QUESTIONS:

- Does service learning enhance, or compete with, students’ engagement with course material in courses outside Education?
- Does service learning in literature courses suggest that literary study is incomplete unless it is “applied” or “useful”?

A typical objection to service learning in a literature course: “Service learning implies that the object of study is now the engagement with the community, not in addition to, but rather instead of the text itself. In service learning, one applies what one has learned in a new environment and uses the self-reflection required by that activity to encourage a more sophisticated and complex engagement with the subjectivity of others” (Bowen & O’Driscoll, Modern Language Studies, 42 (2), Summer 2013).

These excerpts from students’ weekly service learning blog entries show students using the service learning experience as a means of understanding literature they have read.

**LPratt:** As I was discussing with the people who were in the van with me in the car ride home, we said a lot of the students had accents that sometimes made it hard to understand what they were saying. At one point, Jessica was reading and she came across a word that I thought she mispronounced. Turns out she did not mispronounce it, it was only her accent that made it sound different to my ears. This reminded me of Eliza’s slight accent from Pygmalion, and how she continues to try and fix it, being very persistent the entire time. Jessica heard how the word was pronounced in my accent, and then both the girls proceeded to pronounce the word. When they later came across the word, they were able to say it without hesitation. [Makes a connection to a literary text, but doesn’t go far with it.]

**Paige:** This week I can easily relate my children to Eliza and her pronunciation when it came down to the help she received from Higgins in Pygmalion. I immediately could picture her having voice lessons and then go back to listening to my students do their phonics. As well as with Pygmalion I can try to relate it to The Children in Room E4 too. When listening to these children try to pronounce words it made me think if they were getting read to at home. But it was not only their reading that made me think about their home lives. One of the boys had his t-shirt on backwards underneath his sweatshirt and it was clear that it was on backwards. This made me question if he had dressed himself or if someone else at home did. If he did dress
himself why was this the case or why did it go unrecognized that his shirt was clearly on backyards? This reminded me of Jeremy. Maybe this boys parents were too busy and just wanted to get on with their days so they just shipped their son off to school. Or maybe he wasn’t even living with his parents and someone was just their filling the void. There clearly wasn’t much focus on him either way. I did not want to be so quick to assume but it definitely made me question and think a lot. [Connects SL experience to two literary works, including one from earlier in the semester.]

JNovak: This final session reminded me of the poem by Langston Hughes, English B. I have really taken an interest in this poem and find it intriguing. The character in the poem talks about how they can learn a lot from each other despite the difference in education level and surroundings. Even though I am much older and more educated, we could still relate to each other and learn from each other. I learned about their life outside of school and they learned about college and what life is like beyond grammar school. They were very surprised that the books that we read in school did not have pictures; I thought that this was very funny. [Uses SL experience to consider a poem we had read several weeks earlier.]