The purpose of this qualitative case study was to develop a deeper understanding of how 15–16-year-old students created meaning and critically evaluated canonical works through various methods, including a final multimodal project. A case study approach was used to investigate the following questions: how does teaching the students to use critical lenses help students develop their critical literacy skills; how does assigning student-made multimodal/film projects of canonical literature help students connect with canonical texts (including how they evaluate, reflect on, and understand the characters); and how does assigning student-made multimodal/film projects help students develop their critical literacy skills in general (including, perhaps, their understanding of social criticism in canonical works)? By focusing on these questions, this study hoped to uncover how students’ critical interpretations of canonical works could be broadened to help them understand critical social theory in their world, too.

For this study, nine 15–16-year-old participants’ experiences in a Sophomore English classroom were studied. Multiple data sources were collected: journal entries, observations, film projects, film artifacts, and interviews.

The results of the study revealed that students were motivated to read and evaluate canonical texts with critical lenses. Moreover, the students were motivated to
take their knowledge of critical literacy to create their own self-directed films of canonical works. The implications for future research and future instructional practices make this a viable option for teachers to incorporate into their classrooms to increase motivation and engagement with canonical works.