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A. Introduction

WELCOME

Welcome to the PBX Literature Thesaurus, a tool we've created to unite you, a busy high school English teacher, with what you want—an amazing array of language and literature resources arranged by subject so that you can quickly search for material that exactly matches your own curriculum.

WHAT IS A THESAURUS?

These days we're all familiar with a "Google-type" search—you can type in any terms you want, and the Google search engine will look for your terms in the text, title, and abstract of documents. In library science this kind of indexing is called 'natural language.' In contrast, when there is a list, such as our thesaurus, or—in another example, the index of a book, which assigns particular labels for the different subjects of documents, that type of indexing is using a 'controlled vocabulary' (Chowdhury, 2004, p.125). The vocabulary of our thesaurus is modeled on the search terms list used in EBSCO databases such as Academic Search Premier (EBSCO, 2008), which is in turn closely based on the Library of Congress headings (Goin, 1998)

HOW DOES IT WORK?

First, the thesaurus shows you which terms you can use to search our database. These terms, called 'preferred terms', appear in bold face. The thesaurus also gives you useful information about the relationships of terms in our database using the professional language of cataloguers (Craven, 2008). Let's imagine, for example, that you want a radio piece to encourage your freshmen in choosing high-quality independent reading material. In our thesaurus you will see the overarching topic of our database—literature--

listed as a ‘broad term’, marked BT in our database. Within that larger category you would find **Young Adult literature**, which is a preferred term—the term you will be able to use in your search. You will also discover a ‘narrower term’, marked ‘NT’, that you can use—**young adult fiction**, which shows a more limited and specific category within our hierarchy of terms. Finally you will see a related term, labeled ‘RT’-- **Newbery Medal**; this term is not wider in scope or narrower in focus than our preferred term; it’s a term we think you might want to be reminded of when searching **Young Adult literature**.

HOW CAN A THESAURUS HELP YOU?

At first glance the ‘Google-type’ natural vocabulary search may seem as if it would bring better results, but actually, studies find that “the best results can be achieved by a combination of controlled and natural language” (Chowdhury 2004, p.125) . You might be surprised to learn that the probability of any two people using the same term to describe an object is on average less than 20% (Chen, H., Martinez, J., Kirchoff, A., Ng, T. D., & Schatz, Bruce R., 1998). Our thesaurus provides a vocabulary that all the cataloguers indexing PBX pieces will share, and then gives you access to this vocabulary, so that their filing system becomes transparent to you. In addition, we’ve customized our thesaurus for your curricular needs. Though proper names are not usually used in thesauri (Craven, 2008), we know that name searches are common for teachers seeking material related to specific texts, and can be problematic. A search on the Academic Search Premier database retrieves 629 documents for ‘Clemens, Samuel’, but gives 51,961 for “Twain, Mark’. We’ve eliminated that problem for you by including preferred terms for many authors’ names. In the next section you’ll learn how you can use the thesaurus to make your search fast, efficient, and complete.

B. Preferred terms and non-preferred terms

In this section, we will try to simplify all this jargon. We will help you move from the

search terms you've come up with (in library lingo--"non-preferred terms") to the search terms that will retrieve the most information (in library lingo--"preferred terms") from the database. A preferred term is a word or phrase that is used to help translate the users' query to the vocabulary of the system (Reid, 2008). A preferred term should always be in **bold face**. For example, in our thesaurus, if you type in "banned books" you will find that our preferred term is "**prohibited books**". In order to find any information on banned books, you will need to use our preferred term of "**prohibited books**." The phrase "banned books" is a non-preferred term. This non-preferred term is also called a "use-for" term. The good news is that, because of the thesaurus we have created, you don't need to worry about not finding any information when you type in "banned books" because the thesaurus will refer you to the preferred term of "**prohibited books**".

Another example of preferred and non-preferred terms from our thesaurus is "books for teenagers". Suppose you wanted to do a search on our database for articles relating to books for teenagers. You type "books for teenagers" in the search box. Instead of our database coming up with a disappointing window that says "Sorry, entry not found", our database says "See **young adult literature**." '**Young adult literature**' is the preferred term in our thesaurus and 'books for teenagers' is the non-preferred term.

C. Structure of the thesaurus

In our thesaurus, we have used three different relationship indicators: Associated, Hierarchical and Equivalence. These relationships are very helpful. Associated terms are terms that belong together, but are not the same (Wodtke, 2002). These terms are listed as 'RT'-which means 'related term'. It's a term that's related to the preferred term, but would never be construed as the same thing. For example, in our thesaurus, we use **intellectual freedom** as a

related term to the preferred term **prohibited books**. **Intellectual freedom** is not the same thing as **prohibited books**, but it is related to **prohibited books**.

Another relationship that is very helpful is hierarchical. This shows broader terms (BT) and narrower terms (NT). In our thesaurus, **literature** is a broader term (BT) for **Young Adult literature** and **young adult fiction** is a narrower term (NT) for **Young Adult Literature**.

The last relationship is equivalence. According to *What Is a Controlled Vocabulary?* (Leise, 2002), there are many examples of situations that alternate terms cover. Some of them are:

- Synonyms (two words with the same meaning, like “cat” and “feline”)
- Homonyms (words that sound the same, but have different meanings, like left (opposite of right) and left (past tense of leave))
- Common misspellings (misspell/mispell)
- Connecting abbreviations to the full word (LA and Los Angeles)

We have included many words in our thesaurus that teachers might try to use. It is our hope that this thesaurus will help you locate the many PBX programs which will enrich your curriculum.

D. Tips for Searching

1. Try our customized query page, where you can enter 2 thesaurus terms and a helpful search term called a “Boolean operator”: these are AND, NOT, OR. You can search for one thesaurus term AND another; one thesaurus term OR another, and also one thesaurus term but NOT another. For example, depending on your curriculum, you can look for detective fiction but NOT hardboiled, or fiction that’s detective AND hardboiled. You can search for storytelling OR Oral Interpretation, if you could use material on either.

2. You can search our database with a thesaurus term and one of our subject tags—you could, for example, enter the thesaurus: poetry and a tag: Maya Angelou.
3. We can help you with tricky punctuation: is it hard-boiled or hardboiled? Check our preferred terms.
4. Not sure whether to use a number or a word? Is it Nineteenth or 19th? Our thesaurus will guide you to the format which will retrieve the most information.
5. If you're unsure of the most appropriate ethnic term, consult our preferred terms list. You will find, for example, that 'African American Authors' is used for Afro-American Literature and Black Literature.
6. F. Scott or Francis Scott? If you're wondering what form of a famous name to use, turn to our thesaurus.
7. In an added feature especially useful for teachers, you can also search our thesaurus using the names of famous fictional characters such as Huckleberry Finn or the Great Gatsby.

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