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Windows to Critical Thinking: Perspectives on Pedagogy in Henry James's "The Bostonians", Carson McCullers's "The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter", and Frederick Douglass's "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave".

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Abstract

Many times teachers restrict students to viewing literature through a single "preferred" window or from a rather small set of tiny windows, thus hindering their ability to think critically and make choices for themselves. It is my contention that our pedagogy should facilitate a "school of windows" in which students are offered many different vantage points from which to "see" literature--an environment which, instead of monologically conditioning them to accept content without criticism or question, dialogically allows them their own place and importance in active discourse. This study delineates the power that literature has to enable students to acquire these skills. To illustrate literature's effectiveness as a vehicle for critical awareness and empowerment, I have chosen texts that can teach teachers about teaching and students about learning, ones which can teach students to analyze and question what they are being taught. These works are Henry James's *The Bostonians*, Carson McCullers's *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, and Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. All three texts depict the dynamics of student/teacher relationships: James's and McCullers's demonstrating models of negative teaching; Douglass's illustrating a positive model. While addressing the issues of race, class, and gender, each reading focuses on the intentions and motivations as well as the specific pedagogical practices of the teacher-figures in the novels. My goal is for these readings to serve as practical models with which teachers can begin to analyze their own pedagogical goals and methods which they employ in the classroom. By working together with our students rather than on them and by guiding them to see how dialogue and critical thinking work hand in hand, we might show them how to read and see literature from more than one perspective. Consequently--and even more important--we might enable our students to engender voices and intellectual identities of their own, and we might empower them to become "resisting readers" who are able to prevent themselves from turning into "things" molded by those authoritarian masters who call themselves teachers.

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Welcome to the LitCharts study guide on Carson McCullers's *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. Created by the original team behind SparkNotes, LitCharts are the world's best literature guides. *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*: Introduction. A concise biography of Carson McCullers plus historical and literary context for *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. McCullers then returned to New York, where she moved in trendy literary circles, became a member of the artists' salon February House, and made connections that would allow her to move to Paris after the end of World War II. McCullers had relationships with a number of women and often dressed in men's clothing—and yet in 1945 she remarried Reeves McCullers, who himself had homosexual relationships throughout their marriage. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* is an 1845 memoir and treatise on abolition written by famous orator and former slave Frederick Douglass during his time in Lynn, Massachusetts. It is generally held to be the most famous of a number of narratives written by former slaves during the same period. In factual detail, the text describes the events of his life and is considered to be one of the most influential pieces of literature to fuel the abolitionist movement of the early 19th century in