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Teaching Literature in a Post-Truth World: Three Strategies for Integrating Critical Media Epistemology into Literature Curricula

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ABSTRACT

In a 'post-truth' international media landscape increasingly shaped by misinformation and propaganda, English teachers face new and growing challenges in teaching critical literacy. This article reports selected findings from a six-month multiple case study examining how secondary English teachers integrated critical media epistemology (CME) – a new framework synthesising critical media literacy and epistemic cognition – into literature instruction. Focusing on three strategies for embedding CME within existing literature units that emerged from our data analysis, we illustrate how teachers connected student- and teacher-selected digital media to anchor texts and engaged students in creating media grounded in literary study. Drawing on classroom examples from diverse instructional contexts, the article demonstrates how integrating CME into everyday English instruction can foster students' rhetorical awareness, epistemic reflection, and critical engagement with texts across media. The findings suggest that CME offers a feasible, theoretically grounded approach for addressing post-truth conditions through literature-centred instruction.

KEYWORDS

Critical media epistemology; critical media literacy; epistemic cognition; literary studies; mis- and disinformation; post-truth; Secondary Education

On 24 March 2025, *The Atlantic* published an article by senior editor Jeffrey Goldberg describing how he was inadvertently added to a Signal group chat in which senior U.S. government officials discussed forthcoming military action (Goldberg 2025). In the days that followed, multiple officials publicly denied that any wrongdoing had occurred, dismissed the reporting as deceptive, and insisted that no classified information had been shared, despite screenshots and corroborating evidence to the contrary (Goldberg and Harris 2025). No public consequences followed. This episode – quickly dubbed 'Signalgate' – offers a particularly salient illustration of the contemporary 'post-truth' condition, in which compelling evidence is rejected, institutional authority is mobilised to undermine journalism, and false or misleading claims circulate with little accountability. While this example is U.S.-based, the dynamics it illustrates – platform-mediated knowledge claims, denial of evidence by those in power, and the erosion of

shared epistemic norms – have been documented across national contexts (Quelle et al. 2025; Villa-Turek et al. 2024). For English teachers worldwide tasked with fostering critical literacy and thinking, such conditions raise urgent questions about how students might learn to evaluate knowledge claims, media texts, and truth itself in an increasingly contested digital landscape.

In this article, we (a university-based researcher and three secondary English teachers), discuss selected results of a six-month multiple case study exploring how English teachers might address the post-truth phenomenon in their classrooms using a new theoretical and pedagogical framework, critical media epistemology (CME), that Ben (lead researcher) developed prior to and refined during the course of the study. Specifically, we focus on three strategies we adopted for integrating CME into literature units in a way that builds the skills and dispositions students need to critically engage post-truth. First, however, we briefly define ‘post-truth’, describe CME, and locate it in educational scholarship. We then describe our research context and methods. Finally, we identify each strategy, describe our initial implementation of the strategy with illustrative examples, and suggest ideas for future use of the strategy.

Conceptual lens and theoretical framework: post-truth and CME

The Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford Languages 2016) defined ‘post-truth’ as ‘denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief’. Philosopher Lee McIntyre (2018) finds in that definition and the public discourse around it a sense that ‘facts are subordinate to our political point of view’ (p. 11). Philosopher Susan Haack (2019), drawing on the OED definition and its accompanying examples, identifies two ‘strands’ in post-truth, ‘skepticism about truthfulness’ (a sense that everyone lies) and ‘despair of the very idea of truth’ (a sense that the concept of ‘truth’ is outdated) (p. 261). Other scholars have challenged the OED definition and offered variations addressing the power dynamics inherent in the post-truth phenomenon. For example, Thomas (2018) understands post-truth as a populist reaction to post-modernism, ‘akin to “the truth is whatever I say it is regardless of any evidence or the credibility of evidence”’ (p. 8). Similarly, Bacon (2018) defines it as the ‘general phenomena of distorting reality, often with little consequence, for the purpose of political gain’ (p. 3). The strategies we describe, then, aim to address a problem with many facets, including distortion of reality through repetition of claims (often amplified by social media and other digital platforms), with little to no evidence, for political gain; subordination of facts and evidence to emotion, personal belief, and political point of view; extreme scepticism about the truthfulness of government and other institutions; and indifference or even despair about truth and knowledge.

Two frequently cited pedagogical responses to post-truth, each rooted in a different theoretical school of thought and body of literature, are critical media literacy (Kellner and Share 2019), based in sociocultural theories of learning and literacy, and epistemic cognition (Chinn, Barzilai, and Duncan 2021), based in cognitive theories. Each has affordances and significant limitations in addressing the post-truth phenomenon (Lathrop 2025), but very little research documents efforts to integrate disparate approaches to the problem. Moreover, few rigorous studies have systematically explored the integration of either approach into K-12 curricula, despite many calls for such

research (e.g. Chinn, Barzilai, and Duncan 2021; Hobbs et al. 2022). In our teaching, research design, and data analysis, we drew on and refined a new, integrated theoretical framework, critical media epistemology, that aims to combine the affordances of both perspectives while mitigating the limitations of each (Lathrop 2025).

Critical media literacy (CML) emphasises the analysis of media codes, conventions, and ideologies embedded within media texts. It involves cultivating skills to critique stereotypes, dominant values, and power dynamics, enabling individuals to interpret the multiple meanings generated by media (Kellner and Share 2005, 2007, 2019), and it highlights the importance of engaging students in analysing media representations and their societal implications (Alvermann and Hagood 2000). The development of CML within educational research has been influenced by critical theory, cultural studies, and the works of thinkers like Dewey and Freire, who emphasised the role of education in fostering participatory democracy and social change.

Epistemic cognition (EC) is an interdisciplinary field that explores how individuals think about knowledge, its nature, and its use (Sandoval, Greene, and Bråten 2016). Rooted in educational and developmental psychology, EC invites those engaging with media, and knowledge claims in general, to examine their own epistemic assumptions and commitments and those underlying media texts and discourses. The Apt-AIR framework (Chinn, Barzilai, and Duncan 2021) of epistemic cognition addresses the post-truth phenomenon by emphasising the need to teach students to evaluate knowledge claims through criteria such as reliability, generativity, epistemic justice, and ethical values. This framework highlights the importance of understanding deep epistemic disagreements and provides tools for students to critically assess the validity of competing epistemologies.

CME initially developed out of an earlier study in which Ben and Kaylyn planned, implemented, and analysed a two-week unit exploring a climate-change related issue with students using both CML and the Apt-AIR framework to guide our teaching and data analysis (Lathrop and Stockdell 2024). The results of that study suggested five principles, rooted in CML and EC, that Ben used to create the CME framework (Figure 1), which he refined over the course of the present study with the help of the other authors. Although developed within U.S. secondary English classrooms, CME is a flexible framework that can be adapted to different national curricula, assessment regimes, and literary traditions, particularly in contexts where English mediates encounters with global media texts.

Research context and methods

To explore how English teachers might conceptualise and integrate CME, Ben recruited three in-service English teachers (including Cindy and Kaylyn) and two student teachers (including Arden) as study participants and teacher-researchers. At the time of the study, Cindy taught 10th-grade English at a large high school on the edges of a medium-sized city that serves a wide range of students from both rural and semi-urban areas, and Arden was a student teacher in Cindy's classroom. Kaylyn taught 11th- and 12th-grade English in a small-town school that serves mostly rural students. Two other teacher researcher-participants, Katie (in-service teacher) and Claire (student teacher), co-taught 8th-grade English in an urban middle school. The study took place over the course of one semester.



Figure 1. Critical media epistemology.

About a month before the semester started, Ben and the teachers formed an inquiry group that met approximately every three weeks to discuss readings about critical media literacy and epistemic cognition, examine and revise the emerging CME framework, share and analyse student work, and generate ideas for integrating CME into various units of instruction.

This paper focuses on a central aspect of the teachers' application of CME in their classrooms, addressing one of the study's research questions: 'What strategies did the teachers adopt for integrating CME into their curricula?' Our goal of 'integrating' CME – as opposed, e.g., to developing a digital media-related unit – was to make media education part of the everyday rhythm of the English classroom, neither teaching it in isolation nor letting it completely replace traditional English practices like reading whole

books or writing essays, but rather blending it with the rigorous study of literature, writing, research, grammar, and vocabulary. We see this as the most feasible way for English teachers to address the post-truth phenomenon.

Author positionality

Throughout the study, each of us maintained an acute awareness of his or her own positionality and subjectivity (Peshkin 1988). Ben is a white man, while Cindy, Kaylyn, and Arden are white women. All of us identify politically as centre to centre-left. During our inquiry group meetings, Ben was actively conscious of the dynamics of male privilege, especially as the lead researcher; he worked actively to avoid dominating conversation and to allow the teachers' voices to have pre-eminence. All four of us reflected continually on other aspects of our positionality, including our personal backgrounds; our media habits, biases, and blind spots; our power and privilege as educated white professionals and specifically as classroom teachers; and our relationships with our students and the broader community in which we live. We discussed these issues regularly, and Ben's analysis of the inquiry group meeting transcripts suggests a growth in our understanding of our positionality and its effect on our research and instructional decisions. For example, our discussions often highlighted a tension between our critical, social justice-oriented values and our reluctance to use our position of power as teachers to impose – or be seen as trying to impose – those values on students. We mitigated these tensions partly by allowing students to take the lead in text selection and discussion whenever possible (see Strategy 1).

Research methods

The strategies we discuss in this paper emerged from a collaborative analysis of CME-related activities the teachers conceptualised and implemented throughout the study. At the end of that semester, Ben recorded and transcribed all inquiry group meetings, and those transcripts provided the primary data source for the study. Secondary data sources included Ben's interviews of teacher and student participants, field notes generated during classroom observations, teacher-generated materials (e.g. lesson plans, slide decks, handouts), and student artefacts created during the study. Although the teachers worked to integrate CME into all kinds of units, in this paper we discuss strategies the teachers adopted as they sought to integrate CME into existing *literature* units. To identify those strategies, we worked together after the semester had ended to code the data deductively, applying codes based on both the research questions and CME framework. For example, we applied the code 'strategies for integration' (SI) to segments of inquiry group transcripts where we discussed plans, reflected on instruction, or shared student work directly pertaining to our efforts to integrate CME, as well as to student interviews and classwork/artefacts directly related to integration. Ben then coded those text segments using a combination of *in vivo* and inductive coding, ultimately identifying 12 discrete strategies the teachers adopted (general, research/writing, and literature integration strategies).

We conceptualise literature units as three- to nine-week units of instruction centred on an 'anchor text' and usually including supplementary texts such as short stories, poetry, informational texts, creative non-fiction, and (increasingly) multimodal or digital

media texts (Smagorinsky 2019). Kaylyn's English 11 class included units featuring two anchor texts, *There There* (Orange) and *We Were Liars* (Lockhart). Cindy and Arden structured their English 10 Honors classes around units featuring canonical works of literature as anchor texts, including *A Tale of Two Cities* (Dickens), *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Rostand), and others. As they sought to integrate CME into these units, the teachers adopted at least three distinct strategies: (1) connecting student-selected media with the anchor text (students select, analyse, and make connections with digital media texts related to anchor text of a literature unit), (2) connecting teacher-selected media with the anchor text (teachers select and have students analyze/make connections with digital media texts related to anchor text of literature unit), and (3) having students create media based on the anchor text (students create digital media texts rooted in anchor text of literature unit and reflect critically on the process).

Strategy 1: connecting student-selected media with anchor text

From the beginning, all the teachers wanted to incorporate student-selected digital media texts into lessons and connect them to their anchor texts. As Arden wrote in a semester-end reflection, '[T]o try and keep it broader than what my own narrow searches would allow for, I often created activities that had students finding sources themselves'. One early use of this strategy occurred in the first CME-related lesson Cindy and Arden planned during their unit on *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Instructional context

At the time of the study, Cindy taught pre-AP sophomores in a literature-focused course. The Spring semester began with *A Tale of Two Cities*, with students reading roughly three chapters nightly, punctuated by writing, vocabulary, and assessment activities. The semester Cindy began implementing the CME Framework, she was co-teaching with Arden, a student teacher who had completed a practicum in her classroom the previous winter. They planned the literature units and lessons collaboratively. One of their early activities asked students to bring in contemporary headlines from sources they normally pay attention to, analyse them for bias, and rewrite them (see Figure 2).

The idea for this activity occurred to Cindy while reading *The Critical Media Literacy Framework* (Kellner and Share 2019). A comment by the authors linking media theory to themes of corruption and oppression in *A Tale of Two Cities* stood out: '[T]his process can help students in dominant positions recognise their blind spots and become more sensitive to the systems of oppression from which they are benefiting' (pp. 24–25). This led Cindy to consider how the media often downplay oppression in headlines and images, especially when marginalised groups are involved. Students had previously completed an in-class simulation of pre-French Revolution conditions using candy: A student playing the role of 'monarch' rules over the nobility, clergymen, and peasants, and taxes them repeatedly until the monarch ends up with all the candy. As a class, the students developed their own headlines about the simulation and discussed questions such as 'What affects how someone tells a story? Which one is the truth? How do you decide?' For homework, in preparation for the CME lesson, students independently found modern-day headlines about corruption in any government to share with the class.

Partners Names:

Headline Rewrite Activity (due Wednesday, 1/17 11:59PM)

Article 1 Original Headline/Title:

1. Why did the author write the headline this way?
2. Whose story matters when reading this headline?
3. Rewrite the headline from each article from the clear perspective of the **government**.
4. Explain why you wrote it this way. How do your writerly choices convey the perspective of the government? Cite specific examples.
5. Rewrite the headline from each article from the perspective of **the people**.
6. Explain why you wrote it this way. How do your writerly choices convey the perspective of the people?

Figure 2. Headline rewrite activity.

Initial implementation

The next day, students shared, analysed, and rewrote the headlines they had brought in from the ‘government’s’ perspective. They were asked to select articles relevant to novel themes and shift their framing. Figure 3 shows two examples from the same student pair.

Some students struggled to identify how wording shaped perspective and rewrote events inaccurately. Nevertheless, they found the activity memorable. In an end-of-study focus group interview, ‘Henrik’ said the headline activity stood out ‘because we had to use

Original Headline: Defiant Menendez doubles down against resignation calls

Rewrite Government POV: Senator Menendez announces that he will run for reelection in 2024

Explanation: We wrote the headline this way because the original headline states that Menendez is refusing to resign. Instead of making it seem as though Menendez will not want to resign, it would be more peaceful to say that he would like to continue his job in the next reelection.

Original Headline: Indiana DCS fires supervisor after learning of prior substantiation for child abuse and neglect

Rewrite Government POV: Indiana DCS Removes Supervisor from Office; Saves the Lives of Many Helpless Children

Explanation: I wrote it this way because the government would try to downplay the situation and only focus on the positive so it doesn’t cause an uproar or any bad publicity.

Figure 3. Headline rewrites.

the language and the different types, I guess, ways to convey a point'. Another student, 'Lilley', agreed:

What I got from that lesson . . . was the way news outlets use specific styles of writing to kind of skew the opinion of one person or another. So random, fake examples, like, 'oh, this person dies at 76'; 'oh, this person tragically dies of blah, blah, blah'. Big difference there.

In general, students articulated an understanding that media texts often include biased headlines. This lesson set the stage for a follow-up lesson that applied Strategy 3, in which students created headlines about key events in the novel, again from various perspectives.

A key feature of this assignment was having students explain why they chose the words they did. This metacognitive work, aligned with CME Principle 2, Positionality, pushed them to think more deeply about how and why they use specific language. By explaining their choices, students showed they were thinking carefully about how language can both describe events and influence readers – a more sophisticated understanding of how rhetoric works. The activity demonstrates that when students combine media curation and analysis with imaginative writing and reflection on their writing and its connection to an anchor text, they connect more deeply with the text and build critical skills they can use in many situations. Activities like this also help students develop empathy, learn to see things from different perspectives, and become more aware of how language shapes meaning.

Future implementation

Future versions of this lesson could expand discussion of how headlines influence public perception, further connecting 19th-century literature to modern debates about media representation. Peer review could also strengthen the activity by giving students opportunities to workshop headlines, perspectives, and tone, deepening discourse and critical thinking. Although the headline activity encouraged perspective-taking and rhetorical awareness, students did not always cite textual evidence. To reinforce CME Principles 2 and 4, the assignment could include comparison between student-generated headlines and real-world biased coverage. Examining framing, diction, and emphasis in both contexts would help students understand how language shapes perception in literature and contemporary media.

Strategy 2: connecting teacher-selected media with anchor text

While we sometimes had students select media in connection with the anchor text, more commonly, given the practical realities of unit and lesson planning and our desire to ensure students engaged with a wide range of texts, we asked students to engage with related media we had selected. Guided by CME Principle 1, we tried to choose digital media texts representing multiple and conflicting claims and to avoid curating 'safe' sources for students, selecting the kinds of authentic digital media texts students might encounter outside of school, in addition to some that were more traditionally 'educational' but still related to the anchor text in some way. One example of this strategy is illustrated by activities Kaylyn planned for her unit on *There There* in English 12.

Instructional context

Kaylyn teaches in a rural junior-senior high school, with English 12 split into two sections totalling 24 students. Most were white; one was Latina, one African American. Communal identity, central to the CME framework (see Principle 5), also played an important role in the class's engagement with this novel. At the time of the study, Kaylyn was in an online Master's programme. A graduate course in American Ethnic Literature introduced her to several unfamiliar Native American works, including Thomas King's *The Inconvenient Indian*. She decided to pair sections of *There There* with excerpts of that non-fiction text as well as authentic and relevant digital media texts she selected throughout the unit.

Initial implementation

Throughout her *There There* unit, Kaylyn found multiple ways to connect teacher-selected media with the anchor text. For example, she often uses bellringers (short, opening activities that students complete when the bell marking the beginning of the period sounds) to build students' background knowledge. Though *There There* is fictional, it does focus on real-world events and issues. In one instance, an indigenous woman scolds another for trying to hitchhike, referencing numerous missing and murdered indigenous women. For the bellringer on the day following that chapter, Kaylyn found a photo of protesters raising awareness for this cause (see Figure 4). Hoping to aid students in making the connections between real-life events and the



Figure 4. Photo of protesters.

fictional text, she asked students to tell her how they thought it connected to the previous day's reading.

A sample of students' responses suggests that many students made the connection. 'The chapter yesterday has to do with women abuse', one student wrote. 'Women try and get away but sometimes it's hard for them to'. Another student wrote, 'This relates to Blue's chapter because her husband, Paul, is abusive, and she was running away from him'.

A subsequent bellringer asked students to analyse a different kind of digital media text, an infographic, and to draw on their knowledge of Greek and Latin roots (see Figure 5). Students' responses again show the connections they made between the novel, previous vocabulary instruction, and a digital media text. 'This issue is very prevalent because the [infographic] shows 128 indigenous women went missing across 71 urban cities', one student explained. 'Val- meaning important, strong'. Another student wrote, 'The root vale in prevalent means power. When Blue's friend educates her the root in educate is "duc" which means lead, Blue's friend is leading the way to bring up such a powerful and strong subject'.

Kaylyn also implemented media she had selected in standalone lessons related to the novel's broader themes. For example, one day she showed students a BuzzFeed documentary video featuring numerous Indigenous people from a range of backgrounds and tribes reacting to cultural films that negatively stereotype indigenous peoples, such as *Pocahontas*, *Indian in the Cupboard*, and *Twilight*. She had students jot down their thoughts, including what shocked them and what amused them. She then asked them questions adapted from the CME framework: What stereotypes of indigenous peoples are being reiterated here? What are the assumptions the text is making? How could this text be understood differently? Do you have enough knowledge? Did their opinions in the last clip surprise you because the last clip was more satire and more parody? The assignment

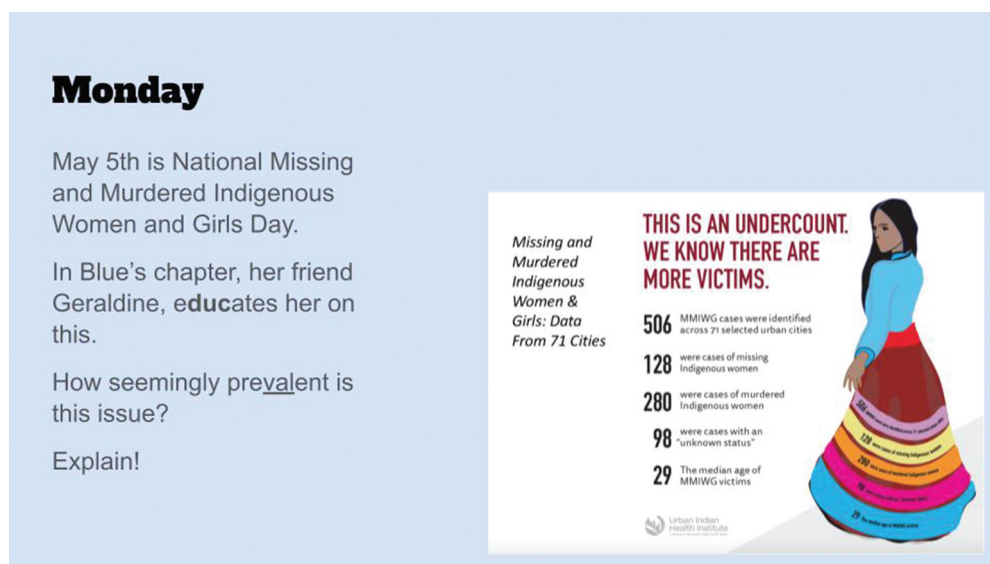


Figure 5. Infographic.

highlighted harmful stereotypes, provided students with practice in the CME framework, and connected ideas from the literary and digital media texts.

To provide background knowledge on the indigenous occupation of Alcatraz in the 1970s, which plays a major role in the novel's themes and the development of two of its characters, Kaylyn created a presentation that provided historical background about the prison and its occupation. She then split students into groups and assigned a different digital media text to each group, including news and opinion articles from *The New York Times* and an article from the National Park Service that provided historical background with a mix of photos. Students were prompted to make observations about the article, focusing on the perspective and the experiences of the people. One student's prediction emphasised legacy and struggle: 'It will impact a future character and . . . show the legacy of some people' and 'It could maybe show the struggles people had while living during this time'. Another student's predictions were less focused: 'It gives examples of the real history in the book' and 'One of the authors . . . might be related to one of the prisoners of Alcatraz'.

Future implementation

Kaylyn plans to continue teaching *There There* and implement Strategy 2 more broadly and with more time for debriefing. She also hopes to continue exploring ways to make the CME framework more accessible to SPED students, and she plans to draw on a related framework, *5 Questions for Any Text* (Pryle 2025) for all her classes.

Strategy 3: creating media based on anchor text

One of the most popular CME-related lessons, judging by the frequency and enthusiasm of mentions by both students and teachers in the data, was Arden's lesson on fake online dating profiles, which she embedded in the *Cyrano de Bergerac* unit. The play's premise involves a handsome but dim-witted man (Christian) who uses the eloquent but ugly Cyrano to woo Roxanne, the woman they both love – essentially presenting a false version of himself to win her affection. Arden decided to have students create a piece of media – in this case, a fake dating profile – for one of the play's characters, which illustrates the third strategy that emerged from our data analysis.

Instructional context

At the time of the study, Arden was student teaching in Cindy's classroom. Having worked in that classroom as a paid tutor the previous semester, Arden knew the community and classroom prior to student teaching. The anchor text for the unit, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, was included in the district's curriculum reading list for English 10 Honours. The discussion-based nature of instruction, written assessments, and literary vocabulary were complemented by the addition of CME literature integration strategies like creating media based on anchor text. Since the *Cyrano* unit fell on Valentine's Day, Arden played into festivity when planning. During brainstorming, the inquiry group floated ideas around like having students write love letters, or comparing *Cyrano* to contemporary love triangles. Because we wanted to incorporate digital media, Arden

shifted the conversation to pursuing love *online* in the era of dating apps like Tinder, Grindr, and Bumble, and building relationships via social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. These online ecosystems are crawling with fake accounts that pose serious threats to students who might not know how to spot them, so online dating looked like a gold mine for testing students' abilities to recognise fake profiles and analyse online interactions critically all within the context of the pursuit of love.

Initial implementation

Students had recently acted out the balcony scene between Cyrano, Christian, and Roxanne, focusing on all of the characters' insecurities and values. The lesson focused on how people present themselves and why, connecting the text to real-life examples of fake social media profiles. First, Arden showed students a fake Bumble profile she had created for herself (for the purposes of the lesson only) to demonstrate catfishing. After students pointed out what they knew was false in Arden's profile, like an interest in anime and having black hair, she transitioned to analysing an unfamiliar fake profile. While Arden's profile was full of photoshop and blatant lies, the second was less obvious. It featured an older man with only two pictures. The images were low quality and the bio was short and non-specific. This segued into a discussion of how to detect fake accounts not only on dating apps but also on other platforms. [Figure 6](#) shows screenshots of Arden's Instagram messages with two other accounts – one (fake) offering a deal and another (real) flirting.

Arden explained to her students that she had looked through the second profile, cross-referenced the user's Instagram and Facebook accounts, and discovered that the account belonged to an apparently Middle Eastern man obsessed with her profile and camels. After discussing this, Arden allotted time for students to consider why people

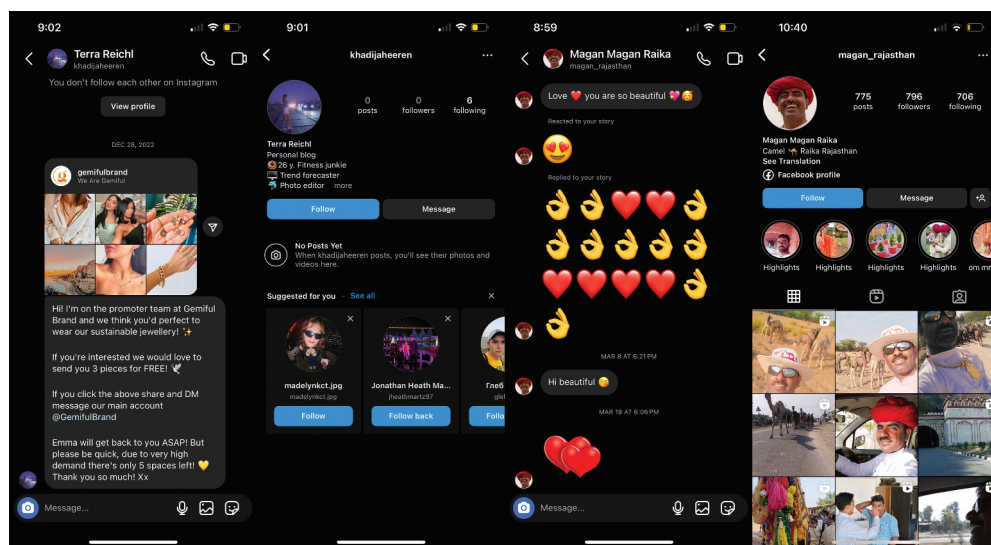
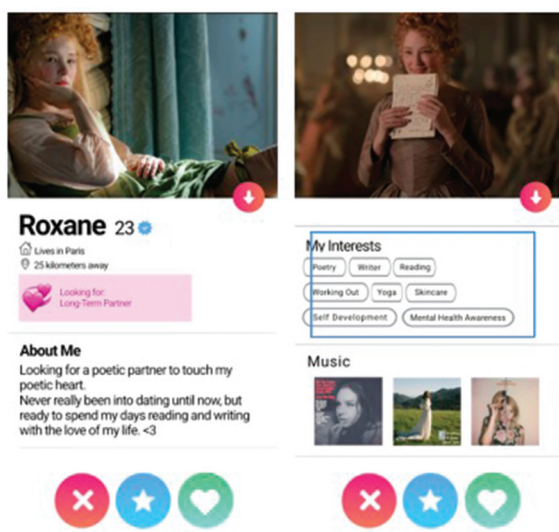


Figure 6. Real examples of suspicious Instagram messages.



Character: Roxane

Though the reader has not seen much of Roxane's personality, there are a few key points that the reader has already seen that are worth noting. She enjoys the affirmations that Cyrano provides in his poetry, so I added the tags poetry, writer, and reading to show that she is interested in the english literature, even though she is not described to read or write in the play. I also added a few other tags that I thought might fit her personality, specifically, the self development tag. I think this tag would not only catch the interest of Cyrano, but Christian as well, because they are working together to "self improve" for Roxane. I also emphasized poeticness in her bio, as she states, "looking for a poetic partner to touch my poetic heart." Once again, she may be interested in poetry, but she doesn't do it herself. The last thing would be how she says that she has never really been interested in love until now, which is completely false, because she has been seen as quite an interest through Paris. Overall, I think Roxane would lie about liking poetry, and never really having an interest in love. I also think that she may try to seem more literate compared to how she actually is.

Figure 7. Student fake dating profile.

misrepresent themselves online, and then connected it to the way Cyrano and Christian misrepresent themselves to Roxanne in the play. Finally, students became media creators themselves with an assignment in which they demonstrated understanding of characterisation by creating 'catfish' dating profiles for *Cyrano* characters and explaining their choices in a written justification (see Figure 7).

As Arden predicted, students appreciated the novelty of the lesson. They were buzzing all day about why Miss Arden was talking about Bumble and Grindr in English class. She was impressed by students' attention to details like patterns in disproportionate follower ratios and vague bios. One student even pointed out that some people might think the real profile she showed them was fake just because he was Brown and/or foreign, noting that his own parents hang up on callers with accents just because they do not sound like native English speakers. Arden complimented his observation and noted that sometimes our biases or prejudices can affect the ways we discern a real profile from a fake one, whether we are right or not. Students found the assignment fun and said while they usually dread homework, they looked forward to creating this project. More than just a fun creation, students also expressed increased awareness of what is/is not appropriate to share online. In a post-activity interview, student Barbara said she learned 'not to put extra personal stuff on there, like just be general and don't go into depth about anything'. While there *are* appropriate ways to be honest, in-depth, and vulnerable online, students gained insight on the importance of exercising caution and criticality.

Future implementation

Following the lesson, several successes were obvious. First, connecting anchor texts to digital media increased student engagement. Second, students demonstrated criticality while engaging with and creating online profiles. Third, students more deeply connected with the anchor text and empathised with characters and each

other in trying to understand why people, fictional and real, choose to misrepresent themselves. Arden also identified aspects for improvement in future implementation. For example, during the lesson, one student interrupted her before she made a connection to the text to say, ‘What are we learning?’ revealing to her that some students do not conceive criticality as a component of English. Going forward, Arden would dedicate more time to contextualising CME both before, during, and after, so that connection is clearer and more consistent for students throughout.

Using the strategy of creating media based on an anchor text proved enriching and eye-opening for students and teachers. For future instruction, the dating profiles lesson is an easily modifiable series applicable across contexts for any media with themes of romance or deception.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have identified and provided illustrative examples of strategies three English teachers adopted as they attempted to integrate CME into their literature units. Although these strategies emerged in U.S. classrooms, they were enacted across rural, suburban, and urban contexts serving students with varied linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds – conditions that mirror those faced by English teachers internationally. The fact that teachers in all three contexts found ways to apply these strategies suggests that they may have some utility and relevance for English teachers in other instructional contexts, working with different curricula, texts, and standards. We invite English teachers and researchers around the world to adapt, contest, and extend these strategies in relation to their own curricular traditions, literary canons, and media ecologies.

Author contributions

CRedit: **Benjamin N. Lathrop**: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Cindy Aubuchon**: Investigation, Writing – original draft; **Kaylyn Stockdell**: Investigation, Writing – original draft; **Arden Woodall**: Investigation, Writing – original draft.

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