A CRITICAL LOOK AT

TEACHING LITERATURE

AT KEY STAGE 3

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| **CONSULTING THE RESEARCH**This paper draws on UKLA-funded research about the teaching of literature at Key Stage 3 (11-14 year-olds). Part of the study was a survey of over 170 schools of what novels, poems and plays they taught to Key Stage 3 pupils. You can find the top-ranked texts here: <https://ukla.org/funded_projects/what-literature-texts-are-being-taught-in-years-7-to-9/>Here are some key findings: * The literature ‘diet’ provided for learners is limited.
* The texts taught are mainly written be male writers.
* There are very few texts written by authors of colour.
* Within the top-ranking novels, there are very few female protagonists.
* There are few characters from BAME backgrounds.
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| Chat**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**1. What is *literature*? Can you define it? (Perhaps look at others’ definitions to help you.)
2. Do we privilege certain types of literature? (e.g. particular authors, novels, ‘classics’, certain genres, etc.)
3. Should we privilege certain types of literature?
4. Is it important for literature taught at KS3 to reflect different groups in society?
5. What impact(s) might our choices have on learners?
6. What constraints, pressures and challenges are faced by English departments in selecting texts?
7. How important is it for departments to have a vision or philosophy for teaching literature?
 | **Thought bubble****TAKING THINGS FURTHER*** Look at the other data given at the link above. What is revealed about the experience of literature pupils may be having in English lessons?
* Ask colleagues in school about what attributes make for a good text (novel, poem or play) to teach in class.
* Write a manifesto for the teaching of literature at Key Stage 3 of no more than 50 words. Perhaps share this on Padlet or a similar platform.
* Access the audit document (<https://ukla.org/wp-content/uploads/KS3-literature-audit.pdf>) and, with the permission of the department, audit the literature taught in the department. Present the findings to the department, with the aim of promoting discussion.
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