Liberatory Education

After reading the novel *All American Boys*, write a well-developed multi-paragraph essay that explains the relationship between education and justice.

Justice cannot exist without education. In the novel *All American Boys*, the authors show that education is a prerequisite for justice. The authors use the character Quinn to represent that relationship.

For example, education exposes students to topics that make them uncomfortable, and that is necessary for a just society. In the novel *All American Boys*, the character Quinn witnesses the character Rashad being beaten by a police officer. Afterward, Quinn wants to avoid that topic, his school environment exposes him to other people’s perspectives. His classmates chant Rashad's name and another unknown student responds by saying the name of the police officer, Paul Galuzzo. Quinn admits, “I was pissed I’d just done the same goddamn thing and assumed it had been Rakhim or Malcolm” (136). This shows that Quinn is initially angry that the students make him uncomfortable, but this is crucial for him to realize his own racial bias. Therefore, by assuming the person who has said the name was black, Quinn realizes he might be contributing to injustice too.

Further, education gives students the language to describe injustice so that they can fight it. As he processes the beating he witnessed, Quinn reads a grammar lesson that is written on the board: “*Mistakes were made,* Mrs. Tracey had scrawled. Underneath it she had written, *Who? Who made the mistakes?”* (214). This lesson teaches Quinn about active and passive voice, and it also gives him a new way of thinking and talking about actions. Thus, Quinn realizes he must now decide whether he will passively stand by while others are committing injustices, or actively do what he thinks is just. Through a seemingly simple grammar lesson, Quinn begins to understand how verbs (and actions) lead to justice.

Likewise, education of the past allows students to envision a more just future. Quinn’s teacher assigns Battle Royal by Ralph Ellison for a reading. This story was published in 1947, but the themes of injustice still resonate with Quinn. Some of his classmates refuse to say the racial slurs in the story, and Quinn realizes “Nobody says the words anymore, but the violence still remains” (218). Quinn starts to imagine a world where the violence is in the past as well. Therefore, Quinn believes this kind of world is possible, and decides to work toward that kind of justice.