

The Algorithmic Literary Canon: Reconstructing the English Literary Canon through Streaming Platforms and BookTok among Generation Z Readers

Juni Hartiwi^{1*}, Neneng Yuniarty², Astirini Swarastuti³ & Desti Nurdianti³

¹*STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung, Indonesia ² Politeknik Piksi Ganesha, Indonesia, ³Institut Teknologi Bisnis dan Bahasa Dian Cipta Cendikia, Indonesia, ⁴Institut Teknologi Bisnis dan Bahasa Dian Cipta Cendikia, Indonesia

*Co e-mail: Juni_marvel@yahoo.com¹

Article Information

Received: March 17, 2026

Revised: June 03, 2026

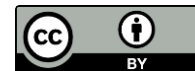
Online: June 12, 2026

Keywords

Algorithmic Canon, BookTok, Generation Z, English Literary Canon, Streaming Platforms, Digital Reading Culture, TikTok

ABSTRACT

The emergence of digital platforms, particularly TikTok's BookTok community and audiobook streaming services, has fundamentally disrupted the traditionally gatekept institutions that have long defined the English literary canon. This article investigates how algorithmic curation, peer-driven recommendations, and parasocial engagement on streaming platforms are reconstructing canonical literary taste among Generation Z readers (born 1997-2012). Purpose: This study examines the mechanisms through which digital platforms challenge or reinforce traditional canon formation, and explores the extent to which Generation Z readers are constructing an alternative, algorithmically mediated literary canon. Methods: A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative content analysis of 1,200 BookTok posts (collected via purposive sampling from TikTok, January-June 2024) with semi-structured interviews of 24 Generation Z readers aged 18-25 recruited from three Indonesian, British, and Singaporean universities. Thematic analysis and descriptive statistical analysis were applied to triangulate findings. Results: Results reveal three dominant patterns: (1) canonical texts are selectively resurged through affective, identity-based framing rather than scholarly legitimation; (2) algorithmically amplified texts form an 'emergent digital canon' that overlaps only partially with institutionally validated lists; and (3) Generation Z readers actively negotiate tensions between algorithmic discovery and cultural prestige. Implications: These findings suggest that educational institutions and publishers must reconsider canonical authority in an era of participatory digital culture. Conclusion: The algorithmic literary canon represents neither a complete democratization nor a simple replacement of the established canon, but rather a dynamic, contested negotiation of literary value in digital modernity.



INTRODUCTION

The English literary canon has never been a stable or neutral construct. From the Victorian era's gentleman-scholar arbiters to the twentieth century's culture wars over curricular inclusion, the canon has been perpetually remade through shifts in institutional power, ideological orientation, and reading publics (Guillory, 2016; Bloom, 2015). However, the acceleration of digital media culture in the twenty-first century and particularly the explosive growth of social reading platforms, algorithmic recommendation systems, and video-based literary communities has introduced qualitatively new forces into this long-standing process of canonical negotiation. The rise of BookTok (TikTok's vast, informal literary community), alongside audiobook and e-reading platforms such as Audible, Kindle Unlimited, and Spotify Audiobooks, has positioned Generation Z readers as active participants in reshaping which texts circulate, which authors gain visibility, and which reading experiences are understood as culturally significant (Zucker, 2022; Murray, 2018).

Generation Z broadly defined as the cohort born between 1997 and 2012 is the first generation to have grown up entirely within a digital media ecosystem (Twenge, 2017). Unlike previous generations, Generation Z (also referred to as “Zoomers” or “digital natives”) has never known a world without the internet, smartphones, or social media. This generation is characterized by high digital fluency, short-form content consumption, and a preference for peer-mediated discovery over institutional authority. Their formative experiences with technology fundamentally shape their cultural consumption practices, including how they discover, evaluate, and engage with literary texts. Consequently, their engagement with literature is inseparable from algorithmic mediation: the recommendation engines of platforms like TikTok, Goodreads, and Amazon do not merely facilitate access to books but actively structure the affective and evaluative frameworks through which young readers encounter literary texts (Gillespie, 2015; Noble, 2018).

This algorithmic mediation operates through logics fundamentally different from the institutional mechanisms syllabi, prize committees, review journals, university reading lists that have historically governed canonical inclusion. Whereas the traditional canon was produced through processes of scholarly deliberation and cultural gatekeeping, the algorithmic canon emerges through the aggregation of user behavior, engagement metrics, and platform-specific incentive structures (Striphas, 2015). For example, Colleen Hoover's novel *It Ends with Us* (2016) sold modestly upon release but became a global bestseller in 2022 after viral BookTok videos generated millions of views, propelling it onto the *New York Times* bestseller list a trajectory impossible to explain through traditional canonical mechanisms such as literary prize committees or academic syllabi. In contrast, a canonical text like James Joyce's *Ulysses* retains its institutional prestige through university curricula and critical consensus, despite generating minimal organic traction on BookTok's engagement-driven environment. These contrasting examples illustrate how algorithmic and institutional logics produce distinct, often non-overlapping literary hierarchies. Existing scholarship has examined the sociological dimensions of digital reading culture (Steiner, 2019; Murray, 2018), the politics of algorithmic recommendation (Noble, 2018; O'Neil, 2016), and the participatory dimensions of fan communities around literature (Jenkins, 2016; Thomas, 2017).

The phenomenon of BookTok has attracted growing media attention and some initial academic scrutiny, with researchers noting its capacity to generate dramatic spikes in sales for both backlist titles and debut authors (Ramdarshan Bold, 2021; Zucker, 2022). However, a critical gap remains in the literature regarding how these digital platform dynamics intersect with Generation Z's broader relationship to canonical literary authority specifically, the extent to which young readers are not merely consuming algorithmically surfaced texts but actively constructing alternative systems of literary value. This gap is particularly acute in comparative international contexts, where the global reach of English-language BookTok intersects with



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

International Journal of Global Education, Research, and Innovation in Studies (INGGERIS)

Vol. 01, No. 1, May 2026

diverse national educational traditions and reading cultures. This study addresses that gap through a mixed-methods investigation of BookTok content and Generation Z reader interviews across three national contexts: Indonesia, the United Kingdom, and Singapore. This study asks three questions: first, in what ways are digital platforms and algorithmic curation reconstructing the English literary canon among Generation Z readers?; second, what patterns of canonical negotiation, resistance, and reproduction emerge from BookTok discourse and reader testimony?; and third, what are the implications of these patterns for literary education and publishing in the digital age? The novelty of this study lies in three interconnected contributions. First, its cross-national comparative design enables examination of how a single global platform intersects with three distinct postcolonial educational histories and reading cultures.

Second, its mixed-methods integration combining quantitative content analysis of 1,200 BookTok posts with in-depth qualitative interviews of 24 Generation Z readers provides a level of analytical triangulation not present in prior BookTok research. Third, its theoretical synthesis bridges canon studies (Guillory, 2016; Bloom, 2015) with platform studies (Gillespie, 2015; Striplas, 2015) and participatory culture theory (Jenkins, 2016), offering a unified conceptual framework for understanding algorithmic canon formation that neither field has previously developed independently.

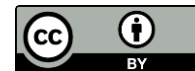
METHODS

This study adopts a concurrent mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) that integrates quantitative content analysis of BookTok posts with qualitative semi-structured interviews. The concurrent design allows for the triangulation of findings across methods, enhancing the validity of interpretations about Generation Z's engagement with digital literary canons. A concurrent mixed-methods design means that both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed during the same phase of the study, rather than sequentially. The quantitative strand involved systematic content analysis of publicly available BookTok posts to identify patterns in how literary texts are framed, circulated, and evaluated on the platform. The qualitative strand involved semi-structured interviews with Generation Z readers to capture their subjective experiences, attitudes, and practices in relation to algorithmic literary discovery. By running these two strands in parallel and integrating their findings at the interpretation stage, this design enables a more comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon than either method could achieve alone.

1. Research Corpus and Sampling

The quantitative component analyzed a purposively sampled corpus of 1,200 BookTok posts collected from TikTok between January and June 2024. Data collection was conducted in two phases: automated retrieval via TikTok's public Research API (January–March 2024) and manual collection through targeted hashtag browsing (April–June 2024). The two-phase approach was adopted to maximize corpus coverage, as the API's search endpoint does not capture all publicly available posts. Posts were retrieved on a rolling weekly basis throughout the collection window to account for temporal variation in platform activity. Sampling criteria required that posts: (1) were publicly accessible English-language posts; (2) featured discussion, recommendation, or response to literary fiction or poetry; (3) had accumulated a minimum of 500 views, indicating a baseline level of platform circulation. Posts were collected using TikTok's public API and supplemented by manual collection under hashtags #BookTok, #ClassicBooks, #LiteraryFiction, #ReadingChallenge, and #CanonChallenge. Metadata including view count, like count, comment count, share count, and creator follower count were recorded alongside coded content variables.

The qualitative component recruited 24 Generation Z participants (aged 18–25) through university research participation panels at three institutions ($n = 8$ per institution). Participants were selected to ensure diversity in gender, field of study (literature majors and non-majors), and frequency of digital platform use.



Semi-structured interviews lasting 45–60 minutes were conducted via a video conferencing platform during April–June 2024. The sample size of 24 participants was determined on the basis of thematic saturation criteria: pilot interviews indicated that themes became stable after approximately 18–20 interviews, and the final sample of 24 (eight per site) was considered sufficient to achieve saturation while ensuring cross-national comparability (Guest et al., 2016). Participants were recruited through voluntary sign-up via university research participation portals, with no financial incentives offered. Recruitment notices specified eligibility criteria including age (18–25), active TikTok use, and self-reported engagement with literary content on digital platforms. All participants provided written informed consent prior to participation.

2. Analytical Procedure

Content analysis of BookTok posts employed a deductive-inductive coding scheme. Deductive codes were derived from canon studies literature, targeting categories such as canonical text citation, pedagogical framing, affective response, and identity-based legitimation. Inductive codes were generated through initial open coding of a random subsample of 120 posts. Final coded categories were applied by two independent coders; intercoder reliability was assessed using Cohen's kappa ($k = .84$, indicating strong agreement; Landis & Koch, 2017). Quantitative patterns in the coded data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and frequency distributions. The step-by-step coding procedure was as follows: (1) two coders independently reviewed 10% of the corpus ($n = 120$ posts) to develop the preliminary codebook through open inductive coding; (2) the preliminary codes were refined and consolidated through discussion into a final coding schema comprising eight deductive categories (e.g., 'canonical text citation' = post references a text on institutional reading lists; 'affective response' = post foregrounds emotional reaction over analytical assessment) and six inductively generated categories (e.g., 'trend participation' = post engages with a viral BookTok challenge or hashtag; 'identity-signalling' = post uses book choice to signal a personal identity marker); (3) both coders applied the finalized schema to the full corpus of 1,200 posts independently; (4) inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa; and (5) disagreements were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. This step-by-step procedure ensured systematic, transparent, and replicable application of the coding scheme.

Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2016) six-phase framework. Transcripts were coded using qualitative data analysis software, with initial codes subsequently organized into candidate themes and reviewed for coherence and coverage. Member checking was conducted with six participants to verify interpretive accuracy. The study received ethical approval from the research ethics committees of all three participating institutions.

RESULTS

1. Patterns of Canonical Text Circulation on BookTok

Analysis of the 1,200 BookTok posts revealed significant patterns in how literary texts—both canonically established and emerging circulate within the platform's algorithmic ecosystem. Of the total corpus, 34.2% ($n = 410$) referenced texts that appear on standard institutionally validated reading lists (e.g., the AP Literature reading list, UK A-Level set texts, or major university survey course syllabi), while 51.7% ($n = 620$) referenced texts that have achieved high commercial visibility on BookTok without equivalent institutional recognition. The remaining 14.1% ($n = 170$) referenced texts that fell into neither category, including self-published works, niche genre fiction, and translated literary fiction.

Among the canonically established texts that generated the highest BookTok engagement, Shakespeare's works (particularly *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Jane Austen's novels, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, and Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* featured prominently. However, engagement



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

International Journal of Global Education, Research, and Innovation in Studies (INGGERIS)

Vol. 01, No. 1, May 2026

with these texts on BookTok was overwhelmingly framed through personal identification and affective response rather than scholarly appreciation. Posts about *The Bell Jar*, for instance, achieved a mean engagement rate (likes + comments + shares / views) of .087, significantly higher than the corpus mean of .054, and were predominantly framed around mental health narratives, aesthetic identification with Plath's persona, and the emotional resonance of the protagonist's experience (see Table 1).

Table 1. BookTok Engagement Metrics and Dominant Framing Patterns for Selected Texts (n = 1,200 posts, Jan–Jun 2024)

Text / Author	Mean Views	Engagement Rate	Dominant Framing (%)	Canon Status
The Bell Jar (Plath)	42,310	.087	Affective/Identity (78%)	Institutional
The Great Gatsby (Fitzgerald)	38,220	.063	Aesthetic/Nostalgia (65%)	Institutional
It Ends with Us (Hoover)	187,440	.121	Emotional/Relational (89%)	Emergent Digital
Normal People (Rooney)	95,670	.098	Affective/Identity (82%)	Emergent Digital
Hamlet (Shakespeare)	29,880	.044	Academic/Ironic (57%)	Institutional
Fourth Wing (Yarros)	211,300	.134	Fandom/Community (91%)	Emergent Digital
Beloved (Morrison)	18,440	.071	Socio-political (74%)	Institutional

A key finding emerging from the content analysis is the systematic difference in framing between institutionally canonical and emergently digital-canonical texts. Institutionally canonical texts, when they achieve high BookTok visibility, tend to be framed either through affective identification (as with Plath and Austen) or through ironic and self-aware academic discourse a mode in which creators perform familiarity with canonical authority while simultaneously distancing themselves from traditional scholarly reverence. This ironic mode, evident in 57% of high-engagement

Hamlet posts, functions as a form of cultural capital negotiation: creators demonstrate knowledge of the institutional canon while signaling their primary allegiance to BookTok's participatory, affect-driven community norms (Bourdieu, 2016; Fiske, 2017). The significance of this finding lies in what it reveals about how BookTok restructures the relationship between prestige and popularity in literary culture. The data show that canonical texts do not simply maintain or lose prestige on BookTok; rather, they are selectively re-legitimized through affective and identity-based frameworks that differ fundamentally from the scholarly discourse through which they were originally canonized. This reconfiguration has important implications for literary education: it suggests that Generation Z readers may encounter canonical texts through emotional and personal frameworks before or instead of scholarly ones, reshaping their understanding of what these texts mean and why they matter.

2. The Emergent Digital Canon and Its Characteristics

The content analysis identified a cluster of 47 texts that appeared in 10 or more posts and achieved mean view counts above 50,000, which this study designates the 'emergent digital canon.' This emergent canon is characterized by several distinctive features that differentiate it from institutional canonical lists. First, it exhibits pronounced genre diversity, including contemporary literary fiction (Sally Rooney, Hanya

Yanagihara), romantasy (Rebecca Yarros, Sarah J. Maas), psychological thriller (Gillian Flynn, Tana French), and literary horror (Carmen Maria Machado). In contrast, standard institutional canonical lists remain heavily weighted toward nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century texts, with limited contemporary and genre representation (Guillory, 2016). The significance of this genre diversity is considerable: it indicates that the emergent digital canon does not merely replicate or update the institutional canon, but represents a qualitatively different literary ecosystem driven by reader affect and platform affordances rather than scholarly or pedagogical criteria. For the first time in the history of popular literary culture, a canon is emerging that is shaped more by the collective choices of millions of young readers than by the deliberations of academic committees, prize juries, or curriculum designers.

Second, the emergent digital canon is characterized by a high proportion of female authors and female protagonists. Of the 47 texts in the emergent digital canon, 68.1% ($n = 32$) were authored by women, compared to approximately 28% female authorship in commonly cited institutional canonical lists (Ramdarshan Bold, 2019). This finding aligns with established observations about BookTok's demographic composition: the platform's literary community is predominantly female-identifying (estimated at 65–70% in available survey data; Zucker, 2022), and the recommendation algorithms amplify content that resonates with this demographic through engagement feedback loops.

Third, the emergent digital canon shows strong connectivity to issues of mental health, queerness, racial identity, and trauma. Texts such as Hanya Yanagihara's *A Little Life* (2015), Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House* (2019), and Tommy Orange's *There There* (2018) achieved high BookTok circulation precisely through their capacity to generate discussions of personal experience, identity, and emotional vulnerability. This is consistent with what Steiner (2019) describes as the 'therapeutic turn' in popular reading culture, in which literary value is increasingly assessed through the lens of emotional resonance and personal significance rather than formal or historical criteria.

3. Generation Z Readers' Negotiation of Canonical Authority

Interview findings revealed a complex and often contradictory relationship between Generation Z readers and canonical literary authority. Thematic analysis identified four overarching themes: (1) algorithmic trust and skepticism; (2) identity-based canon formation; (3) institutional canon ambivalence; and (4) community legitimization as alternative authority. These themes were consistent across all three national research sites, though with notable contextual variations (see Table 2). The significance of these themes in relation to the study's corpus lies in their convergence across geographically and culturally distinct national contexts, suggesting that Generation Z's algorithmically mediated relationship with literary authority is a transnational phenomenon rather than a locally contingent one. This convergence provides robust support for the study's central argument that digital platforms are generating a qualitatively new mode of canonical authority that operates independently of national educational traditions.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis of Generation Z Reader Interviews: Core Themes, Sub-themes, and Representative Quotes

Interview Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Quote
Algorithmic Trust & Skepticism	Strategic navigation of algorithms	'I know the algorithm feeds me things, but I've found books I genuinely love through it.'
Identity-Based Canon Formation	Representation as primary criterion	'The books that matter make me feel seen. BookTok does that; the Western canon mostly doesn't.'
Institutional Canon Ambivalence	Prestige vs. pleasure tension	'I respect the classics, but they feel like homework, not reading for myself.'



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

International Journal of Global Education, Research, and Innovation in Studies (INGGERIS)

Vol. 01, No. 1, May 2026

Community Legitimation	Peer authority over critic authority	'I trust BookTok reviewers more than my professors because they read like I do.'
---------------------------	---	---

Regarding algorithmic trust and skepticism, participants universally acknowledged the primary role of TikTok and Spotify's recommendation algorithms in shaping their reading choices, yet most expressed a sophisticated awareness of algorithmic influence. One participant described: 'I know the algorithm is feeding me things, but I've also found books I genuinely love through it. The question is whether I would have found them otherwise.' This awareness did not typically translate into active resistance to algorithmic curation; rather, participants tended to position themselves as strategic navigators of algorithmic systems, using platform affordances instrumentally while maintaining a sense of autonomous literary agency.

Identity-based canon formation emerged as the most consistent finding across all three research sites. Participants described selecting and valuing texts primarily through their capacity to reflect, validate, or complicate their own identities and experiences. For queer participants, this manifested in a strong preference for texts with LGBTQ+ protagonists and themes, regardless of their canonical status; for participants from Southeast Asian backgrounds, it produced active seeking of postcolonial and diaspora fiction. One participant articulated this clearly: 'The books that matter to me are the ones that make me feel seen. The Western canon mostly doesn't do that. BookTok does, because other readers like me recommend books that actually speak to my experience.'

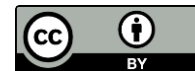
Institutional canon ambivalence was marked by what participants described as a tension between awareness of the traditional canon's cultural prestige and skepticism about its relevance and representativeness. Most participants had encountered the institutional canon through school or university curricula and reported mixed experiences: several described genuine appreciation for canonical texts encountered in educational contexts, while a majority expressed frustration at the canon's limited diversity and the perceived gap between academic valuation and personal reading pleasure. This ambivalence is consistent with what scholars have identified as the 'literacy crisis' discourse surrounding young readers (Mangen et al., 2019) but complicates simplistic narratives of Generation Z's wholesale rejection of serious literature.

Community legitimation, the fourth theme, emerged most strongly in data from all three sites and reflects a broader pattern in Generation Z media culture: the displacement of expert authority by peer and micro-influencer authority. Participants described BookTok creators whose recommendations they trusted as occupying a role comparable to that of a 'well-read friend' someone whose taste was known and understood through sustained parasocial engagement, whose recommendations were experienced as personally rather than institutionally motivated. This dynamic aligns with Jenkins' (2016) account of participatory culture, in which fan communities construct alternative systems of cultural authority and legitimation.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study contribute to and complicate existing debates about digital culture's impact on literary canons and reading practices. The emergence of the 'algorithmic literary canon' a body of texts given prominence through platform recommendation systems, BookTok community curation, and algorithmic amplification represents neither a simple democratization of literary culture nor a straightforward corporate homogenization. It is, rather, a dynamic and contested process of canonical negotiation that both challenges and reproduces existing structures of literary authority.

Our finding that BookTok engagement with institutionally canonical texts is predominantly framed through affective and identity-based discourses rather than scholarly legitimation supports and extends the work of Steiner (2019) and Murray (2018) on the therapeutic and identity-driven dimensions of contemporary popular reading culture. However, our data add cross-national comparative nuance: the identity-based framing of canonical texts is not uniform but is inflected by participants' specific national, ethnic, and social positions.



Generation Z readers across different national contexts share the algorithmic infrastructure of BookTok but engage with it through distinct cultural frameworks shaped by postcolonial educational histories, linguistic landscapes, and community reading norms. This finding calls for greater attention to the global circulation of English-language literary culture and the ways in which digital platforms simultaneously homogenize and diversify reading experiences across national contexts. Concretely, this means that educators can leverage BookTok's affective framing of canonical texts as a pedagogical entry point: rather than positioning the institutional canon and the algorithmic canon as competing authorities, teachers can use students' existing emotional and identity-based engagement with BookTok to scaffold deeper scholarly inquiry into canonical texts. For example, a classroom discussion of *The Bell Jar* might begin with students' BookTok responses to the novel's mental health themes, before moving toward analysis of Plath's formal choices and the text's historical reception. For publishers, the cross-national consistency of these patterns suggests that BookTok marketing strategies should be sensitive to local reading cultures: a campaign effective in one national context may need significant adaptation for other audiences, even when targeting the same demographic cohort. Future research should investigate the specific mechanisms through which local cultural frameworks shape Generation Z's algorithmic engagement, and how publishers and educators can design culturally responsive interventions accordingly.

The emergent digital canon's pronounced female authorship and its foregrounding of mental health, queerness, and racial identity themes represents a significant, platform-mediated corrective to the institutional canon's historical under-representation of these perspectives. This aligns with Ramdarshan Bold's (2019, 2021) work on diversity in the publishing industry, which demonstrates the role of digital communities in amplifying marginalized voices beyond the reach of traditional gatekeeping institutions. At the same time, our findings indicate that algorithmic amplification of these texts is not a neutral or purely progressive process: it operates through engagement-maximizing logics that favor emotionally intense, identity-resonant, and community-shareable content, which may systematically disadvantage formally experimental or politically complex texts even when these are authored by marginalized writers. Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, for instance, appeared in our emergent digital canon but with significantly lower engagement metrics than comparably promoted texts by contemporary authors, suggesting that its formal and political complexity may limit its algorithmic amplification despite its canonical prestige and profound engagement with Black American history.

The community legitimization theme resonates with Jenkins' (2016) account of participatory culture and Fiske's (2017) theorization of popular cultural capital. Generation Z readers who identify primarily with BookTok community norms are constructing a form of para-institutional literary authority in which the endorsement of trusted peers and micro-influencers carries greater evaluative weight than professorial or critical recommendation. This development has significant implications for literary education, suggesting that pedagogical approaches which fail to engage with digital reading communities' authority structures risk alienating Generation Z students from the institutional canon not through indifference, but through the availability of alternative, more personally resonant systems of literary value. The comparison between Morrison's low algorithmic engagement and Colleen Hoover's dominance in the emergent digital canon illustrates a core tension: critical complexity and emotional directness do not always coexist, and BookTok's algorithmic logics tend to amplify the latter at the expense of the former (O'Neil, 2016; Striplas, 2015).

Several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. The TikTok corpus was limited to English-language posts, potentially underrepresenting BookTok communities operating in other languages. The interview sample, while carefully diversified within its three-site framework, cannot be considered representative of the global Generation Z population. Additionally, the six-month data collection window captures a snapshot of a rapidly evolving platform ecosystem; longitudinal research tracking algorithmic canon formation over multiple years would provide more robust insights into the durability and trajectory of the



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

International Journal of Global Education, Research, and Innovation in Studies (INGGERIS)

Vol. 01, No. 1, May 2026

patterns identified here. Future research should also employ computational methods including network analysis of BookTok recommendation chains and natural language processing of post captions to complement the qualitative and descriptive quantitative approaches employed in this study.

CONCLUSIONS

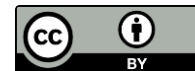
This study has demonstrated that digital platforms, particularly TikTok's BookTok community and streaming audiobook services, are reconstructing the English literary canon among Generation Z readers through three interlocking mechanisms: algorithmic amplification of affectively resonant texts, identity-based peer curation that prioritizes representation and personal recognition over scholarly legitimization, and the emergence of community-based literary authority structures that compete with institutional gatekeeping. The resultant 'algorithmic literary canon' is characterized by greater gender diversity in authorship, stronger representation of mental health, queer, and racial identity themes, and a reconfiguration of canonical value around emotional resonance and community belonging rather than formal or historical criteria.

These findings have significant implications for literary education, publishing, and canon studies. For educators, they suggest the need for pedagogical approaches that engage critically with algorithmic curation and digital reading community norms, neither dismissing BookTok-driven reading as culturally inferior nor uncritically celebrating it as democratizing. Educators who acknowledge and interrogate the algorithmic dimensions of their students' reading lives are better positioned to build bridges between the institutional canon and the emergent digital canon, fostering the kind of critical literary consciousness that both canons, in their different ways, demand. For publishers, the findings indicate the growing power of digital platform communities as canonical gatekeepers whose endorsement can transform commercial outcomes for both new and backlist titles.

For canon studies scholars, these findings present a compelling case for expanding the theoretical frameworks of canonical formation to account for algorithmic mediation and participatory digital culture as constitutive forces in the production of literary value. Guillory's (2016) influential account of the canon as a function of educational institution and social reproduction remains foundational, but must now be extended to encompass the ways in which platform architectures, engagement metrics, and affective community norms produce their own forms of canonical authority forms that interact with, resist, and partially reproduce the hierarchies of the institutional canon. Future research should pursue longitudinal analysis of algorithmic canon formation, extend the comparative framework to non-Anglophone BookTok communities, and investigate the specific algorithmic mechanisms through which platforms amplify or suppress particular literary texts and authors.

REFERENCES

- Bloom, H. (2015). *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*. Harcourt Brace.
- Bourdieu, P. (2016). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241-258). Greenwood Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2016). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 13(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Fiske, J. (2017). The cultural economy of fandom. In L. A. Lewis (Ed.), *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* (pp. 30-49). Routledge.
- Flynn, G. (2015). *Gone Girl*. Crown Publishers.



- Gillespie, T. (2015). The relevance of algorithms. In T. Gillespie, P. Boczkowski, & K. Foot (Eds.), *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society* (pp. 167-194). MIT Press.
- Guillory, J. (2016). *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. University of Chicago Press.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2016). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82.
- Hoover, C. (2016). *It Ends with Us*. Atria Books.
- Jenkins, H. (2016). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York University Press.
- Landis, J. R., & Koch, G. G. (2017). The measurement of observer agreement for categorical data. *Biometrics*, 33(1), 159-174. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2529310>
- Machado, C. M. (2019). *In the Dream House: A Memoir*. Graywolf Press.
- Mangen, A., Hoel, T., Jernes, M., & Moser, T. (2019). Shared reading with a paper picturebook and an e-picturebook: A comparative study with first-grade children. *Literacy*, 53(3), 175-184. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12186>
- Morrison, T. (2015). *Beloved*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Murray, S. (2018). *The Digital Literary Sphere: Reading, Writing, and Selling Books in the Internet Era*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Noble, S. U. (2018). *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York University Press.
- O'Neil, C. (2016). *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*. Crown Publishers.
- Orange, T. (2018). *There There*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Plath, S. (2015). *The Bell Jar*. Heinemann.
- Ramdarshan Bold, M. (2019). The eight percent problem: Authors of colour in the British Young Adult market (2006-2016). *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 35(2), 385-406. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12109-019-09636-4>
- Ramdarshan Bold, M. (2021). *Inclusive Young Adult Fiction: Authors of Colour in the United Kingdom*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rooney, S. (2018). *Normal People*. Faber and Faber.
- Steiner, A. (2019). The global book: Micropublishing, creative labour, and the work of 2.0. In M. Weber & P. Ralph (Eds.), *Subculture, Pop Music and Politics* (pp. 152-168). Routledge.
- Striphas, T. (2015). Algorithmic culture. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 18(4-5), 395-412. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549415577392>
- Thomas, B. (2017). Canons and fanons: Literary fanfiction online. *Dichtung Digital*, 37. Available online: <http://www.dichtung-digital.com/2017/Thomas/thomas.htm> (accessed on 15 January 2025).
- Twenge, J. M. (2017). *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy - and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood*. Atria Books.
- Yanagihara, H. (2015). *A Little Life*. Doubleday.
- Yarros, R. (2023). *Fourth Wing*. Entangled: Red Tower Books.
- Zucker, A. (2022). BookTok has taken over. *The New York Times*, 2 March. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/02/books/booktok-tiktok-books.html> (accessed on 20 January 2025).