**The Goddess of YA Literature**

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**What the "L"?**

Whenever I try to write about Lexiles, the autocorrect function changes the word to "exiles." Somehow this seems reasonable to me. Despite my posting about this topic often, autocorrect still has not learned to differentiate between Exiles and Lexiles. Perhaps the message is to exile lexile?

**What the "L", Part Two**

I know the post yesterday was rather abrupt. No apologies for that whatsoever. But the thought that inspired that post was a bit more complex. It struck me, as often is the case of late, while I was listening to the homily at Mass last week. The sermon was about evil, the reading about the beheading of John the Baptist. But the homilist did not simply shrug off the idea of evil in its many forms or deliver a brimstone and fiery rage against popular culture (what I would imagine some of the presidential candidates would have done in this situation). Instead, he put together one of the most cogent and coherent sermons I have heard for some time (well, this is a new church and both sermons have been exceptional).

Father spoke about evil and how we would rather hear them wrapped up in a fairy tale where there is a spunky princess or price to rescue those attacked by evil, that there could be a happily ever after. Sometimes, though, evil is too real. But there is always hope. He recounted some of the plot of a James Bond movie (how much did I love moving from myth and fairy tale to pop culture and archetypes?) when Bond's sidekick announces they are trapped. Bond's response was, "Never." Never. Trapped. Always some way to escape.

That made me think about all the emphasis on Lexiles and levels (remove the "l" here and basically we are left with evil). Some feel trapped by these numbers. As Bond would say, NEVER. We need to take a stance against this sort of evil that serves to trap us into selecting texts based on some formula that is unrelated to readers.

Here is an example, just a random one. So much has been said and written about TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD this week. The Lexile levels for TKAM range from 790 to 870. I find this variance interesting and puzzling at the same time. Now, add in some other titles related to the book:

I KILL THE MOCKINGBIRD 640
I AM SCOUT 1120
THE STORY BEHIND TKAM 1050
UNDERSTANDING TKAM 1210

Using Lexile.com own measurement:

Grade Reader Measures, Mid-Year
25th percentile to 75th percentile (IQR)
1 Up to 300L
2 140L to 500L
3 330L to 700L
4 445L to 810L
5 565L to 910L
6 665L to 1000L
7 735L to 1065L
8 805L to 1100L
9 855L to 1165L
10 905L to 1195L
11 and 12 940L to 1210L

That places TKAM anywhere from 4th to 7th grade. Kinda scary, yes?

Add to the frightening factor, both Lexile.com and AR tout that their programs get kids college and career ready better than anything else out there. WHOA! I guess I should be grateful that somehow I managed to earn my degrees with their assistance. So did the former residents of the back bedroom. So have countless other kids.

I am sick and tired of this evil that suggests that a program, that a number, that a level or lexile can accomplish anything in and of itself. I refuse to be trapped by this nonsense. I refuse to be trapped by the glitzy web sites or the data they cast out. I refuse to be trapped by anything other than best practices: reading aloud, choice, authentic response, conferring, modeling, etc. I will not be trapped. Just call me Lesesne, Insane Lesesne.

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