ABSTRACT

MEGAN T. MYERS. A Girl’s Place in Space: Teaching Rhetoric through Contemporary Young Adult Science Fiction. (Under the direction of Professor Jason Miller.)

It is difficult to argue against the success of the formulaic writing used in young adult dystopian literature. However, because it was such a widespread and pervasive genre in popular literature, (and because the trend of young adult dystopian literature ended in 2014), it is now a worthy era to study. I argue that the overall trend of women authors writing about young female protagonists for a teenage girl audience is a progressive step towards gender equality, especially in the way that these women writers use interrogative rhetoric. Evidence of this can be found through categorizing and labeling the questions used in four novels from the genre (*Legend*, by Marie Lu; *The Program*, by Suzanne Young; *Origin*, by Jessica Khoury; *Matched*, by Ally Condie). By and large, these female authors are writing their girl protagonists as curious, extroverted, and most of all, willing to ask questions. In this way, female protagonists such as Lu and Condie are being rhetorically subversive (in terms of the number of questions they ask). In this regard, these female authors are challenging traditional gender norms by having their girl protagonists adopt male speech patterns. Here, I present this information through a Unit Plan for a 9th grade (or English I) classroom. The purpose of this Unit Plan is to have students understand the multipurpose use of language, how to analyze rhetoric, to recognize gender bias, to understand and practice the importance of world-building and characterization in storytelling, and most of all, to understand the difference between what is perceived through stereotypes and what is proven through data and textual evidence.