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DELVING INTO DYSTOPIA

A TEMPLATE FOR A COLLABORATIVE CROSS ANNOTATION LITERATURE STUDY

Collaboration is Key

An idea from an urban library was the catalyst for a multi-school reading project in a rural area where teens live far apart and have no access to public transportation. But collaboration was the key to making it work. Ultimately, the project provided an opportunity for teens in Trillium Lakelands to explore literature on a deeper level with peers across their sprawling school district and to gain community exposure through workshop and extension activities.

The first collaboration was between Haliburton Highlands Secondary School and the Haliburton County Public Library. Over the years, the sole high school in Haliburton County had developed such a strong working relationship with the public library that when Brampton Public Library started a teen reading pilot in 2014, inviting libraries and their teen advisory committees from across Ontario to participate, we immediately began brainstorming ways to be included.

There were many challenges to overcome. First, HCPL does not have a teen advisory committee. The public library system serves a sparsely populated area about the size of Prince Edward Island, of which about six per cent are teenagers without access to public transportation. Since the pilot was to take place over the summer, teens would have no easy way to access books at the library branch. Finally, Brampton's project did not include a connection to the Ontario curriculum. Since this was to be a collaboration involving schools, we felt this was important.

The Annotation Book Study Plan

Our inspiration for the project was the book *S* by J.J. Abrams. Published in 2013, *S* is designed to look like an old library book, complete with artifacts tucked between the pages and annotations. The main story is a tale of adventure on the high seas but another saga unfolds as two college students communicate through annotations in the book's margins, attempting to unearth a mystery about its author as they analyze the text.

We decided to have students annotate, using different colours, three novels with a focus on a big question. They would read the first book, making notes around the big question in the margins using blue pen. Then there was a multi-school exchange and students reading the second book would annotate in green pen, responding to the text and the first reader's comments if they felt the need to continue the conversation inside the book. After a second switch, students read the third book, annotating and answering annotations in red pen. At the end, there was a final switch in which each student re-read their first book, becoming the subject expert on that novel. These experts presented to the whole group at a student forum to wrap up the project. The forum also included a workshop where students worked with the public library to extend the learning and create bookmarks.