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## **Cultivating Awareness and the Importance of Engaging High School Students in Food Justice through Literary Exploration**

Yeymi Rivera

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**Cultivating Awareness and the Importance of  
Engaging High School students in Food Justice  
through Literary Exploration**

Yeymi Rivera

Senior Capstone

English Subject Matter Preparation

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School of Humanities and Communications

Spring 2024

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## Senior Capstone Proposal

1. Yeymi Rivera, Humanities and Communication with a concentration in English Subject Matter Preparation (ESMP)
2. How can literature be used to teach children about social justice and food inequality while encouraging critical thinking and raising awareness of structural injustices? Brief Explanation: I decided to concentrate on the relationship between food and social justice in literature because it offers a distinctive and approachable method to speak about difficult social topics inside the school curriculum. Literary texts can offer rich narratives that may captivate students' attention and encourage critical thought on issues such as food security, sustainability, and access to food. Students can improve their critical thinking skills and comprehension of societal injustices.
3. Alignment: My Project aligns with the theme of course, Food for Thought. My topic expresses utilizing literature as a means to address social justice concerns among high school students. It connects to the theme as it will demonstrate how powerful and significant literature can symbolize and highlight the glaring differences between the community in resources and food. Integrating different types of literary works and articles into the curriculum to have students think critically about the inequities that lead to food poverty or the awareness around it. Teaching challenging subjects like food security is vital to include in the high school educational curriculum. It is critically important for reasons such as understanding real-world relevance, health/well-being, and social justice.
4. Purpose: The primary purpose of this proposal/project is to educate students about social injustice, particularly regarding food security and access, through the exploration of

literature. By utilizing literary texts for learning, the project aims to foster empathy, critical thinking, and awareness of structural inequities in society.

5. Capstone Title: Cultivating Awareness and the Importance of engaging High School students in Food Justice through Literary Exploration
6. Working Summary: In this capstone research paper, I plan to teach food security through literature and high school because it encourages critical thinking by getting students to consider complex problems on access to food. Through engagement with diverse texts, students can develop empathy and awareness of the human impact of food and security. Literature also encourages students to think critically about the moral and ethical issues related to the production, distribution, and consumption of food, enabling them to make moral decisions and promote ethical eating habits. Additionally, examining literary topics related to food security offers valuable perspectives on the social, historical, and cultural elements that influence food systems.
7. Sources: I will read novels such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and Rex Ogle's *Free Lunch* along with the film, "A Place at the Table"; these will be my primary sources. For my secondary resources, I plan to use peer-reviewed articles. I will use secondary sources to explain and further explore the relationship between poverty and food insecurity as well as how it affects those who are food insecure. I will also explain how banning books speaking about race, gender, and culture may affect students.
8. Next Steps: To meet my project expectations, I will need to work diligently on my project weekly and consistently, I will focus on specific things I need to research and write by the week to pace myself to avoid burnout or overthinking my mind. Creating an outline of the subjects I will be discussing to make an organized paper. Along with preparing a

senior capstone project, I will create a unit plan to serve as a classroom for the research findings.

9. Timeline:

- Draft Proposal: 02/26/2024
- Draft Project Title & Abstract : 03/27/2024
- Rough Draft: 04/12/2024
- Rough Draft Revised: 04/30/2024
- Final Draft: Senior Project Essay: 05/10/2024
- Final Draft:Poster: 05/10/2024
- Final after revisions: 05/17/2024

## Abstract

To address social justice concerns, this essay explores the relationship between literature and food justice. Primarily, concentrating on utilizing literature as a teaching tool in the high school curriculum to focus on food inequalities. The main goal is to educate students and spread awareness of social injustice, encourage critical thinking, and help them to comprehend the concepts of food security and food access. Comparative narratives are expressed through literary works that captivate a large audience and make people think about difficult issues like food access, food security, food insecurity, and food deserts. In addition, I will design a lesson plan for high school students that will use literary analysis to help them comprehend food inequality and how it is depicted in society.

## Introduction

In my early years, I had trouble reading and didn't think literature was all that fascinating or fun. Feeling overwhelmed by the intricacy of texts and reluctant to seek assistance for fear of coming across as incompetent. I continued to struggle with reading when teachers would belittle me for not reading at the required level in addition to other subjects. Their candid statements in class greatly wounded my self-esteem. I never would have had the opportunity, support, or motivation to improve my skills until a reading competition occurred in middle school. I was initially motivated to read a million words to be able to earn extra credit for my classes. However, as I began reading I discovered a newfound passion for reading. This realization not only increased my desire to read more books, but it also motivated me to practice writing and set higher goals for myself. I was able to use writing and reading to express myself and discover my voice. Literature gave me the ability to travel to different worlds and meet many different characters enabling me to grow as a person. Books gave me the possibility to live a thousand lives or to find strength in a very long one. I decided to pursue a career in teaching with an emphasis on English because I have a strong interest in writing and literature. Being a first-generation Latina, I empathize with the difficulties adolescents and children encounter in seeking assistance and I am committed to creating an inclusive learning environment where everyone's perspectives are respected and heard.

As I progressed in my academic career, my professors at California State University Monterey Bay, and Hartnell College exposed me to a wide range of fascinating books, articles, and other materials on social problems. Narratives pertaining to civil and social rights deeply resonated with me, providing perspectives on actual events and circumstances while also inciting

introspection. But even as much as I appreciated these stories, I couldn't help but feel frustrated and angry about how inequalities still exist in our society. Justice-related topics should be given top priority and the educational system, in my opinion, as they are not only pertinent but also necessary for students to understand that their schools do listen to them and care about them. Students may dive further into the complexities of societal issues and gain a better understanding of the diverse perspectives expressed in literature. It is possible and essential to learn about these social issues in the educational system and include them in the curriculum. Students will learn about real-world problems in addition to academic subjects, which may inspire them to look into and pursue careers in areas of interest. Motivating students to change the world in any job path they choose. I will discuss the need to expose students to difficult narratives, integrating literature that focuses on the complex subject of food justice in the curriculum and the neglect of social problem literature texts in classrooms in this essay.

### Background Information

The social, economic, and environmental issues that have an impact on communities throughout the country are closely linked to the concept of food justice. By observing the primary causes and effects of food justice, students may get an understanding of the systemic injustices that exist in everyday life. Since literature reflects society, it is imperative that challenging issues and topics be included in the curriculum. It illuminates urgent problems facing our neighborhood as well as the real-life experiences of numerous people from various cultural and ethnic origins. Including discussions about difficult topics through literary works within classroom settings such as food justice allows students the chance to explore the realities of marginalized communities. Literature that focuses on narratives related to food experiences such as poverty and hunger provides perspectives on the impact of systemic justice that readers may

not be able to relate to. Analyzing the struggles that characters have accessing nutritious meals helps students comprehend the difficulty in being able to feed themselves or family every day. Additionally, by observing how factors such as class, race, gender, and location create an influence on people's access to food resources, students will be able to recognize systemic oppression and privilege. “Environmental injustice is systemic racism with direct health consequences. Racially segregated communities have often experienced the damaging health effects of environmental injustice,”(Braveman, Arkin, Proctor, Kauh, Holm, 2022, para 13). Systemic injustices benefit some players while disadvantaging others. For example, imagine if there was a race and everyone started on different points, with some closer to the finish line than others. Due to the differences in placement, the race is unfair and unjust even if the rules of this race were followed. Starting at the same time has nothing to do with how beneficial their location is. Another example would be when businesses decide to build power plants and hazardous waste disposals near communities of poor or color. Systemic injustices are a structure within society that makes it difficult for certain groups to succeed or survive in life.

It is important to understand what exactly the terms’ food justice, food access, food deserts, and food insecurity mean to be able to fully grasp how complex and dire the issue is to begin addressing it. These terms emerge from the historical context of inequity and social injustices, the terms shed light on the barriers’ individuals face when attempting to access essential items such as basic needs. “The emerging concept of ‘food justice’ describes a social movement and a set of principles. It aligns with the goals of social justice, demanding recognition of human rights...Its emergence also takes into account the global recognition that the food system is symbiotically linked to public health,”(Murray, Gale, Adams, Dalton). Food justice is expressed as “the belief that healthy food is a human right, so everyone has an inherent

right to access healthy, fresh food. The concept of food justice aligns itself with the goals of social justice, which demand recognition of human rights, equal opportunity, and fair treatment” (Luna, Davila, Reynoso-Morrois). Food justice emphasizes the people's right to healthy food at an affordable price. It encompasses addressing systematic issues that contribute to unequal access to food resources. Food justice entails questioning and addressing access to healthy, nutritious, culturally appropriate food.

Food access indicates the ability of individuals are able to obtain food. It includes factors such as the proximity of grocery markets, farmers’ markets, travel/transportation, affordability, and the availability of nutritious food options. Food accessibility is to ensure that every individual is able to obtain and eat healthy food, regardless of their class or location. “Food access refers to the stable availability of nourishing, affordable, and suitable foods...Secure food access means not only enough food but consistent access to food that is nutritious, affordable, appealing, and practical for consumers”(Stray Dog Institute, para 6). The article, “Access to Affordable and nutritious food”, mentions that in urban neighborhoods where food access is restricted, there are high levels of racial segregation and income inequality. Additionally, demographics will also play a role in determining food access due to socioeconomic differences. Transportation infrastructures are the main defining characteristics for food access due to the distance in gaining nutritious food options. Individuals who live in areas with limited access to food options cause them to rely on the grocery stores that they have. These options may or may not carry all the foods that are needed to have a healthy diet and if so prices will most likely be expensive.

Areas with limited access to fresh, nutritious food are called Food deserts. “Food deserts, in contrast, are not naturally occurring,” (Sevilla, 2021, para 5.). There are many reasons why

food deserts may happen, including but not limited: to geographic isolation, oppression, economic disinvestment, and systemic racism. Food deserts are also connected to food access as it occurs due to the lack of nearby grocery stores; within close distance. This inequality of food can lead to high rates of diet-related issues such as diabetes, obesity, malnutrition, cardiovascular disease, and even depression from the anxiety of food insecurity. Possible solutions to address food deserts are initiatives to focus primarily on locations that lack healthy foods, community gardens, farmers' markets, or food markets that are mobile. The article, "Creating The Healthiest Nation: Food Justice" expresses that in 2017, 12.8% of United States citizens lived in low-income areas classified as food deserts. Food deserts often don't take into account "food mirages," where there are areas where purchasing food is too expensive for the neighborhood, causing them to shop outside of the location for food. This adds more difficulty to these low-income areas as money is sensitive and very important. "Most importantly, the term food desert does not address the primary factor driving food insecurity: financial insecurity" (Creating The Healthiest Food: Food Justice, para.15). The underlying root of the cause of food deserts are the economic disparities. Highlighting the need for comprehensive solutions that can address the need for food accessibility and the inequalities of access to affordable nutritious food.

On the other hand, food insecurity is the absence of reliable access to sufficient food for individuals to lead an active and healthy life. Though it is similar to food access, they are both different. Food access refers to the availability of food within the area and food insecurity addresses the ability of an individual to consistently access and afford food. "Food insecurity is a broader concept, on which incorporates the physical sensation of hunger as well as anxiety that food budgets are inadequate, the experience of running out of food without money to buy more,"(Seligman, para 1). Food insecurity affects many people from different backgrounds.

Poverty, unemployment, and inadequate social safety nets drive this issue, failing to provide sufficient support to individuals and communities that need fundamental necessities, making them a luxury instead. Food insecurity has many different causes that are interconnected. Such as financial strain from low wages, the cost of housing, and employment uncertainty, making it difficult to think of implicating an adequate diet.

Hunger is present in and outside of the United States, whether or not one may see it. A prime example of how flawed the food support system is would be a woman named Barbie Izquierdo in the documentary, *A Place at the Table*. She initially was reliant on public assistance due to unemployment. Within the documentary it is stated, “Food Stamps eligibility is based on total household income. To qualify, the income for a family of 3 cannot exceed \$24,000 per year,”(Silverbush, *A Place At the Table*). Barbie shares that previously she was denied assistance because she was making \$9 an hour at her job, which is \$2 over the income limit. Even when she was on food stamps due to losing her job, they would typically last about 3 weeks out of the month. Barbie would also have to travel an hour by bus to reach a competent grocery store. Proximity to grocery store options plays a crucial role in shaping one’s eating choices and behaviors. Barbie would have to meticulously portion her food and budget her money in order to provide for her children and herself until the next month. For individuals who are solely living on food stamps, each day is a battle to stretch limited resources, such as having to make difficult choices and sacrifices between affordability and health. A sad reality is that healthier food options are usually out of reach due to their high cost, leaving cheaper and less nutritious alternatives to be the only livable choice amongst other challenges. It is shown toward the end of the documentary that Barbie was able to secure a job. But, due to her increased income, she is not qualified for subsidized child care or food stamps. Her children can no longer eat breakfast or

lunch at daycare as a result. Barbie's family clearly needs food stamps and subsidized child care, so the sudden loss of these benefits emphasizes how important public assistance programs are. This emphasizes the difficulties' people face while switching from programs to financial stability. The situation makes one reflect the necessity for a more balanced approach to public aid, guaranteeing that people are allowed adequate time to adjust to living successfully without support. Being given enough time to swim rather than floating only to sink again. Dr. Mariana Chilton expresses, "We have to put a system in place where people get and have enough time to get themselves back on their feet. It's not like you get a full-time job, and the next month you're off of food stamps, and all is well. It doesn't happen that way" (Chilton, *A Place At The Table*). To suddenly deprive someone of these programs immediately upon obtaining a job is both unrealistic and impractical. This approach acknowledges the challenging realities that individuals go through that should require ongoing support.

Transitioning from the hardships portrayed in Barbie's story in the documentary, *A Place At The Table*, we can discover the beginnings of an innovative project aimed at tackling comparable problems with hunger and poverty. "The National School Lunch Program provided reduced-price, but not free lunches for poor children, and the National School Breakfast Program was limited to a few rural schools,"(Pein. para 2). The Black Panthers launched the Free Breakfast Program at St. Augustine Church in Oakland in January 1969. It was created to help underprivileged students who struggled to learn due to being hungry before and after school. The Black Panthers were able to express how hunger was the result of the inequitable distribution of resources and abuse of power. Due to the considerable attention the Black Panther Free Breakfast program had, it drew the attention of Congress to significantly raise funding for the National School Lunch Program. Guaranteeing students from low-income families will get free meals in

school. However, these programs could be better improved as there is still a hunger problem affecting both families and individuals.”In 2020, for example, 928 million people — 12 percent of the world’s population— were ‘severely’ food insecure...Another 155 million people were in a crisis situation in terms of their access to food, experiencing acute food insecurity, which can include malnutrition, starvation or famine”(Caldwell, para 5-6). Kimberly Virguez describes her family’s difficulty in the article, “Food Security: Can the global decline be reversed?” adding that she and her husband often sacrifice meals to ensure her two sons have enough to eat. Another mother, Chanchal Devi mentions, “I can’t sleep at night. I’m so tired of worrying about arranging the next meal,”(Caldwell, para 3). The strain that parents experience with food poverty emphasizes the critical conditions of underprivileged families. Families or individuals who live in less-than-desirable conditions may go without food for more than a day or more. These food programs aid families that are living in food deserts or food insecurity to feed their children. Families in need can greatly benefit from food drives and contributions, such as those coordinated by “Feeding America” or nearby churches. These programs relieve families of the burden of worrying about their next meals by allowing them to prioritize expenses like rent or gas. Free school lunch programs also guarantee that kids have access to nutritious meals. This assistance is major because it keeps children from feeling hungry and allows them to concentrate on their schoolwork without being distracted by an empty stomach. Every child has a right to sufficient and healthy food. “Children who participate in school meal programs are more likely to consume fruits, vegetables, and milk at breakfast and lunch, reducing the risk of nutrient deficiencies...,”(Pryor, Ramos-Yamamoto, Saucedo, para 7). Schools that have meal programs are crucial in making sure students eat nutritious meals. All these initiatives work together to give struggling families access to a more secure and stable environment. However, sadly an issue

that arises within these programs is meal debts. Students who do not qualify to receive free school meals accumulate debts (Pryor, Ramos-Yamamoto, Saucedo, para 12). This occurs because they are able to accept food but are unable to pay for it, which puts a financial burden on them and their family. An example of this can be seen in the Oakville Elementary School where students have four times of debt in unpaid meals according to a lunch lady, Pat Bronz. “..this year school officials say meal debt is reaching levels they have never seen. A recent survey from the School Nutrition Association found school districts had more than \$19 million in unpaid meal debt,”(Grumke, para 8). Given the numerous financial difficulties that many students have in their personal lives, it would be beneficial to improve present free food school programs in order to alleviate students' worries about meal debts. Furthermore, why is it not possible to provide all children in schools with free food even in the absence of such worries? This issue emphasizes the necessity for all-encompassing solutions to guarantee that no student faces debt in order to have access to wholesome meals.

Literature currently taught in most school curriculums frequently ignores many backgrounds, cultures, and histories of people of color. Why is that? In today's day and age books are being taken out of school libraries and banned from being taught in classrooms. While it is understandable that parents or students could feel uneasy about certain information, it's imperative to carefully address these concerns and worries thoughtfully. Rather than denying all students educational experiences, efforts should be taken to meet each student's unique needs by using different resources, methods, or teaching strategies. Finding alternatives isn't always practical or equitable. Even while difficult subjects like American history such as World War I or II might cause discomfort, studying these subjects is essential to comprehending the complexity of our global society. In the same way that these challenging subjects are taught, literature that

explores racial, gender, and cultural realities ought to be welcomed rather than prohibited. The article, “What You Need to Know About the Book Bans Sweeping the U.S.” by Colombia University expresses that the majority of books banned address race, gender identity, and sexuality. When children and adolescents encounter characters that resemble them in books it can change their perspectives and influences within their lives. What Individuals see shapes their self-perceptions, and opinions of others and identity. People are deprived of witnessing the full abundance of the future that we may all live in when there is unequal representation. Not only is it censorship to exclude books that discuss the lived realities of varied cultures, but it also perpetuates ignorance and does a disservice to education. By suppressing these stories we deprive students of the opportunity to learn and comprehend the world and its realities. Literature has the ability to humanize difficult subjects and offer a variety of perspectives on topics such as poverty and food injustice. Students are able to see these issues from different angles. By drawing readers into the lives of others, literature has the capacity to evoke emotions and immerse readers in the lives of others. Teachers may find it difficult to bring up this kind of material in classrooms since it shows advantages held by certain individuals. These privileges can be from students or teachers, but it is important to have an honest discussion about these issues because they are real.

Teachers can enhance the learning environment in the classroom by introducing young adult literature books that connect with students who struggle with food security or learning about the struggle in accessing food. These books which discuss food insecurity, provide students with an insight into the challenges families and individuals face to ensure that they have enough to eat. I will discuss young adult literary works that speak about food insecurity. The first novel I am going to discuss is *Free Lunch* by Rex Ogle. It follows the author’s own experience

of poverty and food insecurity through middle school. It describes Rex's struggles navigating food insecurity as a child and growing up in poverty. Rex's family depends on government aid such as free school lunches to be able to get by, but the stigma and shame of being poor burden him. Rex struggles and finds it hard to cope with bullying, hunger, and the fear of being discovered as "poor" by his peers because he attends a wealthy school. Despite Rex's challenges, he is able to find comfort in writing and reading. *Free Lunch* is a moving and inspiring story of resiliency and it illuminates a reality of poverty in America that may be relatable to students or readers.

The novel *Free Lunch* is a great food insecurity book that many students may relate to, the struggles and challenges that Alex goes through with his family and with himself evoke powerful emotions. Ogle gives readers a very personal and honest depiction of the difficulties encountered by people and families trying to put food on the table. What struck me the most about this book was how unavoidable Rex's circumstances were. No miracle fixes. I started crying at one point and then another, at how I was able to see so many friends in Rex's life. Even if the author was able to make me despise a character, he was still able to give them a redeemable quality. "The words hit me like an eighteen-wheeler. How did I not realize this? Every month, I watch Mom write checks. Every month, I double-check her math to make sure every penny is accounted for. Every month, I noticed the money was negative. But I didn't know I didn't understand"(Ogle 155). Ogle vividly expresses the realities of poverty, food insecurity, and worries that he faces as a sixth grader. The novel offers readers a touching glimpse into the life of poverty and food insecurity that many children and adults face in America. He reveals various ways in which poverty and food insecurity exacerbate pre-existing difficulties, making every aspect of life appear more overwhelming and unachievable. I acknowledge that some of the

content may be too heavy or complex for the age range of this book; however, it is crucial to face and deal with these issues head-on since this is a real circumstance with people and families. Hunger is often an indicator of poverty and affects those who are already having difficulty making ends meet. *Free Lunch* highlights the relationship between food insecurity and poverty making readers consider the structural injustices that perpetuate hunger and poverty in communities.

Another food insecurity novel is *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck; this novel is set during the Great Depression in the 1930s. The Banks drove the Joad family and many others from their homes and farms. They decided to travel to California with the promise of a fresh start. *The Grapes of Wrath* is a worthy story to be read, from the viewpoints of these people, their struggles, and the anguish they endured. It is interesting as the story does not appease anyone by downplaying or sugarcoating the bitterness of what they went through and experienced. When I initially read it, I found it to be difficult and boring at times, mostly because I wasn't used to reading classical literature. I had never read any John Steinbeck novels before. Still, in spite of the initial difficulties, it made a lasting impression. The author's use of dialect and rich imagery captivated me. This book's immense power struck me. While traveling they struggled to locate enough food and depended on donations from people to be able to get by. A continual worry over food, emphasized the possibility of starvation as they had to ration their food. I was able to feel their fears and anxieties. Their journey to California, a state where they felt they would get a second shot was filled and met with hostility, violence, and indifference by others. Being treated as if they were different, wanting to associate with *Okies*. *The Grapes of Wrath* sheds light on the structural obstacles that oppressed populations must overcome in order to live.

During my freshman year at Hartnell College, I read both novels and I found them to be relatable as they have touched a number of different areas of my experiences. They reminded me of friends, acquaintances, and strangers who have shared their personal stories in need of advice or looking for someone to lean on for a moment. Being able to relate to the stories of seeing a loved one foregoing meals to ensure the people they cared for were fed left a lasting impact on me. The heartbreak of seeing someone put on a brave smile despite being so undoubtedly tired from overworking. The helplessness that the Joad family and Rex felt during their time of struggle is a feeling that I will always remember. The unvarnished candor with which their hardships were described moved me. I liked that there was no sugarcoating or glossing over the experiences of the characters. It serves as a reminder of the harsh realities many people face. Not acknowledging and neglecting the present struggle only perpetuates the misconception that this hardship does not exist or affect many people.

When I think back on my school experience, I remember starting to feel inadequate and unprepared. I always felt like I was just lucky to be there. This persistent sense of inadequacy frequently led me to believe that I lacked the brains necessary for success. But as I continued through college, I became aware of the flaws in the educational system. It became clear that the curriculum lacked some of the fundamental information and abilities, needed to succeed in life after high school. There was a prioritization of certain pieces of information that almost felt unnecessary.

As I go out on my journey to become an educator, I'm determined to provide my future students, a well-rounded education that goes beyond the requirements of the standard courses within the curriculum. I think it's essential that students are able to acquire, self-awareness, empathy for others, and knowledge of social issues. My goal is to provide a genuine learning

environment, where kids can relate to the curriculum and the teachings within the classroom and a way that makes them feel heard, seen, and respected. I've learned the value of self-validation and perseverance. Though there are times when I feel unsure and doubtful, I always tell myself that I am just where I should be. Even though the unknown is intimidating, it doesn't represent my talents nor does not make me incapable. It's just a chance for learning and growth. I am optimistic that, despite the possible obstacles ahead, I will develop as a teacher and inspire my future students to see their own potential and go on to resiliency.

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# “FREE LUNCH”

DISCUSSING P: FOOD INSECURITY

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Lesson Objective: this module's goal is to use the *Free Lunch* by Rex Ogle to discuss important societal issues, including poverty, abuse, food security, and mental health. Every part of our everyday life is impacted by food, and security, which has an impact on our mental clarity, emotional stability, and physical health. Many people in the world are thankfully able to live comfortably because of their privilege and not worrying about food accessibility. Students will acquire a more sophisticated understanding of the significant influence that food security has on both individuals and communities by exploring its complexities. Students will write in journals or in expressive forms like poetry to share their thoughts, feelings, feelings, and conceptions to the topics of the book. Students will improve their analytical and communication abilities while deepening their understanding of the novel by analyzing a variety of literary methods.

## Questions:

The following questions will be answered within the module:

- What is hunger?
- What is food security?
- What is food access?
- What are food deserts?
- What is food justice?
- What is food insecurity?
- What is poverty?
- How are food, security, and poverty viewed and discussed in *Free Lunch*
- what are the societal issues in the novel and why are they important?
- How can sharing one's experience with poverty and food justice help us better understand the issue?
- Why is it important for people to share their stories about poverty and food insecurity?

Content Domains	Target Goal	Objective	Assessments	Materials
<p>1.1 Textual Analysis  1.2 Textual components  2.1 Writing Composition  2.2 Worksheets  3.1 Creative Writing or Presentation</p>	<p>Literary methods, social concerns, topics and creative writing, presentation/posters</p>	<p>Teacher/students will talk about recurring topics within the book. Students will create journal entries or poems about their experiences and emotions while reading. Students will explore the literary terms to make connections between food insecurity and the book. Students will work together to identify societal concerns within the book that are currently relevant to modern society and provide examples from news outlets or social media.</p>	<p>Students will receive credit for participating and sharing their thoughts from their journals, entries, or poems. Alternatives would be a summarization of their journal entries for privacy but still participation. Students will also receive credit for participating in the discussions and collaborating within groups. Students will be graded on their ability to convey their understanding of the topic. Students will also receive credit for creating journal, entries or poems along with their creative writings.</p>	<p>Bubble map/concept map   Terminology sheet(Food Justice, Food Insecurity, Food Deserts, Food access)   Novel, <i>Free Lunch</i> by Rex Olge   Say, Mean, Matter, Do Worksheet   Journal entries/Poems   Understanding Food Security worksheet</p>

## ➤ Day 1: Exploring Terminology: Preparing to

### Read *Free Lunch*

**Purpose:** Familiarize students with key terms related to food justice such as food insecurity, food access, and food deserts. Students will reflect on their own understanding/definitions of these terms and engage in group discussions to share and refine the terms meanings.

**First activity: Bubble Map/Concept Map:**

- Bubble maps or concept maps will be passed out to the students. For 10 minutes students will write down what food means to them. They can describe how food creates meaning in their own lives or in different communities or in their cultures/others.
- After the 10 minutes, for 5 minutes students will be assigned a partner to share their bubble maps/concept maps. Circle, underline, or highlight similarities and differences between the two.
- After students have shared for 5 minutes, they will be asked to find another partner and share the answers and repeat in seeing similarities and differences in each other's answers.
- After those five minutes have finished, each person will briefly share with the class about their own meetings along with one different similarity they had with another student.

**Second Activity: Question Prompt:**

- For 10 minutes, students will write on a sheet of paper or their computers and answer the following question: Have you ever been worried whether your food would run out before you got money to buy more?

- One student is done writing, the teacher will share their own answers as it will make students more comfortable with sharing. We will share as long as we want to make everyone comfortable. Maximum time of sharing will be 10 minutes.

**Class Assignment:**

- Students will write down the terms and definitions of Food Justice, Food Insecurity, Food Access, and Food Deserts.
  - Food Justice: refers to the idea that all individuals, regardless of their social status or background have the right to access, healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food
  - Food Insecurity: occurs when individuals or households, lack consistent access to enough food for an active healthy lifestyle due to financial strain
  - Food Access: refers to the ability of individuals and communities to obtain in afford nutritious food that meets their dietary needs including physical access to grocery stores; income, affordability, and transportation
  - Food Deserts: areas where residents have limited access to affordable and nutritious food; can be due to lack of grocery markets
  - Food Security: existing when all people at all times have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food
- Will discuss with the class about their new understanding of these definitions along with providing examples.

## ➤ Day 2: Exploring Textual Components:

### Spotting Literary Terms

**Purpose:** Before students have begun to read the novel, they will need to be introduced to various literary devices. It will enable students to understand better the meaning of the novel. Students will be asked to identify a few of these elements throughout the novel, regardless of repetition as it is possible.

**First Activity:** For 10 minutes students will be placed in a group of 4 and given a worksheet (electronic/paper) with 5 literary devices (Plot, Setting, Character Development, Foreshadowing, Imagery). They will need to work together to define each one. When time is each group will share their answers. After the class has concluded a document will be shared with them, it will have all the definitions plus examples of literary devices to aid them in the future.

**Second Activity:** For the remainder of the class, we will begin to read the novel *Free Lunch* chapters 1-7. As we read the book in class students will be asked to write down page numbers and a literary device they see throughout the reading. Alongside this the teacher will choose students to read, not randomly but in roster order.

- Homework will be given at the end of class 3 minutes before class ends. Homework will be writing down 5 literary devices they saw in the class reading with citations and explanations as to why it was chosen.

## ➤ Day 3: Interpreting Quotations: Discussing

### Say, Mean, Matter, Do & Chalk Talk

Purpose: Students will choose passages from the book that pertain to the topics covered, such as poverty, food security, abuse, and mental health. To discern the author's meaning and intended messages, they will examine the language used. The purpose of this activity is to improve student's critical thinking abilities by attentively analyzing the text's language and meaning. Students will be more prepared to produce their own poetry or journal entries if they can pinpoint crucial aspects for comprehending the underlying ideas.

**First Activity:** For 15 minutes students will be in a group of 4 and work together to do an activity called “Say, Mean, Matter, and Do”. For this activity, students will need to choose four quotes one for each person but they will do it in the same document. In the document you will need to cite, interpret, and analyze direct quotations from the novel. Each column in the chart is addressing a different question from the text:

1. What does it say?
2. What does it mean?
3. Why does it matter?
4. What does it do?

This activity gives you an opportunity to practice selecting and paraphrasing direct quotations. Alongside using your critical thinking skills.

Ex:

Say (direct quotation)	Mean (paraphrase or explanation)	Matter (significance and connection to the theme)	Do (rhetorical effect or function/What is the quotation doing rhetorically? How does it affect you as a reader?)
“I like happy endings—even if they are only fantasies”	.....	.....	.....

After this activity, we will share for

**Second Activity:** Students will be given three separate pieces of chart paper and will be asked to answer the questions: What is hunger? What is food security? and what is poverty? In this activity no students or teacher will be talking, each student will need to contribute to each sheet.

- For 10 minutes each student will write as they feel on each topic. Students may write a definition, what the term means to them, or their perception/interpretation of the term.
- After the time is done, we will all be discussing these answers as a class. After discussing students will have 15 minutes to write in their journal entries about what they learned and noticed from other's interpretations or definitions in the activity.
- Using the last minutes of class homework will be given out. It will be reading chapters chapters 8-12.

## ➤ Day 4:Poetry:

**Purpose:** For this activity, students will be looking at different types of texts and poetry to analyze the devices within them. Aiming to get students to think about their poems and look at different forms of expressing one's emotions within them. Through doing this students will be able to convey and identify meaning within their own poetry as well as others.

**First Activity:** Students will begin analyzing poems independently. Students will be researching poems that reflect the theme of the novel *Free Lunch*. They will each choose a poem that they would like to read out loud to the class.

- Students will have 5 minutes to choose a poem that they like as well as reflecting the theme of the novel. After researching a poem to their liking they will now use 10 minutes to partner up with another student and express their reasoning for choosing this poem.

Alongside they will discuss how it correlates to the book and its themes. After their time is up every student will express what their poem is called and give a brief summary about it and why they chose it.

**Second Activity:** Students will begin reading the novel *Fre Lunch* chapters 12-18. This time students will do popcorn. At least one student will read a whole chapter until they choose another student to continue. This will take the remainder of the class and their homework assignment will be to read chapters 19 to 25.

## ➤ **Day 5: Essay/Creative Writing:**

**Purpose:** For this activity, students will write their own creative stories discussing the theme of the novel. In the novel, Alex discusses his emotions and how he feels emotionally and physically due to the treatment of his teachers, bullies, and parents. Students will create a story that relates to this experience. Students can write a short story or a full story. It will be to their liking but it has to fit the theme of the book.

**First Activity:** In this activity, students will create a poem inspired by any chapter from the novel. Students will be asked to present their poems in front of the class. The presentations of the poems will also be in order of the chapters. Each poem has to be at least a page long. It can be any type of poem, such as slam poetry or iambic pentameter. Students will have 30 minutes to create their poems.

- After presenting their poem they will continue brainstorming for ideas for their miniature essay/ short story and their homework will be to continue reading the novel.