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In my thesis I explore how the high school English curriculum is determined, how certain works prevail through generations of students, and what makes these texts meritorious. In order to gain a better understanding of these topics I looked to the College Board and state standards for perspectives on the way texts are chosen for the classroom. Though diverse texts from the twentieth century seem to be welcomed into the literary canon, the choices of earlier texts remain stagnant. For example, despite Shakespeare's very frequent presence on the College Board's Advanced Placement English Literature exams, there are a limited number of his works that appear often—limited mostly to *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Julius Caesar*. To determine why these texts are so common, while others are seldom mentioned, I focused my attention on two of Shakespeare's plays—the very frequently studied *Macbeth* and the neglected *Antony and Cleopatra*. Using these texts as case studies, I looked first at *Macbeth*, searching for reasons why it is so often incorporated into the classroom. Materials from students, teachers, and education researchers explained that *Macbeth* is a relatively easy Shakespearean play to read and actually comprehend. After an analysis of the play, I applied the themes, characters and language to several AP exam questions, finding that it is indeed quite an applicable play for the high school classroom. Moving on to *Antony and Cleopatra*, however, led me to conclude that there are no distinct reasons why one play would be chosen over the other. *Antony and Cleopatra* explores similar themes to *Macbeth*, making it seem equally as relevant to the AP exam questions, as well as the classroom. However, it enables a deeper level of analysis of the female character, with

the power and gender relationships in this play providing more material from which students and teachers could draw a better understanding of the dynamics of the period. After comparing the two plays, I suggest that perhaps it is time to reconsider what texts are emphasized for the curriculum. While it is not important to remove texts, there are works that may have previously been neglected that could provide another dimension of depth to the current curriculum.

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