

Teaching Literature with Faith

Using literature to bring light to the darkness

Why Read Difficult Literature?

Literature Reflects a Fallen World

- Books like *Brave New World* or *Hamlet* reflect brokenness—just as Scripture includes stories of murder, lust, and rebellion.
- Romans 12:2 – “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Classics as Cautionary Tales

- They provide mirrors and windows into human nature, culture, and moral decay.
- Reading them with discernment helps students build wisdom.

Jesus Engaged with Culture Thoughtfully

- He didn’t avoid hard topics—He brought light to them.
- Encourage students to do the same.

Literary Criticism with a Biblical Worldview

Key Approaches to Literary Criticism:

1. Historical/Biographical Criticism

- Context matters. Understand the time and author.
- *Heart of Darkness* → Colonization & racism.
 - Acts 17:26 – “From one man he made all the nations...”

2. Moral/Philosophical Criticism

- Ask: What values are promoted? What is condemned?
- *1984* and *Brave New World* → Truth, control, identity.
 - John 8:32 – “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

3. Reader-Response Criticism

- What do you think? How does your worldview affect your reading?
- Use this to introduce Scripture into the discussion naturally.
- *Frankenstein* → What does it mean to be human?
 - Psalm 139:14 – “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made...”

4. Sociological Criticism

- Explore societal norms, injustice, gender, class, race.
- *Romeo & Juliet* → Family, rebellion, impulsive love.
 - Proverbs 4:23 – “Above all else, guard your heart...”

Encourage Comparison with Biblical Truth

- Create charts/discussion guides that show contrast between the text’s worldview and Scripture.
- Invite students to wrestle, not retreat.



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Addressing Specific Hard Topics with Grace & Courage

| Literary Theme | Example Text | Biblical Conversation Prompt |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Sexuality | <i>Brave New World</i> | <u>God's design</u> : Genesis 2:24, 1 Corinthians 6:18 |
| Suicide & Depression | <i>Romeo & Juliet</i> | <u>Hope and worth</u> : Psalm 34:18, Romans 15:13 |
| Racism & Slavery | <i>Heart of Darkness</i> | <u>Dignity of all</u> : Galatians 3:28, Micah 6:8 |
| Identity & Individuality | <i>1984, Frankenstein</i> | <u>Made in God's image</u> : Genesis 1:27, Ephesians 2:10 |
| Revenge & Justice | <i>Hamlet</i> | <u>Vengeance is God's</u> : Romans 12:19 |

Note: Always lead with grace, not fear. Avoid oversimplification.

Let students ask hard questions.

Practical Teaching Strategies

Read with Margins & Mindfulness

- Annotate with questions and Scripture.
- Encourage journaling responses.

Discussion over Censorship

- Avoid banning. *Teach discernment.*
- Encourage biblical debate and conversation.

Equip with Biblical Literacy

- Use Scripture not as a weapon, but as a light.
- Help students connect what they read with what they believe.

“Whatever is true, whatever is noble...think about such things.” Philippians 4:8
This includes analyzing even the false in order to better know and cling to the true.



Anna Knaub, is a licensed PA teacher and has been teaching at True North since 2021, where she has taught both History and English classes. She has a passion for classic literature, and teaching it from an encouraging, purposeful, Christian worldview; tackling tough topics in literature & history, with grace and compassion.

For the 2025–2026 school year she is teaching [Brit Lit Survey](#), [Worlds Unraveled](#), and [Cinematic Stories](#).



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Criticism & Questions to Ask

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