

Ina Løken Magerøy

Breaking the Rules

Suicide Literature and the Classroom

Master's thesis in MLSPRÅK

Supervisor: Rhonna Robbins-Sponaas

May 2020

Ina Løken Magerøy

Breaking the Rules

Suicide Literature and the Classroom

Master's thesis in MLSPRÅK
Supervisor: Rhonna Robbins-Sponaas
May 2020

Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Language and Literature



Abstract

Suicide is a well-known phenomenon worldwide and the third leading cause of death among 15-19 year olds (“Suicide”). However, the topic of suicide is not typically apparent in today’s classrooms, which possibly could be a unique arena for suicide prevention efforts. This thesis explores the controversy of bringing a stigmatized topic such as suicide into the classroom through literature within different genres. Written works provide students with multiple perspectives on an issue and help adolescents understand that they may need several perspectives on a text in order to develop a deeper understanding of the world. The portrayal of suicide is analyzed through the young adult novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher, and the autobiography *Cracked, Not Broken: Surviving and Thriving After a Suicide Attempt* by Kevin Hines. The young adult novel presents readers with the controversy of suicide within a genre that generally provide adolescents with hope. The novel presents issues regarding suicide through a realistic teen perspective, which ends with the suicide of Hannah Baker. The autobiography by Hines gives readers insight into the ambivalence experienced by those who battle with thoughts of suicide and into the struggles of having bipolar disorder. Important aspects concerning sensitive issues in the classroom is explored, such as the portrayal of suicide, establishing a safe environment, and how to bring knowledge of challenging topics into school. This thesis gives insight into the abilities that education, schools and teachers will have to possess to safeguard every student in the best possible manner. The thesis looks explicitly at how the books portray suicide differently and how they may complement each other in order to teach about mental health issues in the 9-13 grade classroom.

Sammendrag

Selv mord er et velkjent fenomen verden over, og er den tredje ledende dødsårsaken blant ungdom i aldersgruppen 15-19 år. Samtidig er ikke selvmord et fremtredende tema i dagens klasserom, som muligens kunne vært en unik arena for forebygging. Denne oppgaven undersøker hvordan man gjennom ulike sjangre av litteratur kan bringe et kontroversielt og stigmatisert tema på banen. Litteratur gir studenter muligheten til å utforske ulike perspektiv og utvikle en bedre forståelse for sine omgivelser. Denne oppgaven analyserer selvmord gjennom novellen *Thirteen Reasons Why* av Jay Asher og *Cracked, Not Broken: Surviving and Thriving After a Suicide Attempt* av Kevin Hines. Novellen er skrevet innenfor sjangeren ungdomslitteratur som vanligvis kan bidra til å fremme håp. *Thirteen Reasons Why* tar for seg temaet selvmord gjennom et realistisk ungdomsperspektiv, som ender med at Hannah Baker tar sitt eget liv. Biografien av Hines gir leserne innblikk i de ambivalente opplevelsene personer som strever med tanker rundt selvmord kan oppleve og utfordringene som bipolar lidelse kan medføre. Viktige aspekt i forhold til sensitive temaer i klasserommet blir utforsket, slik som fremstillingen av selvmord, etablering av et trygt læringsmiljø, og hvordan man kan bringe kunnskap om vanskelige temaer inn i skolen. Denne oppgaven gir innblikk i kunnskap utdanningsinstitusjoner, skoler og lærere må tilegne seg for å kunne ivareta hver enkelt elev på best mulig måte. Oppgaven ser spesifikt på hvordan bøkene fremstiller selvmord ulikt og hvordan de kan komplementere hverandre i undervisning om psykisk helse i et ungdomsklasserom.

Acknowledgements

My years at NTNU are now coming to an end. I am so grateful for all the experiences I bring with me from the beautiful city of Trondheim.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Rhonna Robbins-Sponaas for excellent guidance and positive encouragement. A special thanks to my family and friends for valuable support and for always believing in my ability to succeed.

Trondheim, May 2020

Ina Løken Magerøy

Table of Contents

Abstract	v
Sammendrag	vii
Acknowledgements	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction	13
Chapter 2: The Portrayal of Suicide in <i>Thirteen Reasons Why</i>	21
Chapter 3: The Portrayal of Suicide in <i>Cracked, not Broken: Surviving and Thriving After a Suicide Attempt</i>	29
Chapter 4: The Potential of <i>Thirteen Reasons Why</i> and <i>Cracked, Not Broken: Surviving and Thriving After a Suicide Attempt</i> in the Classroom.....	38
4.1 Preparation	41
4.2 Literature Circles.....	43
4.3 Sociocultural poetry model	45
4.4 Concluding tasks	47
Conclusion.....	48
Works Cited.....	50
Appendix	58
- The thesis' relevance for the teacher profession	

Chapter 1: Introduction

Literature is a fundamental part of the world in which we live and reflects our lives and place in society (Renzi et al. 97). The medium involves all written works which promote knowledge (Clarke 53) and benefit readers' personal development and foster positive attitudes (Stan 456). Through text and imagination, literary works take readers on various imaginary journeys that move between real and represented worlds, truth and imagination (Thomson 7). Literature can take readers beyond space, time and self, and question the world as it is. It offers a variety of views, visions and voices that are necessary to democracy. It gives readers a unique opportunity to explore the human condition and ways to be human in the world (Wilhelm 63). Books intended for children generally feature thematic richness of fantasy, humanity and positive moral qualities in children. The scope of children's literature is childhood itself, filled with children's perception of life, including kindness, play, joy and friendship (Stakić 244). Perry Nodelman argues that a genre's uniqueness can be seen through its distinctive meanings and patterns. However, interpretations of children's books have revealed that they all tend to have the same or quite similar patterns and themes that are undetailed and simple, and few children's novels move beyond the stereotypical idea of traditional stories for children (5).

Although the genre of children's literature is characterized by similar means, it produces excellent books of good quality. The similarity of children's books to each other differentiates the genre from adult books, which in contrast are considered good by their differences in themes and patterns (Nodelman 6). The capability of literature to promote imagination and challenge values has been a consistent concept throughout time (Renzi et al. 97). According to Andreea Vertes-Olteanu, the characters, the content, the morals and lessons learned from children's literature are influential factors in establishing the individuals we visualize becoming (109). Although simplicity characterizes the genre of children's literature, it does not mean that the genre is superficial but rather that it can tell more with fewer words. The simplicity signifies quality rather than weakness (Stakić 250). "The conciseness, clarity and simplicity in composition, style and linguistic expression enhance the communication between the writer and the reader" (Stakić 249). Even though the genre speaks to children through its clarity, it does not mean that it lacks emotion as it still brings life to objects and encourages imagination and creativity (249). The simplicity also refers to the irregularities in the grammatical and syntactic forms which function to provoke laughter and cheerful reactions in children (250).

Children may see themselves as the books' literary heroes and identify with the book's characters through a language of naive thinking that the child understands (247).

Literary works for children and youth do not typically suffer from dark scenes from reality as children typically do not relate to dark and destructive themes, but rather works of bright tones and happy endings (Stakić 246). Mirjana Stakić argues that issues such as poverty and disease are not suitable for younger children because they may struggle with making a clear boundary between fiction and reality (246). However, on their way into teenage years, children's life experience is more substantial. The naive thinking in children's books that tell them that life is like a fairytale may not convince them anymore. According to Stakić, adolescents are attracted by literary themes that are difficult to classify as children's literature because their thinking and their emotions occupy issues arising from complex, existential and ethical problems (246). L. P. Spear notes that adolescence represents a period of cognitive, emotional, physical and social shifts from childhood and adulthood (qtd. in Watson and Gable 108). They experience not only physical maturation but also cognitive developments (Watson and Gable 108). Even though they mature and their abilities to process information accelerates, they are not yet adults. They are not able to regulate their behavior in the same way as adults and can find literature useful in the process of how to cope with difficult experiences and handling diverse situations (109). A genre of literature that has emerged as distinct from both adult and children's books is 'Young Adult Literature' (YAL) (Ostenson and Wadham 5). The genre aims specifically at adolescents by addressing their voices, concerns and dreams (Bull 53). It attempts to portray authentic representations of adolescents' experiences and often addresses issues related to students' everyday life (Bach et al. 199). Young adults can be referred to as adolescents from ages 10 to 19, and Marci Glaus describes young adult literature as "texts in which teenagers are the main characters, dealing with issues to which teens can relate" (408).

YAL deviates from the framework of children's literature as it covers topics that children's literature categorizes as adult literature (Stakić 246). Through YAL, adolescents can speak about how they see themselves in the text, and not just symbols, themes and characterization. Contemporary fare challenges the classics, such as Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850) and Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (1884). Even though these high school literary canons contain teen characters (Kaplan 19), they are long novels aimed to attract mixed audiences, not young readers specifically (Gubar 209). Gallo D. R. argues that most teenagers are not ready for classical literature as they do not deal with teenage concerns (34). Many children's authors

do not write for a specific age group, even though their books are categorized as children's or young adult literature (Gubar 209). The anonymous novel *Go Ask Alice* (1971) sparked controversy by its frank portrayal of teenage drug addiction in the 70s. The change in style and content from children's literature has modified the dynamics of adolescent literature within the last fifty years (Kaplan 20). Modern times bring modern problems, and there are now more books than ever that speak honestly and openly about the aspects of the lives of young people (19, 21).

Young adult literature often deals with adolescents' mental health issues such as the loss of a family member, bullying or identity struggles (Bach et al. 199). This reflects the increase in young adult books covering adolescents' mental health, seeing as one of five adolescents has a diagnosable mental health disorder, according to Wickham (11). Many adolescents are experiencing mental health issues due to the extensive pressure experienced from society, school and home, which leads to exhaustion, stress and depression (Madsen 119). Adolescents may resort to a strategy where they try to act in a certain way they believe the society expects. They abandon their impulses and how they want to act, in order to act in a way that is more similar to the idealistic pictures of how one should act. Consequently, they are waiving their personality traits to acquire traits that fit the norms better in order to obtain status (71). If adolescents do not experience reaching the goal of the idealistic image they have set out, it may lead to a sense of failure. Failure has a negative effect on adolescents' development and may lead to mental health issues such as depression (76). Depression is the highest risk factor for suicidal behavior in girls (Kutcher and Chehil 72). Even though it affects our mental health, the illness can also have negative physical consequences in forms of symptoms of heart palpitations, digestion issues, dizziness, reduced concentration, and reduced memory. The body and mind are connected, and it is not possible to see them separately as they affect each other (Van Roy and Larsen 254).

Characters with mental health issues appear not only within YA literature but also outside of YA literature (Wickham 10). However, the particular potential of the presence of mental health issues in young adult literature is that it provides teenagers with reading material that encourages them to reflect on their experiences through the story of the adolescent characters (Bach et al. 199). The potential emotional connection with the characters may help students handle their difficulties through learning about how others deal with similar issues; a process called bibliotherapy. The emotional attachment to the text develops personal growth and

motivation for reading (Stan 456). The world of contemporary realistic fiction holds a unique place in the lives of young adults. They worry about aspects of life, such as their appearance, feelings and attitudes, into which young adult literature gives them insight (Kaplan 20). Jonathan Stephens refers to young adult literature as “a story that tackles the difficult, and oftentimes adult, issues that arise during an adolescent’s journey toward identity, a journey told through a distinctly teen voice” (40-41). The teen voice perspective takes readers on a journey towards identity and gives young adults a unique insight into realistic portrayals of youth (41).

YAL is an emerging field that is vital for the academic, social and emotional development of young people (Hayn and Nolen 11). The genre has changed the view on mental health issues as taboo topics. Today, nothing is taboo for young adult books, and adolescents can easily find a book that covers their concerns (Kaplan 20). However, suicide has long been considered a taboo due to the fear of influencing young readers into suicidal ideation and is, as such, still a taboo today (21). Books about suicide give adolescents a sense of not being alone and the ability to consider the consequences of suicide without engaging in suicidal acts (Fisher 368). General readings on suicide are essential and may give adolescents a unique perspective on the issue and prevent harmful actions (369). Suicide is a severe mental health issue, and “the prevalence of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts in youth is high” (Cash and Bridge 613). Milde and Norevik argue that there exists a risk of suicide among adolescents at every school in Norway (4). Youth suicide is a significant public health concern, and The Center for Disease Control and Prevention shows a suicide rate of 5.18 per 100 000 among adolescents aged 12 to 17 years in the US (Sheftall et al. 2). Suicide is a global phenomenon and The World Health Organization (WHO) states that close to 800 000 people die due to suicide worldwide every year (“Suicide”).

Suicide and suicide attempts are significant societal issues that have occurred in all generations and within all cultures (Nybo 20). From a historical perspective, suicide has always been considered a mental illness and was stigmatized and associated with shame (11). Greek philosopher Plato condemned suicide and argued that churches should bury people who had taken their own lives outside of the cemetery, with no monument. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) developed rules that supported the church’s condemnation of suicide and argued that a person who kills himself was a murderer. A change in the view of suicide did not happen until the 1800s when philosophers and authors defended the individuals’ right to end their life and criticized the official view on suicide (16). Mental health has become a significant focus in today’s society through public conversations on mental health concerns. However, although

our society has become more open, there still exist prejudices towards mental illness and suicide (11). Stigmatization can lead to a sense of personal failure that may prevent people from seeking help, even though they identify a mental health issue (Heflinger and Hinshaw 61). WHO argues that it is vital to break down the taboo regarding mental health issues to make progress in the prevention of suicide (“Suicide”).

In order to prevent suicide, adults will need to acquire knowledge about risk factors and warning signs of suicidal adolescents. Risk factors refer to the characteristics and circumstances such as mental illness, bullying and academic pressure (Erbacher et al. 12-13). Warning signs, on the other hand, are visible signs such as depression, discussing suicide in their writings, or expressing a wish to die (13). Further signs may be the feeling of hopelessness, trouble concentrating at school, decreased school attendance, or change in behavior or eating habits (14). Warning signs seen separately may not be considered as suicidal triggers. However, if they represent a change in behavior or functioning there may be an underlying issue. Most adolescents experience one or more suicidal triggers such as school pressure, rejection, exclusion and the spreading of rumors throughout their teenage years. Although unpleasant, this is a normal part of growing up. However, some adolescents are more vulnerable than others and do not know how to cope with such issues, especially if they experience several triggers consecutively (Kutcher and Chehil 73). Many adolescents show warning signs of suicidal intent, but adults, such as teachers, will have to be aware of such signs in order to recognize them (Swing 80).

Suicidal ideation often emerges due to several conditions, such as a life crisis, arguments with family or friends, trouble at school, feelings of disappointment, or trouble in sexual orientation (Cash and Bridge 615). However, many adolescents do not know where and how to get help when they experience troubling emotions and often go online to search for the information they need. As John M. Grohol observes, adolescents today may go online to find help if they are struggling in life, as they often find the Internet convenient. The Internet does contain ways to get help, but it is also a place where students may encounter harmful content. Therefore, it is essential to safeguard adolescents by equipping them with knowledge and resources about sensitive topics and how to get help (qtd. in Aranjuez 46). Adolescents need to be taught that help is accessible and how to cope with difficult emotions through an approach where hope and future are emphasized (Bridge et al. 240). The preventative work by adults is essential, as responsible portrayals have the potential to promote awareness and get people to seek help

(236). Speaking about suicide is a delicate topic, but at the same time, it is a topic that is important to address to safeguard vulnerable adolescents (Nybø 47).

Openness about the topic of suicide is essential, but it is crucial to be cautious of descriptions of methods as that has proven particularly dangerous. According to international research, detailed descriptions of suicide or suicide attempts may contribute to more suicides (Nybø 13). In 1774, Johan Wolfgang von Goethe released a novel called *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, which triggered an epidemic of suicides among young European men (16). The epidemic became a phenomenon labeled the Werther effect, a phenomenon still used for suicide epidemics (17). In a Belgian newspaper, a suicide was described with the title “Sprang i friheten”, which can be translated as “A Leap to Freedom”. The method was copied by other young people who killed themselves in the same way after reading the newspaper; by jumping off a tower in a medieval castle (30). If literature that reaches adolescents wants to portray suicide, the literature should promote help and information rather than describing methods (37). The World Health Organization’s advice is to focus on the effects of suicide, rather than methods and glamorization of the decedent (“Hvordan forebygge selvmord” 6). The effects of suicide are severe and leave family and friends behind with a feeling of pain and guilt (Nybø 41). They often question what could have been done or said differently to change the outcome. Family and friends left behind may look back and figure out if there were any warning signs apparent, and how they could have approached the person to get them help (Kroning par. 8). Parents losing their child may express anger and guilt towards one another for not being able to save their child (Jaques 376). Siblings left behind may seek comfort in each other, but also blame one another, isolate themselves, or compete for their parents’ attention over their own grief. The loss of a family member to suicide can be considered the most painful way to lose someone to death (377).

One of the books that made suicide a topic of discussion was the young adult novel *Thirteen Reasons Why*, which speaks of realistic truths that break with earlier portrayals in literature (Kaplan 21). The novel narrates the suicide of a young woman named Hannah Baker. Hannah leaves behind a series of tapes recorded before she took her life, each addressed to particular individuals who played a part in her decision to end her life. The author wants to show readers how events such as bullying, sexual harassment, and the invasion of privacy interconnect (Chisholm and Trent 78). The novel is constructed as a real-life high school experience of rumors and class jokes, and how different events can affect people severely (Okpokwasili

1191). Netflix adapted the novel into a television series that premiered in March 2017, which became a popular series aimed at young adults (Cooper et al. 688). The title of the novel is *Thirteen Reasons Why*, with the number 13 spelled out. The title of the Netflix series uses the number 13 in its title. This thesis will reference them likewise. Critics have questioned both the book and the series' approach towards suicide (Campo and Bridge 610). After the release of *13 Reasons Why* experts have shared their concerns about the series affecting adolescents negatively and increased suicidal thoughts and behaviors among youths (Cooper et al. 688; Campo and Bridge 610). Ebele Okpokwasili, a Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellow, argues that the book ignores clinical and public health research regarding a teen's risk for suicide, particularly the significance of mental health issues (1191).

Another book that highlights the aspect of suicide through literature is the adult autobiography *Cracked, Not Broken: Surviving and Thriving After a Suicide Attempt*. This autobiography tells the story of a man with bipolar disorder who survives a suicide attempt. He experiences several challenges in his life and ends up jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. He is one of few who have survived a suicide attempt from that bridge, and tells his readers about his bipolar disorder, and the time before and after his suicide attempt. The author of the autobiography, Kevin Hines, shows the reader how he coped with his mental disorder and how he found purpose in life. Through his autobiography, readers will find that there often is more to a story of suicide than the act itself. He points out the important aspect of how the help system consisting of psychologists, therapists, and physicians helped him recover, and shows readers how he manages to live with a disorder that challenges him every day. Hines uses his suffering to help others through writing an autobiography and public speaking and advocating mental health.

Literature is a field that consists of several categories, such as autobiographies and young adult literature. These two categories allow for diverse perspectives through different literary genres. While young adult literature is a relatively new genre that often deals with contemporary realistic fiction (Kaplan 20), autobiography is a genre established around the 1800s which tells the story of the author's life (Bell 1). Autobiographies give readers a unique glimpse of the author's experiences through his or her perspective (Thomson 7). They are expressions of the writer's character, values and experiences, as well as a source of historical information. When reading an autobiography, readers believe in the author's perception and understanding of his experiences, and readers expect to get an authentic representation of painful emotions and inner

thoughts (Bell 175). Young adult literature, on the other hand, shows teenagers that even at their darkest moments in life, there exists hope and positivity for their future (Cart 35).

Adolescents will find comfort in literature that presents issues related to their lives, both young adult literature and non-young adult literature. Even though books that deal with suicide may be seen as controversial to bring into an adolescent classroom, these books may have a special effect on exploring the reality of the world from the safe distance a book provides (Gallo, D. 117). Don Gallo argues that due to people's diverse thinking, controversy is guaranteed as good books make people think (116). Students' cognitive development is promoted by analyzing two different literary genres, such as fiction, to another genre, nonfiction (Ward et al. 136). This thesis will analyze the portrayal of suicide in the young adult literature *Thirteen Reasons Why* in Chapter 2 and the adult autobiography *Cracked, Not Broken* in Chapter 3. These books will not be representative for the whole genre of young adult novels and autobiographies, but rather serve as an example of how teachers can bring different genres dealing with suicide into the high school classroom. By analyzing benefits and implications of *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Cracked, Not Broken*, teachers may get a clearer picture of how they can deal with such books, and how these books can function as a resource for introducing sensitive topics to their students. Chapter Four will, therefore, look at how these books could be implemented in the classroom, educating students about the sensitive topic of suicide.

Chapter 2: The Portrayal of Suicide in *Thirteen Reasons Why*

Jay Asher published the young adult novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* in 2007. In an interview conducted by Bryan Gillis, Asher expressed his interest in how several events in a person's life can push them to the point of committing suicide (543). The novel narrates the story of a young woman named Hannah Baker who leaves behind a series of tapes recorded before she took her life. Hannah addresses the tapes to particular individuals and explains how their actions affected her life negatively. Asher organized the novel by dividing it into sides of cassette tapes and tells the story through a dual narrative of Hannah and her friend Clay Jensen. Hannah's voice is a recorded voice, while the second voice is the thoughts of Clay listening to her voice. The development of the characters makes readers want to continue reading even though they already learn about Hannah's choice in the first tape. Asher has, through a posthumous narration, managed to capture readers' curiosity about the reasons behind her choice to commit suicide (Gillis 542). Asher guides the reader through all of Hannah's recorded tapes from a teen perspective and for a teen audience. The young adult novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* garnered several awards, including Best Books for Young Adults (YALSA), Young Adults' Choices (IRA), and Top Ten Book for Teens (Barnes and Noble) (543).

Okpawasili, argues that Asher's main focus is to show how adolescents and adults failed to respond to the crimes in the book, rather than mental health issues and the involvement of professionals (1191). During the interview with Gillis, Asher states that he wants adolescents to become more aware of their actions and how they can affect others (542). He does not present one singular cause for Hannah's death, but rather a set of adverse social events, false rumors, missed opportunities, and sexual harassment. The storyline takes place within a realistic high school social scene and places the book in a realistic outline in which students can relate. There are several warning signs of Hannah being a vulnerable individual struggling with her mental health. However, Asher seems to fail in identifying what makes Hannah vulnerable, and students reading the book may not be able to see such signs themselves but rather get drawn into Hannah's lived experience. Okpawasili is not convinced that other people's actions are the reason for Hannah's irreparable damage. He believes that it has to be more to her choice than Asher addresses. Okpawasili argues that the book lacks clinical and public health research regarding a teen's risk for suicide, particularly mental health issues, such as depression (1192).

Readers may find Hannah's potential vulnerability and mental health struggles by seeing between the lines of *Thirteen Reasons Why*. However, it may not be easy for students to associate the events and Hannah's background with suicidality. The snowball effect that ends with Hannah's suicide consists of several incidents of rumors, sexual harassment and bullying. Hannah might have produced the tapes to make every individual aware of how one negative event contributed to further incidents. Rumors started the snowball effect in Hannah's life, and she emphasizes how an innocent first kiss became ruined when the person Hannah kissed made up facts about the encounter. Further, she was voted the "Best Ass in the Freshman Class" as a result of previous rumors (Asher 37). "A rumor based on a kiss ... started a reputation that other people believed in and reacted to" (Asher 30). The uncontrollable aspect of life called rumors is a big part of this novel. One occurrence leads to several continuing incidents as a reaction to that first rumor. Hannah emphasizes that some people will find the events insignificant; however, every one of them matters for her (13).

Based on Asher's novel, Hannah is experiencing the feeling of hopelessness already after the five first incidents. According to Kutcher and Chehil, this emotion can be seen as a core symptom of suicidality and depression (3). Depression and the sense of hopelessness are both risk factors concerning suicidal ideation (Goldsmith 91). However, it seems that Asher fails to recognize the importance of mental health issues such as depression as he shows readers that rumors were the reason for Hannah's troubling mind. At the same time, Hannah is probably experiencing several issues related to suicidal thoughts besides her trouble with rumors as she had just moved into town and was new at school. Further, her parents' divorce and their financial issues also seem to affect her. Rumors may give people the feeling of hopelessness, insecurity, and a feeling of not being good enough. However, it is important to stress that rumors alone may not have the effect of giving someone suicidal thoughts. Rumors can cause a set of different emotions in people, which are tightly associated with a loss of personal control. Research has found an association between a lack of personal control and suicidal risk (Chang et al. 531).

Knowing that something is controllable may benefit a person struggling with troubling emotions (Kutcher and Chehil 37). It seems like Hannah is grasping on to the little things that she is able to control by making the tapes, as no one would have the opportunity to contradict her after listening to them. It gives her the power that she did not earlier possess. However, it shows the difficulties she had handling her thoughts and emotions. Hannah tried to reclaim

power by giving the individuals mentioned on her tapes specific rules to follow. Further, she sent every person on her list a map with about a dozen red stars that marked different areas around town days before she passed away. Hannah wants the listeners to visit those spots marked on the map as they listen through the tape, while Hannah tells them when and where to go. Low personal control is a high-risk factor for vulnerable individuals and places students at considerable risk for suicide (Chang et al. 531). Asher portrays Hannah as a young woman who lacks coping skills and positive social support, which are important protective factors to prevent suicide. It may be difficult for students to see the connection between lack of control and suicide, as Asher does not explicitly present the connection in the novel. According to Kutcher and Chehil, losing control is part of suicidal ideation, as the decision to commit suicide can symbolize a wish to regain power and to escape from the burden mental health issues can cause (37).

Asher provides readers with a strong message that rumors are destroying Hannah's life without explaining how other factors may impact Hannah's mental health. This aspect of the novel may have negative consequences on adolescents if they do not have the coping skills to understand that rumors are uncontrollable (Kutcher and Chehil 6). However, it is not only rumors that emphasizes Hannah's negative pattern, but also her being a victim of sexual harassment, invasion of privacy, and feeling a lack of safety. The novel shows how Hannah is sexually harassed and violated and how it affects her negatively. It also shows that those persons who harassed Hannah, do not share her view on the issue by arguing that she wanted it, and that she just wanted an excuse to kill herself (Asher 110). The book portrays women in a degrading manner, and not one of the boys who sexually harassed Hannah owned up to their crimes (265). Brakman et al. argue that sexual harassment is the reality for many adolescents and can be considered traumatic experiences (par. 2). Undoubtedly, Hannah's experiences of being violated and sexually harassed can be characterized as traumatic events. Kutcher and Chehil argues that such incidents are putting individuals at a higher risk for suicide (28).

Having people to trust in life is a significant aspect of maintaining good mental health, as meaningful individuals are influential protective factors in the risk of suicide (Kutcher and Chehil 25). However, after being a victim of bullying and harassment, Hannah did not find it easy to open up and felt rather unsafe and alone. Victims often lose trust in other individuals and struggle with opening up after experiencing traumatic events, even as adults. It suddenly becomes difficult to trust family, friends, and especially making new friends. This can affect

adolescent's development and well-being. They put on a front to protect themselves as their ability to trust others is significantly affected (DeLara 2383). As a result of rumors, sexual harassment, and being stalked at home, Hanna does not have any place where she can feel safe. When Ryan, the school publisher, steals one of Hannah's poems, "Soul Alone," and publishes it in the school's Lost-N-Found journal, Hannah feels like even her inner thoughts are exposed (Asher 192). According to DeLara, Hannah's experiences have negative consequences for her mental health in forms of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and suicidality (2382).

There are several warning signs visible throughout *Thirteen Reasons Why*, a fact that Hannah's friends, Clay and Tony express briefly towards the end of the novel. Clay, as mentioned earlier, is the second narrator in the book. Tony is the person to whom Hannah gave the second set of tapes (Asher 170, 233). Some of the most apparent signs are Hannah's attempt to change her hair, giving away prized possessions and her change in behavior. However, Asher does not mention anything about an underlying mental illness. According to Kutcher and Chehil, suicidal individuals often change their behavior, personality, or appearance as an attempt to take control which can signal that the individual is struggling (73). Many depressed individuals are relieved when they get help, and the rapid change is rather a cry for help than an attempt to get attention (3). Changing one's hair does not typically suggest that someone is suicidal; however, as a result of Hannah's experiences, it may be a relevant part of her last attempt for someone to reveal her plan. It is evident that Hannah shows signs of suicidality and that she needs help as she changed her appearance and behavior and gave away prized possessions, all associated with warning signs of suicidality (Kutcher and Chehil 74). Nevertheless, no one notices, or comments, on any of these aspects of Hannah due to fear or revenge (Asher 169). Her parents do not notice any signs due to their own family and financial issues, an aspect of life which also could trigger suicidal individuals (Kutcher and Chehil 72).

Besides changing her hair, behavior, and giving away possessions, Hannah tries to reach out to adults at school twice and partly blames them for not saving her. One of her attempts is to reach out through a bag arrangement that her teacher had set up in the classroom. Each student has one bag each, in which other students can put notes with kind words. Hannah uses that opportunity to put a note in the teacher's bag, saying: "Suicide. It's something I've been thinking about. Not too seriously, but I have been thinking about it" (Asher 170). Hannah further describes how they had never discussed the subject of suicide in class. It is difficult for her to understand that she is the only person fighting with the idea of not wanting to exist. Even

though Hannah carefully anonymizes her note, she reflects over the opportunity to get help and be rescued by that note (170). Mrs. Bradley brings the note up in class to have a class discussion on the subject of suicide. Mrs. Bradley explains that the topic of suicide has been a taboo for a long time, and about parents not wanting the public to know if their child took their own life. Asher explicitly states warning signs for suicide for the first time in the novel as the teacher hands out a flyer called *The Warning Signs of a Suicidal Individual*. One of the first signs is a sudden change in appearance, which makes Hannah wonder why no one has noticed her changing her hair (173).

Asher illustrates how adults failed Hannah several times, as she also tries to reach out to her English teacher and guidance counselor, Mr. Porter. He is the last person Hannah sees before she gives up her life completely: "I'm getting help. I'm asking for help because I cannot do this alone. I've tried that." (Asher 269). Hannah tells Mr. Porter that she finds everything difficult, including school, and that she feels empty and alone (271). She explains that she needs life to stop and that she needs his help because she does not want her life to stop (272). Additionally, she describes being a victim of rape by Bryce Walker and her thoughts about pressing charges. Nevertheless, Mr. Porter tells Hannah that one of her options is to move on, as Bryce is a senior and will not be at school next year. Hannah feels like no one is caring for her and she questions her reasons for living (278). "If nothing's about to change, then I'd better get on with it, right?" (Asher 279). Hannah leaves the office and waits outside to see if Mr. Porter will come after her. When he does not come out to see if she is all right, Hannah believes he is letting her go just like everyone else (279). Hannah puts her life in Mr. Porter's hands, and she tells the reader that he is one of the adults who could have been her salvation (269).

It is not only the victim herself who struggles concerning suicide, but also people left behind. A common feeling for loved ones left behind after a suicide is guilt. It is normal to have the feeling of failing to save the person close to them and trying to figure out what they could have done to prevent the person from committing suicide (Nybø 41). Hannah places guilt on every individual in her tapes, without considering how it would affect their lives moving forward. The first words Clay, the second narrator, hears when listening to the tapes is Hannah's voice saying that every person who receives the tapes is part of the reason why she killed herself (Asher 7). Her friends and family were already suffering from the fact that she had committed suicide. They may suffer more when they realize that Hannah particularly blames them (Nybø 20). Clay communicates his pain in forms of confusion and anxiety regarding what he has

possibly done to Hannah. He wonders what he could have done to save her and expresses a sense of hopelessness (Asher 10). As stated, the feeling of hopelessness is a considerate warning sign of suicidal ideation, which could have fatal consequences for the blamed individuals. Suicide is a complicated matter triggered by several factors, and blaming someone for their suicide, as Hannah did, may have fatal consequences as the individuals may resolve to the same emotions that made her take her life (Nybø 31).

Clay's emotions and reactions are a big part of this novel. The reader follows his journey through guilt, blame, and confusion as he expresses his reactions to the tapes throughout the book. Asher has managed to show readers how suicide affect loved ones, if the readers manage to relate Clay's emotions to Hannah's decision. As Clay listens to the tapes, he gets new information about what Hannah felt about their last encounter, and he does not get an opportunity to tell her what he feels after listening to the tapes (Asher 219). Clay finds it difficult not to blame himself (221). The shoe box, in which Clay found the tapes, makes an impact on every individual on Hannah's list, as they cannot go back and change the outcome (206). Clay feels much hate toward himself for giving in to the rumors and Hannah's reputation. "Because if I hadn't been so afraid of everyone else, ... Hannah might still be alive" (Asher 181). Asher illustrates the power of rumors by telling readers how Clay is too afraid of what other people might say about him if they knew he liked Hannah (285). Tony shares the feeling of guilt with Clay. Tony was also the one who got Hannah's bike and gave her the handheld recorder (233-234). After listening to the tapes, Tony quickly understands why Hannah needed the recorder, so he rushes over to her house; however, he is too late (235).

On March 31, 2017, Netflix released a series based on Asher's novel named *13 Reasons Why* (Bridge et al. 236). The series became popular and caused international attention from all over the world. Just in the month following its March premiere, the series was tweeted about 11 million times (Aranjuez 41). When the show premiered, all episodes were released simultaneously, making it possible for people to watch the series non-stop. According to Netflix, *13 Reasons Why* was the third most binge-watched show of 2017 (Bridge et al. 237). Hannah dies due to the ingestion of pills in the book in comparison to the graphic scene in the series where she bleeds to death in a bathtub (Aranjuez 43). The series sparked approximately 0.9-1.5 million more suicide-related internet searches within the first nineteen days after its release on Netflix. There was an increase in searches related to suicide prevention but also an increase in searches on how to kill oneself (44). Bridge et al. argues that the series ignores

media guidelines about avoiding method or suicidal behavior (236). Aranjuez claims that the way *13 Reasons Why* romanticizes suicide may trigger vulnerable individuals to imitate the act, referred to as the Werther effect (43-44).

Bridge et al. conducted a study through a statistical analysis comparing suicide rates before and after the series release. The study identified an increase in suicide rates for children and adolescents aged 10 to 17 years after the release of the first season of *13 Reasons Why*. They found that approximately 195 additional suicide deaths in the US in 2017 for 10- to 17- year-olds were associated with the series release (238). These findings are troubling as even before the series release, several mental health professionals expressed concerns about the series potential to promote suicide. The findings showed that adolescents are easier to influence, as the increase was mainly associated with this age group. Portrayals of suicide may have unintended negative consequences (240). Even though a series may have a positive effect on some parts of the intended group, it may harm the vulnerable part of the group (Nybø 35). When the series was released, the book gained new popularity and attention. Both the book and the series are known for their presentation of mental health and considered controversial (Walter and Boyd 615). The creators of *13 Reasons Why*, on the other hand, argue that the controversy could work as a preventive measure by showing viewers how disturbing and painful suicide is (Bridge et al. 236-237).

During the adolescent years young people experiment with different ways of being and expressing themselves. Some adolescents might have difficulties with the transition from childhood to adulthood and struggle with the pressure from school and home, including unrealistic pressure found in social media (Kutcher and Chehil 71). By analyzing possibilities for underlying mental health issues and drawing a connection from the novel to the risk factors and warning signs of suicidality, *Thirteen Reasons Why* is found to glamorize suicide and not show readers how to get help. Young adult literature usually does portray hope for adolescents, but that aspect of the genre is clearly missing in this novel, which may give Hannah's decision credibility, instead of showing readers that there are alternatives. Okpowasili argues that Asher's reason for not explaining Hannah's possible mental health issues may be due to the role of fiction, but also because he focused on the connection and consequences of various incidents rather than mental health (1192).

However, by analyzing the novel's portrayal of suicide, students may benefit from connecting aspects from the novel to other books. The events that Hannah is going through do have consequences for her mental health, including the events on her tapes, but also the factors of age, gender, family issues, and changing schools (DeLara 2385). Girls make more suicide attempts than boys. However, boys are more likely to die of the attempt by choosing more lethal methods. Adolescents are more short-sighted and impulsive than adults, which puts them at a greater risk of making the choice of going through with an attempt (Kutcher and Chehil 71). It is important to critically read the text and develop several perspectives on the issues Hannah experiences as the subject of suicide is not all black and white (Chisholm and Trent 75). Even though there are obvious reasons for the critique *Thirteen Reasons Why* has received, it has succeeded in its purpose to inspire conversation.

Chapter 3: The Portrayal of Suicide in *Cracked, not Broken: Surviving and Thriving After a Suicide Attempt*

Kevin Hines published the autobiography *Cracked, Not Broken: Surviving and Thriving After a Suicide Attempt* in 2013. As a nineteen-year-old, Hines tried to take his life by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. He survived, and his autobiography tells the story of his life leading up to his suicide attempt, and his road to recovery after his failed attempt (Hines 2). The Golden Gate Bridge opened in 1937 and is a recognized symbol of the city of San Francisco. The bridge stands 220 feet above the waters of the bay, and the suicide rate from the bridge has been relatively consistent since the bridge's completion in 1937 (61-62). However, Kim Larsen argues that it would not be possible to have an exact number on the attempts from the bridge, as the water may have washed bodies away (38). In his autobiography, Hines takes the reader on a journey of happiness and sadness, ups and downs. He gives readers insight into the ambivalence experienced by those who struggle with thoughts of suicide and into the struggles of having a mental illness called bipolar disorder. His motivation for sharing his story is the belief that suicide is preventable, and he wants to stop other vulnerable people from making the same mistake. Additionally, he wants to speak up for the people who never will have the opportunity to express their reasons or regrets of committing suicide (Hines 4). Hines describes his journey through life in a way that captures readers' interest and empathy. He presents and explains risk factors and warning signs in the context of his lived experiences and how he deals with those issues.

Hines' vulnerability for suicide is affected by several factors, some as early as his childhood. Hines opens his work by presenting readers with background information about being a child of mentally ill parents who struggle with drug addiction. Hines and his brother Jordache experience being abducted and maltreated by their parents until the San Francisco police place him in foster care. His brother however, dies less than two years old (Hines 6). Even though Hines does not explicitly connect his childhood experiences to his suicide attempt, he explains how it affects his emotional state. Being a victim of maltreatment and neglect are factors associated with a higher risk of suicidal behavior (Kutcher and Chehil 24). Additionally, both of his parents had mental health issues (Hines 8), which also increased their children's risk of mental health issues and suicidal ideation (Kutcher and Chehil 76). Hines was adopted by Debi and Patrick Hines when he was nine months old. He describes his adoptive parents as being his salvation, and he appreciates having adult individuals fighting for him (Hines 10). He grows up

with two other adoptive siblings; Elisabeth, who is eight months older than him, and Joseph, whom they adopted after Hines (11). Hines describes his life of privilege with family get-togethers, and a Christmas celebration filled with an abundance of toys and new clothes (12). He suddenly has a family life that consists of protective factors such as stability and positive social support (Kutcher and Chehil 6). However, when Hines is a junior in high school, his adoptive parents file for divorce and Hines is again affected severely by family issues which increases the risk of suicidality (Hines 34).

Hines shares the story of his sister by relating her harmful emotions to his own. Elisabeth's story has a valuable character in his autobiography as he compares her eating disorder with his troubling mind (16). Hines compares her disorder with his own, in the way that they are both struggling with inner demons. By telling her story, readers get insight into her journey towards becoming healthy and the importance of treatment facilities, physicians, psychiatrists, and therapists (17-18). Both Elisabeth and Hines experience bullying at school and he tells the readers about all the years where he was beaten, called names, and harassed. "Maybe I was the sort of kid who is always, inevitably, bullied" (Hines 22). Bullying can give adolescents a feeling of hopelessness and question whether or not they matter. Adolescents may end up feeling worthless due to the maltreatment of others (DeLara 2382), which again may lead to suicidal thoughts as bullying is one of the stressors that may trigger suicidal ideation in adolescents (Kutcher and Chehil 73). Nevertheless, Hines expresses strength and wants to use his experience to help others. He learns that he wants to be a person who helps other people through his experience of how painful it is to be a victim of bullying (Hines 23).

Before Hines leaves high school, the most apparent risk factor for suicidality emerges as Hines experiences becoming mentally unwell and develops a terrifying and threatening behavior. Doctors diagnose him with bipolar disorder with psychotic features (Hines 32). Bipolar disorder, with its depressive and mixed phases, is one of the diagnoses most often found in suicide deaths (Kutcher and Chehil 17). However, before Hines was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, he was struggling at school. He is more focused on his inner world, which consists of him being a hero, than the outside world, where other students are bullying him because of his appearance. His teachers see Hines as a bad listener who does not pay attention in class. However, due to his mental unwellness he is getting tired faster than other students as he hears every noise clearer than other children. He describes the painful effect of paying attention to

every detail around him, and about having trouble answering his teachers as he tries to parse the meaning of all those outside voices (Hines 24).

Hines shares facts about his mental illness throughout the book and gives the reader insight into how bipolar disorder affects the way a person thinks, acts and feels. Hines experienced a seizure caused by head trauma in fourth grade and was prescribed a medication called Tegretol. Tegretol undermines Hines's bipolar disorder up until he stops taking the medication in high school. Shortly after he stops taking the medication, he experiences the first symptoms of his mental illness (Hines 33-34). He describes rapid cycling, manic highs, extreme paranoia, auditory and visual hallucinations, grandiose thoughts, panic attacks, and depressive lows (50). According to Kutcher and Chehil, these are all symptoms associated with increased suicide risk (15-16). Some of his first symptoms are the experience of people with evil intentions conspiring against him. At that time in high school, he finds it difficult to cope with his changing moods, and he feels like the world makes less and less sense (Hines 38). He feels like his mental health sufferings are taking over his life (50).

Losing a loved one is a stressor of particular concern during adolescence (Kutcher and Chehil 73). Hines describes a troubling experience only months before he tried to take his life; he loses his mentor to suicide. This affects him severely (Hines 41). Losing someone to suicide can have a negative effect as other individuals close to that person may get the same emotions of hopelessness. His mentor's death tips him over the edge, and he attempts suicide only months later (42). Unfortunately, Hines uses alcohol to survive the pain of troubling life experiences and the symptoms of his bipolar disorder, both before and after his attempt (40, 87). As a result, his symptoms worsen since alcohol abuse is a risk factor for individuals with psychiatric disorders (Kutcher and Chehil 16). Hines explains the negative effect and connection between alcohol and suicidal ideation to his readers, warning them not to mix medication and alcohol. He points out that drinking like normal teenagers do is not typically serious. However, if you drink to deal with pain it may be particularly dangerous. Further, readers get a glimpse of the difference between drinking when having healthy mental health, and drinking in order to try to feel healthy.

One of the challenging aspects of bipolar disorder is that it can be hard to parse reality from hallucinations. This is particularly challenging as hallucinations may lead people into dangerous behavior. Command hallucinations accompanied by impulsivity are aspects of

bipolar disorder that are associated with suicidal ideation and can trigger a person to go through with a suicide attempt (Kutcher and Chehil 16). Hines describes several confusing episodes where he sees a hotel with 15 million occupants and interacts with those occupants like they were real (Hines 93). Further, the grandiose thinking makes him think that he can achieve things that are entirely out of reach, for instance, to become the president of the United States. When he is manic and feels like he can conquer the world, he convinces himself that he does not need his medication. However, every time he stops taking his medications, he begins to hear hallucinatory voices (103). These voices tell Hines that he does not deserve to live and that he has to find a way to take his own life. Hines further describes being in much pain and seeing suicide as his only available option. “There is a huge difference between believing you have to do something and wanting to do something” (Hines 3). Hines describes his illness in association with his suicidal thoughts as it is not himself that wants to end his life, but rather the voices in his head.

Command hallucinations are auditory hallucinations that tell the individual to execute particular actions, think specific thoughts, or act in particular ways. Command hallucinations that direct a person to engage in risk-taking actions, or to harm themselves or others, may have fatal consequences (Kutcher and Chehil 19). Such command hallucinations are the ones that Hines experiences, and he makes his suicide plan while listening to that voice (Hines 47). Hines describes being powerless, helpless, and seeing himself as a failure (48). He likens his symptoms to a battle he cannot handle anymore, and he is not able to think about brighter days (50). Persons who feel terrorized by their symptoms, in addition to experiencing suicidal command hallucinations, may be at particularly high risk for completed suicide (Kutcher and Chehil 19). Even though Hines does not explain this fact in his autobiography, he explicitly shows the reader that it is his illness that thinks and acts on his behalf. Individuals experiencing a depressive episode within the context of bipolar illness may be at an even higher risk of suicide than those who have depression outside the context of bipolar illness (17). Hines paints a picture of the consequences of the depression he experiences after a manic episode; he could barely get out of bed and was falling behind in every class (Hines 88).

Hines’ mix of experiences, his illness and family history are all aspects of his life that contributed to his struggles with the emotion of hopelessness. While listening to the hallucinatory voices in his head, he is looking forward to being free from pain (Hines 53), which is a normal thought of suicidal individuals (Kutcher and Chehil 37). He searches online for

information about suicide and finds several pages that encourages people to take their own life. One of the suicide recipes he encounters is jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge. People on different forums argue that a person who jumps from the bridge would die on impact from hitting the water (Hines 49). Having a suicidal plan is a considerable risk factor for an individual to go through with the attempt (Kutcher and Chehil 5). The more detailed and specific the suicide plan, the higher the level of suicide risk, and the suicidal method chosen is a significant factor in determining the risk of death by suicide. Globally, one of the most common methods of suicide is medication overdose. However, in many Western countries, jumping from heights is the lethal means chosen (14). It is generally more common for men to plan a more lethal method than for women, which means more men are successful in their attempts than women (9).

One of the apparent warning signs described in the book is that Hines gives away his most prized possessions, like his comic book collection and his CD collection. He states that he would not have done that if he was in his right mind. He also explains that his family and friends did not know at the time that giving away possessions in a hurry was a sign of suicidal ideation (Hines 46). Hines drops nine and a half of his twelve and a half units at school in addition to giving away his prized possessions. He expresses a wish that the counselor could have saved him by asking him why he wanted to drop those courses, but she did not (55). Giving away prized possessions and dropping almost every unit at school can be significant signs that something is not as it is supposed to be (Kutcher and Chehil 74). Giving away personal belongings may be part of an individual's suicide plan, which was correct in the case of Hines (14). In addition to giving away his possessions and dropping out of classes, Hines experiences a change in behavior the last weeks before he attempts suicide. Even though his father notices that something is different and gets in contact with Hines' psychiatrist, he assures him that everything would go back to normal. His dad also attempts to reach out to Hines; however, he had not yet reached the point of regret and pretends to be alright (Hines 53). The change in behavior is an indicator on his mental health and medical condition, and a sign that something is not as it should be (Kutcher and Chehil 73).

On his way to the bridge, Hines wavers between believing he has to die and desperately wanting to live. He explains how this reaction is common for someone contemplating suicide, especially someone with severe mental health issues. He tries to convince himself that he deserves to live and that he should go and get help (Hines 57). However, even though many victims of suicide

want to be rescued, not many reveal their plans. Questioning suicidal behaviors may not always work preventatively, but it may encourage individuals to seek help (Kutcher and Chehil 4). Several factors can impede the detection of and prevention of suicide, such as stigma and failure to seek help. Society's stigmatization of suicidal ideation considers suicide shameful, weak or selfish, which reinforces the secrecy and people not wanting to seek help (2). Hines argues that the stigmatization of suicide is dangerous, and points out that he did not share his thoughts about taking his life partly due to this discrimination. He convinced himself that he would get locked up if people found out about his suicide plan (Hines 54). Such beliefs may contribute to feelings of self-isolation in individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts, and shame and guilt in those who had loved ones who have committed suicide (Kutcher and Chehil 2).

Further, Hines makes an inner pact with himself about revealing his plan if someone asks him if something is wrong. Many depressed persons who have suicidal thoughts are relieved when they get help. Discussing these troubling emotions will likely save them rather than lead them to fulfill the act of committing suicide (Kutcher and Chehil 3). In his autobiography, Hines explains how a last try to back out from their decision is typical for individuals thinking about ending their lives (Hines 58). He explains to the reader that it is not his rational choice to jump from the bridge and that he wants someone to discover his plan (57). Even so, no one stops to ask him why he is in tears when he stands on the bridge so he feels like nobody cares, and jumps (58, 60). Strong religious beliefs are protective factors for suicidal individuals (Kutcher and Chehil 6); however, Hines had lost his faith in God little by little up until he jumped. When he understands that he is going to survive, he feels ashamed and regrets jumping off the bridge. Nevertheless, he is thankful to be alive, his feeling of hopelessness is gone, and his faith in God returned (Hines 63). Vulnerable individuals who attempt suicide often question their religious beliefs when they get suicidal thoughts. However, if they survive their attempts many suddenly begin to believe in a higher spiritual world, filled with hope and purpose for being alive (Rosen 291).

Even though Hines survives the suicide attempt, he has to recover from his injuries, both physically and mentally (Hines 67). When the doctors discharge Hines from the hospital, he has not yet healed mentally, and he is transferred to his first stay at a psychiatric ward (72). The years after he commits suicide he is in and out of hospital stays due to psychotic breakdowns, and experiences suicidal thoughts several times (88). Even though religious beliefs are protective factors for suicide, Hines suffers from a complex medical illness and psychiatric

condition. His bipolar disorder additionally to a previous attempt makes the risk for another one higher (Kutcher and Chehil 13). The period immediately following discharge from hospital presents the highest risk for suicide or suicide attempts (20). Further, patients who have had multiple psychiatric hospitalizations are at a higher risk (19). Hines does not explicitly explain the risk factors for committing suicide after one's first attempt. However, Hines gives readers insight into different psychiatric hospital stays, relating how they affected him, both positively and negatively. Hines explains what psychosis can do to a person, as it makes people do things they could never imagine themselves doing (Hines 98).

Hines tells readers about both positive and disturbing experiences from his stays in psychiatric wards, which both scares him and gives him hope. The most important message he gives to his readers is that by staying on a treatment plan, it is possible to heal. He wants to learn as much as possible about his condition and follows his plan of exercise, medication, talk therapy, and social interaction (Hines 75). Hines argues that most people with bipolar disorder have to be prepared to experience symptoms, even though they are working hard to heal. Even though there is no cure for the disorder, there exists hope. One can live and be self-aware of symptoms and follow a treatment plan in order to avoid psychotic breakdowns (101). This fact is essential for readers to understand, as many individuals who attempt suicide may have a mental disorder that will respond to appropriate and effective treatment. Appropriate treatment of a mental disorder significantly reduces the risk of suicide (Kutcher and Chehil 3). Hines finds faith and purpose in living, which makes him believe that he can live the life he wants even though he will never be cured from his illness (Hines 109). Hines describes his encounter with health personnel as both good and bad. Even though he describes one psychiatrist as tragic, most of his experiences with clinicians in the field of mental health are uplifting, empowering and life-altering (51). Positive therapeutic relationships are crucial protective factors for vulnerable individuals to open up and receive help (Kutcher and Chehil 6).

When Hines understands that his symptoms subside when he follows his treatment plan, he realizes that he can give hope to others struggling with mental illnesses and suicidal ideation (Hines 80). However, he has to heal before he can help others and is engaging in several therapy treatments, such as art therapy, cognitive therapy and group therapy (107). Hines's vision to help others is one of the things that keeps him going (101). Throughout his childhood, he is inspired by other public speakers, family, and his battles with demons, into becoming a mental health advocate. Public speaking and advocating about mental health became his purpose in life

(80). Hines explains how positive social support guides him through painful periods and how he begins to learn about his disorder. Some people show him that they are there for him by calling him, or writing him letters, while others give him books about his disorder and public speaking manuals (79).

Through his autobiography, Hines shows that there are more to a suicide attempt than one isolated incident. He points out the fact that suicidal individuals often have mental health issues, trouble at home, school, or with bullying. His book is a significant resource for showing students how complex the issue of suicide is, and how it affects a person both before and after an attempt. He also shows the fact that if someone actually attempts suicide, they will be at a higher risk for a second attempt. He shows the downsides of suicidal ideation, and the importance of the health system. He argues that it is important to remove suicide as taboo and promote the fact that asking for help is not shameful. Hines' father did not always trust in his ability to heal, but he later recognizes the potential of Hines' story and wants him to share it with broader audiences. He believes that Hines can be part of saving lives by telling his powerful story, and he became his guardian and his publicist (Hines 114). Hines is now a mental health advocate and global speaker (167).

Hine sheds a light on the fact that there have been several campaigns to build a suicide barrier at the Golden Gate Bridge (Fleming 18). Hines' first psychiatrist, Dr. Gregory, started one of the more recent movements for the Golden Gate Bridge by implementing a task force to raise the rail to make it more complicated to jump (Hines 107). Fleming argues that a barrier that is difficult or impossible to climb would reduce the suicide rate to nearly zero. However, people argue that placing a suicide net on the bridge would ruin the esthetic for which the bridge is known. Jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge is an available method and a romanticized place associated with suicide in the public mind, and it may actually be the esthetic that has made the bridge a suicide hotspot. It is a possibility that the bridge amplifies suicidal ideation in vulnerable people due to its status as the world's famous suicide icon (18). Fleming argues that the lack of effort to build a suicide barrier reflects society's ambivalence about people who struggle with suicidality (19). A suicide barrier would possibly discourage suicidal persons and change their minds. Even so, Rosen argues that a suicide barrier should be constructed in order to make attempts from the bridge less accessible (292). According to the Golden Gate Bridge website, a suicide deterrent net is being constructed to keep people from jumping off the bridge.

The construction began in 2018 and is expected to be completed in 2023 (“Suicide Deterrent Net”).

Hines describes mental health issues and ties them up to his suicidality. He does not focus on how all the events connected but instead explains each event as a link to his suicidal thoughts, as suicide is complex and influenced by many underlying factors (Kutcher and Chehil 31). It is important to remember that one protective factor or one risk factor cannot determine the event of suicide independently. The factors should be seen in context with the individual’s experiences, such as difficulties at home and school (5). Hines paints a picture of stressors that may trigger suicidal ideation, such as bullying, failure and loss of a loved one (Hines 41; Kutcher and Chehil 73). Further, he shows readers several warning signs present in his life, such as a change in personality and behavior and giving away valued possessions (Hines 2; Kutcher and Chehil 74). Hines manages to get through to the reader the vital aspect of psychiatric disorders in association with suicidal ideation (Hines 57; Kutcher and Chehil 15). He provides readers with knowledge of mental health and health care and gives insight into the importance of following a treatment plan and the positive support from health personnel. Most suicides happen when a person struggles with mental health issues, and therefore, they are not able to make rational choices. Reidun Kjelling Nybø argues that openness about suicide may contribute to uncovering suicide issues and possibly preventing them (89). Hines agrees on the point of openness and argues that suicide should be removed as a taboo topic in order for people to seek help. Hines claims that suicide is not inevitable and emphasizes the importance of the mental health care system (55).

Chapter 4: The Potential of *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Cracked, Not Broken: Surviving and Thriving After a Suicide Attempt* in the Classroom

The young adult novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* and the autobiography *Cracked, Not Broken* are books dealing with sensitive topics and portraying suicide. From different genres and perspectives, the books give readers insight into the world of hopelessness, difficulties, and the main characters' reasons for their decision to end their lives. Readers expect young adult literature to give them hope even though it deals with delicate and tough subjects (Cart 35). However, *Thirteen Reasons Why* deviates from these expectations, and students will find more hope in Hines's autobiography. By deviating from this norm, *Thirteen Reasons Why* shows the brutal reality of teenagers' struggles without showing them how to get help. Asher tells the story of how other individuals are the reason for Hannah's choice to commit suicide, without stressing anything about her possible mental health issues leading up to her decision. In *Cracked, Not Broken*, on the other hand, students get insight into how a troubled mind may make a person do things that he or she would not usually do. Throughout his book, Hines provides insight into mental health issues, the help system, and the importance of receiving help. He describes how a troubling childhood, bullying, and mental disorder influence the non-rational choice to attempt suicide. Hines points out that attempting suicide is something more complicated than just having a bad day.

The autobiography by Hines presents those individuals struggling with their emotions with ways to get help. The novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* and the series *13 Reasons Why* fail to account for how mental health issues could have played a factor in Hannah's decision to end her life (Aranjuez 45). Both Asher and Hines present suicide as the only available option; however, Hines states that he believed it was his only option due to his mental unwellness. He relates his suicide attempt to mental health issues and, in his case, a mental health disorder. The aspect of addressing mental health issues is crucial as bipolar disorder is a significant risk factor for suicide, and mental health issues are present in up to 80-90% of adolescent suicide victims (Cash 615). Nevertheless, societal issues found in *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Cracked, Not Broken* can generate meaningful discussions between students and give teachers an experiential understanding of adolescent life (Bach et al. 204). The books do complement each other by giving readers diverse perspectives on mental health and youth struggles, and the combination

of both books is useful for critical analysis and teaching about mental health in a 9-13 grade classroom.

Norway was among the first countries to develop a national strategy for suicide prevention in the 90s; however, Norway did not have a strategy from 2002 to 2014. *The Plan of Action for Suicide Prevention and Self-Harm 2014-2017* was, therefore, an essential measure (Mork 3). One of the fundamental actions of this plan was to promote mental health at school by teaching students how to receive help, mastering emotions and solving emotional issues. *The Plan of Action for Suicide Prevention and Self-Harm 2014-2017* argued that the implementation of measures on mental health issues in school should be an obligatory part of education (5). It is no longer in use, yet the government is stating that a new plan is in progress (Helse- og omsorgsdepartementet). However, from the autumn of 2020, a new core curriculum in schools will enter into force, which incorporates mental health within the section called *Health and Life Skills*. The section concerns providing students with competence around mental health and the ability to cope with troubling thoughts, emotions and relationships. The new section intends to make students capable of becoming responsible adults who make rational life choices (“Health and Life Skills”). Additionally, the World Health Organization has a superior *Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020* to safeguard international mental health as mental well-being is a significant part of WHO’s definition of health (“Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020” 5). Students’ mental health is essential for education as their mental health status impacts both their emotional state and their learning potential, as consequences such as reduced concentration and memory may affect their ability to focus in class (Scarpello 8).

WHO argues that suicide prevention should be executed by several sectors simultaneously, including the health and education sectors (“Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020”). School is a shared environment for children and adolescents and an essential location for suicide prevention efforts (Mcconnellogue and Storey 174). The National Strategy for Suicide Prevention considers teachers to be key gatekeepers. Through anti bullying and suicide awareness programs, adolescents are encouraged to turn to teachers if they are bullied or contemplating suicide (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 78). However, if adolescents are encouraged to turn to teachers, teachers will need coaching in how to respond to suicidal behavior. One way of doing this is by including young adult literature (YAL) in teacher education programs. Kristine E. Pytash argues that by using YAL in the teacher education programs, they will know how to handle similar incidents with their future students.

Educating future teachers about adolescent suicide and how to recognize students at risk should be part of the teacher education program in order to prepare them with the ability to handle possible situations in a protective manner (471).

Schools must give their teachers the competence needed to be able to support students through preventative measures and the learning processes involving sensitive topics (Milde and Norevik 4). Further, schools should equip teachers with the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to identify students at risk (Gould et al. 395). However, there exists a boundary between being a teacher and becoming a psychologist. Teachers are dependent on a system and cooperation between the school, families and health professionals, to secure a referral to professionals with the expertise to intervene in the case of suicidal ideation (McConnellloggue and Storey 180). As adolescents with mental health issues rarely search for adults and help in the ordinary help system consisting of psychologists and professionals, teachers' vital role is to identify warning signs and put them in contact with the correct expertise if they identify a student at risk (Milde and Norevik 5).

Bringing tough topics like suicide into the classroom may be an opportunity to deepen students' understanding of their daily life struggles. Even though students, parents and teachers fear the glamorization of suicide, it is essential to address and discuss the issue as it helps dispel myths surrounding suicide and function as a preventative measure (Swing 78). More recent research agrees that suicide may be prevented and may lose its label as a stigmatized subject through open conversations (Aranjuez 44). However, Okpokwasili argues that *Thirteen Reasons Why* lacks clinical and public health research on the risk of teen suicide, making it essential for teachers to find a way to approach the book in a safeguarding manner in order to avoid glamorization (1192). The American Association of Suicidology's president, Julie Cerel, argues that "irresponsible portrayals of suicide may direct vulnerable people to see suicide as the best option" (qtd. in Aranjuez 42). Therefore it is essential not to plant ideas in the minds of youth related to suicide being a viable option, but rather show them all aspects of suicide. That includes what leads to suicidal thoughts and the consequences of such emotions, and reminding them that help is available (Hinduja and Patchin 217).

Literature that reflects student's issues is absent from our classrooms (Renzi et al. 97). Educators have a special role in adolescents' life and substantial influence on their behavior. The school system is in a unique position to bring literature about suicide into the classroom

and provide accurate information (Wanda 114). There are, of course, multiple ways in which *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Cracked, Not Broken* could be incorporated into a classroom. With some consideration, a lesson plan using the texts might be organized in the following manner.

4.1 Preparation

Teachers have several responsibilities when bringing individual books into the classroom (Wolf et al. 183). The first consideration is to create a safe and comfortable classroom environment where students can explore and interact. A safe environment is one of support, in which learners with various abilities feel comfortable. When students feel safe, they are more likely to take risks by sharing their opinion and exploring a variety of texts (Kelley et al. 72). Through community building exercises, students will be able to establish the respect and trust needed in order to express themselves and their emotions (Miller 33). There may be some students who are more affected than others when introducing sensitive topics. Teachers have to be aware of how to support and guide them through the learning process of developing insight into mental health issues. Teachers should gain insider perspectives by reading the books and determining if any students have experienced traumas similar to those presented in the books (Bach et al. 202). Teachers should be prepared to handle possible situations and emotions that arise and make time to handle possible suicidal thoughts (Erbacher et al. 6).

Teachers' second task before bringing the two texts into the classroom is to establish the books' purpose. The material will engage discussions and reflections, challenge students' knowledge, and give them a picture of the world we live in. According to the Norwegian curriculum, schools should help students to be inquisitive and develop critical reflection ("Critical Thinking and Ethical Awareness"). The books will develop reading skills and reading habits through literary discussions and promote critical and analytical skills. Teachers should present and explain the books' purpose to her students in forms of learning aims. The goal of bringing these topics into the classroom would be to teach students how to handle difficult situations, about problem-solving, how and when to get help, and the importance of good mental health. Further, the books will give them several perspectives on the same issues through different literary genres which are sources of critical analysis. When dealing with tough topics, the goal should be to discuss and learn instead of looking for a concrete answer (Miller 33). Conversations about tough topics will explore the effects of myth-busting, promote social justice, and teach survival

skills (32). The vital message of bringing these books into the classroom will be to teach them how to receive help and handle difficult situations on their way to becoming robust adults.

The third aspect teachers will have to be aware of is the presentation of the thematic units within the concept of mental health raised in the books. Both *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Cracked, Not Broken* deal with topics that require teachers to be aware of specific possible issues. The teacher must present the issues of sexual harassment, suicide and bullying before letting students read the books. The teacher will have to assure herself that it is safe to introduce such topics into her classroom by mapping her students' mental health and previous experiences. Additionally, teachers should work with the topic of suicide over a couple of weeks, and in the context of what leads to the act of suicide and how it might be prevented. It is important to support them if students face potential issues and be aware of warning signs that may arise. Teachers should be prepared for possible conflicts and be ready to refer students to the school counselor. Suicide itself is the final act, so teachers should present aspects of suicide and mental health issues, rather than the specific act itself (Swing 80).

It is not only students who should be prepared for tough topics in the classroom but also their parents. Parents should know what students have been taught at school in order to safeguard them when they come home. *Thirteen Reasons Why* was introduced in a classroom setting, and at that school, parents perceived the book as a danger for their students by the topics the text raised. The adults may focus on the potential controversy, while students see literary elements and draw connections to social themes (Walter and Boyd 621). In order to discuss tough topics and empathize with students, teachers and parents will have to make an effort to understand adolescents' perspectives. The way the teacher frames the material is important, and as such, they should communicate their goals in employing texts in the classroom. Rather than treating mental health as taboo, situating a text as an opportunity for dialogue and understanding can solicit support for the students. One should select literature that reflects students' realities and authentic topics, such as bullying and mental health, and invite parents to participate in the discussion (622).

4.2 Literature Circles

The teacher may start with an informal discussion of the issues raised in the books to tune the students into the topics that will be debated (Swing 79). Further, the teacher can create literature circles where the class is divided into smaller groups. Literature circles create reflection and discussion on various questions regarding the books, and facilitate making connections between the texts and the world. Literature circles promote engagement, comprehension and interpretation where students draw on their own experiences in order to make sense of the text (Chisholm and Keller 24). They may learn how to relate to others by learning how to empathize with others' perspectives and by sharing their own feelings and perspectives (25). The method gives students a text-to-life experience by putting themselves into the character's shoes and developing insight into their own lives (31). Through supportive and critical reflections on several literary characters' circumstances, students may respond to questions that relate to the current situation to broader themes. Putting themselves in the shoes of a character may lead to emphatical responses, as students will use experiences from their own social worlds when reflecting around and understanding the situation of the character (29).

As an introduction to the following task, the teacher may ask her students about what made them curious to continue reading the books, as the authors reveal the outcome of both *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Cracked, Not Broken* in the beginnings. The students are divided into literature circles in order to get different insights and perspectives on the same issue to develop students' critical analysis. The teacher may give students specific tasks regarding one, or several characters, with guidelines that promote reflections and discussions. Students' ability to take on others' perspectives and empathizing with others will be accomplished through the literacy practice of literary discussions (Chisholm and Keller 25). In order to figure out how each student interprets the books and what they think about the presentation of mental health in each book, the following question can be asked:

Which similarities and differences can you find between the two books?

The groups may choose to get into different characters from the book, however, they should think about the characters role in the book. If they consider Hannah, they should consider Hines. If they consider Clay and Hannah's parents, they should consider parents and friends of Hines. Both *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Cracked, Not Broken* provide insight into the world of mental health issues. However, there are apparent differences in how those books portray suicide.

Asher's primary goal is to show how people failed Hannah, not what they should have done in order to help her. Hines, on the other hand, explains how each event affected him, how several persons helped him, and how he could have searched for help. Hannah's story deals with life at high school, while Hines's story goes beyond high school and follows him from his parents abandoned him as a child until he was an adult who educated other people about suicide and mental health issues. At the beginning of each book, the reader knows that both have attempted suicide. However, the big difference is that only Hines survived that attempt.

Even though *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Cracked, Not Broken* portray suicide differently in terms of mental health issues and the help system, they both present readers with warning signs and what to look out for in suicidal individuals. Both Hannah and Hines experienced bullying, parents getting a divorce, and low self-esteem. Further, they both present the reader with their method of taking their lives. They both gave away prized possessions, as Hannah gave away her bicycle, while Hines gave away his CD collection and comic book collection (Asher, 233, Hines 2). They both expressed a wish to get help, and they both consulted their counsellor in a last attempt to receive help. However, both of them also believed that no one cared about them in the last moments before their attempts. They placed their salvation in the hands of other individuals, hoping that they would reveal their plan. Further, they both had the feeling of hopelessness in the moment of committing suicide. They both also experienced an invasion of their private sphere, as Tyler invaded Hannah's bedroom and Ryan invaded her thoughts, while Hines was invaded by his own mind.

This question about similarities and differences is an interesting entrance into a discussion about warning signs and what to look out for in suicidal individuals. It will give the teacher an overview of whether or not her students have understood that these aspects of the books actually are warning signs, and they can teach students about the importance of noticing such signs. The goal is for students to develop the ability necessary to foster independent thought and action through tasks that ask them to analyze differences critically. Students' responses through literature circle discussions may mediate their analytical thinking, speaking and listening (Chisholm and Keller 32).

In order to see if the students have understood the broader picture of Asher's book, students could be asked to perceive Hannah's and Hines' perspective on the effect of the issues they experienced:

Why do you believe that Hannah called the thirteen incidents a snowball effect? Did you find a similar effect in Cracked, Not Broken?

Through emphatical and personal responses to characters' situations students will experience literary transactions that facilitate their comprehension of the text. They may get insight into their own lives through a text-to-life connection, through discussions on how their own words and actions can impact others and that words may affect people in different ways (Chisholm Keller 31). Students will conceive the book as a narrative, not worrying about the romanization of suicide, which makes it important to explain why Hannah and Hines found their solution as the only one possible. They will make connections with the issues regarding the snowball effect and emphasize with the characters (Walter and Boyd 621). Teachers may break this question down into smaller units, for instance, by asking them how they believe Hannah and Hines felt when they experienced being harassed and bullied. This may make it easier for students to understand what the snowball effect really means, several incidents related to each other. By facilitating students' understanding of such an effect, they can make a causal chain of the events Hannah and Hines experienced in order to understand the consequences of the diverse events (Chisholm and Trent 77). Students may learn that every student has the responsibility of standing up for both themselves and their classmates (80).

4.3 Sociocultural poetry model

Ingram has adapted a theory for cultivating empathy by combining personal responses to texts with critical reflection and comprehension. It is a sociocultural poetry model for discussing sociocultural poetry in the classroom, which makes students able to connect to the expressed lived experience in the poem (Ingram 86). In Hannah's tape number eight, students read the story about Ryan stealing Hannah's poem. Through an adapted version of Ingram's model, students can work with their emphatical responses of Hannah's poem, "Soul Alone." To begin with, the teacher explains the difference between the concepts of empathy and sympathy with the students, as empathy may be a complicated concept to understand as it refers to the ability to understand another's perspective and to recognize one's own emotional reaction (Kümmerling-Meibauer 127). After reading the poem, students may

- a) write down their spontaneous responses and discuss them in groups.

Teachers must be aware that *Thirteen Reasons Why* and the poem in itself may provoke emotional responses. These emotions should not be ignored but instead acknowledged and processed. A collective approach could be to ask the class if everyone is okay, or through an approach where the teacher acknowledges students' feelings in a private conversation (Ingram 86).

- b) Students can be asked to interpret the poem and look for what they see as its intended significance compared to Ryan's interpretation written by a person who struggles with accepting herself.
- c) The teacher asks her students how they believe Hannah felt while writing the poem. Which specific cues in the poem do you think represents Hannah's emotions?

The teacher may ask how the students feel after reading it; however, sharing one's feelings is not always easy. By identifying characters' emotions, students may more easily express their own emotions. It would be significant to first identify the characters' feelings in order to promote student's development of ways to share their concerns and issues (Ingram 87). The poem could also be related to the book itself, by asking students how they think Hannah felt when Ryan confronted her with his interpretation of her poem, and when he published her poem for everyone to see. Incorporating experience into literary discussions by asking if some students have had similar experiences as Hannah could be troubling when handling sensitive topics. However, according to the teacher's research on her students' well-being before introducing the books to the class, she would possibly know to what extent she could raise certain personal questions. Through an adapted version of Ingram's model, teachers can encourage students to validate their emotions and thoughts through reflection on others and their own lives.

Students do find bullying, suicide and harassment as interesting topics to discuss, and personal experiences may be meaningful and promote an authentic context related to students' own lives (Chisholm and Keller 33). The missing aspect of Hannah's vulnerability could be an entrance into a discussion on how every individual has diverse experiences and ways of dealing with difficult emotions due to their differences in childhood and societal experiences and a potential troubling mind. By analyzing what could have made Hannah vulnerable, adolescents can become aware of how people can get hurt by a comment even though they appear tough, and the importance of meeting each other with kindness.

4.4 Concluding tasks

What are your thoughts regarding mental health issues as a discriminated topic? Why do you believe that the topic of suicide is considered a taboo?

In order to create this concluding discussion, teachers may use the same literary discussions as earlier, by asking students to get into the role of the characters. One possible division could be to have some groups reflecting over *Thirteen Reasons Why's* portrayal of discrimination, while other groups interpret *Cracked, Not Broken*. The task should work in favor of reducing mental health issues and suicide as stigmatized and associated with shame. Both books are sources of how adolescents hide their issues regarding mental health in fear of bullying due to social stigma and ignorance (Wickham 10). Suicide is a personal and lonely action, and students should learn that it should be removed as taboo in order for people to speak about their suicidal thoughts and get help (Nybø 15). Both Hines and Hannah show the stigmatization of suicide through their inactions of speaking about their suicidal thoughts. Hines explicitly explains that he did not ask for help due to the stigma and discrimination, which emphasizes the importance of removing these topics as taboo in order to encourage adolescents to seek help (Hines 49). Attitudes related to mental health stigma seem to be well established at a young age, making it crucial to make students aware of such attitudes. If students are met with negative attitudes, they will have difficulties searching for help or uttering their troubled minds (Rodger 142).

The last, maybe most important, discussion would be to discuss the aspect of help in both books, and how their outcome could have been different. Students should be taught how to cope with emotions of hopelessness, sadness and loneliness, and how and where to get help. Communication is a crucial aspect of suicide prevention, and schools and teachers have an opportunity to teach, detect and help students struggling with mental health issues by putting them in contact with the right professionals. Students must know that help exists, and that their teachers are trustworthy adults who are there for them (Swing 82). Some tasks that could get students to see several options would be to ask them to make a list with 13 alternative decisions that Hannah could have made in each of her stories. They could also be asked to make a list of 13 alternative lessons they have learned for handling a difficult social issue in their lives. By working with alternatives students may reflect and discuss possible solutions to handle difficult situations in a healthy manner.

Conclusion

Teachers do not usually bring the topic of suicide into the classroom due to fear and lack of knowledge. Nevertheless, it is evident that pain and suffering are aspects of life, and the lack of good mental health may lead students to the feeling of hopelessness, failure and depression (Madsen 64). Young adult literature is a useful resource for bringing students' struggles and daily lives outside the classroom into a classroom context (Elliot-Johns 37). Adolescents often find comfort in literature that addresses their daily life struggles, both in young adult literature and non-young adult literature (Kaplan 20). The young adult novel by Asher and the autobiography by Hines have explored possible tasks in order to create a healthier class environment and safeguard students' mental well-being. Even though *Thirteen Reasons Why* has received its critiques on the issue of romanization of suicide, Asher makes an essential point in addressing the fact that adolescents' actions matter. *Thirteen Reasons Why* also serves as a source for motivation, build literacy skills, and might relate to students' interests (Bull 63). The combination of a fictional young adult novel with a realistic autobiography will teach students to critically interpret the aspect of suicide through different perspectives on reality. Even though *13 Reasons Why* deviates from giving readers hope, they will find hope and help in *Cracked, Not Broken*. The combination is essential in teaching students how to handle difficult emotions and situations found in *13 Reasons Why*. The main goal of bringing these books and the topic of suicide into the classroom is to teach them about how to handle difficult emotions, situations, how to get help and to recognize someone in trouble. Teachers must assure themselves that students understand the complexity of suicide by involving background knowledge, open discussions, and establishing a safe learning environment (Bach et al. 200). By engaging students in work with both *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Cracked, Not Broken*, teachers may effectively teach students that suicide is not the best and only option (Rodger 153). Teachers are encouraged to use literature dealing with suicide in the classroom in a safe manner to teach students that they are valued and not alone and that help exists.

Works Cited

- Aranjuez, Adolfo. "Confronting Images: Suicide, Rape Culture and Responsibility in 13 Reasons Why." *Screen Education*, no. 88, 2018, pp. 40–47.
search.proquest.com/docview/2278750997?rfr_id=info%3Axri%2Fsid%3Aprimo
- Asher, Jay. *Thirteen Reasons Why*. Razorbill, 2017.
- Bach, Jacqueline, et al. "Young Adult Literature and Professional Development." *Theory Into Practice: Young Adult Literature*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2011, pp. 198–205. *JSTOR*,
www.jstor.org/stable/23020783
- Bell, Robert H. *The Rise of Autobiography in the Eighteenth Century: Ten Experiments in Literary Genre - Augustine, Bunyan, Rousseau, Locke, Hume, Franklin, Gibbon, Fielding, Sterne, Boswell*. The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012.
- Brakman, Anita, et al. "Adolescents Too: Young People Affected by Sexual Harassment and Assault." *Contraceptive Technology Update*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2019, pars. 1-11.
search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ccm&AN=133953512&site=ehost-live
- Bridge, Jeffrey A., et al. "Association Between the Release of Netflix's 13 Reasons Why and Suicide Rates in the United States: An Interrupted Time Series Analysis." *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, vol. 59, no. 2, 2020, pp. 236–243. doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2019.04.020
- Bull, Kelly Byrne. "Identifying Obstacles and Garnering Support: Young Adult Literature in the English Language Arts Classroom." *Teaching Young Adult Literature Today: Insights, Considerations, and Perspectives for the Classroom Teacher*, edited by Judith A. Hayn and Jeffrey S. Kaplan, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012, pp. 52-65.
- Campo, John V., and Jeffrey A. Bridge. "Exploring the Impact of 13 Reasons Why: Looking for Light Amidst the Heat." *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, vol. 57, no. 8, 2018, pp. 547-549. doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2018.05.012
- Cart, Michael. "A Literature of Risk." *American Libraries*, vol. 41, no. 5, 2010, pp. 32–35.
search.proquest.com/docview/365464362?accountid=12870
- Cash, Scottye J., and Jeffrey A. Bridge. "Epidemiology of Youth Suicide and Suicidal Behavior." *Current Opinion in Pediatrics*, vol. 21, no. 5, 2009, pp. 613–619.
DOI: [10.1097/MOP.0b013e32833063e1](https://doi.org/10.1097/MOP.0b013e32833063e1)

- Chang, Edward C., et al. "Presence of Trauma and Suicide Risk: Personal Control as a Moderator." *Death Studies*, vol. 42, no. 8, 2018, pp. 529–533.
doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2017.1411991
- Chisholm, James S., and Bethany Keller. "Making Connections during Transactional Discussions: Adolescents' Empathic Responses to Thirteen Reasons Why." *The ALAN Review*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2017, pp. 24–34.
scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/v42n1/
- Chisholm, James S., and Brandie Trent. "'Everything... Affects Everything': Promoting Critical Perspectives toward Bullying with 'Thirteen Reasons Why.'" *The English Journal*, vol. 101, no. 6, 2012, pp. 75–80.
search.proquest.com/docview/1361834679?accountid=12870
- Clarke, George H. "What Is Literature?" *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 35, no. 1, 1927, pp. 53–71. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27534096
- Cooper, Michael T., et al. "Suicide Attempt Admissions From a Single Children's Hospital Before and After the Introduction of Netflix Series 13 Reasons Why." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 63, no. 6, 2018, pp. 688–693.
doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.08.028
- "Critical Thinking and Ethical Awareness". *Utdanningsdirektoratet*, 2017.
www.udir.no/lk20/overordnet-del/opplaringens-verdigrunnlag/1.3-kritisk-tenkning-og-etisk-bevissthet/
- DeLara, Ellen. "Consequences of Childhood Bullying on Mental Health and Relationships for Young Adults." *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, vol. 28, 2019, pp. 2379–2389. doi.org/10.1007/s10826-018-1197-y
- Elliott-Johns, Susan E. "Literacy Teacher Education Today and the Teaching of Adolescent Literature: Perspectives on Research and Practice." *Teaching Young Adult Literature Today: Insights, Considerations, and Perspectives for the Classroom Teacher*, edited by Judith A. Hayn and Jeffrey S. Kaplan, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012, pp. 41-58.
- Erbacher, Terri A., et al. *Suicide in Schools: a Practitioner's Guide to Multi-Level Prevention, Assessment, Intervention, and Postvention*. Routledge, 2015.
- Fisher, D. "The Literacy Educator's Role in Suicide Prevention." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, vol. 48, no. 5, 2005, pp. 364-373. doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.48.5.1
- Fleming, Anne. "Would a Suicide Barrier on the Golden Gate Bridge Save Lives?" *Psychiatric Times*, vol. 25, no. 10, 2008, pp. 18–19.

search.proquest.com/docview/204569039?accountid=12870

- Gallo, Don. "Bold Books for Teenagers: Censorship, Clear Thinking, and Bold Books for Teens." *The English Journal*, vol. 97, no. 3, 2008, pp. 114–117. *JSTOR*, DOI: 10.2307/30046847
- Gallo, Donald R. "How classics create an alliterate society." *English Journal*, vol. 90, no. 3, 2001, pp. 33-39. *JSTOR*, DOI: 10.2307/821305
- Gillis, Bryan. "Thirteen Reasons Why." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 54, no. 7, 2011, pp. 542-550. doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.54.7.9
- Glaus, Marci. "Text Complexity and Young Adult Literature." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 57, no. 5, 2014, pp. 407-416. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/24034480
- Goldsmith, Sara K. *Risk Factors for Suicide: Summary of a Workshop*. National Academy Press, 2001.
- Gould, Madelyn S., et al. "Youth Suicide Risk and Preventive Interventions: A Review of the Past 10 Years." *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2003, pp. 386–405. doi.org/10.1097/01.CHI.0000046821.95464.CF
- Gubar, Marah. "On Not Defining Children's Literature." *PMLA*, vol. 126, no. 1, 2011, pp. 209–216. Modern Language Association. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41414094
- Hayn, Judith A., and Amanda L. Nolen. "Young Adult Literature: Defining the Role of Research." *Teaching Young Adult Literature Today: Insights, Considerations, and Perspectives for the Classroom Teacher*, edited by Judith A. Hayn and Jeffrey S. Kaplan, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012, pp. 10-18.
- "Health and Life Skills." *Utdanningsdirektoratet*, 2020. www.udir.no/lk20/overordnet-del/prinsipper-for-laring-utvikling-og-danning/tverrfaglige-temaer/folkehelse-og-livsmestring/?lang=eng
- Heflinger, Craig Anne, and Stephen P. Hinshaw. "Stigma in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Research: Understanding Professional and Institutional Stigmatization of Youth with Mental Health Problems and Their Families." *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*, vol. 37, no. 1-2, 2010, pp. 61–70. doi.org/10.1007/s10488-010-0294-z
- Helse- og omsorgsdepartementet. "Verdensdagen for Selvmordsforebygging 10 September: Regjeringen Starter Arbeidet Med Ny Handlingsplan." *Regjeringen.no*, www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/verdensdagen-for-selvmondsforebygging-10-september-regjeringen-starter-arbeidet-med-ny-handlingsplan/id2610508/.

- Hinduja, Sameer, and Justin W. Patchin. "Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Suicide." *Archives of Suicide Research*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2010, pp. 206–221.
doi.org/10.1080/13811118.2010.494133
- Hines, Kevin. *Cracked, Not Broken: Surviving and Thriving after a Suicide Attempt*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013.
- "Hvordan forebygge selvmord: en veileder for mediefolk". *World Health Organization (WHO)*, 2008.
www.med.uio.no/klinmed/forskning/sentre/nssf/kunnskapsressurser/for-pressen/dokumenter/veileder-for-mediafolk_who.pdf
- Ingram, Michael A. "The Use of Sociocultural Poetry to Assist Gifted Students in Developing Empathy for the Lived Experiences of Others." *Journal of Advanced Academics*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2002, pp. 83-90. doi.org/10.4219/jsge-2003-420
- Jaques, Jodi D. "Surviving Suicide: The Impact on the Family." *The Family Journal*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2000, pp. 376–379. doi.org/10.1177/1066480700084007
- Kaplan, Jeffrey S. "The Changing Face of Young Adult Literature: What Teachers and Researchers Need to Know to Enhance Their Practice and Inquiry." *Teaching Young Adult Literature Today: Insights, Considerations, and Perspectives for the Classroom Teacher*, edited by Judith A. Hayn and Jeffrey S. Kaplan, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012, pp. 19-36.
- Kelley, Michelle J., et al. "Using Young Adult Literature to Motivate and Engage the Disengaged." *Teaching Young Adult Literature Today: Insights, Considerations, and Perspectives for the Classroom Teacher*, edited by Judith A. Hayn and Jeffrey S. Kaplan, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012, pp. 66-80.
- Kroning, Maureen. "From Our Readers: the Guilt Suicide Leaves behind." *American Nurse Today*, vol. 8, no. 6, 2013, pars. 1-10.
search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ccm&AN=103233231&site=ehost-live
- Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina. "Emotional Connection: Representation of Emotions in Young Adult Literature." *Contemporary Adolescent Literature and Culture: the Emergent Adult*, edited by Hilton, Mary, and Maria Nikolajeva, Ashgate, 2012, pp. 127-138.
- Kutcher, Stanley P., and Sonia Chehil. *Suicide Risk Management: a Manual for Health Professionals*. Blackwell Publishing, 2007.
- Larsen, Kim. "To personlige bøker fra Golden Gate Bridge." *Suicidologi*, vol. 22, no. 3,

- 2017, pp. 38–43. doi.org/10.5617/suicidologi.5884
- Madsen, Ole Jacob. *Generasjon prestasjon: hva er det som feiler oss?* Universitetsforlaget, 2018.
- Mcconnellogue, Sheila, and Lesley Storey. “System Constraints on Efficacious Teacher Behaviours in School-Based Suicide Prevention Initiatives; a Qualitative Study of Teacher Views and Experiences.” *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2017, pp. 174–183. doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2017.1288848
- “Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020”. *World Health Organization (WHO)*, 2013. www.who.int/mental_health/publications/action_plan/en/
- Milde, Anne Marita, and Annie Norevik. “Gatekeeper-modellen i skolen - erfaringer fra et pilotprosjekt om selvmordsforebygging.” *Suicidologi*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2017, pp. 4-12. doi.org/10.5617/suicidologi.5435
- Miller, Donna L. “Tough Talks as an Antidote to Bullying.” *English Journal*, vol. 101, no. 6, 2012, p. 30. search.proquest.com/docview/1030265451?accountid=12870
- Mork, Erlend. “Ny handlingsplan for forebygging av selvmord og selvskading.” *Suicidologi*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2015, pp. 3-6. doi.org/10.5617/suicidologi.2302
- Nodelman, Perry. “Interpretation and The Apparent Sameness of Children’s Literature.” *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1985, pp. 5-20. search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mlf&AN=1986023928&site=ehost-live
- Nybø, Reidun Kjelling. *Fra tabu til tema: selvmord i mediene*. Ij-Forl, 2007.
- Okpokwasili, Ebele. “Thirteen Reasons Why.” *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, vol. 50, no. 11, 2011, pp. 1191–1192. doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2011.09.004
- Ostenson, Jonathan, and Rachel Wadham. “Young Adult Literature and the Common Core: a Surprisingly Good Fit.” *American Secondary Education*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2012, pp. 4–13. search.proquest.com/docview/1287974967?accountid=12870
- Pytash, Kristine E. “Using YA Literature to Help Preservice Teachers Deal with Bullying and Suicide.” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 56, no. 6, 2013, pp. 470–479. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41827880
- Renzi, Laura A., et al. “Out of the Closet and Into the Open: LGBTQ Young Adult Literature

- in the Language Arts Classroom.” *Teaching Young Adult Literature Today: Insights, Considerations, and Perspectives for the Classroom Teacher*, edited by Judith A. Hayn and Jeffrey S. Kaplan, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012, pp. 95-109.
- Rodger, Susan, et al. “Supporting Students: A GRADE Analysis of the Research on Student Wellness and Classroom Mental Health Support.” *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2019, pp. 133–171. doi.org/10.1177/0829573516684069
- Rosen, D H. “Suicide Survivors. A Follow-up Study of Persons Who Survived Jumping from the Golden Gate and San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridges.” *Western Journal of Medicine.*, vol. 122, no. 4, 1975, pp. 289-294.
search.proquest.com/docview/82857772?accountid=12870
- Scarpello, Gary. “Lack of Sleep Could Be Trouble for CTE Students.” *Techniques*, vol. 85, no. 2, 2010, pp. 8–9.
web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=734691130640-4d87-8f5e8ba7e2814004%40sessionmgr4007&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGI2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=5081
- Sheftall, Arielle H., et al. “Suicide in Elementary School-Aged Children and Early Adolescents.” *Pediatrics*, vol. 138, no. 4, 2016, pp. 1-12. doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-0436
- Stakić, Mirjana. “The Specifics of Children’s Literature in the Context of Genre Classification.” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 19, 2014, pp. 243–251. [10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n19p243](https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n19p243)
- Stan, Ruxandra Viorela. “The Importance of Literature in Primary School Pupils’ Development and Personal Growth.” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 180, 2015, pp. 454–459. doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.02.144
- Stephens, Jonathan. “Young Adult: A Book by Any Other Name . . . : Defining the Genre.” *ALAN Review*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2007, pp. 34–42.
search.proquest.com/docview/212185629?accountid=12870
- “Suicide”. *World Health Organization (WHO)*, 2019.
www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide
- “Suicide Deterrent Net: Saving Lives at the Golden Gate Bridge”. *Goldengateorg*.
www.goldengate.org/district/district-projects/suicide-deterrent-net/
- Swing, Georgia Hanshew. “Choosing Life: Adolescent Suicide in Literature.” *English Journal*, vol. 79, no. 5, 1990, pp. 78–82.
search.proquest.com/docview/237283999?accountid=12870

- Thomson, Alex. "What Is Literature?" *The Edinburgh Introduction to Studying English Literature*, 2nd ed., edited by Dermot Cavanagh et al., Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2014, pp. 3–15.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). *National strategy for suicide prevention: Goals and objectives for action*, 2012, Washington, DC: HHS. www.sprc.org/library/nssp.pdf
- Van Roy, Betty, and Hege S. Larsen. "Når kroppen sladrer, bør helsetjenesten lytte med to ører." *Tidsskrift for Psykisk Helsearbeid*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2014, pp. 253-263. www.idunn.no/tph/2014/03/naar_kroppen_sladrer_boer_helsetjenesten_lyttemedtoer
- Verteù-Oltenau, Andreea. "Children's Literature as a Source of Jurisprudence." *A Serious Genre: the Apology of Children's Literature*, 1st ed., edited by Dana Percec, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, pp. 102-119.
- Walter, Brooklyn, and Ashley S. Boyd. "A Threat or Just a Book? Analyzing Responses to Thirteen Reasons Why in a Discourse Community." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 62, no. 6, 2019, pp. 615–623. doi.org/10.1002/jaal.939
- Ward, Barbara A., et al. "Crossing Boundaries: Genre-Blurring in Books for Young Adults." *Teaching Young Adult Literature Today: Insights, Considerations, and Perspectives for the Classroom Teacher*, edited by Judith A. Hayn and Jeffrey S. Kaplan, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012, pp. 136-149.
- Watson, Silvana Maria Russo, and Robert Gable. "Cognitive Development of Adolescents at Risk or With Learning and/or Emotional Problems: Implications for Teachers." *Intervention in School and Clinic*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2013, pp. 108–112. doi.org/10.1177/1053451213493171
- Wickham, Anastasia. "It Is All in Your Head: Mental Illness in Young Adult Literature." *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2018, pp. 10–25. doi.org/10.1111/jpcu.12641
- Wilhelm, Jeffrey D., 'You gotta BE the book': *Teaching engaged and reflective reading with Adolescents*, 3rd ed., New York: Teachers College Press, 2016.
- Wolf, Shelby Anne, et al. *Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature*. ed., New York: Routledge, 2011.

Appendix

The thesis' relevance for the teacher profession

This thesis allows teachers to enlighten themselves on students' daily struggles and look closer at their teaching practice. Teachers are a part of their students' support system and have an essential role in safeguarding students' mental health. The classroom is a significant arena to develop as individuals, create reflections, and several perspectives on how to solve every-day issues. According to the new core curriculum in Norway, which will enter into force from the autumn of 2020, mental health should be part of education. This thesis can be part of the efforts of bringing the topic of mental health into the classroom and making students become responsible adults who can deal with their thoughts and emotions. Although our society has become more open than in earlier generations, it still needs more openness around mental health issues, especially suicide. Suicide is still a taboo topic and a controversial topic to bring into the classroom. The fact that students' daily struggles are stigmatized emphasizes the importance of this thesis that investigates the possibilities of breaking down the stigmatization of mental health issues by discussing them in the classroom. It shows how essential it is to implement measures to deal with troubling minds and to build common ground on how to handle difficult emotions, and having a system in place to help students if teachers identify someone at risk.

The two books analyzed in the thesis deal with topics that are apparent in students' daily lives, and they may give teachers insight into students' struggles. Using books that teens can relate to may strengthen the teacher-student relationship as the student may feel that the teacher understands their situation as an adolescent. Adolescents experience much pressure from society, school, and from home, and their youth is a time where they develop as individuals and explore who they are. Teachers may be a big part of students' journey towards adulthood, and they can teach them how to deal with possible mental health issues through their role as a teacher. By bringing literature about mental health issues into the classroom, students may learn how to help themselves and others by reflecting on characters' situations. The critical relevance of this thesis to the teaching profession is for teachers to develop a better understanding of adolescent lives and teach students about problem-solving and how to receive help. Students' mental health is essential for education as their mental health status, emotional state and their learning potential interconnects. By including literature dealing with the topic of suicide in the classroom safely, teachers can guide students to make rational life choices and how and where to get help if needed.

