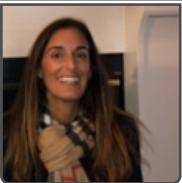


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We have a reading problem. Can film help remedy it?

Sara Hansen

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In 2019 The New York Times reported two out of three 4th and 8th graders who took the National Assessment of Educational Progress “did not meet standards of reading proficiency” and that this would surely inspire “demand for policy change” which, as yet, has not occurred. Neuroscientists, the Department of Education, and the National Association of English Teachers among other researchers verify the benefits of reading in its association to brain connectivity, empathy, improved writing skills, stress reduction, focus, memory improvement and so on. Reading clearly benefits humans; and yet, reading scores in half of the states in this country are in decline (National Assessment of Education Progress, 2022).

“Adult illiteracy directly affects an individual’s employment options, likelihood to live in poverty, likelihood to be incarcerated, access to adequate health care and health outcomes, and life expectancy” (Center for American Progress, (May, 2020)). We can blame distributors such as YouTube, Disney and Netflix where teenagers watch an average of six to nine hours per day (CDC, 2023) or we can use the streaming services to inspire more engaged readers. I have been using film to engage students in reading and recognizing literary devices and form. How does this Dutch angle shot with low key lighting create a dynamic protagonist? Does the diegetic sound signal resolution or climax? My research explores using students’ passion for film and media arts to inspire the practice, analysis and passion for reading.

Biography:

Sara Hansen has taught in the public and private arena since 1994, both in high school and at the university level. She has been a Humanities Department Chair for eleven years for grades 6-12, has taught AP Literature and Composition since 1999, and has a letter of recommendation from an 18 year old that, in part, states: “She is the best teacher I’ve ever had. I barely ever fell asleep in her class.” Sara has also spoken nationally about how to teach written language. Her most recent speaking engagement was at the Hawaiian International Convention in January of last year.