Twitter Thread by Nicholas A. Christakis



Nicholas A. Christakis
@NAChristakis

I had assumed that the #DisruptTexts movement was organic. But I recently discovered https://t.co/55JVkOeyO7, and I think that, in addition to publishers springing into action to meet market demand, they may possibly be playing a role in fostering abandonment of classics. 1/

Because, there is perhaps much less money to be made selling classics. 2/

I need to be VERY clear that I am wholly in favor of *expanding* the cannon and adding relevant, engaging texts for students in middle school, high school, and (of course) college. Students can and should read Baldwin, Marquez, Tan, Walker, Morrison, Malcolm X, and on and on. 3/

But this website suggests 'disrupting' so many valuable classics that one has to wonder if the interests of real education are being served.

For example, disrupt Shakespeare https://t.co/oLB38lXmRH

given "violence, misogyny, racism" in the texts. 4/

Disrupt "To Kill a Mockingbird"

https://t.co/7e020R5jaN

given Atticus Finch's alleged limitations and failings.

To be clear, few real persons have half the moral strength (& parenting skills) of the fictional Atticus Finch (Nelson Mandela or Sophie Scholl re the former?). 5/

Or disrupt "The Crucible"

https://t.co/LTSoRmjFK9

because doing so would stand in opposition to "mass hysteria & paranoia."

The irony is astonishing.

If you don't think young people can be taught, or learn from, The Crucible, you really have drunk the Kool Aid. 6/

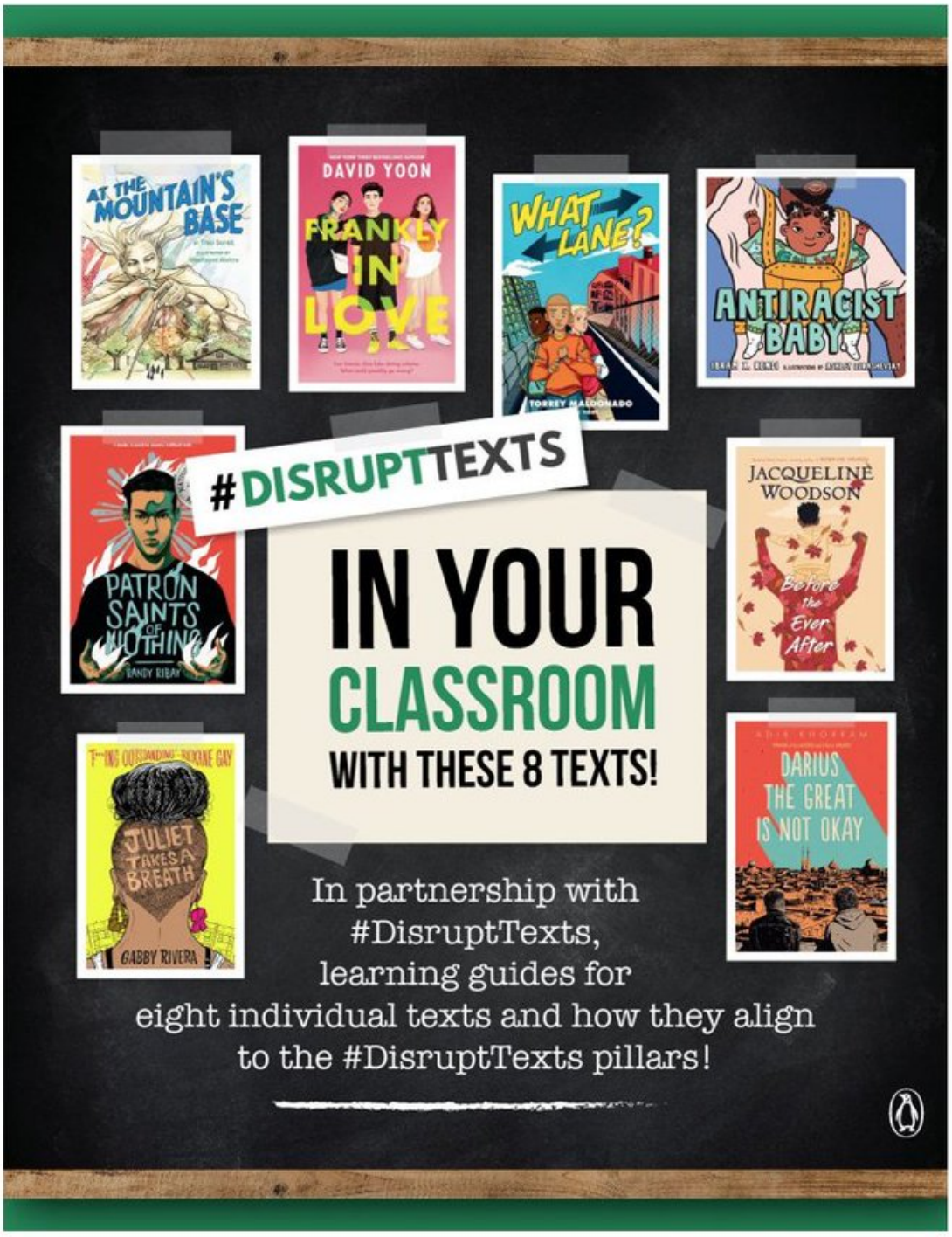
What would the authors of this #DisruptTexts website replace such books with? 7/

“Our team is excited to share that we have eight teaching & learning guides for texts [e.g., “Antiracist Baby” by Ibram X. Kendi] we believe can be integrated into classrooms tomorrow. We are thrilled to collaborate with Penguin to bring these guides to teachers everywhere.” 8/

Of course students can read these books. https://t.co/ng4ZPiPINO

I know it can be hard to find books that engage the hearts and minds of young people.

But I do have a problem with the *reasons* offered for why classic texts are not valuable. 9/



- *At the Mountain's Base* by Traci Sorrell
- *Frankly in Love* by David Yoon
- *What Lane* by Torrey Maldonado
- *Antiracist Baby* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *Before the Ever After* by Jacqueline Woodson
- *Darius the Great is Not Okay* by Adib Khorram
- *Juliet Takes a Breath* by Gabby Rivera
- *Patron Saints of Nothing* by Randy Ribay

And I have endless confidence in the capacity of good teachers to help students to understand and work through what it means to read an 'old' text, to critique it, to still see its value (incl its foundational impact on our society), and to rise up to write & say new things. 10/

In the end, I think this is a question of degree and balance. Teach The Crucible side by side with Beloved. To me, that is what real education is all about. 11/