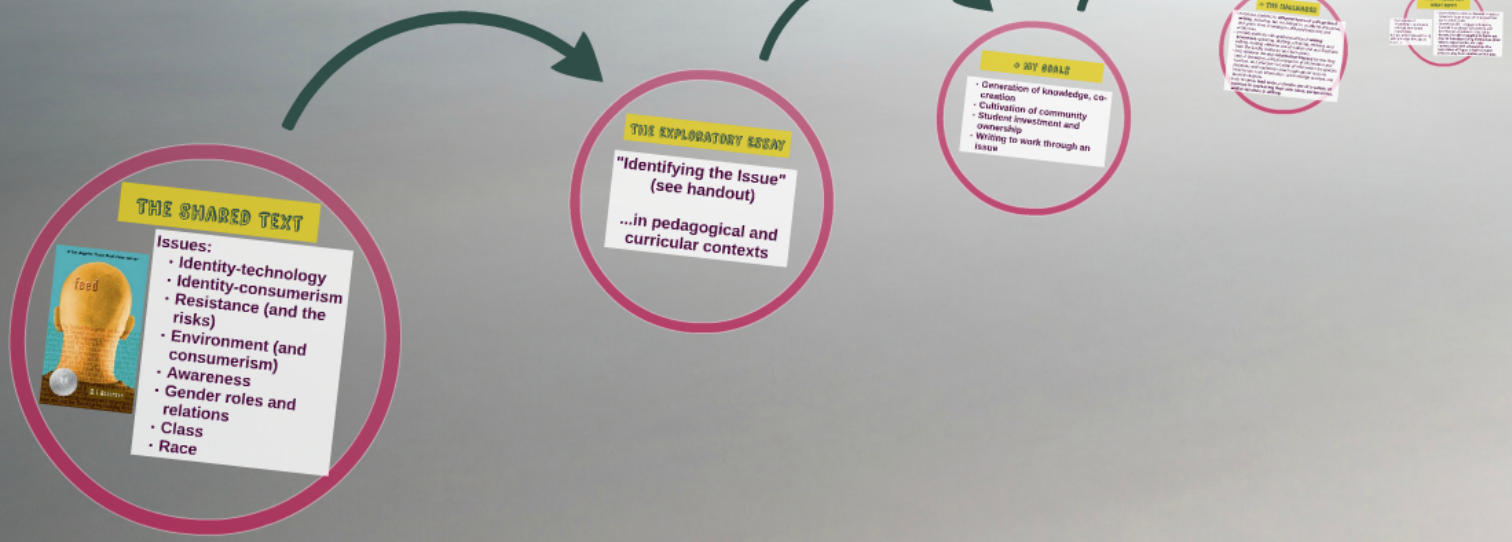
Empowering Students to 'Theme' First-Year Writing: An Exploratory Essay Assignment



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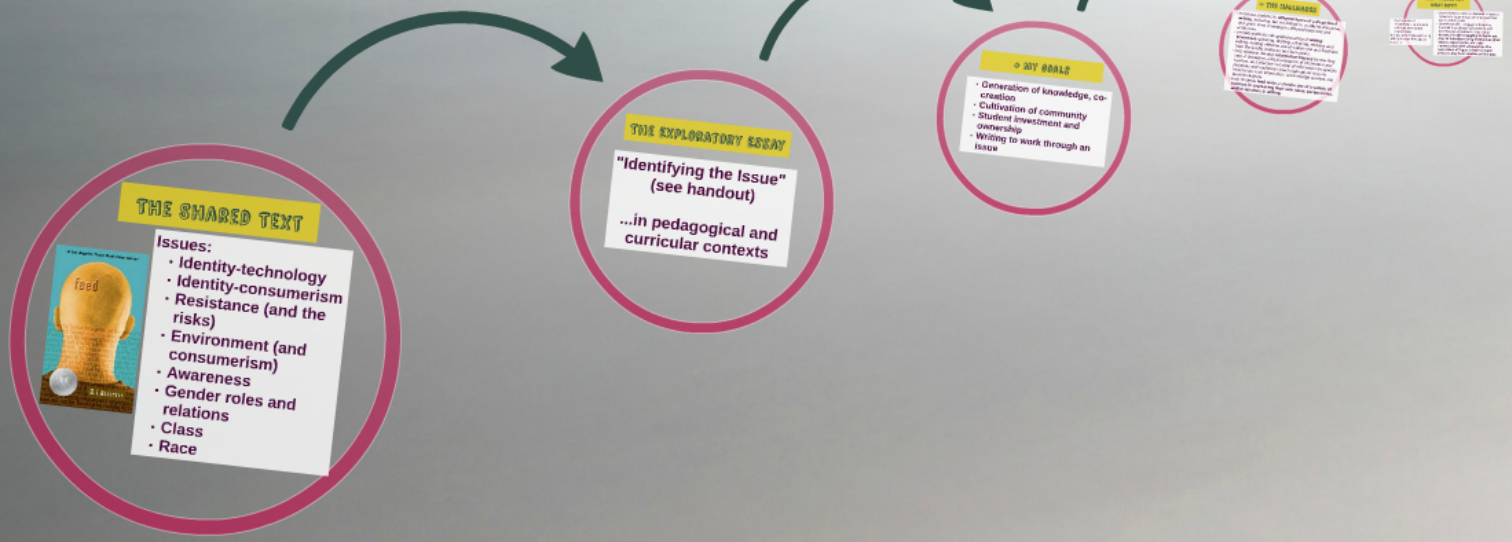
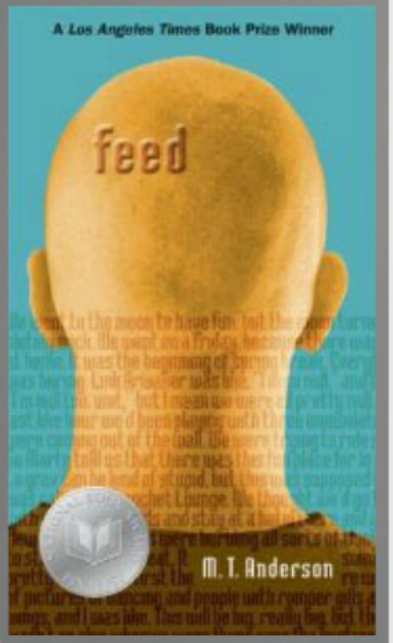


THE SHARED TEXT



Issues:

- Identity-technology
- Identity-consumerism
- Resistance (and the risks)
- Environment (and consumerism)
- Awareness
- Gender roles and relations
- Class
- Race

THE EXPLORATORY ESSAY

"Identifying the Issue"
(see handout)

...in pedagogical and curricular contexts

+ MY GOALS

- Generation of knowledge, co-creation
- Cultivation of community
- Student investment and ownership
- Writing to work through an issue

+ THE HALLMARKS

- introduce students to **different forms of college-level writing**, including, but not limited to, academic discourse, and guide them in writing for *different purposes and audiences*.
- provide students with guided practice of **writing processes**–planning, drafting, critiquing, revising, and editing–making effective use of written and oral feedback from the faculty instructor and from peers.
- help students develop **information literacy** by teaching search strategies, *critical evaluation* of information and sources, and *effective selection of information for specific purposes and audiences*; teach appropriate ways to *incorporate* such information, *acknowledge* sources and provide citations.
- help students **read texts** and **make use of a variety of sources in expressing their own ideas, perspectives, and/or opinions in writing**.

WHAT WORKED AND WHAT DIDN'T

- Generation of knowledge, co-creation
- Student investment
- Community

But (re: ownership and using writing to work through an issue...)

- Sometimes became too focused on source material in later stages of project and lost sight of their goals
- Sometimes didn't engage with source material to challenge conceptions and experiences articulated in first paper
- **In sum, I'm still struggling to figure out how to help them bring themselves (their values, experiences, etc.) into conversation with scholarship. The separation of Paper 1 from research process may have reinforced that gap.**

THANK YOU!

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