High School Libraries: Educational Necessities

BY MADELEINE REX

Here is an English paper I wrote this year focusing on the importance of libraries. I wrote this because I was inspired by the total lack of a decent library in my school. My teacher agreed that "our library is a place where books go to die." I believe libraries are an indispensable asset to a high school, and this is why...

High School Libraries: Educational Necessities

Supplying high school libraries with a diverse collection of books and technology is essential to developing both the intellectual and creative skill sets of students. Books encourage creativity and understanding of the world around us, and they are more conducive to concentration than other mediums, such as reading digitally. However, it is equally important that libraries supply students and teachers with the technology necessary for thorough research.

Independent – or pleasure – reading is an indispensable asset. Reading can serve so many purposes. Robert M. Hutchins, an educational philosopher and the dean of Yale Law School, asserted that, “…books are the means of understanding our society and ourselves. They contain the great ideas that dominate us without our knowing it. There is no comparable repository in our tradition.” As Hutchins said, reading books gives people, in this case, students, a deeper understanding of the world around them. This learning often happens unconsciously through the reading of either nonfiction or fiction. By exposing a child to the world of a book, the characters of the book, and the ways they function, the child begins to understand our world and our people. In fact, the National Endowment of the Arts has published a statistic that tells us that 43% of literary readers perform volunteer and charity work, while only 17% of non-literary readers do. Readers are motivated to perform such work because they, through books, have nurtured a connection to the world and its people. A well-stocked library provides ample opportunities for the natural learning that breeds that attitude. It is essential that high school libraries provide a variety of books to ensure that there is something for everyone, as research has shown that reading as a pastime becomes more popular in the 11th and 12th grades. Francine Prose, in her article "I Know Why the Caged Bird Cannot Read," said, “High school – even more than college – is where literary tastes and allegiances are formed; what we read in adolescence is imprinted on our brains as the dreamy notions of childhood crystallize into hard data.” The years a student spends in high school determine their reading habits for years to come.

Reading also promotes learning in other academic areas. By focusing on the page and the story being told, the reader’s attention span expands, while also deepening comprehension. Reading books for pleasure broadens a student’s vocabulary and strengthens their ability to understand the workings of grammar, thereby aiding them in writing and in reading books assigned to them in school, such as textbooks. Hutchins has said something similar, “Great books teach people not only how to read them, but...
It may be argued that many of these things can be taught in the classroom, and that personal reading can easily happen outside of schools with the help of bookstores, the internet, and public libraries. However, efficiency is a highly valued quality in America. If schools would ensure that the library accessible to students, simple to use, and that its presence in the school is noticeable, students would be more likely to take advantage of its services.

It is true that libraries can function without librarians, and doing so might seem wise during times of economic stress. However, librarians are almost as important as the libraries themselves. They are teachers just like any other. In fact, a majority of them have responsibilities outside those we typically attribute to them. Liz Gray, a former English teacher and the current library director at Dana Hall School, a girls’ boarding and day school in Massachusetts, claimed that “One of [her] primary responsibilities as a librarian is to teach information literacy skills – defining research questions, selecting and evaluating sources, avoiding plagiarism, documenting sources – and in [her] experience this works best face to face with students.” This face to face time between librarian and student has the potential to strengthen the students’ ability to attain and organize research, a skill that will undoubtedly benefit them in the future. Librarians keep tabs on the needs of the students and teachers of the school. By giving librarians sufficient funds, schools are also giving them the means to buy the books and tools that complement the curriculum. In my experience, the librarian has been a friend. They listen to what students have to say about specific books or series, and they work to serve the students by stocking the library with the books they know the kids like to read.

As mentioned earlier, the role of the librarian has stretched to include technology. The purpose of the library as a whole has changed over the past decade. Research is mostly conducted online, as it is fast and often more up-to-date than books published years ago. It is essential that libraries have technology that is up-to-date and ready to meet the requirements of the curriculum. It cannot be argued that technology will not play a key role in the lives of today’s students. They must learn how to use it effectively in order to succeed in the many fields that are becoming more and more dependent on technology. Libraries are frequently the place chosen to house computer labs and other electronics, but they are often not able to be accessed by students. This is a major drawback. Computers are portals to information, and most students prefer to do research for school through the internet. If libraries had a more extensive collection of technologies and a greater number of computers, students would be drawn to them when working on assignments. What more could be asked for than a quiet, studious environment stocked with all the necessary tools?

Books, though not necessarily ideal for up-to-date or efficient research, are unarguably important. Sherman Alexie wrote in his article, “Superman and Me,” that, when talking as a guest teacher at schools, he tells the students simply, “Books,’ I say to them. ‘Books.’” Books hold answers to questions about culture, life, science, love, religion, and the many other topics that dominate the world. They have been pored over repeatedly before being put on the market, and therefore, books are probably more accurate than some online sources. By reading books for their school classes, students learn how to read analytically and how to comprehend what they read. These skills are crucial to succeeding in a wide range of classes because of the reliance on textbooks, which a student must be able to read and understand.

It is necessary that high schools strike a balance between technology and books. William Powers, the author of Hamlet’s Blackberry: A Practical Philosophy for Building a Good Life in the Digital Age, has said, “The idea that books are outdated is based on a common misconception: the belief that new technologies automatically render existing ones obsolete, as the automobile did with the buggy whip. However, this isn’t always the case. Old technologies often handily survive the introduction of new ones, and sometimes become useful in entirely new ways.” He also observed that “What are often considered the weaknesses of the old-fashioned book are in some ways its strengths.” The internet is full of distractions, while a book is focused on the topic at hand. So, while technology is a great tool for research, books promote concentration. A library that serves both of these needs is one that has the best interests of students at its heart.
Certainly, books, computers, and other electronics are expensive, and that the money used to buy them could be invested in other things. However, books and technologies have benefits that are worth the cost. They provide students with the means to thoroughly research topics for school and investigate questions of their own. Schools could lessen the impact on their budgets by creating a system of circulation between the libraries, as public libraries do. There is also a possibility that donations could help fund a library. There are many means by which libraries could receive the funding they are in need of, if someone would be willing to take on the job.

A common concern I’ve come across is that students will not use the library, even if it is well-stocked and has the technologies they need. There are ways to make a library appealing, and school libraries simply need to put them into action. Comfortable seating, a sense of casualness, and a modern environment would help to abolish the idea that libraries are “uncool” or only for “nerds.” Libraries could also provide devices for listening to music for students who are studying or reading quietly. To draw students to the library after school, they could give out after school snacks, have study sessions for certain classes, or even host author events, which many authors are willing to participate in. Author events would serve as an incentive for students to come to the library for reasons beyond the academic.

High school libraries in particular, as the academics in high school are more demanding than those in elementary and middle schools, have the potential to be one of the most valuable assets of the school. In order to reach this potential, they must be nurtured and cared for until they can provide students with the environment, tools, and help they need. By hiring adept librarians, purchasing a sufficient number of computers, and stocking the library with the books needed to satisfy the curriculum as well as the pleasure reading of the students, libraries can serve both the teachers and the students in ways that no other part of the school can. There are certainly issues to be dealt with, such as budgetary ones, but they can be overcome if there is a librarian who is willing to do their job well, such as Liz Gray. Libraries promote comprehension, studiousness, and the pleasure reading that can aid students with their classes as well as entertain them. Hutchins suggested that, “To put an end to the spirit of inquiry that has characterized the West it is not necessary to burn the books. All we have to do is leave them unread for a few generations.”

Let us provide libraries with the librarians to nurture them, as well as the budgets necessary to support them, and we can encourage that “spirit of inquiry” and train students for the challenges of college and their careers. Books are, as Hutchins said, “the means of understanding our society and ourselves.”

Works Cited


Looking For Alaska. Authors want and need these sorts of blogs....

The last comments for
The Elite by Kiera Cass; Review

Emma
I really love that this installment became more than just the love triangle. It was awesome to see America...

» 234 weeks ago

The last comments for
The Magician’s Nephew by C. S. Lewis; Review

Wordbird 49p
I can’t believe I didn’t reply to this 49 WEEKS AGO! I must have been really distracted. :)...» 281 weeks ago

The last comments for
Reluctant Hiatus
@Kendra503
Aw! Well, at least you’re back up and blogging. My inspiration needs to stay there! :P Have fun...

» 294 weeks ago

The last comments for
I Haven’t Died
Dominique
Whew! Thank goodness your not dead. You had me worried there for a second ;)

» 296 weeks ago

Comments by IntenseDebate

MAY 8TH, 2012

Legend by Marie Lu; Review
BY MADELEINE REX

Title: Legend
Author: Marie Lu
Published: November 29th, 2011
Number of Pages: 336
Rating: 4/5

Synopsis:

What was once the western United States is now home to the Republic, a nation perpetually at war with its neighbors. Born into an elite family in one of the Republic’s wealthiest districts, fifteen-year-old June is a prodigy being groomed for success in the Republic’s highest military circles. Born into the slums, fifteen-year-old Day is the country’s most wanted criminal. But his motives may not be as malicious as they seem.

From very different worlds, June and Day have no reason to cross paths – until the day June’s brother, Metias, is murdered and Day becomes the prime suspect. Caught in the ultimate game of cat and mouse, Day is in a race for his family’s survival, while June seeks to avenge Metias’ death. But in a shocking turn of events, the two uncover the truth of what has really brought them together, and the sinister lengths their country will go to keep its secrets.

Full of nonstop action, suspense, and romance, this novel is sure to move readers as much as it thrills. [From Goodreads]

Quote:

“You should have taken me with you,” I whisper to him. Then I lean my head against his and begin to cry. In my mind, I make a silent promise to my brother’s killer.
I will hunt you down. I will scour the streets of Los Angeles for you. Search every street in the Republic if I have to. I will trick you and deceive you, lie, cheat and steal to find you, tempt you out of your hiding place, and chase you until you have nowhere else to run. I make you this promise: your life is mine.

Review:

*Legend* is the sort of book that grips you from the first chapters. Unfortunately, it also is the sort of book that feels as though it is simply background for books to come.

I found that I sympathized with both characters, but Day was the one who truly hooked me. Every action he took was one I could understand, whether it was the right one or not, and I approved of his motivations a bit more than I did June’s. It was June’s development as a character that drew me to her. It’s evident from the beginning that she has to go through enormous changes, and I am particularly happy with the outcome.

The world created in *Legend* does not vary much from a classic dystopian society. You are constantly aware of the class differences, especially between the two main characters, and that, to me, was the most prevalent thing that set this world apart from others. I’ll admit that classes are an issue in most dystopian books, but I have never noticed them so clearly. I enjoyed this aspect now that I’ve taken more history classes and can relate their experiences to those I’ve read about in my textbooks. The issue of class separation is an ongoing one for mankind, and this book illustrates that.

Obviously, it’s been a while since I’ve read this, but I’m trying to remember all that I can in order to write a review. One thing I’ve never forgotten is the relationship between June and Day. It’s destined to be a disaster from the start, considering how and why they meet, but you can’t help but hope that it will evolve into something stronger and better. This is one of the primary reasons I’ll be reading the sequels. I want them to work together without tension, distrust, and suspicion.

There’s a secondary character I absolutely cannot ignore: Tate. She’s a darling, strong girl that first Day, and then June, find themselves attached to. She’s a beautiful young thing with a very old soul, and the book would not be the same without her.

The plot moves along at a steady, though not very fast, pace. Naturally, the most exciting bits were toward the end, when things seemed so dark and a terrible end so inevitable that my heart started pounding. Lu did a fantastic job of making me excited to read the rest of the books, particularly because I have a feeling that they will continue to become darker, more action-packed, and suspenseful. Not to mention the fact that June and Day still have a lot of developing to do.

Lu manages to surprise you with a handful of lines that are intriguing and poignant. I love being taken by surprise in the middle of the page by a thought that strikes me. Both June and Day have thoughts of that sort, and those were by far the best parts of the book.

I’d recommend it to people who are die-hard dystopian fans, like myself, but not to those who don’t enjoy dystopian in general. You need to have a taste for it in order to really enjoy *Legend*. The alternative to not reading it is going out and finding other dystopians and learning to love them, because I can assure you that, however average some of them may be, they have a way of inspiring you to consider the world and people around you, and they also tend to have heart-wrenching romances and incredible action scenes (a few perks). Give the genre a shot before tackling *Legend*.
The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde; A sort-of review

BY MADELEINE REX

Title: The Importance of Being Earnest

Author: Oscar Wilde

(First) Published: 1895

Number of Pages: 76

Rating: 5/5

Synopsis:

Oscar Wilde’s madcap farce about mistaken identities, secret engagements, and lovers entanglements still delights readers more than a century after its 1895 publication and premiere performance. The rapid-fire wit and eccentric characters of The Importance of Being Earnest have made it a mainstay of the high school curriculum for decades.

Cecily Cardew and Gwendolen Fairfax are both in love with the same mythical suitor. Jack Worthing has wooed Gwendolen as Ernest while Algernon has also posed as Ernest to win the heart of Jack’s ward, Cecily. When all four arrive at Jack’s country home on the same weekend the “rivals” to fight for Ernest’s undivided attention and the “Erneests” to claim their beloveds pandemonium breaks loose. Only a senile nursemaid and an old, discarded hand-bag can save the day!

This Prestwick House Literary Touchstone Edition includes a glossary and reader’s notes to help the modern reader appreciate Wilde’s wry wit and elaborate plot twists. [From Goodreads]

Review:

First of all: Long time, no… blog.

It seems I’ve disappeared for the past few months. Not simply from Wordbird, but from all of cyberspace, aside from the unnecessary amount of time I spent on facebook. Since January, I’ve been tackling homework in addition to extracurriculars, and I have been forced to put other parts of my life on hold – namely, reading, writing, and blogging. Unless it’s a textbook, it’s probably not going to be read. Unless it’s an assignment, it’s not going to be written. The same applies to blogging. Fortunately, my AP Language and Composition teacher has recently given us an assignment to blog, thereby granting me the time to return to the few readers who have stuck around. I am so grateful to be back, and even more grateful to find that not all of you are gone. Thank you.

And, finally, the actual post:
In January of this year, I had the privilege of becoming Black Swan Youth Theatre’s assistant director of *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde, a play set in the 1890’s that is, as I wrote in a recent press release,

…”a story of comical misunderstandings, strange coincidences, and ample mischief. *The Importance of Being Earnest* combines humor and satire with immaculate prose.

The language is the most fascinating aspect of the script. Every sentence is perfectly phrased and nearly poetic. I can recall so many lines because of the fluid way in which one sentence flows to the next. The fantastic thing about the beautiful language is that it manages to be beautiful and absolutely hilarious. My director, Susan Scott, and I paid close attention to every word and made every actor accountable for stating things perfectly because each sentence is such a gem.

Here is just one bunch of “gems”:

> **Lady Bracknell.** Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?  
> **Jack.** [Gravely.] In a hand-bag.  
> **Lady Bracknell.** A hand-bag?  
> **Jack.** [Very seriously.] Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a hand-bag – a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it an ordinary hand-bag in fact.  
> **Lady Bracknell.** In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?  
> **Jack.** In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.  
> **Lady Bracknell.** The cloak-room at Victoria Station?  
> **Jack.** Yes. The Brighton line.  
> **Lady Bracknell.** The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion – has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now – but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognized position in good society.  
> **Jack.** May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen’s happiness.  
> **Lady Bracknell.** I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

Of course, that excerpt is rather confusing out of context, but it gives you an idea of the cleverness I’m talking about. The satiric story that Oscar Wilde crafts is the sort that makes you savor every word and chuckle at every comment. I was thrilled to work with such a magnificent piece of literature.

Furthermore, *The Importance of Being Earnest* is the first play I’ve participated in.
After the performances in early March (we had a mere month and a half to pull it together), no one wanted to let it go. Naturally, we were all ecstatic when Susan told us we’d be taking the play to the **Hollywood Fringe Festival** in June. If you’re interested in seeing it, take a look here. I would love to meet you!

But back to the play…

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the story is the attachment a reader has to all the characters. This rascally, ridiculous bunch become irresistibly endearing, despite their less admirable qualities: pride, arrogance, ignorance, etc. Though Wilde intended to criticize (with a smile!) the upper classes of 19th Century England, he did so in a way that does not make them seem blatantly terrible. I appreciated this acknowledgment that, well, not everybody can be all that bad. Algernon Moncrieff, in particular, is a silly, cocky man, but anyone who sees or reads the play will absolutely adore him. Here’s a peak at Algý’s fantastic silliness:

"**Cecily.** I can’t understand how you are here at all. Uncle Jack won’t be back till Monday afternoon.

**Algernon.** That is a great disappointment. I am obliged to go up by the first train on Monday morning. I have a business appointment that I am anxious… to miss?

**Cecily.** Couldn’t you miss it anywhere but in London?

**Algernon.** No: the appointment is in London.

**Cecily.** Well, I know, of course, how important it is not to keep a business engagement, if one wants to retain any sense of the beauty of life, but still I think you had better wait till Uncle Jack arrives. I know he wants to speak to you about your emigrating.

**Algernon.** About my what?

**Cecily.** Your emigrating. He has gone up to buy your outfit.

**Algernon.** I certainly wouldn’t let Jack buy my outfit. He has no taste in neckties at all.

**Cecily.** I don’t think you will require neckties. Uncle Jack is sending you to Australia.

**Algernon.** Australia! I’d sooner die.

**Cecily.** Well, he said at dinner on Wednesday night, that you would have to choose between this world, the next world, and Australia.

**Algernon.** Oh, well! The accounts I have received of Australia and the next world, are not particularly encouraging. This world is good enough for me, cousin Cecily.

**Cecily.** Yes, but are you good enough for it?

**Algernon.** I’m afraid I’m not that.

Come to think of it, Cecily’s pretty cute in there, too. See what I mean? You just can’t get enough of them!

I *earnestly* (lame joke) recommend reading *The Importance of Being Earnest*, whether you come to the show or not, because of its immense literary value. I can assure you that you will laugh on every page. However, seeing it performed (by Black Swan or in the movie) is a priceless experience. Wilde wrote the story for the stage, and it is only there that the characters truly become real. Participating in theatre has made me realize the potential stories have to come as close to reality as they can, and working with Black Swan has been the highlight of my last few months. We’re now working on Disney’s *Mulan*, a shocking change from Oscar Wilde, but still exciting and fun. Performances for *Mulan* will be June 1st, 2nd, 8th, and 9th.
I must reiterate: take the time to read this play. It takes less than a day, but it will amuse you for much longer.
One of the most daunting tasks a webmaster must perform is uploading a large website to a remote server. Depending on your Internet connection speed, this task can be tedious and files are uploaded to your root directory one file at a time. Archive is mainly used for backing up your site to safe storage, whereas the packaging method zips the files together. For a list of provider settings, you may want to look at this Microsoft site to get your feet wet.

To get started deploying your site with a zip file, one thing you need to know is that you cannot simply use your OS compression tool to zip a website. You will need to use MSDeploy for that. When MSDeploy zips a file, it will also create a couple of xml files. These files are archive.xml and systemInfo.xml. Archive for May, 2012. Microfilmmaker reviews iPi Mocap. Posted on: May 23rd, 2012. Microfilmmaker reviews iPi Mocap and interviews iPi Soft’s CEO Michael Nikonov. Tweet.

iPi Mocap is included in the special Computer Graphics World’s feature article Motion-Capture Mania. Tweet. May 31st, 2012 by Admin. Active Directory allows Windows network administrators to centrally manage the user accounts, and other resources on a network. Users can use a single username and password to log in to any computer on the Active Directory domain. If you forgot domain administrator password and don’t have any other administrative access, you’ll lose full control over your Active Directory server. Is there any way to reset a lost Active Directory password? Many people may think of some tools such as Offline NT Password and Registry editor, Ophcrack, Hiren’s Boot CD or Ultimate Boot CD.