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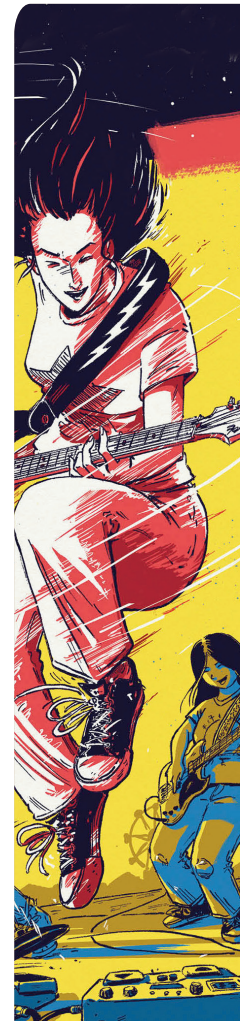
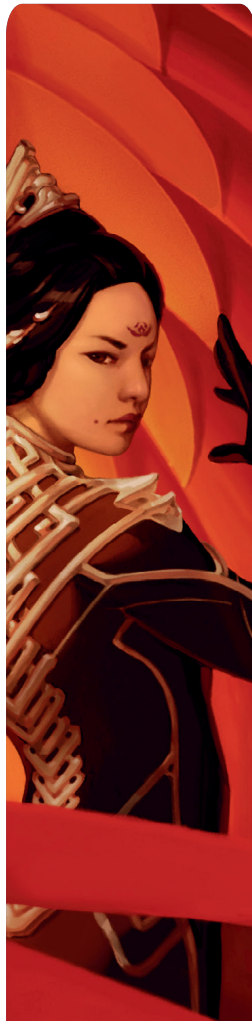
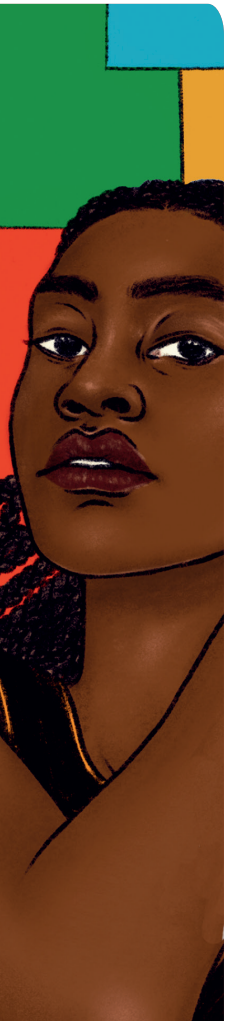
Education



High School Collections Grade 11 and 12

— A HANDBOOK FOR EDUCATORS BY —

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About the Creators



Lorena Germán is a nationally awarded middle and high school anti-bias and anti-racist educator, featured in *The New York Times*, NPR, PBS, and more. She published *The Anti Racist Teacher: Reading Instruction Workbook*, and *Textured Teaching: A Framework for Culturally Sustaining Practices*. She's co-founder of #DisruptTexts and Multicultural Classroom.



Cicely Lewis is an educator and author of *Focus on Civil Rights Sit-ins (History in Pictures)*, (Lerner Publications, 2022). Her award-winning Read Woke challenge won the MAE Award for Best Literature Program for Teens and she was named the 2020 *School Library Journal* Librarian of the Year. When she is not reading, you can find Cicely writing her bimonthly column in *School Library Journal* where she shares her book recommendations.



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Julia E. Torres is a librarian and veteran language arts teacher in Denver, Colorado. She was a 2020 *Library Journal* Mover and Shaker and recipient of the Colorado NCTE Affiliate's 2020 Secondary Educator of Excellence Award. Julia is a teen programs administrator in a public library system in Colorado and co-author of *Liven Up Your Library: Design Engaging and Inclusive Programs for Tweens and Teens* (International Society for Technology in Education, 2022).



Ronell Whitaker is a high school English curriculum director in Chicagoland with over fifteen years of experience and is a champion for comics in the classroom. He is a founding member of the Lit-X teacher cohort. Ronell believes in comics, and he likes to think that comics believe in him.

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Introduction

Note to Teacher

When I ask my students, “What is your favorite book of all time?” I am often met with blank stares or giggles and then replies of “*Captain Underpants?!?*” Reading choice and access to classroom libraries frequently disappear after middle school as students enter high school. High school students are not given the same opportunity to read high-interest novels as they once were. If independent reading is incorporated into the curriculum, it is typically accompanied by dense reading logs, pop quizzes, and dialectical journals. There simply isn’t much “reading for fun” during high school. The Penguin Random House High School Collections aim to change the paradigm and to support choice and access, and provide students the opportunity to read relevant, high-interest, diverse texts and graphic novels. The authors of this guide firmly believe that classroom libraries are at the heart of any curriculum and offer a transformative and powerful resource for both students and educators alike.

As educators, we know the value of literacy and the importance of creating a reading culture for students. However, many of our students do not see themselves as readers due, in no small part, to the books they are required to read books of little interest or relevance.

Teachers must go beyond the literary canon and incorporate a wide range of culturally responsive texts that represent different experiences, characters, and culture, including those often marginalized, and connect students with the power of literacy. These collections provide educators with the books and resources to diversify and enrich reading environments for all students.

Why Independent and Choice Reading?

“I liked that there were many options to choose from and that we could choose a book that we want and read at our own pace, it wasn’t forced, and it made reading more enjoyable.”

— Sammar, eleventh-grade student

Sammar and her classmates were surveyed at the end of the school year about their choice reading experience. Her testimonial reflects two key foundations of the collections and accompanying educator handbook: **access** and **choice**. When students are given a number of texts to browse and select from, they are more likely to find one that interests them. Creating a reading culture in your classroom is a collaborative effort. Teachers should share their passion for reading, get to know their students’ interests, and offer recommendations that can help connect students to books they are likely to engage in and enjoy.

In addition to anecdotal evidence, there is much research on student choice that points to its multivalent impact and importance: “[W]hen students shifted from assigned reading to choice reading, there was ‘increased reading volume, a reduction in students failing the state test, and changes in peer relationships, self-regulation, and conceptions of self.’”¹

In 2004, Dr. S. Jay Samuels and Dr. Yi-Chen Wu conducted a scientific research study that corroborated the findings of Richard C. Anderson, Paul T. Wilson, and Linda G. Fielding,² concluding that the more time students spend reading, the higher their achievement compared to a control group.

TABLE 1

Variation in amount of Independent Reading

Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988³

Minutes a Day	Words a Year	Percentile Rank for Reading Volume
67.3	4,733,000	98th
33.4	2,375,000	90th
16.9	1,168,000	70th
9.2	601,000	50th
4.3	251,000	30th
1.0	51,000	10th
0		2nd

Collectively, the research and our own work has shown the transformative power of choice reading and classroom libraries. Classrooms that provide time for students to freely select and read books of high interest, focus on fostering and affirming students' reader identities, and include a large selection of diverse stories at varying levels will increase overall engagement, improve academic performance, and build lifelong learners ready to participate in an ever-changing and demanding world.

Ways to Implement Independent and Choice Reading:

Let's be real, it can be challenging to make the most out of a fifty-minute class period. Too often, performance and knowledge building are over-emphasized in class, as opposed to a focus on process. As stated earlier, quite simply, the more time students spend reading, the better readers they become. Providing time for independent reading is one of the best ways to ramp up proficiency and develop students' sense of themselves as readers and learners. Every academic year should have at least one independent reading unit (if not more).

Here are a few suggestions to get started.

Book Tastings:

Book tastings are a great way to guide students in deciding which book to choose and what influences go into making that choice.

At the beginning of the unit, it is important that students pick books they are interested in reading. You can accomplish this by hosting a book tasting in your classroom.

Place the books on tables or desks and allow students to "taste" the books by completing the following four steps:

1. React to the cover of the book. What do you think the book will be about?
2. Read the summary on the jacket flap or back of the book. Additionally, you can make available to students (or have them research) what book critics have said about the book, reader reviews (Goodreads or online booksellers), and social media (such as TikTok and Reddit).
3. Read the first two pages of the book.
4. On a scale of one to ten, rate the book on how likely you want to read more.

After completing these steps, students will list their top three books and select one of the books as their reading selection.

Have students write down why they picked the book and then later, after they've read the book, see if the reading experience met, exceeded, or fell short of their expectations. Would they recommend the book to their peers?

Literature Circles

Literature circles are a very popular classroom strategy, and for good reason. A great alternative to the whole-class read, "lit circles" focus on choice. It allows students to find authentic and meaningful ways to engage with texts. Lit circles' emphasis on student-led instruction is an important way for students to express themselves, harness their unique skills, and build connections with one another.

If students are reading the same novel at the same time, suggest that they meet weekly together to discuss their reading. The group, or lit circle, decides how many pages they want to read by the next meeting. Typically, there are roles (e.g., questioner, summarizer) assigned to group members with specific writing responsibilities before the meeting. When the group comes together to meet, they share their writing and discuss.

Typical Member Roles:

- **Discussion Director/Questioner** – Develops a list of open-ended questions about the reading to pose to the group.
- **Literary Luminary** – Selects important quotes from the assigned reading to discuss.
- **Vocabulary Enricher** – Jots down unfamiliar vocabulary words, defines them, and explains their significance to that portion of the text.
- **Summarizer** – Creates a short summary of the reading and its key points.

If there are less or more members in groups, roles can be removed, or additional ones can be created/duplicated.

At the very first meeting, the teacher should instruct students to choose a role from above. Each role has a corresponding handout that the student completes for homework before the next meeting. There are many versions of these handouts available online for free. Once students choose roles, they should discuss and decide how much they will read by their next meeting. Their work on the handouts should correspond to the assigned reading. The cycle repeats each week until students complete their novels.

How to Use the Collections and Thematic Guides

The Penguin Random House High School Collections for ninth and tenth grade are intended to be an exploration of a wide array of voices all addressing the human condition from a variety of vantage points. Though there have been tens of thousands of books written, including books especially for young people, what students are assigned in class remains limited to a very narrow set of titles. Books like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *1984*, and *The Catcher in the Rye* reflect the restrictive authority of the literary canon. One of the most valuable and enduring gifts we can give a young person is the opportunity to develop a reader identity through the power of reading choice.

These curated collections have been assembled to not only broaden the selection for all students, but also to better reflect their lived realities and interests, constructed as they are around unifying themes including belonging, identity, and resiliency.

Suggested activities, thematic connections, and essential questions are provided along with pedagogical resources to help educators incorporate the themes into their curriculum/ELA block.

We purposefully included three copies of each title, so students can read the same text, but even students who read different titles still should be able to connect with one another and share their collective reading experiences, based on the unifying themes of the collections. Students should be encouraged to explore the books as their curiosity leads them. We also suggest that educators use these collections as an opportunity to read and learn alongside your students to help develop your classroom reading culture.

Educators may find these collections useful as part of a professional learning community or book club to engage colleagues in deepening their understanding of the topics and to better

prepare them for “unpacking” the texts with students.

Inclusivity is central to the compilation of these collections. We sought to create synergy amongst the collections and themes to represent the ever-changing landscape of our nation. As a multicultural group of authors with unique experiences and backgrounds, we were also focused on creating a guide that welcomes educators and invites readers to experience the joy and empowerment of reading. In that spirit, we have thoughtfully curated this collection and accompanying guides to be representative of the diversity we have in our schools, including neurodivergent and multilingual learners.

Ultimately, educators can use these unique, engaging collections to cultivate a classroom of care to better reflect and reach their students for academic and lifelong success. Educational psychology professor DeLeon Gray impactfully states, “that when students feel a sense of belonging in the classroom, it can increase their educational success and motivational outcomes in multiple ways. Teachers can help create this feeling of belonging by building connections between classroom and community.”⁴

Through literacy that empowers young people, we can build a more just society. In order to be inspired to feel like our changes matter, it is important to feel that we have voice and choice. One of the most emblematic shifts of the past two decades in education has been the shift toward more culturally responsive and sustaining education. When we work to respond to a student’s sense of belonging (or lack thereof) through literacy education, we show them they matter and help them develop a sense of community.

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Collection 3:**Great Power & Great Responsibility: The Diverse Hero's Journey**

By Morgan Taylor

Overview

“You enter the forest
at the darkest point,
where there is no path.

Where there is a way or path,
it is someone else's path.

You are not on your own path.

If you follow someone else's way,
you are not going to realize
your potential.”

—Joseph Campbell, *The Hero's Journey:
Joseph Campbell on His Life and Work*¹

Senior year marks the end of high school and students' entry into adulthood and society. It is a time where young adults struggle with pursuing their own dreams and aspirations, while facing entry into adult spaces that often oppressively demand conformity and self-sacrifice. The hero's journey archetype parallels twelfth graders' own path to self-discovery and transformation beyond the classroom walls. This collection will allow students to follow heroic characters, while reflecting on their own journey into the unknown.

Pre-Reading and Background Building

Joseph Campbell first introduced the term “hero’s journey” in 1949 to describe the monomyth that acts as the common foundation of countless stories since the beginning of storytelling. Campbell described it in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*: “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.”²

Campbell’s original work outlines seventeen stages of the monomyth. Inspired by Campbell’s stages, Hollywood Development Executive Christopher Vogler reimagined the monomyth in twelve distinct stages in his book *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*.³ While Campbell’s framework and theory guides my teaching of the hero’s journey, I prefer to use Vogler’s twelve steps as they are presented in more student-friendly language and commonly used when studying the monomyth in the secondary classroom.

Scan the QR code on this page to access the article “The Hero’s Journey” by Zachary Hambry. The short text briefly describes twelve stages and provides relatable examples to modern stories. Ask students to read and annotate the article, then refer back to it in their thinking and writing while reading the texts.



The hero’s journey archetype is often taught alongside epics, like Homer’s *The Odyssey*, in earlier grades. When compiling this collection, I thematically connected the genre to twelfth-grade students’ common experiences of facing the unknown and great responsibility as high school ends.

Students will likely be familiar with hero’s journey stories, from J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series to culturally iconic pop films, such as *Star Wars* and Disney’s *The Lion King*. This familiarity with the genre provides a natural point of engagement for students. After reviewing the stages of the hero’s journey, have students reflect upon their own life stories as “hero’s journeys” and consider what pivotal moments in their lives fit the twelve stages of the hero’s journey. Where have they been their own heroes? How have their own mentors been heroes? What difficult choices have faced them in their journeys? And how might they deal with the burden of personal responsibilities (e.g. succeeding in college, caring for family members, etc.) as they graduate high school?

This mix of literary analysis with personal narrative writing and self-reflection exemplifies the power of culturally responsive teaching, that is “teaching that draws on the cultural backgrounds and knowledge of students as assets in the classroom.”⁴ As noted in a 2016 synthesis of research on culturally responsive teaching:

Culturally responsive teaching and similar approaches to teaching also increased students’ motivation, interest in content, and the perception of themselves as capable students, among other benefits, the study found. Brittany Aronson, an associate professor in educational leadership at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and a co-author of the study, said whenever teachers drew direct connections between classroom lessons and students’ experiences outside of school, students could see greater value in the academic content as it applies to the real world. Such work helps students see themselves as knowledge producers and researchers.⁵

Students should be able to identify and analyze the hero's journey in all of the novels in this collection, and practice textual analysis using evidence. For twelfth-grade students moving onto college-level writing, they can also practice multipage analytical writing, composing compelling thesis statements, and independent research to supplement their arguments.

Essential Questions

1. How can our own life stories be viewed as heroes' journeys?
2. What makes a character a hero?
3. Do the qualities of heroes change over time? Do different cultures value different types of heroic qualities and journeys?
4. How can heroes be used to manipulate and exploit ideals and objectives?
5. What are the elements of Joseph Campbell's hero's journey, and how and why do modern stories continue to reflect the archetype?

Anchor Texts

Title	Author
<i>Watchmen</i>	Alan Moore
<i>Enrique's Journey (Young Adult Version)</i>	Sonia Nazario
<i>Skin of the Sea</i>	Natasha Bowen
<i>Six Crimson Cranes</i>	Elizabeth Lim
<i>The Hobbit (Graphic Novel)</i>	J.R.R. Tolkien, David Wenzel
<i>The Iliad</i>	Homer

As twelfth graders move to college-level reading and writing, they should be challenged with higher-language texts, such as Homer's *The Iliad* and J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. Both classics give students practice with complex texts that they might encounter in a literature or composition course. In this collection, the graphic novel version of *The Hobbit* and the young-adult version of *Enrique's Journey* are included, but can easily be switched out for their original formats to challenge advanced readers.

The inclusion of diverse multicultural stories highlights the universality and importance of the hero's journey across the globe. Science-fiction writer Octavia E. Butler's 1979 novel, *Kindred*, incorporates historical fiction in the compelling story of a contemporary Black woman who

travels back and forth through time to the antebellum South. It is a unique monomyth that plays off of slave narratives, while combining two genres.

Likewise, *Enrique's Journey* presents the struggles of Central American immigrants who risk everything to come to the United States for a better life. Nazario's investigative journalism is told through the story of Enrique, an unaccompanied minor who travels at great peril from Honduras to the United States to find his mother. The poignancy and suspense of the journey, centered around immigration, will likely be popular with students, particularly English language learners who may identify with Enrique and his mother's journey to the United States.

Elizabeth Lim's *Six Crimson Cranes* is a fantastical East Asian monomyth that focuses on a heroine's struggles. Female protagonists are uncommon in the hero's journey narratives, so it is particularly valuable especially for female students to see themselves as heroes and champions.

Alan Moore's graphic novel *Watchmen* takes place in an alternate 1985 United States in which the United States won the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal was never exposed. In this world, costumed vigilantes exist but are outlawed. When one of the core vigilantes is mysteriously murdered, others come together to investigate the death. It is a unique and raw take on the monomyth. It is also incredibly influential in the modern graphic novel genre. The illustrations, written material, historical allusions, and characters are truly a work of art that is a valuable addition to any classroom library. It does contain very mature content and should be presented to students with caution.

Project/Lesson Ideas

Narrative

After reading "The Hero's Journey" by Zachary Hamby, consider the structure and twelve stages of the monomyth. Choose at least three of the stages and connect them to your own life. Describe a moment in your life that fits the defining characteristics of the stage. For example, who is a mentor that has made a significant impact on your journey to achieve your goals and aspirations? (Refer to stage four: meeting with the mentor.) Be sure to explain and elaborate on how those stages reflect your own hero's journey.

Creative Writing

After studying Joseph Campbell's hero's journey structure, create your own heroic story that follows the model. Be sure to include the key elements of the monomyth and get creative!

Argument & Synthesis

In addition to the book you read, choose an additional hero's journey story (can be a movie or novel) and compare and contrast the two heroes. Take a position on which hero is the ultimate hero. Explain and support your position with evidence from the two texts.

Compare and Contrast

Partner with someone in the class who has read a different book from this collection. Compare and contrast the two heroes. Take a position on which hero is the ultimate hero. Explain and support your position with evidence from the two texts.

Research

Choose a hero's journey story from a particular culture. Research how the culture chooses to portray the hero. What is revealed about the culture's values, storytelling components, and heroes?

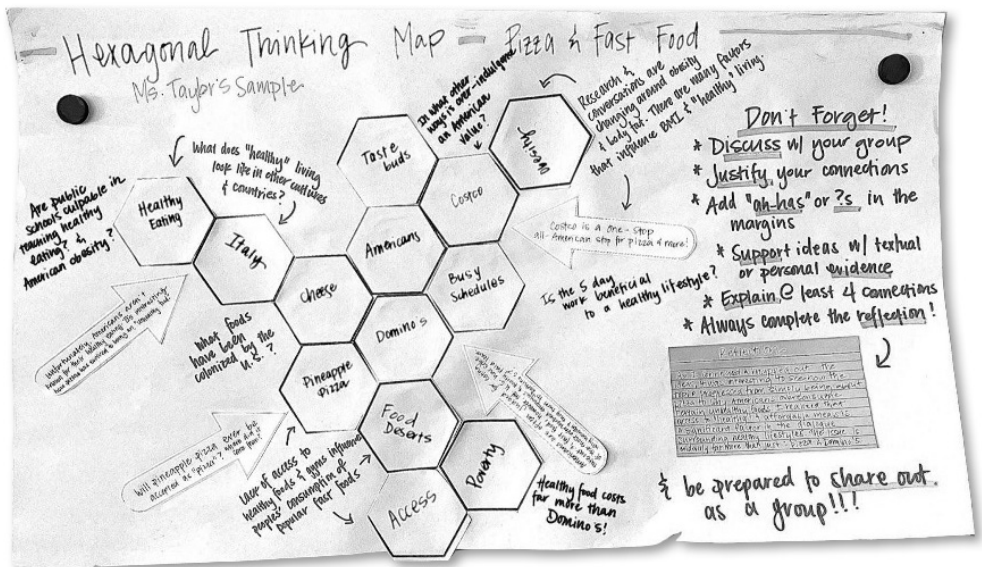
Visual Presentation

Using an online presentation software, such as ThingLink (which easily embeds hyperlinks into a presentation) or Google Slides, students will create a visual presentation that identifies and illustrates each stage of the hero's journey. Students can present their work in small groups or to the entire class as the culminating assessment.

Hexagonal Thinking

Hexagonal thinking⁶ has recently entered the classroom, though it has been used in the business world for many years. Hexagonal thinking involves students working in small groups to make connections to ideas. Even if students are reading different novels from the collection, they can still create and make connections to thematic ideas. For example, students can connect characteristics of the hero's journey using the activity. Each group receives hexagons that are blank or include ideas prewritten by the teacher. Students work together to connect the hexagons or ideas together; all hexagons must be touching. As they make connections, they must justify the links. Teachers can add an additional writing assignment in which individual students or groups write an explanation for their connections. Personally, I like to always have the groups present their work to the class, as the

"hexagons" and connections will be vastly different. This activity is applicable to all grade levels and subjects, and is excellent for synthesis and argumentative writing. This activity is also excellent for cross-subject connections and synthesizing big ideas from other texts students have read. See an example below.



The Larger Conversation

“Multicultural literature serves as a powerful tool in enabling students to gain a better understanding of both their own culture and the cultures of others. Through this deeper knowledge, relationships can be strengthened, bridging the gap between students from diverse cultural backgrounds.”

—Marianne Grasso, “The importance of multicultural literature”⁷

When educators teach traditional archetypes and literary classic genres, it remains imperative to utilize multicultural texts in the classroom. Traditional thematic units, like Joseph Campbell’s hero’s journey, hold more power and relevance when paired with texts in which students can see themselves or grant them perspectives into other diverse cultures.

In a world full of turmoil, political dissonance, and one that is still recovering from a global pandemic, students deserve joyful and meaningful educational experiences. The novels in this collection allow students to dream, imagine, and, most significantly, view themselves as their own heroes ready to take on the world.

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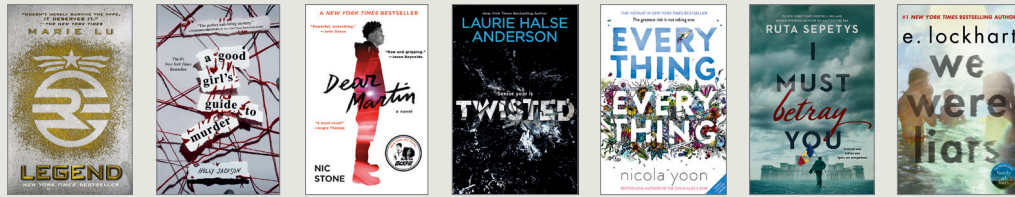
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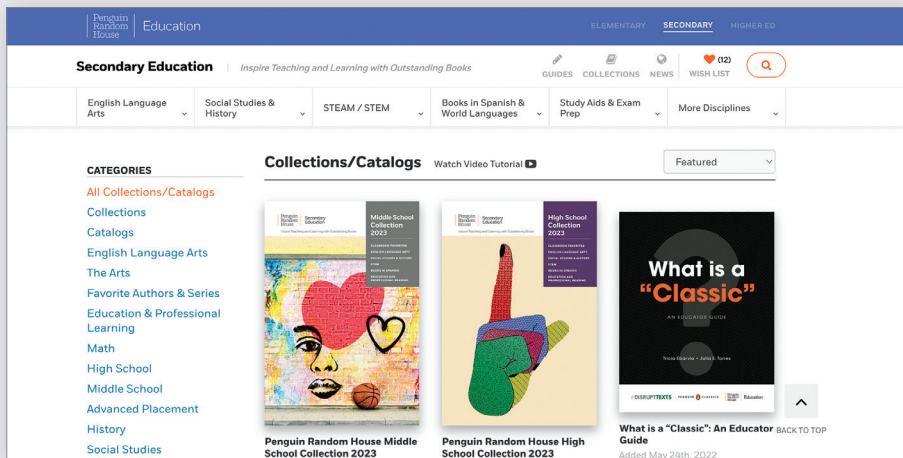
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