

The Un-Common Piece of Common Core

The Librarian

► TERI S. LESESNE

Adopted by forty-seven states, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), while not quite a national curriculum, spells out the skills deemed necessary for college and career readiness.

While there is still much debate over the standards and how they were written, the fact that many states have moved forward with their implementation does suggest that librarians need to be familiar with the standards and the roles they might play in their implementation. I urge librarians to read the standards (<http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>) themselves; however, it would be prudent to see how the schools and districts in your area are interpreting them. There are a few ways that librarians can play a vital role in assisting educators, especially those in the English Language Arts field. As curriculum is being written and as lessons are being prepared, librarians must insert themselves as important stakeholders or run the risk of being redundant in CCSS schools.

One of the key components of the CCSS is the inclusion of nonfiction into the English Language Arts program (note: it is also to be integrated within content areas, such as history and science). This quote from the introductory materials aligns the importance of the reading of more nonfiction to student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP):

"In K-5, the Standards follow NAEP's lead in balancing the reading of literature with the reading of informational texts, including texts in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. In accord with NAEP's growing emphasis on informational texts in the higher grades, the Standards demand that a significant amount of reading of informational texts take place in and outside the ELA classroom. Fulfilling the Standards for 6-12 ELA requires much greater attention to a specific category of informational text—literary nonfiction—than has been traditional" (p. 5).

The use of narrative nonfiction, then, is one of the key elements to the creation of curriculum and lessons that address CCSS. Here is where the librarian can be of tremendous support and assistance by providing teachers with developmentally

appropriate, narrative nonfiction for students in grades six through twelve. Pointing teachers to available resources such as the Sibert Award winners (<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/sibertmedal>) and the YALSA Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults (<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/nonfiction>) is a good place to begin. Though the Sibert is intended for children, ALSC includes those up to age fourteen in that consideration. Therefore, some of the Sibert titles such as **Black and White**, **Drawing from Memory**, and **Witches** from the 2012 list are appropriate for middle school, and even some high school, students. All three titles are examples of narrative nonfiction. All of the 2012 list for the YALSA Award fall into the narrative nonfiction category as well: **Sugar Changed the World**, **Wheels of Change**, **Music Was It!**, **BootleG**, and **The Notorious Benedict Arnold** should find their way into the hands of English teachers, too. Direct teachers to other resources along with these lists.

Each year, the Children's Book Council (<http://www.cbcbooks.org/>) publishes two lists containing outstanding nonfiction selections. Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People (<http://www.cbcbooks.org/readinglists.php?page=notsocialstudies>) and Outstanding Science Trade Books for Students (<http://www.cbcbooks.org/readinglists.php?page=outstandingscience>) are developed

with the assistance of experts in the field. Past lists are available on the websites indicated. Not all books listed will be narrative nonfiction—or even nonfiction—so be certain to highlight those titles that meet that requirement. Additionally, the National Council of Teachers of English annually awards nonfiction with the Orbis Pictus list (<http://www.ncte.org/awards/orbispictus>). Titles such as **Amelia Lost** and **Heart and Soul** would certainly suit readers searching for narrative nonfiction.

Simply leading teachers to lists of potential titles is not enough if librarians want to be key players in CCSS. Teachers will also be

There are a few ways that librarians can play a vital role in assisting educators, especially those in the English Language Arts field.

As curriculum is being written and as lessons are being prepared, librarians must insert themselves as important stakeholders or run the risk of being redundant in CCSS schools.
