Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

AMBER MOORE

B.A.H. (Queen’s University, 2008)
M.A. (Wilfrid Laurier University, 2009)
B.Ed. (University of Toronto, 2010)

“The Role of Trauma Literature in the Secondary English Classroom”

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Tuesday, June 21, 2016
9:00am
David Turpin Building
Room A144

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Deborah Begoray, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Ruthanne Tobin, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Elizabeth Banister, Department of Nursing, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Mary Lesperance, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

The inclusion of critical literacy is becoming more prevalent in our curricula, however, while the value of using trauma literature in the English Language Arts classroom has been established, the explicit use of sexual assault narratives sometimes seems too risky or intimidating for educators. This case study research utilizes social constructivism, feminist, gender studies, and queer studies, trauma theory, and reader response theory as lenses for analysis. Further, a narrative methodological framework was employed to explore how trauma literature influences the writing practices, specifically the digitally written responses, of grade ten adolescents. As well, the study examined the usefulness of digital writing platforms and social media as vehicles with which to use while incorporating such critical literacies into the classroom.

The research was carried out in in one western Canadian high school and across two grade ten academic English Language Arts classes. Data was collected from 25 student participants for the primary portion of the classroom study and four of those participants also participated in the focus group discussion.

The findings suggest that trauma literature is certainly a valuable form of critical literacy, particularly sexual assault narratives. Students’ responses indicated that they responded angrily and aggressively to the texts presented, they voiced a need to be heard through the use of repetition, they identified the significance of mental health issues, they made personal connections with the literature as well as intertextual connections between other stories, and created significant and telling silences. Perhaps most importantly, this study found that we must continue to work towards finding best practices for teaching these texts because doing so may lead to challenging rape culture and fostering a sense of empowerment, agency, and resiliency in our learners. These qualities were particularly demonstrated through the students’ personal, critical, and creative written responses using digital literacy.