

Video Transcript: Discussion 3 • 7-12 Teachers

Participants: Jayne Marlink, Liz Harrington, Norma Mota-Altman, Amanda von Kleist, and Marlene Carter

JM: So let's talk about the writing and the reading and the teaching that you all are going to do to put Upstanders, Not Bystanders in your world. Who wants to start? What writing task, what writing genre, are you thinking about focusing in on, and what kind of texts are you going to use to go along with it?

NM: I thought that I might start with a wonderful story called, "Who Wants Stories Now?" by Sandra Cisneros. It's a story of her friendship with a woman in Sarajevo during the war. And she writes, she writes a letter to the editor of *The New York Times*. And I've done this with my students before, but to re-position it as looking at her as an upstander, I think, would be really powerful. And she feels hopeless, she feels like she can't do much. But her pen is her weapon, and even that is a weapon, and we all have that power. So that's something I'd like to do.

This is another book that I've used with my students, *It Doesn't Have to Be This Way* by Luis Rodriguez, talking about gangs and the choices that we make and the consequences that brings about. And I think that's really powerful to have students see themselves as someone capable of taking a stand and making a difference.

JM: So what are they gonna write? What genre are they gonna write?

NM: They are going to write informational. What I had started with was, because my students are English Language Learners, we started with the words bystander and upstander and deconstructing them and what does it mean and how do you know this, so that they also have a sense of "I can figure out what words mean by looking at them and deconstructing them." So we looked at that and then we started talking about "What is, who is an upstander? What are the qualities that they have? What are some of the actions that they might take?" And so sort of, creating their own definition. Then thinking about "Who is an upstander? Who do you know who's been an upstander?" And then so it would be a three-paragraph essay more or less, and informational.

MC: (Holding up a copy of *To Kill a Mockingbird*) Well, I teach ninth, eleventh, and twelfth graders, so part of what a lot of eighth or ninth grade teachers do, cause sometimes in middle school, sometimes students have read this in middle school already. But Atticus Finch is like the quintessential—

JM: I was thinking the same phrase!

MC: Oh gosh, I mean if you want to define upstander, you look, there's his picture. So, uh, since we already have this as part of the curriculum, now to, you know, reposition him as an upstander.

One of the things, uh, I think that's important as we get older is to talk about the risks of being an upstander. And Atticus Finch pretty much risks a lot to stand up and do the right thing to represent this African American man, Tom, who has been accused falsely of raping a young, white woman. And what happens, the backlash that he gets for simply doing the job he was hired to do, and a job that he also believes in. So being an upstander can be a risky thing, and I think that's one thing that can come from this. Also, my ninth graders also read *Twelve Angry Men*, which is another case of juror number nine standing up and doing the right thing, which is to make the other jurors slow down and think about all of the facets of the case.

Already in my curriculum is *The Crucible*, and John Proctor. I never called these people upstanders. I think that's what the difference would be, is to talk about them as upstanders and then the next step of writing about an upstander, so that literary topic or analysis. But then to make the transition to, "What does that mean for me as a person?" So that's, that's what I'm thinking.

And then the last book I want to mention is, um, this would be a little controversial, and I think in some districts you may or may not be able to use it, because *Zoot Suit*, while it seems fine for my seniors, I really don't bring it out for the younger students, because I think the seniors can handle the language. There's a lot of profanity. And I think that the seniors handle it. I wouldn't do this with younger students. But there's a character, Alice, who is an upstander, who when the guys are falsely accused of murder, she's the upstander who gets the, you know, leads the cause to get them the representation. And so there are upstanders in this book. So there are ways to cast this a little bit differently than I've been doing before.

JM: So you're going to do, um, mostly literary analysis, or characterization?

MC: Well, no.

JM: How is it going to move?

MC: It's got to move. I don't want to read the same essay 30 times. I want to read an essay where you make a transition into, maybe, um, "What are the causes today, real-life causes for which we need to stand? And how do you see yourself doing that?" Maybe something like that.

JM: So will they pull on a literary character that actually links to today's issue. Will the character traits pull them into today's action?

MC: The traits. Not necessarily the issue, but the traits that the character brings. And maybe this whole thing about, I mean what does it take to—So analyzing what it takes to be an upstander. What are the risks? And then, what does it take for you to be an upstander? What might be the risks? And understanding that you need to know the risks as you stand up. You need to know what could happen to you, be ready to address that.

JM: Yeah, I'll bring this up now. It, I was predicting with the other group that the conversation that we would have with you all doing 7-12 would be much more on the analytical end. Which of course is what we're building on. Yes, they write to inform, yes they write to argue. But it gets into much more of an analytical essay context because that's what they're going to be doing a lot more of, especially in college and in the world of work. And there will be examples of this in the module, trust me, we'll talk about this. But it's a really classic example, Marlene, of using the text to link to the issue, inform the issue, and then build the analysis, which has to get to, what we talked about in the last group, "So what?" That's the significance, it's got to have—Analysis builds significance. Impart significance to the subject you're analyzing, and it's tricky to pull off. How do you—Okay, this is a strange question I can talk about with secondary teachers. How do you help your kids not, um, get preachy? Pedantic?

LH: Can I jump in?

JM: Yes!

LH: I think, because I want to piggyback on something that Marlene said, which is this whole aspect of the "risk" that the upstander takes. And I think that's where you get away from the preachiness, is to not just think of "Oh, you know, I'm going to be an upstander, I'm going to solve the world's problems." But stop there for a minute and think, "Okay, if I actually do this, what might be some of the consequences?" And not that you want to scare them away from doing it, necessarily, but I think Marlene's right. They need to think about what are the costs, what were the costs for Atticus Finch?

In the case of my prompt, my seventh graders would start by reading a short story by Ray Bradbury called "All Summer in a Day." And the point in that story is that nobody stands up for a little girl who gets shut in the cupboard. And so, I think we would then take it from the point of view, and at the end of the story, you know, we've read the story, the kids all feel very sad that nobody stood up for Margot. So then we would step back and say, "Well, what would have happened if somebody had stood up for

Margot? How would that have affected Margot, but how would it have affected that child as well or the other children in the class?" So I think you need to take this rounded approach to it.

AK: And the truth is, no one is innocent of being a bystander. We all have at some point in our lives stood by and saw something happen that, we should have stepped in, and provided some support. So I think that's a way to kind of humble the task and have students really think about—you know, I wrote down as one of our writing tasks for front loading, "Think of a time when you saw someone who needed help and didn't get any. What went through your head, what prevented you from helping, what were the things that made you think, maybe it's not my job, or somebody else will take care of it or, good luck?"

NM: And I think you know, when I brought this up to the group, it's, when I started talking about this issue of upstanders and bystanders, one of the first things my students said, "Well, if we stand up for someone, we might get hurt. We might be." Um, and so, that brings it all home because they themselves realize that something might happen. And so it's important because it's, we don't want to be Polyannas. In the real world, there are consequences, and when you take action there are consequences, and they can be positive or they can be negative. But there's so many things that we could use. I really like the materials from *Facing History*. And one of my heroes is Eleanor Roosevelt, and all she did with African Americans and help to integrate the armed services. I like to bring in women, because I don't think women get enough credit in history books. And I want to show them that women have been in history, have done things. And so, she's someone that I have the students read about and think about what her life was like and the choices she made and how powerful they were for everyone.

JM: *Facing History* resources, link to be provided in the module and in the writing invitations, count on that, um, really serve this whole project well in another regard. Because I was just thinking of kind of a classic English/Language Arts problem. As we build more toward analytical writing and—or in a school that hasn't outlawed fiction. There are those schools. But, long story short, what I'm trying to say is a lot of times we ask kids to do informational, argument, analytical writing about fiction, but they're writing nonfiction. And they've got a genre model mismatch. What's lovely about the *Facing History* resources is that you have digital models, which takes a different kind of scaffolding to talk about and read, of a nonfiction approach to writing about an upstander. And you also have a number of print resources that give the nonfiction model, so that kids actually can, they can use the nonfiction models for the nonfiction writing that they're doing. I think that's the hardest part of tagging this on to fiction. I would always look as far as I could, as widely as I could for a genre

model for the work that the kids were actually doing. It's more complicated though.

AK: So the genre that we are going to write to is sort of undefined. This is Glogster.

JM: Yes, digital genre, my goodness, good for you.

AK: It's an online poster, but it goes deeper than a poster because where a paper and glue poster is 2D, this can link you to videos. My students could upload a podcast of their own analysis and so forth. So, but what does a good Glogster look like? What are the criteria for making a solid Glogster? We don't really know. We're kind of figuring that out. Yes. But we definitely want to access the *Facing History* resources and Biography.com to pull a historical figure and inform on the Glogster and then analyze with a personal reflection at the end where students talk about how this, how this upstander's story has impacted me, how I'm going to use what I learned from this upstander in my life.

JM: Analytical significance, that's where it goes.

AK: And putting it out there, concluding with the "Here's what's next."

JM: Do you do Glogster too, Liz?

LH: I have not done Glogster. I have seen Glogsters. I have not tried it myself, but I'm really excited to.

JM: 'Cause I know you do a lot of digital transforming and digital writing as well. Is it, well, I want, you know, I want to experiment, but I'm scared. Is it, how different is it from, say, a VoiceThread?

AK: It's a little different because you're basically assembling a poster, so you can put text parts. Like here's a colorful circle, and I'm filling it with text. And here's a little title for it. So maybe I'm going to put, here's the situation, and then I'm thinking about this for my Glogster. Now here were the bullies, this is the group of folks that were the bullies. Here are the victims. And so maybe, um, instead of just having text, I'm putting a link to a little video or a website that explains and then adding a little podcast, what I want you to do when you go to this website, what I want you to look for. And so, it's more alive.

LH: And you can add music as well.

AK: Yes.

LH: Link to a song

AK: Like a living poster.

JM: I cannot wait to see it. One--You've got a lot of content that you're gonna have your kids access. What're gonna be some really essential—accessing the content, using the text, accessing the genre— what're gonna be some really essential features that have to be a part of your teaching before they even start getting to the draft? And I would assume, this is gonna be different, especially for English Learners, Special Ed students. Scaffolding is all, not over-scaffolding is all, but scaffolding is all. So I'm just, I'm curious, what're gonna be some essential strategies that you'll be focusing on?

MC: You know, I'm thinking of, in terms of text, also, you know, all the websites you're talking about. But I ran across one on Freedom Riders, and I also noticed that there was a transcript that came with it. So I am thinking that we'll view the video and then, and I think it's on the History Channel website, I believe that's where I found one. And there's another one on PBS. So they're all over the place. And there was a transcript, so I think maybe seeing the text itself and seeing how someone, how it is structured to take us through what happened in that summer and highlighting certain individual people that were part of that process. Now, from there, though, because when I saw this whole idea of, that we were thinking about it as inform, argue, and analyze, I could see that, the writing task that I'm thinking of is all of those.

JM: Yeah.

MC: That you can't do, I mean, in order to argue, I have to inform. And the analysis is part of the argument a lot of times. And so I'm envisioning, especially the older students, the twelfth graders, the eleventh and twelfth graders, that there'll be this meshing of genre. And that's important for them to see, because sometimes districts want to say, "Oh, we're doing this, that, or the other." And I think that's not what happens to real writers. Real writers do that? And so I think it might be nice to find a model where we look at how genre is kind of meshed together and maybe identify that for our students. I'm thinking that's one of my steps. And then help them to see that they could do the same thing.

LH: That's so interesting that you'd say that, Marlene, because I'm going down the same road with my seventh graders. Because my plan is for them to write an editorial for the school newspaper. We've actually been reading editorials from live newspapers. And one of the things that I'm having my students notice as we are reading editorials is that they are a blend of all different genres. There's narrative in there, in the form of anecdotes.

There's information in the form of facts. There's persuasion in there. So we are looking at how journalists blend, you know, blur the lines between genres, blend genres. And so in having them write their own editorials, we are going to look at a whole host of different editorials on different topics and just identify, where is he using narrative here, where is he informing us with facts? And then have them go back to the information that they have and see, Okay, from our writing in our writer's notebooks where we wrote about our personal experiences with bullying, where's an anecdote I could draw from that to start my editorial with? We've done some research around using, looking at some YouTube videos of people reacting to bullying. We've looked at biography.com to look at historical upstanders. Where's some information that I can put into my editorial from that? Another thing that I would have them use is infographics. And so it's fairly easy to find infographics online on bullying. You can just google bullying infographics. And those are interesting ways for students to look at information rather than somebody reading text. So they can do research in a number of different ways and then look at ways to bring those facts into their editorial and combine that with opinions about what it means to be an upstander. So I'm excited about having them blend genres as well, because I really wanted to get away from this rigid, you know. This is the narrative box. This is the persuasive box. This is the informative box. Because you're right, the real world doesn't work like that.

JM: And even, even what kids read, in kindergarten and first grade. I mean, we may talk about a narrative text type, but it's not all narrative. The descriptive parts of a narrative piece are not narrative. Every piece ends up with a reflective, or it's just threaded. It ends up with analysis, some kind of significance, analysis or it's threaded along. Those are not narrative. Um, I used to tell my middle school students when I started examining this in my own practice, "I have been one of the teachers who have lied to you. I have taught you narrative paragraphs, and I have taught you informational paragraphs. And then I led you to believe that an entire piece of writing would just be those. I lied. I didn't know better. Now let's fix it."

Are any of you going to, like write your own with the kids or, or write parts of it? (Enthusiastic yeses from the whole group.)
Are you going to build your own Glogster?

AK: Oh yes, absolutely.

JM: Better you than me! I want to, I want to see the video of how you make it happen. In, in the crush of the curriculum pacing of the last decade, I think that really important, slow down model, let's think it through, here's how it works, and something similar to what you're writing, that you're not going to--That's really been lost, the life's been squeezed out of it. Seems like

everything you're talking about, reading, and getting to the thinking of the writing is going to be huge. Huge, huge, huge. And blended. Blended. Yeah.

AK: Well that's what I'm talking about is "framing the text." I think that before we ever touch Biography.com and start looking at historical figures, you know, we have to make it relevant and personal to the students. And so, starting from the beginning, "Why do we practice self-advocacy? What is advocacy? Who needs advocacy?" And talk about who in this world needs an upstander? And let's really think about that. What are the people who need someone to stand up for them? And then start thinking about the situations they've already experienced in their lives and writing about them, talking about them, and putting names to the terms they're expressing. Empathy and powerlessness and power and control, and really providing some language for them to use, so that when we get to the real writing task, they know what they're talking about, they've connected it to their own experiences, and they can use the terminology to express and analyze it. So that's what, I think we're going to have to spend a lot of time doing that before we ever get to, "Now we're going to do a project."

JM: The amount of time before you get to this may make the actual writing pale. It usually does. And I'm hearing all of you getting kids to go this way, and this way, and this way. And then they're going to have to go that way. That's the selecting, the sorting, and the managing. Now what do I really want to say out of everything I've learned?

AK: And then I was thinking about the argument part of this too, because, I don't want them to just have an informative poster. That doesn't do anything. I want them to argue. So their argument is, number one, this person is an upstander. And here is the evidence. And then number two, that we could connect that with character traits. This person showed perseverance, this person showed initiative. You know, common sense, responsibility, any of those terms that we've been talking about, that they can use as evidence to support and put in their own analysis.

NM: And that was one of the ways that I, that I would scaffold, for my English Learners, is brainstorming all those adjectives that could describe an upstander, so they could begin to think about the words that they could use, giving them the words that they could use. The actions, what are some of the actions that upstanders would take, from big to small? You know, but, so that they can have a sense of what all this means. And then, brainstorming who within the community, who within history? And when we brainstormed, one of my students brought up *The Help*, which is a fairly new film. And she talked about how Skeeter was an upstander, how the maids were upstanders. And they had it! They just didn't have the vocabulary. But she understood the concept, and so that was great,

because then the other students were going, "Oh, oh yeah! Okay. I get what you're trying to say."

So that, and then, there's another great film, *The Long Walk Home*, and has great upstanders in that film, that are everyday people. But I think one of the things that, um, I was talking to Marlene about this, is, with English Language Learners, as I'm sure with Special Ed students, one of the things I'm conscious of is the language, and the language that I have to provide so that their arguments, their informational texts, whatever they're writing will be more powerful. And so, the transitions that I need to go over, the way that we can connect one idea to another. And that is modeling because as Writing Project teachers, we write. And the students write.

JM: And it's a good place to tail off, because that's gonna be our last talk, is exactly what language do we think we need to support. And you've already gotten some out there. Because the language that Liz is going to need to support will be different than the language about characterization and traits. And Glogster is giving us all new language. And we'll see if we can pull, actually, some aspects from the ELD standards. Oh, we'll get on a soapbox here. We think those standards ought to be used for all students, not just EL students. That will be our last discussion. Anything else you want to say about just the supporting the writing to inform, argue, and analyze? I know your planning templates and examples are going to hold more, but--

MC: Could I say, I think it's Moffett, that I—I take a lot of things from James Moffett. But there's an activity, I believe it's in Moffett, where he has people do a role-play before writing. I think I envision my students, especially with African American students, it feels like they do better if we frontload it with a lot of oral language. And so I envision us doing some roleplaying. And the question could be, um, "Upstanding possibly has some risks, but is it worth it?" And I think if you look historically at people who have stood up, the risk is there, but the benefits are great. And that risk-taking is important and worth it. So I can see us doing maybe, um, taking the position of many upstanders and then role-playing with some of the push back that they got and then seeing, figuring that out before we actually start to write. And so, that's something I'm thinking about.

JM: Well, and we talked a little bit with the last group too, and you're getting a little bit into this, only under an analytical umbrella. Any of that considering the perspective of the other. Walking in somebody else's shoes - *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It prepares kids to either verbalize, understand, recognize, what's going to be so important for the arguments we have to have them do. The concessions and the counter-arguments. They've got to hear it, they've got to talk it, they've got to act it out, they've got to feel it, they've

got to recognize it in real perspectives often times before they can actually write their own. But absolutely essential is the kind of analytical writing we're asking them to learn how to do.

LH: One of the other texts that I have to use is a poem that's called "I Am the One," and it comes from the website NoNameCallingWeek.org. And we have used this poem in my school before. And what's interesting about it is that it takes the bullying situation from both the point of view of the person who's being bullied and the point of view of the bully. And so with that, my plan is to chunk the poem into different sections, which will be posted around the room on chart paper. And then have students go around in pairs or groups of four, perhaps, and writing on the chart paper their reactions to this poem, so they're also talking about it. Because I think you're right, the oral language here is so important. And in my classroom I have English Language Learners mixed in with my fluent English speakers. So in grouping them I'm making sure that the English Language Learners are grouped with some fluent English speakers so they get that support and they're also able to have their voice heard. But I think the oral part of this is so huge, having kids talk to each other about what they're doing is so huge.

NM: And I found just in starting the whole thing about upstander/bystander in your groups, explain the difference. And then we would do another little activity and, okay, in your groups, talk about it. And that was so powerful because when they got to the task of writing, they had a sense of what they were going to write, because they had been talking about it. And it's just so powerful to have students talk to each other. It's, that's where they learn, I think. And something like this is so important because they have so, they have things to share.

JM: It reinforces why we actually like these ELD standards so much because they're built on the current theories that language and writing are activity. You do something with it. They're social. You use them. It's action. So they've got to use their ideas. And the other thing I think it supports that we maybe need to advocate more strongly--Okay, underpinning this also is the issue of college and career readiness. Okay. What were your favorite classes in college? (pause) Were they the discussion classes? Where you actually, hello, where you talked about issues and ideas and you rehearsed what you were going to eventually write about? Kids, they need to learn how to rehearse. It takes a little bit. It ought to be loud and noisy. Well, maybe not noisy. Any last points you want to put out there, because we are going to move, the last session, we are going to talk specifically about the language - go.

NM: I just want to, I use this newspaper, *LA Youth*, which is in the Los Angeles area. Wonderful, all written by teenagers, and my students love it because

they relate to it. But I had them go through it, the last issue, and I said, "Read a couple of these stories, and pick out who was an upstander and explain why." And they were able to do it. Because they had been talking to each other about what makes an upstander, and the qualities, obviously. So when they read these texts, they were looking through different lenses, and I thought, "Wow, this is so powerful." Because then they could look at the people in the literature texts or whatever and they look at them with different perspectives, and they say, "Okay, this is an upstander. This is a bystander." Wow, it's powerful, very powerful.

JM: It's kind of taking over everything, isn't it? (Laughter). It is for the k-5 group too. I'm glad, I'm glad this was suggested to us. I cannot wait to see what the kids come up with. I can't wait to hear what you all say really worked well or what we didn't think about. Because the lovely thing about this in this kind of talk is, you can't laminate this and return to it later. It's, we're gonna have to rework it. And that's what we're asking kids to do, so we might as well be right in there with them. Okay.

AK: This process is so powerful, talking to each other, learning from each other, just like our students, you know we're smarter together. And, this is the kind of stuff that teachers need to do together all the time.

JM: Absolutely.