

4 ways to integrate culturally responsive teaching into the ELA classroom



How can we make our classrooms truly inclusive? As educators' understanding of true diversity and inclusion deepens, they discover new opportunities to integrate and celebrate their students' cultures in the classroom—and one result has been the rise of [culturally responsive teaching](#) (CRT). The storytelling that naturally occurs in ELA classrooms makes it the perfect atmosphere to choose narratives through a CRT lens and open the floor up to students to share their experiences as well.

Here are four ways to make the most of these opportunities:

1 Choose diverse, representative reading material

[Students fall in love with reading when they see themselves reflected in the texts.](#) Educators and administrators are actively seeking reading materials that reflect their students' cultural backgrounds and experiences. With these materials, students can discover real or fictional role models who look like them, and feel seen

in a way that they might not when learning a traditional ELA curriculum. Just as importantly, students who are not from the culture being represented can enjoy a window into lives that are different from their own, fostering empathy and curiosity.

NEWSELA TIP:



Newsela provides access to over 10,000 texts, ranging across 20+ genres, sourced from over 100 world-class content partners. Use Newsela's Advanced Search to search by content provider or content type.

2 Introduce student choice

Who better than students themselves to find texts that reflect their own experiences? Educators can facilitate this by providing a safe space for students to search for content that's representative of themselves—for example, by letting them choose books or articles from a large library of material. There is a [documented relationship](#) between reading

choice and student engagement and motivation, so teachers can leverage this to increase achievement while also making their classrooms more culturally responsive. To take this method even further, students can even discuss their choices, introducing their peers to what they've learned and perhaps sparking their interest in reading other texts themselves.

NEWSELA TIP:



Teachers can provide students with structured choice by creating and assigning a Text Set around a specific topic, or guide students to search independently on Newsela for texts.

3 Frame the text with questions that relate the student and their community to the material.

Frame the text with questions that relate the student and their community to the material. Student-centered teaching means making ELA discussions personal. One way to accomplish this is to ask questions that invite students to understand the role of themselves and their

communities in the context of the material. These questions not only give students an opportunity to share their experiences with the teacher and their classmates, but also encourage students to reflect critically on their position in a way that could produce new and exciting insights.

NEWSELA TIP:



Teachers can use Annotations to scaffold Newsela texts with questions to provide students with an opportunity to draw connections and reflect on their own experiences.

4 Create a safe space for reflection in writing and discussion.

Especially at the beginning of the school year, some students may feel more comfortable opening up about their culture and communities in writing rather than group discussion. Through

assignments like this, educators can deepen their own understanding of their students and their communities and use that knowledge to build a safe space for discussion later in the year.

NEWSELA TIP:



Teachers can customize Write Prompts with a reflective question, so students have a safe space to explore and share their thinking.

Found on Newsela: Content that reflects student experience

Arts

Salvadoran immigrant writes poetry meant to get us talking

By PBS NewsHour, adapted by Newsela staff
01/24/2018 Text Level 7
Word Count 829



Poet Javier Zamora. Photo from Anna Ruth Zamora

In 2006, protests broke out in cities across the United States as immigrants and their supporters took to the streets. It was in response to a proposal to toughen immigration rules and wall off one-third of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Opinion

Opinion: Nipsey Hussle motivated many from rappers to Eritrean-Americans

By Master Tesfatsion, Washington Post, adapted by Newsela staff
04/11/2019 Text Level 7
Word Count 899



Rapper Nipsey Hussle attends Craft Syndicate's music collaboration unveiling event at the Opera Atlanta nightclub on December 10, 2018, in Atlanta, Georgia. Photo by Prince Williams/Getty Images

I sat on the plane fighting tears. I looked at my phone as the text messages were delivered. Then I looked down at the Eritrean

Opinion

Opinion: It's time to rethink our schools' reading lists for diversity

By Anjali Enjeti, Al Jazeera, adapted by Newsela staff
06/08/2018 Text Level 7
Word Count 892



Harper Lee's 'Go Set a Watchman' book ready to be released on July 14, 2015, and Lee's 'To Kill a Mockingbird' at a Harper Lee celebration at Barnes & Noble in New York City on July 13, 2015. Photo: Laura Cavanaugh/Getty Images

Recently, a school district in Minnesota decided to remove Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" and Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird" from its required reading list. The books