NEW HABITS OF MIND: INVOLVING STRUGGLING READERS IN AN ERA OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

By

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ABSTRACT

NEW HABITS OF MIND: INVOLVING STRUGGLING READERS
IN AN ERA OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

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Given the pressures placed on educators to ensure that no child is left behind, school districts are concerning themselves with the kinds of programs they must put in place for struggling readers. Traditionally, middle school students, who have been deemed "struggling" readers, have received instructional interventions described as "bottom-up" approaches, consisting of skills done in isolation, in tracked classes, or pull-out programs.

As a teacher researcher, using methods of qualitative inquiry, I explored and examined what happened in two Grade 6 Reading Essentials classes. Data for this study include students' written work, transcripts of audio- and videotaped reading discussions, and student interviews.

This study reveals how Grade 6 students deemed "struggling" readers learned to involve themselves and others as members of a literary discourse community, developed into highly competent, strategic readers, and markedly improved their standardized reading comprehension scores.

The results of this study suggest that in order to involve middle level students who struggle as readers, instructional interventions need to be re-mediated instead of the students themselves.

Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire.

William Yeats

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with gratitude that I thank the members of my committee for their guidance throughout this entire process. It is both humbling and awe-inspiring to surround myself with those who are not only accomplished scholars, but exemplary teachers as well. I especially thank my dissertation advisor, Doug Campbell, for his gentle nudges and insightful feedback that shaped my work in significant ways, and the ease with which he made revising key segments of my work, because he paid such close attention.

I thank Susan Florio-Ruane for her direction, especially from her own scholarly work with literacy educators and their students. Her work has greatly influenced my teaching practice, which has benefited my students tremendously. I am grateful to Troy Mariage for his time spent in conversation with me, especially concerning the ways in which he invited me to think about enhancing the chapters on discourse analysis. I am indebted to Dorothea Anagnostopoulos for her helpful commentary early on in the construction of this dissertation, and especially for the ways in which she influenced my own teaching strategies, when attempting to help students make meaning from expository text. She evidenced that "all teachers are teachers of reading" in her Education Policy Analysis course, and my own students found ways to connect with dense pieces of writing due to the influence her instruction had on me.

I thank Sue Koczara, Deborah Peck, and Kathy Heitman, my best girlfriends and "sisters" for knowing when to leave me to my writing and when to demand that I take a break. They exemplify the meaning of true friendship.

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I extend appreciation to Robert Papazian for keeping me "grounded" throughout this process and I took great joy in convincing him that qualitative research is *real* research.

I thank my principals, Mark Mulholland and Allan King, who supported my work and, especially, supported the students and their Reading Essentials program, and continue to do so. I am fortunate to work *for* and *with* these two outstanding administrators.

I thank Don Stevens, who bravely came into my life during the frenzied, final stages of this document's completion. He has been there to cheer, coax, read, listen, motivate, and problem-solve. He is extraordinary.

I owe my parents, John and Kay Harris, everything. As retired master teachers, they taught me early on that teaching is not a thing you do, but who you are. As parents, they always told me I could achieve anything and said often through this degree process, "You will do this because you *can*!"

Finally, I thank my students for their hard work in class and their authentic investment in this document. They were incredible editors, thinkers, and accomplished readers. Geniuses!

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Chapter 1

STRUGGLING READERS: SITUATING THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Middle level educators are feeling a great deal of pressure to put in place the kinds of literacy programs which will ensure that their students are not left behind. Traditionally, middle school students who have been deemed "struggling" readers have received instructional interventions described as "bottom-up" approaches, consisting of skills done in isolation, in tracked classes, or pull-out programs. Using methods of qualitative inquiry, as a teacher researcher, I explored and examined what happened when Grade 6 "struggling" readers were given opportunities different than they typically received. This study revealed how these students learned to involve themselves and their peers as members of a literary discourse community, developed into highly competent, strategic readers, and markedly improved their standardized reading comprehension scores. This study urges middle level literacy educators to re-mediate instructional interventions, and not the students themselves.

National reading crisis

According to the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress), statistics on the reading scores of our nation's youth indicate that more than 8 million students in grades 4-12 are struggling readers. Two in three high school students read below grade level and one in four reads *far* below grade level (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). These low reading scores mean that 70% of 8th graders cannot give details and examples to support themes they identify in a literary passage, or describe the purpose of an expository passage, and support their views with examples and details. Roughly 70% of

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12th graders cannot explain the use of irony and symbolism in a literary passage, or apply information or directions appropriately to read a practical passage.

Consequences of low reading ability

Low reading skills lead to low achievement. Each year, 1.3 million students do not graduate with their peers. Thirty per cent of students drop out of high school. Students in the bottom quartile of reading achievement tests are 20 times more likely to drop out than students in the top quartile (Carnevale and Desrochers, 2003; Kamil, 2003; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003). This means that each day, we lose 7,000 students. Only 62% of those seeking to enter the work force, upon graduation from high school, are prepared to do so. Of those students who attend college, 53% enroll in remedial courses. Over 68% are unprepared for college altogether (NCES, 2001;Greene & Forster, 2003; Swanson, 2004). Indeed the statistics are troublesome. The Federal government, therefore, sought ways to respond to the problem.

A federal response to the reading crisis

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act into law. This legislation, passed by a bipartisan coalition led by President Bush and Senator Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.), promised to close the reading gap between African American and Hispanic students, when compared to their Caucasian peers, and to improve the overall reading achievement of every student in America. With specific regard to reading improvement, schools and districts that received Title I funding were expected to make annual yearly progress (AYP), as determined by the state, by raising the achievement levels of students. Those not meeting AYP requirements for two

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consecutive years would be identified as "in need of improvement" and required to offer parents the option of sending their children to another public school within the district.

As President Bush explained in a January 8, 2002, speech at the University of New Hampshire, "If a school can't change, if a school can't show the parents and community leaders that they can teach the basics, something else has to take place. In order for there to be accountability, there has [sic] to be consequences. And the consequence in this bill is that after a period of time, if a parent is tired of their child being trapped into [sic] a failed school, that parent will have different options, public school choice, charter, and private tutoring" (Office of the Press Secretary, January, 2002).

Similarly, Senator Kennedy – who has since charged that NCLB has been inadequately funded and implemented – initially declared that the bill's "message to every parent" is "help is on the way." In one of many press releases celebrating the act, U.S. Representative John Boehner (R-Ohio), chairman of the House Education Committee, promised that "these changes represent a significant departure from the status quo, and will empower low-income parents with new options and new choices" (Office of the Press Secretary, January, 2002).

"Scientifically based" reading methods?

No Child Left Behind places special emphasis on determining which educational programs and practices have been proven effective through rigorous scientific research. Federal funding is targeted to support these programs and teaching methods that work to improve student learning and achievements. Given that federal funding is tied to evidencing a close in the reading gap, and proving that all children make adequate yearly

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progress, school districts and classroom teachers are questioning what kinds of reading interventions to put in place for their students that align with "scientifically based" methods of reading instruction.

According to the NCLB document (Public Law 107-110, January, 2002 115 Stat.), "scientifically based" means (A) research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs; and includes (B) research that –

> employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment; involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn; relies on measurements or observational methods that provide reliable and valid data across evaluators and observers, across multiple measurements and observations and across studies by the same or different investigators; is evaluated using experimental or quasi-experimental designs in which individuals, entities, programs, or activities are assigned to different conditions and with a preference for random-assignment experiments, or other designs to the extent that those designs contain within-condition or across-condition controls; ensures that experimental studies are presented in sufficient detail and clarity to allow for replication or, at a minimum, offer the opportunity to build systematically on their findings; and has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective and scientific review.

"Scientifically based" reading methods have been taking the form of commercial reading kits and programs, which are highly skill based and expose students to a scripted curriculum and an overabundance of phonics taught in isolation (Kohn, 2004). These scripted programs *do* allow students to do well on tests of phonics, but not on tests of comprehension (Vacca & Vacca, 2001). These results, however, are for early

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elementary-aged students. Statistics of the past decade show little improvement for middle level students, and declining scores for secondary school students (National Center for Education Statistics) when the instructional interventions are similar (McCardle, P. & Chhabra, 2004).

The "benign neglect of adolescent literacy"

In classrooms, teachers *are* seeing a visible number of students who are less proficient readers in grades 4 through 8. Too many learners are moving from elementary into secondary school with serviceable levels of skill in decoding and fluency, yet are unable to comprehend what is read (Wilhelm, 1997; Greenleaf, Jimenez & Roller, 2002; Brown, 2003). What counts as being a highly proficient reader demands more than being able to decode; one needs to enact strategies in order to make meaning, especially in the upper grades, when texts are used to learn new material (Pearson, 2004). Middle and upper grade students, when given "scientifically based" reading instruction, as described above, are unprepared for the demands placed on them with regard to what they must read and understand. Richard Vacca, former president of the International Reading Association, has characterized this situation as the "benign neglect of adolescent literacy" (1997, p. 1).

A call for the re-mediation of instruction

Given that commercialized reading programs, with an over-emphasis on phonics and other reading skills taught in isolation, are ineffective for middle and high school students (Stanovich, K. & Cunningham, A., 1992; Schoenbach, R., Greenleaf, C., Cziko, C. & Hurwitz, L, 1999; Moje, E. & O'Brien, D., 2001), this dissertation study explores an alternative form of instruction – one in which traditional reading practices are re-

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mediated and not the students. In this dissertation study, I explore, examine, and analyze an alternative form of instruction for struggling middle school readers.

Research questions

As a classroom teacher who was given the challenge of designing and implementing a program for struggling Grade 6 readers, I had read extensively in the field of reading research. I also considered my familiarity with the instructional interventions entering Grade 6 students who "struggle" with reading received during their elementary education in my district. Therefore, I realized my first challenge was to connect students with books, and to find the kinds of books that would assist me in bringing this about. The literature on sociocultural theories of learning, specifically, the importance of providing students with ample opportunities to engage in authentic discussions about what they read, also shaped the interventions I would put in place for my students. I then reflected back on conversations I had with David Pearson, a noted scholar and educator in the field of reading, while taking doctoral courses from him at Michigan State University, and realized that I needed to embed purposeful reading strategy instruction into these dialogues. Hence, my research questions for this study became:

1. **What factors involve Grade 6 struggling readers with reading?**
2. **How do Grade 6 readers become involved as members of a literary discourse community?**
3. **How do Grade 6 readers become involved as strategic readers?**
4. **How do particular features of adolescent literature involve Grade 6 readers?**

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Another research question grew out of the data analysis. This research question became:

5. **What are the particular discourse strategies used by a group of Grade 6 readers involving themselves and others with reading?**

Methods

In the qualitative traditions, I studied my thirty students who were enrolled in a tracked, remedial reading course – Reading Essentials – during the 2004 -2005 school year. Data sources consisted of student work, student interviews, student surveys, and audio- and video recordings of reading conversations, as I explored, examined, and analyzed what happens when Grade 6 readers deemed "struggling" work and learn through instructional interventions contrary to traditional approaches.

Theoretical Framework

To guide this dissertation study, I used the discourse analysis frameworks of Tannen (1989) and Cazden (1991). These frameworks were utilized in order to evaluate growth in students' ability to become involved as members of a literary discourse community, and evidence competence as strategic readers. I looked to identify various discourse strategies in both the teacher's and students' talk that advanced the literary discourse, which would indicate involvement. I further analyzed the discourse within the theoretical framework of "accountable talk" put forth by Lauren Resnick (1977). The realm of accountable talk consists of three norms for researchers – two academic (accountability to knowledge and accountability to standards of reasoning) and one social (accountability to the learning community) to evaluate student utterances for use of reading strategies, textual involvement, and membership in the discourse community. I

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also analyzed student discourse from Judith Langer's (1989) theoretical framework referred to as envisionment building – how meaning develops from the reader's vantage point. She identified four stances – Being out and stepping into an envisionment, Being in and moving through an envisionment, Stepping back and rethinking what one knows, and Stepping out and objectifying the experience – which are recursive stances, constantly informing the knowledge-building of the reader.

Out of the data analysis, three complementary modes of involvement, which I called *gathering, supporting,* and *advancing,* became prevalent. I applied these modes of involvement to further analyze each discourse event, individually and comparatively. I also drew from Rosemary Chance's (1999) adolescent literature book analysis framework to identify and analyze particular features in core class novels that brought about involvement.

Plan for this study

In Chapter Two, **What does it mean to be a reader who struggles?: Instructional legacies and possible alternatives,** I frame the problem addressed in this study. I define and discuss "struggling" readers, and provide an historical perspective on the treatments typically received by them. I also describe an alternative plan for involving struggling readers, based on the literature in the fields of reader response theory, sociocultural theories of learning, and adolescent literature. In Chapter Three, **Teacher as researcher: Working and learning in tandem with my students,** I situate this dissertation study by describing my methodology as a teacher researcher, and describe the context and participants for this study. I also illustrate how data was collected and analyzed.

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Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven comprise the data analysis of this dissertation study. In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, discourse transcripts of reading discussions are analyzed in great detail. In Chapter Four, **"Ain't nobody never asked what I thought before!": Apprenticing new habits of mind,** I investigate and analyze the initial reading discussions with my Grade 6 students. I examine the various scaffolding moves enacted by me, as I worked to apprentice students into a new participation structure. In Chapter Five, **Transfer of control: Students involving themselves and others as readers in a literary discourse community,** I analyze the discourse from a subsequent reading conversation that evidences students gaining more competence as strategic readers who are highly involved as members of a dialogic community. In Chapter Six, **Dialogic Transformations,** I analyze the discourse from a third reading conversation, in which students take complete control over the literary conversation, as full-fledged members of a literary discourse community, and as highly competent, strategic and critical readers involved in sophisticated analysis of a novel. This chapter evidences that students deemed "struggling" are capable of the kinds of literary discourse observed in reading classes typically reserved for those considered "more competent." This chapter also includes a comparative analysis of the modes of involvement and utterances as I look across the three discourse transcripts. In Chapter Seven, **Involvement Features of Adolescent Literature,** I analyze the core pieces of adolescent literature used in class, in terms of the high and low involvement features of the literary elements, and through the responses of my students. I also explore the reading level of each core novel based on Fry's Readability Index. In Chapter Eight, **Conclusions and Implications,** I summarize and discuss the findings of this dissertation

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Summary

Faced with top-down mandates, school systems are seeking ways to measure up. Concerning reading, schools are faced with the challenge of closing the gap between those who are left behind and their higher-achieving peers. Due to this daunting task, and the call embedded in the No Child Left Behind mandate to implement "scientifically based" interventions, more and more school systems are enlisting "bottom-up" approaches with readers who struggle. In some cases, these approaches may help younger students perform adequately on tests closely matched to phonics, sight word vocabulary, and fluency, yet do very little to assist older readers with meaning-making and, therefore, gains in standardized reading scores.

This dissertation study examines an alternative approach to "bottom-up" reading instruction for middle grade readers deemed "struggling." In the next chapter, I discuss the issues surrounding readers who struggle in greater depth and review relevant literature. In Chapter 3, I address how I situate this dissertation study and describe the methods employed to respond to the research questions. In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I present the results of my findings in great detail, through the discourse analysis of three reading conversations. Chapter 6 also includes a comparative analysis of the modes of involvement. Chapter 7 addresses the analysis of core works of adolescent literature with high and low involvement features and readability scales. In Chapter 8, I draw conclusions from this study and address its implications.

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Chapter 2

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A READER WHO STRUGGLES?: INSTRUCTIONAL LEGACIES AND POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to frame the problem addressed by this dissertation study. As federal and state policy makers increase pressures to ensure that no child is left behind, school districts wonder what kinds of programs they should enact for their struggling readers. As these mandates are imposed on classroom teachers, the pressure for results is heightened. Interventions for readers who struggle become increasingly perplexing as students move through the grades. The first aim of this chapter is to examine what it means to be a struggling reader and to explore the diversity among those categorized as such. The second aim of this chapter is to examine the instructional interventions typically implemented to remediate middle level struggling readers, and to urge an alternative plan – one in which the instructional interventions are remediated *instead of* the students themselves.

Struggling Readers

There is an extensive body of research on struggling readers (Carlsen, 1974; Smith, 1984; Applebee, Langer & Mullis, 1985; Atwell, 1987, 1990; Nell, 1988; Donnellson & Nelson, 1989; Sherrill & Ley, 1994; Huck, 1997; Ivey & Broadus, 2001). Struggling readers, who are often at the low end of classroom performance, are distinguished by a set of characteristics that are common and consistent across schools. They read and write less than their higher performing peers, do not choose to read and write (even actively avoid doing so), are less metacognitively aware, less likely to connect what they have read to their own lives, and are more likely to cling to simplistic

interpretations (Allington, 1983; Palinscar & Brown, 1984). Struggling readers will tell you that they do not like to read, that it is boring, and too hard. They have not developed personal reading lives and avoid reading whenever possible (Robb, 2000). They do not engage with text because it is a painful chore. As a matter of fact, struggling readers find reading so painful that the majority avoid it at all costs (Beers & Samuels, 1995).

Diversity among readers who struggle

The term "struggling reader" is an umbrella concept covering a broad range of diversity. Many struggling readers have difficulty with phonological decoding. Difficulties with working out the correct pronunciation of a certain grapheme string negatively influences reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. These readers typically distance themselves from reading whenever possible, as it is too labor intensive. This avoidance puts them on a downward spiral compared to their more competent peers, because by avoiding reading, they do not continue to develop a language base or background knowledge (Samuels, 1995).

Some have difficulties with fluency. According to Wolf and Katzir-Cohen (2001), reading fluency refers to "a level of accuracy and rate where decoding is relatively effortless; where oral reading is smooth and accurate with correct prosody; and where attention can be allocated to comprehension" (p. 219). Disfluent readers who lack sufficient decoding and word recognition skills, and may lack awareness of prosodic cues, read in a slow, hesitant, and often laborious manner, which interferes with comprehension.

Others, at the opposite end of the spectrum with regard to fluency, are considered hyperfluent. These readers are characterized by "effortless reading in which automaticity

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and accuracy are evident" (Lipson & Lang, 1991), which makes them seem contrary to their disfluent peers. They do, however, often manifest the same difficulties with comprehension as those who are disfluent. Their decoding and sight word identification skills are highly polished, yet they do not enact meaning-making strategies while engaged in the reading act.

Yet another subcategory of struggling reader is the aliterate reader. The aliterate reader is described as one who is capable of reading, but chooses not to, because reading is deemed undesirable (Beers & Samuels, 1995). Often, these students are rarely labeled "struggling" readers and exit school with an antipathy toward reading. Alverman & Phelps (2001) state that aliteracy is fast becoming one of the most vexing problems facing educators today. I argue that the aliterate reader warrants concern equal to those described above and should be deemed "struggling" for three reasons. First, what counts as being a highly competent reader in school, and today's society, demands the capacity to apply complex, critical reading strategies to a variety of texts (Pearson & Stephens, 1993) and these aptitudes do not stay polished if not practiced. Second, this reluctance toward reading may have the potential to deny these students access to exchanges of critical thought and ideas in a global society, in which literacy is necessary to knit people and ideas together. Third, their antipathy denies them the pleasurable experience savoring books brings about and, therefore, they are unlikely to become lifelong readers.

"Struggling" – a pejorative and politically charged term

There are as many reasons why middle level readers struggle as there are readers themselves. Labeling someone a struggling reader, therefore, is far more complex than the term indicates. It bears noting that the teacher/researcher of this dissertation study

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recognizes the pejorative nature of the term "struggling reader." First, to "struggle," means to labor with great effort in pursuit of a goal or a task (Webster's Encyclopedia, 1981). Certainly in the academic setting, learning experiences *should* be intellectually challenging for our students, as this is how they move from the new to the known. In this sense, "struggling" has a positive connotation. With regard to readers, those labeled "struggling" are often isolated from their peers in academic settings, as well as social groups, which often does a great deal to perpetuate their low self-esteem and uninvolvement in and out of school (Stanovich, 2000). In the literature on reading, work on struggling readers, specifically, has drawn considerable attention, especially with the pressures of No Child Left Behind (2000). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, I use the term with *intent,* as I hope to speak to fellow educators who are given the responsibility and privilege of working with such students, and to contribute to the specific body of research on struggling readers. I recognize, however, the derogatory nature of the term.

Historical treatment of struggling readers

Historically, the research indicates that struggling middle level readers have encountered different treatment in schools than their more successful peers (Stanovich, 2000). Most struggling readers are placed in remedial classes for reading instruction. In these remedial classes, isolated skills and tasks are emphasized. This kind of instruction is prevalent, as teachers perceive the remedy for their deficits as needing a "bottom up" approach (Carrillo & Cox, 1992). For example, if teachers recognize that struggling readers have difficulty with reading fluency, they frequently design lessons around phonics activities done in isolation from real text, instead of selecting appropriate texts

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In programs for struggling readers, in which skills are overemphasized, students have a difficult time responding to the more demanding critical and creative aspects of reading comprehension (Tovani, 2004). When given opportunities to read real text, they come away with only surface-level understanding (Applebee, 1991). These students, then, have difficulty when asked to think more deeply about what they have read; when they are asked to defend, elaborate, or write about their ideas, they cannot do so. Oldfather (1995) claims that this lack of critical thought occurs not only because struggling readers are rarely given opportunities to read real text, but also because they are rarely given opportunities to engage in interesting discussions about what they have read.

Struggling readers often lack being a part of a community of learners that enriches and extends mutual thinking and ideas, and enhances their motivation for further engagement in reading. A study by Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) of middle school students found a substantive difference in the discourse between high and low tracks of reading students. The low track reading classes commonly were asked for recitable information and little to no student-generated questions. In the higher track classes, the content of questions and classroom discourse in general, was more thoughtful about the literature.

It is evident from the research that part of what works to create struggling readers is the kind of instruction these children receive in school. I liken this to the infamous

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"Pygmalian in the classroom" study (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) that evidenced that the expectations teachers have of their students' behavior can unwittingly influence that behavior. In this study, researchers gave an intelligence test to all students in an elementary school at the beginning of the school year. Next, they randomly selected 20% of the students and reported to teachers that these students could be expected to make significant gains during the school year, as they showed potential for "intellectual growth." At the end of the year, all students were re-tested and those labeled "intelligent" showed significantly greater gains. The findings indicated that when teachers expected students to do well, they tended to do well; when teachers expected students to fail, they tended to fail. Implicit in these findings was that, conversely, a change in teachers' expectations can lead to an improvement in intellectual performance from those who are usually expected to achieve the least.

In 1996, a study was conducted by Taffy Raphael and Susan Florio-Ruane, as part of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA). This study, based in part on previous work on dialogue, inquiry, and learning in Book Club, investigated teacher's learning in dialogue and inquiry, and addressed the problem of engaging low-achieving learners in classroom literacy learning. As a result of this study, struggling readers did make gains in reading comprehension (McMahon, Raphael, Goatley & Pardo, 1997; Raphael, Florio-Ruane, Kehus, George, Hasty & Highfield, 2001; Florio-Ruane & deTar, 2001; Florio-Ruane, Raphael, Highfield & Berne, 2004). The instructional practices implemented in these classrooms were unique, compared to the typical treatments received by most struggling readers elsewhere, as they were given opportunities to read and write often, and become members of a literary discourse

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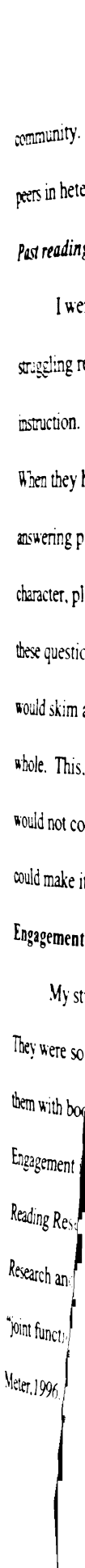

community. Struggling readers also worked and learned alongside their more competent peers in heterogeneous classrooms.

Past reading treatments of my students

I went back to my classroom and discussed past instructional practices with my struggling readers. My students described being pulled out of class for reading instruction. Most indicated that they worked on phonics worksheets during this time. When they had opportunities to read, it entailed reading a book on their own and answering prepared questions about the basic literary elements of a story such as character, plot, and setting. When asked how they would go about finding the answers to these questions, my students described a method which I call "seek and find." They would skim and scan the chapters to find the answers, instead of reading the chapter as a whole. This, they explained, they did so they would not have to read. Several simply would not complete their assignments in the first place. Many of them indicated that they could make it through an entire school year without reading very much at all.

Engagement vs. Involvement

My students had taught me that they were artful at finding ways to avoid reading. They were so disengaged, that I realized my first challenge was to find ways to connect them with books, or the gap between them and their more proficient peers would widen. Engagement in reading has been deemed central to literacy growth by the National Reading Research Center (NRRC), which was funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1987). Engagement is defined as the "joint functioning of motivations and strategies during reading" (Guthrie & Van Meter,1996, p. 1). Guthrie and Alao (1997) state that engaged readers

> acquire the competencies and motivations to read for diverse purposes, gaining knowledge, performing a task, interpreting an author's perspective, sharing reactions to stories and informational text, escaping into the literary world, or taking social and political action in response to what is read.

Interest and engagement are two constructs sometimes used interchangeably with each other and with involvement. Of the three, the term engagement is the most widely used in current research literature on reading. In contrast, involvement refers to a psychological process in which an individual, while involved in a task, has his/her attention wholly concentrated on that task, making a sense of time irrelevant, coinciding with deep comprehension of the task material (Reed et al, 1996). Involvement is at the juncture of the cognitive and affective processes necessary for a task. When involvement is deep, a coupling of comprehension and concentration occurs (Reed & Schallert, 1993). When involved in a story, a reader is focusing on it to the exclusion of other possible tasks, and is constructing meaning that is rich and complex. Involvement also adds a focused, emotional investment in the task along with a motivational drive to continue.

In terms of the relation of involvement to engagement, involvement is seen as a special type of engagement. Engagement subsumes involvement in the sense that it is possible to be engaged without experiencing much involvement in a task, but it is not possible to be involved in a task, without first being engaged. Although engagement includes the idea of invoking strategies and making conscious choices to fulfill a literacy task, strong involvement is not likely to be associated with an awareness of striving or of willing oneself to complete a task. When deeply involved, the term "flow" is used to describe an individual's state of mind as he/she is so engrossed in an activity that

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With this in mind, I considered the kind of program I would need to put in place for my students. This brought me to my first overarching research question: What factors will involve Grade 6 struggling readers with reading? Considering an alternative to the traditional skills-based, pull-out program for struggling readers, I capitalized on three ideas prevalent in the research literature to design a program for struggling Grade 6 readers: Reader response theory, sociocultural theories of learning, and adolescent literature itself.

Reader response theory

Reader response theory has been greatly influenced by the work of Louise Rosenblatt (1938/1976). Rosenblatt defines response to literature as a transaction between the reader and the text, an integrated relationship between reader and text. In her transactional theory, she argues that meaning exists as a result of the interaction between the reader and text, and not solely within the reader or the text. In the past, researchers in the field presumed that meaning resided solely in the text, and it was the responsibility of the reader to find that meaning on the page. This stance overlooked the reader as bringing his/her unique experiences to the page. Others, especially during the whole language movement, claimed that meaning resided in the reader, that the reader was the most central element in the reading (Purves, 1985). This stance overlooked that the text was also an important contributor to meaning. Rosenblatt (1985) was quick to point out that, although meaning is constructed, interpreted and revised by readers, the text cannot be ignored. This theory implies an active reader, constantly working to

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achieve meaning with the guidance of the text. This is why Rosenblatt used the term "transaction" to describe the interrelationship between the reader and the text.

The nature of this transaction depends on the stance or approach the reader takes with the text, focusing the reader and making an impact on how he or she responds to the text and constructs meaning (Ali, 1994; Cox & Many, 1992; Enciso, 1992; Langer, 1992; Many & Wiseman, 1992a). Rosenblatt (1976) identifies two stances – the aesthetic and the efferent. The aesthetic stance focuses on what the reader experiences, thinks, and feels during the reading. It is the lived-through experience described as entering the story world that characterizes this stance. In contrast, the efferent stance has as its purpose to carry information away from the text, to learn something rather than to experience something. Rosenblatt states that these stances are not binary, but operate on a continuum.

In school, however, the predominant mode of response is efferent, especially in programs for struggling readers. When students respond efferently, they are responding solely to the literary elements of a book. They are not having a "lived through" experience. When individuals read literature efferently, they are reading to study it, not experience it. Rosenblatt's transactional model is contrary to the way in which literature is often taught in schools. Literature instruction often focuses mostly on correct answers. This predisposes students to take the efferent stance and prohibits a greater degree of investment – or involvement – than an aesthetic stance allows.

Beers & Samuels (1995, p. 46) state that when a reader reads aesthetically,

> attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text and he pays attention to the associations, feelings, attitudes and ideas that these words and their referents arouse within him,

synthesizing these elements into a meaningful structure.

Said another way, when readers read aesthetically, they are involved. As Probst (1988) points out, the aesthetic response allows students the freedom to deal with their own reactions to the text, which also means that teachers should ask students what they see, feel, think, and remember as they read, encouraging them to attend to their own experience with the text. They are allowed the opportunities to respond to what moved them in the text, to connect the experiences of the characters with their own lives, and to wonder and ask questions they have generated on their own. The strongest involvements are made when a reader can have a "lived through" experience with the text.

Soter (1999) advises that to involve readers, teachers must invite students first to experience text aesthetically, since students cannot effectively move to an analysis level until they have first worked through, processed, savored, and shared their personal responses. Probst (1988) adds that the pathway to analysis and to more sophisticated and defensible interpretations of literature must go *through* aesthetic response and not *around* it. If the strongest involvements are brought about when a reader is able to first have a "lived through" experience with the text, a program for middle level struggling readers, built with reader response theory in mind, may be more successful in increasing their involvement and, therefore, their motivation to read.

Sociocultural theories of learning

The second idea in the literature that is relevant to the problem of middle level struggling readers comes from the research on sociocultural theories of learning (Mead, 1934; Cicourel et al, 1974; Bandura, 1977; Mehan, 1979; Gumperz & Gumperz, 1981; Leont'ev, 1981; Minsky, 1986; Winograd & Flores, 1986; Latour, 1987; Resnick, 1987,

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1991; Ochs, 1988; Eckert, 1989). Sociocultural theories of learning, based largely on the work of Vygotsky (1978), emphasize the interdependence of social and individual processes in the co-construction of knowledge. In Vygotsky's view, peer interaction, scaffolding, and modeling are important ways to facilitate individual cognitive growth and knowledge acquisition. Lave (1996) elaborates by asserting that learning as it normally occurs is a function of the activity, context, and culture in which it occurs. Social interaction, she claims, is a critical component of situated learning because it is in this "situatedness" that learners become involved in a community of practice, which embodies certain beliefs and behaviors to be acquired. Said another way, the social context in which cognitive activity takes place is an integral part of that activity, not just the surrounding context for it (Egan & Greeno, 1973, 1988; Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave, 1988; Resnick, 1990). It is in this environment that learners move from incompetence to competence.

Discourse communities

The notion of a discourse community is a key component of sociocultural theories of learning. Many researchers have described the vital role language plays in the development of thought (Mead, 1934; Vygotsky, 1978, 1979; Wertsch, 1988; Gee, 1990). Bahktin (1986) states that when students interact with others, they adopt various speech genres. They move from one social setting to another and, as they do, they modify their speech patterns to fit the new context. Gee (1990) calls this an identity kit for each group interaction. Teachers can help students create a literary identity kit by building an environment that supports the kind of thinking and involvement with text that leads to provocative and complex discussions. Responding to text in such a community involves

readers by building understanding and *both* the opportunity and ability to communicate a perspective. Being members of a literate community allows students to communicate their developing responses (Vygotsky, 1987). In a joint position paper, the International Reading Association and the National Middle School Association recommended actions in schools that included providing struggling readers with ample time to read and discuss reading with others (Raphael, 1996). Creating an effective learning environment in such a manner would demand the existence of a discourse community rich in language that enables learners to express their developing thoughts (Gee, 1990). This discourse community would be one in which students think deeply about their reading, with the ability to elaborate on their ideas, as this is critical to involving middle school readers, especially those who struggle and resist reading (Berthoff, 1981). Therefore, meeting the needs of struggling readers requires, first and foremost, the development of classroom environments that sustain inquiry and reflection, agency, and authentic, collaborative action (Resnick, 1977).

Embedded reading strategy instruction

Responsible teaching, however, dictates that these conversations not become "anything goes." Students must be taught to have more strategic competence with what they read. In order to do this, I had to shape our discourse community into an instructional one embedded with reading comprehension strategies. Embedded strategy instruction is derived from the work of Vygotsky's (1981) social development theory. Vygotsky (1978) asserts that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition, and that "every function in the child's cultural development

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appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)." (p. 57)

Vygotsky claims that all development and learning originates as socially based activity, because real learning always entails collaboration between children and adults as they jointly negotiate understanding. These understandings come about through instruction that is challenging, contextualized, and scaffolded (Pressley, Wharton-McDonald & Mistretta, 1998; Tracey & Morrow, 1998; Bransford et al; 1999). Instruction in this form works to sustain children's active involvement in conversations that are fundamental for acquiring effective reading strategies (Guthrie & Anderson, 1999). He refers to this as the zone of proximal development (ZPD) which is learning in advance of development. The ZPD is the distance between the level of independent problem-solving and the level of problem-solving in collaboration with an adult or more capable peer. Wertsch (1978) adds that the learning interaction must be difficult enough so that it has not already been mastered, but simple enough so that it will not be impossible for the child to understand.

Pearson and Gallagher (1983) further elaborated on Vygotsky's theory by developing a gradual release of responsibility model (GRR) with specific focus on literacy instruction. In the GRR model (Figure 2.1) learning comes about through scaffolding. The zone of actual development represents the student's current independent application of knowledge and strategies. The teacher models successful task completion for the student while drawing attention to the key portions of the experience. In this way, the teacher assists the student in developing strategies beyond his/her current level of development. Over time, responsibility is transferred to the student as he/she internalizes

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and utilizes the tools for accomplishing the task on his/her own. The gradual release of responsibility requires variable amounts of assistance on the part of the teacher. Teaching and learning are the responsibility of both the teacher and the learner throughout all phases of this process, since each are full participants in a collaborative dialogue (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Bakhtin, 1981; Wertsch, 1991). Through this collaborative dialogue, students are apprenticed to think in academically appropriate ways (Herrington, 1985; McCarthy, 1987; Berkenkotter et al, 1988).

TABLE 2.1: GRADUAL RELEASE OF RESPONSIBILITY MODEL

Zone of actual development	**Zone of proximal development**		**New zone of actual development**
Student	Teacher	Joint	Student
What the student can already do independently	Assistance from teacher, peer, or environment	Transition from receiving assistance to working independently	What the student can do independently

Gradual release of responsibility →

Adolescent literature

Finally, a program for middle school struggling readers needs to attend to the kind of literature available for them to read. Literature for adolescents covers a broad range of both interest and genre for young persons, ranging in age from ten to nineteen (Purves & Beach, 1972; Smith, 1983; Alverman & Moure, 1991; Wood, Lapp & Flood, 1992; Stover, 1994; Berliner, 1995; Hynds, 1997; Campbell, 1998; Brozo & Simpson, 1999). The unique appeal of adolescent literature is the way in which works deal with issues directly related to those individuals who are moving from childhood to adulthood. Issues such as identity formation, the tension between dependence and independence, ones' place in the family, social justice, and fairness are of great interest. Adolescents do not find much appeal for works that are overly moralistic and "preachy." Adolescents prefer

round characters – those who can grow and change as the story unfolds – as well as characters with whom they can identify. Specifically, they prefer round protagonists who are also dynamic characters (Chance, 1997). Adolescents find adventure stories appealing as they can be "swept away" into the story world through well-developed plots and quick-moving action (Blasingame, 1999). Carlsen (1980) suggests that for both boys and girls aged eleven to fourteen, "literature becomes a way of seeing themselves and of testing possible solutions to their own problems" (p. 40). Typically, struggling readers have access to books based primarily on their reading level, which often means vocabulary controlled works of literature which often are not age- or interest-level appropriate for middle grade students.

These reviews did not specify the kinds of adolescent readers who found these characteristics appealing. They focused, instead, on the books students chose to read. It remains to be seen whether or not struggling readers would find these books to be of interest.

Research Questions

The overarching questions for this dissertation study are these:

What factors involve Grade 6 struggling readers with reading?

How do Grade 6 readers become involved as members of a literary discourse community?

How do Grade 6 readers become involved as strategic readers?

How do particular features in works of adolescent literature involve Grade 6 readers?

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What are the particular discourse strategies used by a group of Grade 6 readers involving themselves and others with reading?

Summary

This chapter provides a description of readers who struggle and highlights the variation within those students labeled as such. According to the research literature, struggling readers, historically, have received very different treatment in school. These treatments have not been effective in improving their reading achievement as they reach the middle grades. Thoughtful consideration of this, along with the research literature from reader response theory, sociocultural theories of learning, and adolescent literature brought Margaret Mead's (1934) question to mind, What if it were otherwise?

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Chapter 3

TEACHER AS RESEARCHER: WORKING AND LEARNING IN TANDEM WITH MY STUDENTS

> "Teachers are subjective insiders involved in classroom instruction as they go about their daily routines of instructing students, grading papers, taking attendance, evaluating their performance as well as looking at the curriculum. Traditional educational researchers who develop questions and design studies around those questions and conduct research within the schools are considered objective outside observers of classroom interaction. But when teachers become teacher-researchers, the traditional descriptions of both teachers and researchers change. Teacher-researchers raise questions about what they think and observe about their teaching and their students' learning. They collect student work in order to evaluate performance, but they also see student work as data to analyze in order to examine the teaching and learning that produced it" (MacLeon & Mohr, 1999, p. x).

Introduction

This study was designed to explore and investigate what happens when a group of Grade 6 students deemed "struggling" readers in a tracked class titled, Reading Essentials, receive reading instruction embedded in an alternative participation structure. This study was a form of teacher research, since I held dual roles as classroom teacher and researcher. The research questions that framed this dissertation study evolved from the charge I was given by my principal, Mr. Mark Mulholland, to improve the reading scores of entering Grade 6 students, who were at least 1 ½ years deficient in reading, compared to their peers, according to results on standardized tests. These questions were:

1) **What factors involve Grade 6 struggling readers with reading?**
2) **How do Grade 6 readers become involved as members of a literary discourse community?**

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3) **How do particular features in works of adolescent literature involve Grade 6 readers?**

4) **What are the particular discourse strategies used by a group of Grade 6 readers involving themselves and each other with reading?**

In this chapter, I provide a rationale and description of the research methodology that supports this dissertation study. I first situate this dissertation study as interpretive and then as participant observational. Since I shared dual roles as both teacher and researcher, I then situate this study as teacher research. Next, I address the benefits of and criticisms surrounding such research. I then describe the design of this study, including participants and field data. Lastly, I describe my methods of data analysis, including three complementary modes of involvement the data revealed, termed *gathering mode*, *supporting mode,* and *advancing mode.*

Situating this study as interpretive

Frederick Erickson (1986) claimed that the primary characteristic of qualitative research is the centrality of interpretation. Interpretive researchers start out with the assumption that access to reality (given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings. Interpretive research focuses on the full complexity of human sense making as a situation emerges (Kaplan and Maxwell, 1994). Individuals and their beliefs are influenced by their experiences and the contexts in which they operate, and also influence those experiences and contexts by existing in them. A hallmark of interpretive research is that it allows the researcher to capture those complex experiences as they function in real life (Spradley,

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1980). The ability to focus on the targeted data in the most natural settings available is another specific advantage of interpretive research.

Situating this study as participant observational

The key data collector in qualitative research is the participant observer. The participant observer is not a stranger to the situation, therefore she knows the language, phrases, and particular vocabulary common to the environment (Altrichter, Posch & Somekh, 1993). This knowledge allows the participant observer an understanding of the events – in this case – the classroom and the educational culture – from the beginning phases of the data collection. The participant observer can ask sensible questions about educational events, and can develop strategies for data collection of all kinds (Bardine, 2001).

One criticism of participant observational research is the level of personal involvement of the particular researcher. In the classroom setting in which the teacher is also the researcher, she *is* deeply *and* personally involved with her students. A teacher, operating as a participant observational researcher, can markedly reduce the problem often associated with an outside researcher coming into a particular environment, which is called reactivity. Reactivity is referred to as the degree of artificiality that may be evidenced when an outside observer comes into a setting and, thereby, alters the setting. A teacher researcher can reduce problems of reactivity among the members of the study *because of* her personal involvement and familiarity. She understands the educational system and how it operates, and fits in well, so the class and school participants soon go on with the business of allowing the researcher to collect data, with a minimum change in behavior (Burnaford, 2001).

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Situating this study as teacher research

Several terms for teacher research are encountered in education literature, including: action research, practitioner research, teacher-as-scholar, practical inquiry, interactive research, classroom inquiry, and practice-centered inquiry (Downhower, Melvin & Sizemore, 1990; Williamson, 1992). These terms may not be completely interchangeable, yet, a common thread running through various conceptions of teacher research is that the teacher is an active constructor of knowledge, rather than a passive consumer of it (Miller & Pine, 1990; Williamson, 1992). McCutcheon and Jung (1990) identify the core components of teacher research as systematic inquiry, reflexivity, and focus on the practical. It seeks to answer questions and solve problems that arise from the daily life of the classroom, and to put findings into immediate practice (McKay, 1992; Twine & Martinek, 1992). It is this systematic inquiry that is the hallmark of effective teacher research (Shalaway, 1990). Defined more succinctly,

> teacher research is a distinctive way of knowing about teaching and learning. It involves the careful study of students in educational practice – what and how they learn. The research is personal because it represents not only the search for general principles or theories of school curriculum or instruction but also the search for understanding and improving one's everday practice (Zeichner & Noffke, 2001).

The benefits of teacher research are many. The key to professional growth is inquiry (Ross, 1999). When teachers become agents of inquiry, the locus of knowledge about teaching shifts from sources external to the classroom (researchers, textbook publishers, administrators) to sources of practical classroom experience. This shift enhances the professional status of teaching, because teachers, through this knowledge construction, actively help to shape the knowledge base of their own profession (Johnson,

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1993). Teacher research is viewed as a powerful vehicle for deepening teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987, Tom, 1999, Cochran-Smith, 2003). Grounding teachers' learning experience in their own practice, by conducting research in their own classrooms and school community, makes it likely that what they learn will indeed influence and support their teaching practice in meaningful ways, and build the capacity to increase student learning as well (Putnam & Borko, 2000; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001).

Criticisms of teacher research

Teacher research, however, is not without its criticisms. One critique has to do with the teacher's role. Academic researchers engage in research as part of their professional role, which means that resources and time are provided for their research, and promotion and credit are gained through such research. The role of the classroom teacher is to teach, which is a hectic and time-consuming activity, and the responsibilities of the classroom teacher do not cease once the students have left the classroom. This role does not include research, so the resources and time for research are not a normal part of teachers' working conditions. As a consequence, teachers do not have time for writing extensive literature reviews, for constructing complex data collection procedures, or for detailed analysis of findings (Kemmis, 1988). Research is not integrated into the life of the typical classroom teacher, so they rarely receive advancement or monetary rewards for doing so.

A second critique of teacher research comes from professional researchers who voice that teachers are neither professional researchers, nor members of a professional research community who support and sustain research. Opportunities for publication are

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limited as are events for reporting and discussing research. Not only are teacher researchers in environments which do not promote research, they are also subject to additional criticisms by professional research bodies as conducting the kind of research that is devalued and considered less than rigorous (Mickan, 1990). The very qualities for which teachers' research is advocated by teacher educators – contextualized, descriptive, applied, and anecdotal in style – cause critics to make such derogatory claims.

A third critique of teacher research stems around epistemological issues (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). This criticism asserts that if teachers are to generate "knowledge" about teaching, learning, and schooling, it should be done according to the same epistemological traditions as research intended to generate formal knowledge. The assumption embedded in this criticism is that only formal knowledge, not practical knowledge, is valid. Specifically, criticism is centered around methodological issues questioning whether or not teacher research is research at all. It posits that it is extremely difficult to understand events when one is participating in them, and therefore, the possibility of a teacher functioning as a researcher in his/her own classroom, or school, is challenged (Henson, 1996).

Teacher as researcher: A particular perspective

To address these critiques, teacher researchers have provided standards of rigor, systematicity, and intentionality (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Hubbard & Power, 1999). Erickson describes the role of the teacher researcher as "that of an unusually observant participant who deliberates inside the scene of action" (in Baumann & Duffy-Hester, 2000, p. 93). Teacher researchers offer a particular perspective on classroom practice as they have an insider perspective, and mix theory and practice (praxis), while

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teaching and researching within the worlds of their classrooms (Baumann, 1996). The teacher researcher is pragmatic and goal oriented – there are practical classroom problems that need to be solved in an organic, real-world setting.

The research setting

The teacher researcher

I was a twenty-year veteran teacher at the time of this study. Most of my teaching career had been spent working with fourth-and fifth-grade students at Monteith Elementary School in Grosse Pointe. Grosse Pointe is an upper-middle class, predominantly Caucasian suburb of Detroit. I had also spent the last five summers teaching graduate courses in literacy for Michigan State University. I had taken a one-year sabbatical from the Grosse Pointe Public School System to complete the course work for my doctoral studies at Michigan State University. During the fall of 2004, I was asked to move to Parcells Middle School to work with Grade 6 students who were struggling with reading. Central Office administration had created Reading Specialist positions at each of the three middle schools in Grosse Pointe, as there was growing concern that more and more entering Grade 6 students were not achieving in reading, and were falling behind their more accomplished peers. These Reading Specialists would be responsible for teaching tracked courses titled, Reading Essentials, to students whose reading test scores indicated they were 1 ½ years or more below grade level.

I accepted the position and the challenge that came with it. My responsibility was to design a program in which students would not only improve in reading, but make up ground when compared to their peers. I consider myself a whole language educator, yet am cognizant that the term is politically charged. As a self-described whole language

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educator, I mean that I believe skills and strategies are best taught in context and not in isolation. I do *not*, however, consider myself a facilitator, coach, mentor, or any other term that positions me in the classroom in ways that have the potential to be miseducative for learners. I am the *teacher*. I consider myself the more knowledgeable person in the room and, therefore, believe it is my responsibility to instruct. I view instruction as defined by Underwood & Pearson (2004) as a "staging of purposeful activity over an extended time frame." I believe these learning activities should be substantive, meaningful, challenging, and based on theorized practice.

The Reading Essentials students

I was to have two classes of fifteen students each (16 males and 14 females) in a course called Reading Essentials. These students ranged in age from eleven to twelve. Twelve students were African American (6 male, 6 female) and eighteen were Caucasian (10 male, 8 female). Over half of my enrollment lived in a section of Harper Woods, which is a part of the Grosse Pointe school district, yet on the periphery of the community. Many of my students were from working class and working class poor households in which several lived with a single parent, which is contrary to the description of Grosse Pointe as an affluent community. Many of these same families shared three-bedroom apartments with each other, in an area of Harper Woods, in order to pool resources and send their children to the Grosse Pointe schools.

Test data

Formal assessments

I received files on my incoming students from each of their feeder schools and learned they were labeled struggling readers based on a holistic array of both formal and

informal reading assessments. First, standardized tests such as the MEAP and the CTP-IV indicated that these students struggled with text, and these test scores, along with recommendations by Grade 5 teachers and Language Arts Specialists, qualified them for placement in the Grade 6 Reading Essentials course. Scale scores ranged from 220 to 326 in story reading and from 257 to 349 in informational reading on the Grade 5 MEAP test. A score on either reading test below 300 is considered low. Of the 30 student scores, 17 students scored in the low range in story reading and 16 students scored low in informational reading. Fifteen of the 17 students who scored low in story reading also scored low in informational reading. Thus, over half of the students scored in the low range in story reading and half scored in the low range in informational reading.

Student scores on the reading section of the CTP-IV were also low. Their raw scores in the reading subtest ranged from 10-25, placing them at the 24^{th} to 66^{th} percentiles when compared to the national norms. The average score of the 30 students placed in the Reading Essentials classes was 18.24. A perfect score on the reading portion of this test is 45. Again, these students fell in the low range.

These students had also received support in the form of remediation from a Language Arts Specialist for at least three years in elementary school. This support was a pullout program. These students also were recommended by their Grade 5 teachers as being in need of additional intensive support in reading as their middle school placement was being considered.

Informal assessments

Upon enrollment in Reading Essentials, I administered two informal reading assessments. The first was a Reading Interest Inventory from the *Literacy Assessment*

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Handbook of Instruments (Rhodes, 1993). This inventory asks questions such as, how often do you read on your own? What are your favorite kinds of books? Do you like to read? And, how many books have you read in the last month? Responses to these questions revealed that these students did not like to read because they thought reading was "boring' or "too hard." Others said they did not like to read because it took too long and that they liked to "watch the movie better." Two students indicated that they liked to read, but "couldn't remember what they read" and "weren't very good at reading." Rarely did the results indicate that these students chose to read at home. Only five out of the 30 responded that they read at home, and three of these said they did so because "their mothers made them." The other students indicated that they read skateboard and sports magazines, yet elaborated in a follow-up interview that they mostly looked at the pictures. Most had a difficult time listing a favorite book. When they did, it was often a book a teacher had read to them. Nine students, all of whom had been in the same Grade 5 class the previous year, chose *Tuck Everlasting* (Babbit, 1975), a book read aloud to them by their teacher. Seven students listed that they did not have a favorite book.

The second informal reading assessment used was the *Qualitative Reading Inventory IV* (Leslie & Caldwell, 2001). This inventory evaluates students for fluency, sight word identification, and reading comprehension. When given a grade level passage to read orally, and then asked to retell the main idea, key events and details, students could not achieve above 85% comprehension without the help of the teacher. Without help from the teacher, the comprehension ranges were from 18% to 37%. Said another way, when reading on their own with grade level passages, they scored at the frustration level; the text was too difficult for them to comprehend. Results indicated that in reading

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comprehension, 27 out of the 30 students ranged from a 3.2 to 4.1. This meant that their independent reading level – text they could read and comprehend on their own – ranged from early Grade 3 to early Grade 4.

In the sight word section of the reading inventory, students scored equally low. Twenty six of the 30 students scored at the frustration level with Grade 4 sight words, ranging from 12% to 62%. A score above 85% indicated independent reading level comprehension based on this inventory. I also gave them the Gates-MacGinitie reading test, which is a standardized reading comprehension test. Their scores ranged from 2.9 to 4.9 with an average reading level of 4.05.

Many questions ruminated in my head. What made these children so resistant to reading? What kinds of reading encounters would support them in the best ways? Were there any particular kinds of books they would find involving and willing to read? What instructional strategies would be the most effective for them? Factors leading to reading success are complex (Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2004) and I knew I needed to explore the nature of struggling readers in greater depth if I was going to be successful working and learning with my students. I decided to study these students in a more systematic way.

Student voices

"I thought our reading questions came from Massachusetts"

Early conversations with these students suggested that they matched the characteristics of students frequently labeled "struggling" in the research literature. I was aware, from my years of familiarity working within the school district, that these students received remediation in the form of a pull-out program, and that interventions were based on phonics practice in isolation, black-line materials from commercialized reading

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programs, and reading books based on their reading level which were vocabulary controlled.

I asked them if they had ever been given the opportunity to ask their own questions about what they read, and if they had ever been asked what they thought, or wondered about. The majority of students shook their heads, No, and one commented, "I thought our reading questions came from Massachusetts." He was referring to the ancillary materials teachers provided as follow-up questions to chapters or entire books, but he had made his point. Questions were given from without, not generated from within. Again, I knew this to be true from teaching in the district and witnessing the kinds of interventions used with children who struggled with reading. I knew that these children, given that their reading interventions had historically been a curriculum of skills in isolation, had not been given opportunities to either become a part of – or learn to become a part of – a literary discourse community.

"Ain't nobody never asked what I thought before!"

My Reading Essentials students, when told they would be discussing what we read, and that their voices would become the springboard for our literary learning, looked quite surprised. One student captured the look of surprise on the faces of most of the others, when he replied, "Ain't nobody never asked what I thought before!" They were about to learn to become members of a discourse community – one embedded with strategic reading instruction – and for most of them, it would be a new experience.

Through my intensive study of the research thus far, I had begun to shape a curricular framework for my students. I had come to believe that moving them out of a traditional, monologic participation structure and into a dialogic participation structure

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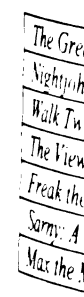

would provide them with the cognitive tools necessary to become involved, competent, strategic readers. I believed that providing them opportunities to read age- and interest-level works of adolescent literature would enhance their involvement and also their literary discussions.

The Reading Essentials Program

Reading Essentials students were in a double block of 48 minutes, five times per week. Three days a week were devoted to guided reading of a common novel selected by me. Novels used during guided reading were age-appropriate and at an instructional level. Books at an instructional level for students are defined as books students can read with a high degree of comprehension (87%) as long as the teacher provides support (Allington, 2001). During guided reading, strategies were embedded such as think aloud protocols, text look backs, and other forms of comprehension monitoring. Comprehension monitoring strategies were embedded in this way since the comprehensive studies conducted by Pressley and his colleagues (1990), Dole and hers (1996), Pearson and Dole (1987), Pearson and Fielding (1991), Rosenshine, Meister & Chapman (1996) and Mastropieri and Scruggs (1997) converge on one conclusion: Comprehension can be improved when students are provided explicit demonstrations of the strategies literate people use when they read. See Table 3.1 for a timetable of the core novels read in class.

Table 3.1: Timetable of Core Novels Read in Class

The Great Gilly Hopkins	late September through mid-November
Nightjohn	mid-November through early December
Walk Two Moons	mid-December through late January
The View From Saturday	late January through mid-February
Freak the Mighty	late February through mid-March
Sarny: A Life Remembered	late March through mid-April
Max the Mighty	mid-April through mid-May

The guided reading was followed by written response time. During this time, students would respond aesthetically to what we had read, and/or be given questions/issues to consider and respond to. Responding in writing provided students with an opportunity to organize their thoughts and gave them support for the reading discussion that followed (Wong-Kam & Au, 1988). These questions and issues were brought up during our guided reading and generated by the students. The discussions were also embedded with reading strategy instruction when the need arose.

Two days a week were devoted to free choice reading time and process writing. Books read as free choice were age- and interest-appropriate and written at an independent reading level for each student. Books at the independent reading level are those students can read on their own with a high level of comprehension (90%). In a study on reading difficulty and achievement conducted by Gambrell, Wilson, and Gant (1981) it was found that time and opportunity for students to do much reading at the independent level brought about gains in fluency, vocabulary development, and overall comprehension. For reading, students could select a book they were capable of reading on their own, from either the classroom library, or the school library, and spend time reading and responding in their reading log.

Often, students would meet in pairs, or with me, to discuss chapters, or to highlight points of interest in the reading. During this time, I would teach writing mini-lessons and follow up with writing time, so students could apply the new learning to their written drafts, and I would conference individually with students about their written pieces. Students chose their own topics for most of their narrative writing and, within guidelines, for report topics as well.

Data collection

This interpretive study, within the qualitative traditions, is the product of working and learning with my Grade 6 Reading Essentials student throughout the 2004-2005 school year. The tradition of interpretive, participant observational fieldwork, according to Frederick Erickson (1986) involves,

> (a) intensive, long-term participation in a field setting;
>
> (b) careful recording of what happens in the setting using field notes and other documentary evidence (e. g., memos, records, examples of student work, audio tapes and video tapes);
>
> (c) subsequent analytic reflection on the documentary record obtained in the field;
>
> (d) reporting in detailed description, using narrative vignettes and direct quotes from interviews, as well as by more general description in the form of analytic charts, summary tables and descriptive statistics (p. 112).

In this conception of qualitative research, the researcher enters the field, observes the field, documents as carefully as possible the phenomena that transpire; participates in the field enough to interpret the meanings and significance of the phenomena observed; and then analyzes, describes, and reports on her findings.

The qualitative researcher's goal is to better understand human behavior and experience. It is to grasp the process by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are. Field observers use empirical observation, because it is in

finding concrete incidents of human behavior that researchers can think more clearly and deeply about the human condition (Bogden & Biklen, 1998).

Particular artifacts

Erickson's (1986) description of interpretive or qualitative research begins with participation in the field and collection of evidence of "what happens." For this project, the data collected included daily observations and field notes from one class of eleven Grade 6 Reading Essentials students from September 2004 through mid-June of 2005. Copies of students' written responses to literature were collected three times per week. Transcriptions of audio taped conversations were gathered as well. These audio tapes and transcriptions recorded the conversations Reading Essentials students had while they shared, elaborated on, and discussed their written responses.

Transcriptions of audio tapes are of great learning value for both teachers and students because they represent a "grounding of their own discussions of learning and teaching, of moment to moment talk in classrooms" (Cazden, 2001, p. 6). Transcriptions of audio tapes were made of fifteen whole-class and small group reading discussions. Transcriptions of audio recordings from one-on-one follow-up student interviews were made, when greater elaboration or explanation was warranted.

Student interviews concerning the works of adolescent literature were also conducted and analyzed. An additional data source was the pre- and post-Gates-MacGinitie reading comprehension tests which were given in September of 2004 and in June of 2005.

Video recordings were used to capture some of the reading conversations and to provide an alternative venue to the audio recordings. Four to five video recordings of

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reading discussions were made and transcribed. These, again, were both whole-class and small-group recordings.

Introducing video equipment into a classroom is a risk that could prove disruptive to the class and, therefore, undermine the authenticity of classroom interactions. The Reading Essentials students, however, were familiar with and comfortable around a video recorder. They had been videotaped and photographed for daily morning announcements. In Reading Essentials class, they were videotaped as they performed their commercials during a study on propaganda and "reading" the media. They also were videotaped as a part of their classroom activities when they presented dramatic readings and choral readings. In addition, they were videotaped as they conducted small group work on various activities, so they could view how their group worked together to solve a common problem. Therefore, videotaping in the Reading Essentials classroom had become a familiar learning tool through which children engaged in daily learning activities. As a result, the making of videotapes for purposes of this research should not be viewed as significantly altering students' interactions around literature.

Data Analysis

Qualitative researchers tend to analyze data inductively. As Strauss & Corbin (1990) point out, qualitative data analysis is a process of engaging in constant comparative analysis, through which patterns of change emerge and can be notated. For patterns to be analyzed, coding strategies are needed. Developing a coding system involves searching the data for regularities, patterns and topics (Bogden & Biklen, 1998) that are data-specific to the researcher and her work. Upon close examination of transcriptions of both audio- and videotaped sessions, patterns began to emerge. These

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were influenced by the discourse analysis frameworks of Tannen (1989) and Cazden (1991). I used these frameworks in order to evaluate growth in students' ability to become involved as members of a literary discourse community and evidence competence as strategic readers. Specifically, I was looking to identify discourse strategies in both the teacher's and students' talk that supported and advanced the literary discourse, which would indicated involvement. I also needed to examine and analyze the discourse data for student growth as strategic readers. To enhance my analysis even further, I utilized the realms of "accountable talk" put forth by Resnick (1999). These realms consist of norms for researchers – two academic (accountability to knowledge and accountability to standards of reasoning) and one social (accountability to the learning community) – to analyze discourse events. These discourse moves were coded and identified with empirical examples. After being identified, they were subjected to further examination in order to compare them and to construct a coherent description for them.

As students moved to levels of critical analysis and were able to make meaning from multiple vantage points – stances – developed by Judith Langer (1989) were used to analyze their capacities to have thoughtful and intelligent discussions about texts.

A question emerges from the data analysis

Unlike quantitative research, in which data analysis is usually the end point, qualitative analysis is often a part of data collection as, often, the most important questions emerge from the field in the course of that analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The research question, **What are the particular discourse strategies used by a group of Grade 6 readers involving themselves and each other with reading?** was one such question.

Modes of involvement emerge from the data analysis

The inductive analysis of the interactive data revealed three complementary modes of participation, in orchestrating and working within a literary discourse community, that bring about involvement, and evidenced the strategy use of highly competent readers. I termed them *gathering, supporting* and *advancing.* The *gathering mode* includes asking initial, open-ended questions, evoking initiations, inviting opinions. The *supporting mode* focuses on revoicing questions and interpretations, clarifying responses, drawing perspectives together, modeling reasoning processes, monitoring metacognitive strategies, identifying textual evidence, and valuing and validating contributions. The *advancing mode* emphasizes strategic reading comprehension instruction through the interjecting of, naming of, building upon, or confirming a strategy in use. These three coding categories evidenced the gradual release of responsibility (Vygotsky, 1962) I turned over to the students, as they began to evidence increasing levels of sophistication as involved members of a literary discourse community, and as strategic readers, who matured in the ways in which they were able to talk about text.

I also drew from the adolescent literature book analysis framework of Rosemary Chance (1999) to identify and analyze particular features in the core class novels that brought about involvement.

Summary

This chapter situated this dissertation study as interpretive, participatory, and as teacher research, and described the methods and design for the study. The setting, participants, and program were also portrayed. I also discussed how a pertinent research

question and modes of involvement emerged from the data analysis. Chapters Four, Five, and Six look more closely inside this setting and at the participants and the program.

Chapter 4

"AIN'T NOBODY NEVER ASKED WHAT I THOUGHT BEFORE!": APPRENTICING NEW HABITS OF MIND

Introduction

How did a group of Grade 6 students deemed "struggling" readers develop into sophisticated, strategic readers capable of involving themselves and each other in a literary conversation about what they read? They developed within the discursive environment in which they were immersed. Students were inducted and apprenticed through the tools of strategic talk. Specifically, I worked to apprentice students in the use of the strategies and discourse patterns of expert readers and involved members of a literary discourse community. Since talk is the central tool of a teacher's trade (Johnston, 2004) I enacted specific discourse moves, as I modeled the ways in which competent readers talk about reading, and the ways in which those involved in conversation work together with purpose. Specific reading strategy instruction was embedded in these dialogues, again, as a way to model the talk of one who is able to read critically. Also, quality pieces of adolescent literature were selected which met specific criteria for high involvement. This chapter explores and analyzes a transcript of these strategies and responds to the research questions:

What factors involve Grade 8 struggling readers with reading?

How did particular features in works of adolescent literature involve Grade 6 readers?

How did Grade 6 readers become involved as strategic readers?

How did Grade 6 readers become involved as members of a literary discourse community?

Participation structure: From old to new

A participation structure is defined as the setting and structure in which students are expected to participate, especially with reference to an adult (Watson-Gegeo & Boggs, 1977). It is largely through discourse that norms for participation are constituted within any such activity or event. It is through the norms for talk, artifacts, the goals and social/cognitive resources of participants, the roles assumed, interacting together that constitute the activity (Engestrom et al, 1999).

Typically, when my students had opportunities to discuss what they had read in the past, it was a traditional response model referred to as the IRE model (Cazden, 1988). The participation structure in this model was teacher dominated, as the teacher would initiate (I) the conversation with a question, a student would respond (R) and the teacher would reply with an evaluative (E) response.

In order to apprentice students into a very different participation structure, rigorous demands were placed on me. Scaffolding moves such as modeling, think aloud protocols, specific texts, and specific discourse moves – particularly repetition – were enacted to involve students as highly competent readers and members of a literary discourse community. These scaffolding moves were enacted to bridge students from the new to the known via the Vygotskian (1962, 1978) orientation to teaching and learning. Vygotsky posits that teaching and learning consist of the transformation of student participation from that of a novice to an expert, and that this transformation must take place in a community of practice – a real context – in which becoming knowledgeably skillful *and* developing an identity as a member of the community, are part of the same process.

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Due to my familiarity with the treatments my Grade 6 students received in previous reading instruction in my district, and through extensive interviews with them, it was clear that I would be inviting them into something new. I embraced a sociocultural approach to mind (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Bakhtin, 1981; Wertsch, 1991) whereby thinking originates in collaborative dialogues, which are internalized as inner speech, enabling children to do later in verbal thought what they could at first only do by talking with supportive, more knowledgeable others. I believed that apprenticing them into this type of participation structure would involve them as strategic readers in dialogic relationship with each other. As Wilhelm (2001) states, in an apprenticeship, people who become competent in a particular domain make use of social practices to complete important tasks, to create and communicate knowledge, and to participate in, and identify themselves, as competent members in that field's particular community of practice.

This chapter reveals the initial progression toward my students' becoming sophisticated strategic readers capable of involving themselves and each other in a literary conversation about what they read. It also reveals how the conventions of schooling have a profound effect on the kinds of literary response that students will come to see as appropriate and natural (Purves, 1973).

Structuring consciousness

In order for my students to become more involved as both strategic readers *and* members of a literary discourse community, I applied Vygotsky's social learning theory as our framework. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) asserted that good learning is always learning in advance of development. He referred to this as the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD is the distance between the level of independent problem-solving and

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the level of problem-solving in collaboration with an adult or more capable peer. Wertsch (1978) added that the learning interaction must be difficult enough so that it has not already been mastered, but simple enough so that it will not be impossible for the child to understand.

The dialogue in the following transcript from September, 2004, was aimed at "structuring consciousness" (Vygotsky, 1978) in terms of the disciplinary knowledge competent readers access when they read in critical ways, and in terms of the dialogic moves members of a discourse community make when involved in literary conversation.

With specific regard to the disciplinary knowledge of competent readers, the goal is to develop students' critical literacy (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000) which requires them to be involved in constructing and negotiating meanings, reflecting and connecting. Critical literacy demands that students infer and think beyond the superficial meanings of texts (Pearson, 2001). To assist students in doing this, I applied Pearson and Gallagher's (1983) gradual release of responsibility model (GRR) of instruction in which learning comes about through scaffolding. I utilized several scaffolding moves which are instructional mechanisms that assist in moving learners from the new to the known. Instruction is direct and explicit (Doyle, 1983) as students are apprenticed into a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1989) in which they are involved as novices in the actual work of the expert. I modeled the behaviors of a highly competent reader involved in the process of inferencing.

I enacted think aloud protocols in which I made my thinking known, so students could both view and hear the "in process" metacognitive work of a highly competent reader. I used various discourse moves, particularly repetition, to involve students in

developing new habits of mind as highly competent readers. I also used works of adolescent fiction with particular involvement features to involve them with text. I knew their learning histories. Given that this was their first encounter with a participation structure of this nature, the majority of the responsibility was on me, as teacher, to actively guide and explicitly assist my students into more competent performances.

We had read the first two chapters of *The Great Gilly Hopkins* (Paterson, 1978) and students were asked to write a response to what they had read. They were given the following prompts – Write about whatever caught your attention in the chapters. What made you laugh? What did you wonder about? What made you feel angry? Shocked? Confused? I invited them to respond in writing prior to our discussion as it allowed them to organize and elucidate their thoughts and to consider and mold their initial impressions (Cobine, 1995). In mini-lessons previous to beginning this novel, we had read and written responses to three picture books, *Wilma Unlimited* (Krull, 2000), *Two Bad Ants* (VanAllsburg, 1988) and *My Hiroshima* (Morimoto, 1992) as a way for me to model what an aesthetic reader response entails.

Table 4.1: Transcript of Initial Reading Discussion – mid-September, 2004

Participant		Verbal Action	Mode of Involvement	Analysis
		Section I: Setting the Stage		
Teacher	1 2	Who would like to share their response first? (scans group) (nominates, hand raised)	Gathering	Evoking invitations
Student 1	3 4	(Student reads) If I acted like Gilly I would be grounded. She is a brat	Supporting	Revoicing interpretations Identifying textual evidence
Teacher	5 6 7 8	Shania thinks Gilly is a brat. How many others agree with her and wrote about that? (scans group) OK, so we all think she is a brat.	Supporting Gathering	Revoicing interpretations Inviting opinions

	9	What happened in the chapter		
	10	to make us think she is like that? (nominate Student 2)		
		Section II: Collecting Evidence		
Student 2	11	She blew bubbles on her face	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
	12	and hair on purpose. She was		
	13	trying to make herself look like		
	14	a mess. (reads)		
Teacher	15	(nomination) Dustin, do you	Gathering	Evoking invitations
	16	know something else Gilly did		
	17	that makes us know she is a brat?		
Student 3	18	She stuck gum on the handle. (reads)	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
	19	That is so gross. What if someone		
	20	else touched it? (groans from class)		
Student 4	21	(has hand raised, nominated)	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
	22	Ms. Ellis told her not to. (I nod)		
Teacher	23	So, what I have asked you to do	Advancing	Drawing perspectives together Monitoring metacog-nitive processes
	24	is to collect evidence. Let's write		
	25	all the evidence on the board. (walk		
	26	to board, repeat and record verbal		
	27	responses) What does this evidence		
	28	show? What are we trying to prove?		
.		(scans class. Motions with hands)		
Several Students	29	That Gilly is a brat.	Supporting	Revoicing interpretations
	30	----Gilly's bad. (overlapping talk)		
Teacher	31	How do we know that these	Advancing	Drawing perspectives together Modeling metacog-nitive processes
	32	things show bratty behavior?		
Several Students (1,2,4,6,11)	33	Because you don't act like that!	Supporting	Revoicing interpretations Modeling reasoning processes
	34	She wasn't minding. Just look		
	35	at what she did. It was bad		
	36	manners! (overlapping talk)		
Teacher	37	So, you are saying that these	Supporting	Revoicing interpretations Drawing perspectives together
	38	pieces of evidence from the		
	39	chapter are proof that Gilly is		
	40	a brat and it isn't right to act that way?		
Several Students	41	Yes. Yea. Uh-huh. Sure. (overlapping talk)	Supporting	Revoicing interpretations

Teacher	42	What we just did was what good	Advancing	Naming a
	43	readers do when they read. They	Supporting	strategy
	44	inference. Does anyone know		Inviting opinions
	45	what it means to inference? (long		
	46	pause) Has anyone ever heard the		
	47	word 'inference' before?		
Student 11	48	I heard of it before but I don't	Supporting	Clarifying
	49	remember for sure. I think we		responses
	50	did it once in fourth grade...		
	51	I'm not sure.		
Teacher	52	Inferencing is when a good reader	Advancing	Naming a
	53	uses evidence from the book *and*		strategy
	54	from the brain to figure out what		Drawing perspectives
	55	is going on. I wrote down all the		together
	56	pieces of evidence we found in the		
	57	chapter when I asked you how you		
	58	knew Gilly was a brat. The author		
	59	never came out and wrote down that		
	60	"Gilly is a brat" but she did show it		
	61	by having her behave in certain ways.		
	62	Those are pieces of evidence that came		
	63	from the book. We also used our brains		
	64	to inference. You said that when someone		
	65	behaves like Gilly does that it is bad manners		
	66	and not minding. Someone must have taught		
	67	you that. That part did *not* come from the book.		
	68	It came from your brain. Good reader use		
	69	evidence from the book *and* from their own brain		
	70	to figure things out and that is what we did. That		
	71	is inferencing. Nice job! You won't believe what		
	72	Gilly is up to in the next chapters! Let's continue		
	73	reading to find out. (We continue reading.)		

Analysis of Section I: Setting the stage

I pull the tables together so we can sit facing each other. My intent is to make the seating arrangement conducive to talk. I begin by collecting students' thoughts, opinions and reactions to the reading. Verbal contributions are imperative if students are to learn to dialogue *as* readers *with* readers. I invite conversation by asking, "Who would like to share their response first?" (line 1). I am working in *gathering mode* as I evoke invitations to the dialogic event with student responses. Starting with student observations, rather than the teachers, allows instruction to begin with a joint focus of

attention, as the student is already attending. Johnston (2004) terms this "attentional following." I scan the group until Student 1 raises her hand. She reads from her paper, "If I acted like Gilly I would be grounded. Gilly is a brat" (lines 3, 4). This is all she has written on her paper. This response is typical of most in the group. Written responses are short and either sparse summaries of the reading or acknowledgements that identify Glly as a brat.

The students provide me very little with which to work. As the teacher, it is my responsibility to make something meaningful out of what the student says. Having little to work with cannot stop the dialogic exchange. I must take "intentional discursive action" and impute intentions to position the student's comment – and the student – as a reader enacting competent reading behaviors (Rio & Alvarez, 2002). Aware that they were in transition on multiple levels – moving from elementary to middle school, moving from a single, homeroom teacher to seven teachers a day, encountering a new student body and new classmates, and moving from a monologic to a dialogic participation structure – I capitalize on this generative response as our way into the literary conversation. The onus is on me as I work to translate what is important for them to learn into a format appropriate to their current state of understanding (Langer, 2002).

The involvement features in Katherine Paterson's novel operate as a scaffold, helping me to assist my students. Authors have designs on the reader (Soter, 1999) and Katherine Paterson opens up the novel with a bombardment of contemptible behavior on the part of her main character, Gilly. She has constructed such an outrageous character that students cannot help but focus in on her behavior. She sets up the reader and forces us to feel shocked and outraged. This begs students to respond aesthetically, which

makes involvement primary (Rosenblatt, 1978). I am working in *gathering mode*, evoking invitations to put thoughts on the table.

In lines 5 through 7, I reframe and rebroadcast Shania's response. My question is partially closed and partially open. "How many agree...?" is a closed, yes or no question which allows for non-verbal participation as well. I am attempting to validate her thoughts and emphasize that she has recognized something important in the reading. By rebroadcasting and then asking for group agreement, it validates Shania to the group as well. It also puts other opinions on the table, even though they are in the form of non-verbal nods. A dialogic community necessitates talk, yet, recognizing the degree to which my students are in unfamiliar territory, non-verbal cues also become significant and valid contributions. "...And wrote about that?" is an open question and an attempt to solicit more verbal contributions. I am working in *supporting mode* as I revoice student contributions and am working in *gathering mode* as I attempt to solicit *more* verbal contributions. Students neither raise their hands to volunteer a response, nor speak without being nominated by me. There are, however, several nods from the room. They indicate either that many agreed with S1's claim, and/or have written about a similar reaction to the main character's behavior.

I confirm (line 8) that we are in agreement and then attempt to face them back toward the text, because the text must be considered as we construct meaning, which is the goal of comprehension (Langer, 1998). An aesthetic response is stressed in Rosenblatt's (1980) argument for involving readers, yet she rejects pure subjectivity. The language of the text shapes which interpretations are feasible. Her concept of "poem" is the transactional experience of the reader under the guidance of the text (Rosenblatt,

1986). True comprehension goes beyond literal understanding and involves the reader's interaction with text. They need to become cognizant of the conventions that govern how texts work to deepen their involvement with them. Since texts are culturally constructed and, therefore, conventional, learners cannot naturally stumble upon how they operate and communicate. They must be *taught* the conventions that govern how they work (Soter, 1999). So, I scaffold with the question, "What happened in the chapter to make us think she is a brat?" (lines 9, 10). I want them to focus on the ways in which authors construct characters to involve the reader. I also want to highlight that they are beginning to make inferences, which is a complex and important reading strategy. I nominate Student 2 who has her hand raised.

Analysis of Section II: Collecting evidence

Student 2 (lines 11-14) responds by saying, "Gilly blew bubbles on her face and hair on purpose." She adds, "She was *trying* to make herself look like a mess." Student 2 elaborates by expanding on her response. In the opening scene of the novel, Gilly is sitting in the back of the social worker's (Ms. Ellis) car. Ms. Ellis asks her to stop blowing such large bubbles with her gum because she is getting it on her hair and face. Gilly blows another one, immediately, in defiance of Ms. Ellis. Student 2 works in *supporting mode* as she cites three instances of textual evidence.

I then nominate Dustin as I reframe and rebroadcast, "Dustin, do you know something else Gilly did that makes us know she is a brat?" (lines 15-17). By saying "something else" I am both validating that Student 2 identified evidence from the text while I continue to ask for more contributions – there are more clues in the text that prove Gilly is a brat. I am working in *gathering mode*, positioning my question as a scaffold to

continue to connect readers with text. Dustin (Student 3, lines 18-20) adds, "She stuck gum on the handle" which is another behavior Gilly displayed. Ms. Ellis demands that Gilly get rid of her gum, so Gilly complies – she sticks it on the underside of the door handle of the car! Dustin's response operates in *supporting mode* as he, too, provides another piece of textual evidence. Dustin adds a personal opinion, "That is so gross. What if someone else touched it?" His last question is not meant to be answered in the literal sense. It is a rhetorical question of a sort – imagining the disgust of touching already chewed gum. He receives a collective groan from the class which works to provide some comic relief and binds students together in agreement.

Student 4 raises her hand and comments, "Ms. Ellis told her not to." She is identifying more textual evidence by paraphrasing the dialogue of Ms. Ellis, Gilly's social worker. Ms. Ellis has made several desperate pleas with Gilly to make a good impression and to change her attitude before she meets her next foster mother. Her contribution operates in *supporting mode* as she identifies more evidence from the text. Students were recognizing rhetorical patterns in the novel, which is very powerful; once they start to notice these patterns and their recognition is highlighted, it is likely to influence perception, as they will notice them again (Johnston, 2004).

We had collected textual evidence as a group to support our claim that Gilly is a brat. Eisner (1997) argues that the process of meaning making must be highlighted through instruction, and good teachers know that learning cannot be left to discovery (Wilhelm, 2001) so I use this collection of evidence as a scaffold into the next step of the inferencing process. In lines 23-28, I am working in *advancing mode*, drawing perspectives together and showing students another way to see the evidence we have

collected to support our claim. I create a fixed text of this evidence on the board and say, "So, what I have asked you to do is to collect evidence. Let's write all the evidence on the board. What does this evidence show? What are we trying to prove?" As I record student contributions, I repeat them verbally. This scaffolding move provides yet another way to see inferencing at work – how we, as competent readers, make a claim, locate evidence from the text to support our claim and catalogue that evidence to prove its validity.

·She blew bubbles on her face and hair on purpose.

·She stuck gum on the handle.

·Ms. Ellis told her not to do these things and she did anyway.

I write the above contributions on the board, making my thinking visible as I verbalize the metacognitive processes good readers use when they inference. I employ the collected contributions of textual evidence provided by my students, while I model a think aloud of my metacognitive processes (Pressley, 2002). I want to make known the thinking of the group in its entirety, socializing their attention to textual evidence, and the importance that it was a collaborative effort. I am emphasizing that when competent readers read, they begin to form thoughts, opinions, and theories about characters, which come about through ways in which characters are constructed – what they say, what they think, how they behave. Competent readers constantly catalogue these constructions as evidence.

In lines 29-30, several students respond with overlapping talk to my questions, "Gilly is a brat. Gilly is bad." They are working in *supporting mode*, revoicing the

interpretation and validating that, yes, these behaviors most certainly show Gilly is a brat. I ask, "How do we know that these things show bratty behavior?" (lines 31-32). This question operates as a scaffold to move us into the second component of inferencing. Inferencing does not simply include locating textual evidence to support a claim. Inferencing also demands world knowledge. In this case, to fully verify our claim that Gilly is a brat, we need to consider what we know about the norms of appropriate behaviors. Working in *advancing mode*, I transition us into the other component of inferencing, making my thinking visible once again.

Several students respond (lines 33-36) with overlapping talk, "Because you don't act like that!" "She wasn't minding." "Just look at what she did!" "It was bad manners!" They are responding with what they know about living in the world. First, a person does *not* behave in such a way. Second, a child is *supposed* to mind an adult. Third, being defiant and rude *is* bad manners. Proper norms of behavior indicate that, indeed, Gilly is being a brat.

Working in *supporting mode*, I revoice and reframe their responses (lines 37-40) by asking, "So, you are saying that these pieces of evidence from the chapter are proof that Gilly is a brat and that it isn't OK to act that way?" I use this question to focus us in once again on textual evidence *and* world knowledge emphasizing that highly competent readers consider *both* when they inference. Students respond with overlapping, backchanneling talk (line 41) by saying, "Yes, Yea, Uh-huh, Sure," working in *supporting mode*, as they confirm that they have found ample proof for their claim and that it came from the text *as well as* their understanding of appropriate social norms.

Although they are not able to come to these understandings without teacher scaffolds, I want to emphasize their valuable contributions.

Analysis of Section III: Solidifying claims

In lines 42-47, I review what we have done up to this point. I say, "What we just did was what good readers do when they read. They inference." This is the first time I have introduced the term. I work in *advancing mode* by naming the strategy. It is my responsibility not only to teach them the ways and procedures for reading like highly competent readers; I must teach them the names for things as well. Students must possess declarative knowledge – the names of things in specific disciplines (Garner, 1987) – if they are to become fully apprenticed into the ways of knowing as highly competent readers. I then ask, "Does anyone know what it means to inference?" Since I receive neither a verbal nor a nonverbal response, I reframe my question and ask, "Has anyone ever heard the word 'inference' before?" This question performs an assessment function (Doyle, 1983) as I work to understand their working knowledge of the term. Student 11 (lines 48-51) responds, "I heard of it before but I don't remember for sure. I think we did it once in fourth grade...I'm not sure." Student 11 is trying to recall her experience with inferencing from two years ago and cannot seem to. No other students respond. I am fairly certain that they have not gone through schooling from kindergarten through Grade 5 and not had *some* encounter with inferencing, but it is evident they have no working knowledge of either the term or its procedural use as a reading strategy.

I work in *advancing mode*, tying the lesson together by naming the strategy and modeling metacognitive processes once again (lines 52 – 73) by repeating the entire process of what we have just done together as a way to review the strategy. This

scaffolding move is a rebroadcast summarization of the metacognitive strategies highly competent readers use when they read. It is also a rebroadcast summarization of the work we have done *together* as strategic readers up to this point. Verbal explicitness is particularly important (Duffy, Roehler, et al, 1986) so I review in words, yet again, the entire process and use the proper vocabulary. I say, "Inferencing happens when a good reader uses evidence from the book *and* from the brain to figure out what is going on." I walk over to the board where our list of evidence is written and point to it again. I then say, "I wrote down all the pieces of evidence we found in the chapter when I asked you how you knew Gilly was a brat. The author never came out and wrote down 'Gilly is a brat' but she did *show* it by having her behave in certain ways." I add, "Those are pieces of evidence that came from the book." This statement is a reframed repetition of my initial utterance that provides a retrospective narrative about what took place in the dialogic event.

I repeat (lines 63-71) the other component of inferencing – a good reader's ability to use what is known about social norms and the world, by saying, "We also used our brains to inference. You said that when someone behaves like Gilly, it is bad manners and not minding. Someone must have taught you that. That part did not come from the book. It came from your brain. Good readers use evidence from the book and from their own brain to figure things out and that is what we did." I emphasize once again that inferencing is a strategy good readers use. I also highlight, yet again, that to inference, a good reader uses evidence from the text as well as his/her own brain.

Language works to position people and the way they think about themselves. It is constitutive and invites a certain identity (Johnston, 2004). I validate them by saying,

"Nice job!" as I emphasize that we were doing the work of good readers. By representing them as good readers, I open the door for them to entertain the possibility of becoming the kind of people who *are* good readers, in hopes that they also welcome further interactions based on that premise. Each dialogic exchange in this growing community of practice between teacher and students, provides building material for their understanding of a wide range of literary concepts, practices, and responsibilities. I also work to shape their identities through each encounter (Davis & Harre, 1999). I want to build conscious awareness of their ability to be effective as competent readers whose purposeful actions control outcomes. I entice them a bit before we continue reading by saying, "You won't believe what Gilly is up to in the next chapters! Let's continue reading to find out." We continue reading.

Accountability to knowledge and standards of reasoning

Modeling, think aloud protocols, discourse moves and specific works of adolescent fiction were utilized as scaffolds, to involve my students as highly competent readers and as members of a literary discourse community, in a very different participation structure. As this transcript reveals, my students were on the periphery of this participation structure in which certain ways of knowing were required. Resnick (1978) describes these ways of knowing as "accountable talk." There are two academic realms of "accountable talk." The first is "accountability to knowledge" in which students must posit claims, provide evidence for those claims and recognize the kinds of knowledge to access in order to do so – the "what" of discipline-specific knowledge. The second is "accountability to standards of reasoning" meaning that rational strategies are used to present arguments, draw conclusions, and justify claims – the "how" of

discipline-specific knowledge. In order to legitimize themselves as highly competent, strategic readers, students must develop both capacities.

With regard to the criteria legitimizing them in the ways of knowing, students did not automatically invite textual cues (Enciso, 1990) unless strategies were scaffolded for them. The initial scaffold provided for them was my selection of this particular novel. In *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, Katherine Paterson (1978) employs specific narrative techniques to evoke certain responses from the reader (Benton, 1992). She bombards the opening scene of the novel with images of Gilly's outrageous behavior which serves as a framing function for all subsequent developments (Soter, 1999). Texts invite readers to look at them through certain analytical lenses and, in this case, the reader cannot help but be shocked by Gilly's behavior and then ask, Why does Gilly act this way?

These particular features involve my students as the initial written response shared by Student 1 (lines 3-4) asserts, Gilly is a brat. This is the claim we must prove as readers throughout the entire dialogic exchange; the focal point. Additionally, I scaffolded throughout the discourse by repeating the word 'brat' in either direct or paraphrased form six times (lines 5, 8, 10, 32, 65, 66). Students, as they became involved themselves, repeated the word 'brat' in either direct or paraphrased form eight times (lines 17, 29, 30, 33, 34, 35, 40, 58).

As we proceeded to find evidence for our claim, I scaffolded first with questions (lines 9-10 and 16-17) to face students back toward the text. They were able to locate several pieces of textual evidence to support the initial claim:

11 ...blew bubbles on her face
12 and hair on purpose. She was
13 trying to make herself look like
14 a mess.

18 She stuck gum on the handle.

22 Ms. Ellis asked her not to.

I also repeated the textual images located and verbalized by my students to emphasize that we were proceeding as strategic readers – accumulating evidence to justify our claim.

Competent readers involved in literary dialogue also speak with specific vocabulary. Therefore, I employed repetition to emphasize key terms highly competent readers use when involved with reading in critical ways. Repetition, in this sense, aids in comprehension by providing semantically less dense discourse (Tannen, 1989). Repetitions of the following terms serve a connective function as well. Each of these terms are linked together and related to each other as they are the 'what' and the 'how' of accountable knowledge with regard to being legitimized as a highly competent reader. I repeated the word 'inference' in either exact or paraphrased form seven times (lines 44, 45, 47, 52, 59, 64, 71). I repeated the word 'book' in exact or paraphrased form five times (lines 9, 39, 53, 67, 69). I repeated the word 'evidence' in exact or paraphrased form fourteen times (lines 9, 10, 16, 17, 24, 25, 27, 28, 38, 39, 56, 60, 61, 62, 69). I repeated the word 'brain' four times (lines 54, 63, 68, 69) which are paraphrased repetitions of student responses from lines 33, 34, 35, and 36.

The summarizing monologue at the end (lines 52-73) serves a tying function (Cazden, 2001) as it is a condensed review of the ideas, vocabulary, and procedures we constructed together in this dialogic event. I barrage these words into the discourse with *intent* as they are critical terms for both the "what" and the "how" of "accountable talk." Highly competent readers involved with reading know that they must recognize textual features that cause them to make inferences. As they infer, they must provide evidence for these claims, and can find that evidence in the book and in their brain. Having

working knowledge of the terminology strategic readers use, as well as working knowledge of how to proceed, will involve them as the critical readers they must be in order to make meaning. Knowing that this is the work highly competent readers do, I also repeat 'good readers' (lines 42, 52, 68) three times. I want students to begin to take on identities that they *are* "good readers" so they will act accordingly. This offers students the opportunity to claim competency and agency. Competency and agency must begin with their belief that they can achieve a thing. As they work in the foreign territory of a dialogic community, I must repeat often how they are being instrumental in contributing to and constructing knowledge. It reinforces a solid foundation that readers use certain language and strategies in certain ways (Johnston, 2004) to achieve certain results.

Accountability to the learning community

The third realm of Resnick's (1978) "accountable talk" is "accountability to the learning community." This realm is more social in nature. Participants in a learning community – a literary discourse community – in this instance, must engage in talk and learn to listen attentively. Speakers must take responsibility for giving conversation a life. The coherence created in such a learning community sends a metamessage of involvement. Several scaffolding moves were enacted to bring this coherence about. The primary scaffolding move was repetition as it is the central linguistic meaning-making strategy for personal involvement (Tannen, 1989).

I used a predominance of particular pronouns – "we," "us" – to involve students as participants in the literary discourse community we were creating (lines 6, 10, 23, 24, 28, 31, 37, 42, 44, 46, 56, 57, 63, 64, 70, 71). My intent was to send a strong message of

unity that "we" were in this together, constructing knowledge as a group, involving ourselves in the task at hand *and* with each other. I emphasize that, for a time, we are part of the same social and intellectual mind. For example, in lines 9-10, I ask, "What happened in the chapter to make *us* think she is like that?" The pronoun "us" was used with intent. Although, at this point in the dialogue, only one student had offered any verbal contribution, the point was made clear that we are a collective of one; socially constructing knowledge as a single unit.

A second way in which I used repetition to bind us together, as members in a literary discourse community, was through reframing and rebroadcasting student contributions. For example, in line 5, I reframe Shania's initial comment and rebroadcast it to the group. Her comment sets the stage for the rest of the conversation so I must give it a bigger voice to emphasize its significance, and to emphasize that this is how highly competent readers construct knowledge together as a group – they provide verbal contributions to involve each other in membership. My summarizing monologue in lines 52 through 73 is yet another reframing and rebroadcasting of the entire dialogic event we constructed together. Again, my emphasis was to celebrate their emerging competence as involved readers (Wertsch, 1998) validating that, together, we are doing the work of highly competent readers immersed in a community of literary practice. This encourages the collective identity of a community of practice that people like us do things in this way.

Summary

Gee (1992) writes that a discourse is a sort of "identity kit" which comes complete with the appropriate instructions on how to act, talk, and proceed, so as to take

on a particular role that others will recognize. Scaffolding moves such as modeling, think aloud protocols, particular texts, and various discourse moves – primarily repetition – were enacted intensively to involve my students as highly competent readers, and members of a literary discourse community. By enculcation with dialogic tools, my students were learning that developing an identity as a member of a community of practice, and becoming knowledgeably skillful, are part of the same process (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Through the overt sharing of structural support, my students were apprenticed to use the strategies of expert readers, and members of a literary discourse community.

Although in the infancy of their apprenticeship, students were able to do with assistance what they could not yet do on their own (Pressley & McCormick, 1995). Given that the predominance of dialogue was mine, both in terms of number of lines (51) and the number of turns taken (8) it looks similar to the traditional IRE model. Student responses, however, were generative. They came from within as we created what was to be discussed together. The dialogic event began with the "lived through" experiences of my students (Rosenblatt, 1978). The dialogic encounter was neither predictable nor scripted in advance. It was responsive teaching in action (Shulman, 2004) as the instructional dialogue was constructed *from* and *with* the contributions of my students, created out of the discursive environment in which students were immersed. I had to provide much assistance to these novice learners, however, in order for them to achieve higher levels of conceptual and communicative competence.

Through these scaffolds, they were involved in both dialogic thought and strategic reading. Students were able to supply, both orally and in writing, initial,

emotive responses to a literary work. These responses, at this point, were not sophisticated, yet they did become the springboard to initiate the dialogic event. They were able to identify textual evidence as a way to support claims, yet a predominance of teacher scaffolding was necessary to turn them back toward the text. Students still raised their hands as a way to be nominated by me to take the floor. There were a few instances of non-teacher nominated utterances, but these were instances of overlapping talk. Students were unable, yet, to get the floor through non-verbal or backchanneling venues, and did not seek ways to either accept or enact these cues with each other. They looked to me, still, as the person in the sole role of knowledge "validator." They also were unable to combine the use of textual evidence with world knowledge to support their claims without teacher scaffolding.

Chapter 5 evidences how, through continued dialogic encounters such as this, I begin to extract myself as the bridge between the transactions students have with texts and each other. My students, as they enact various discourse moves, take greater ownership over the literary event. They begin to legitimize themselves as both highly competent readers and involved members of a literary discourse community, as control is transferred to them.

Students no longer need me to nominate them for each student utterance. They are able to face themselves back toward the text to cite evidence to support claims, and begin to reveal their developing internalization of combining textual evidence with world knowledge to do so. They interrogate the text, the claims of their peers, and re-think initial stances through an accumulation of evidence. They evidence that they share this dialogic universe with each other through their use of unifying pronouns.

Chapter 5

TRANSFER OF CONTROL: STUDENTS INVOLVING THEMSELVES AND OTHERS IN A LITERARY DISCOURSE COMMUNITY

Introduction

This chapter illustrates students' use of a variety of discourse moves to involve themselves and each other with reading. It showcases students taking on a greater degree of ownership over the entire literary discourse event. They use talk as a tool to move themselves out of the traditional, monologic participation structure, and into a dialogic participation structure. Students evidence their increasing internalization of involvement strategies, both as strategic readers and as members of a discourse community.

As strategic readers, students evidence "transfer of control" (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) over the discourse event as they make claims, use evidence from the text to support them, and use the language of strategic readers. Students not only evidence their use of discourse moves as competent, strategic readers, they also use discourse moves to involve each other in fellowship in this dialogic event.

Students initiate the literary conversation, working in *gathering* mode, which is typically the teacher's role in a traditional classroom. Students also work intensively in the *advancing* mode of involvement, as they interject reading strategies in use, primarily by their use of evidence from the text to support their claims, combined with real world knowledge. Earlier in the year, the *advancing* mode was used predominantly by me, as students did not yet possess working knowledge of more complex strategies competent, critical readers enact when they read and discuss a literary work.

In this chapter, students not only evidence ways in which they use discourse moves to involve themselves and each other as critical readers, they illustrate ways in

which they use discourse moves to invite peers into the literary conversation and to sustain it. They show repeatedly their commitment to the cohesiveness of the group. They are developing into highly capable discourse users, working as thoughtful, active listeners and speakers involved and invested in the dialogic event and each other.

This chapter explores what it looks like in a classroom setting of Grade 6 students who have been deemed "struggling" readers. It addresses and analyzes the research question:

What are the particular discourse strategies used by a group of Grade 6 readers involving themselves and others with reading?

Transfer of control

The following is the transcript of the reading conversation that took place after students had finished the last chapters of Katherine Paterson's (1978) novel *The Great Gilly Hopkins.* This novel tells the story of Galadriel "Gilly" Hopkins, a recalcitrant pre-teen, who has been shuffled from foster home to foster home, since the age of three. She has convinced herself that if she persists in being a behavior problem, she will be reunited with her biological mother. Early in the novel, Gilly's biological mother sends her a postcard that reads:

> *My Dearest Galadriel,*
> *The agency wrote me that you had moved.*
> *I wish it were to here. I miss you.*
> *All my love,*
> *Courtney*
>
> (excerpt, p. 28)

This letter creates tension, persistent throughout the story, as it forces students to wonder why a child and her mother would not be together, when the evidence seems to indicate that they *both* want exactly that. In the last chapters of the novel, Gilly is finally reunited

with her mother at the airport. During the scene at the airport, the mother's true feelings about her daughter become clear.

Table 5.1: Transcript of reading discussion – end of November, 2004

Participant	Verbalization	Mode of Involvement	Analysis
	Section I: Setting the Stage		
Student 4	1 I can't believe that mom!	Gathering	Evoking invitations
Several Students	2 It was a lie! That letter was 3 a lie!	Supporting	Revoicing interpretations
Teacher	4 I see you have some strong 5 opinions about this chapter. 6 Let's slow down so I can hear 7 each of you better. What's going 8 on?	Supporting	Revoicing interpretations Inviting opinions
	Section II: Collecting Evidence		
Student 5	9 Courtney doesn't want Gilly after 10 all! I told you, Dustin. I told you 11 guys! I know for sure because of 12 how she acted at the airport. She 13 didn't even pay for her own ticket!	Advancing Supporting	Modeling reasoning processes Identifying textual evidence
Student 7	14 And...she didn't even hug her!	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
Student 11	15 Well, she sort of hugged her, but 16 she kept that big bag in the way. 17 That's cold, man!	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
Student 4	18 Yea, and then she wasn't even 19 going to stay very long. And... 20 she called Gilly 'the kid' instead 21 of 'my daughter.'	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
Teacher	22 So, what do you think all of this 23 means?	Supporting Gathering	Monitoring metacognitive processes Inviting opinions
Student 6	24 She does NOT want her child. 25 She just doesn't care. And, another 26 part was that the grandma kept giving 27 Courtney dirty looks. She was mad at 28 her, too.	Supporting Advancing	Drawing perspectives together Identifying textual evidence Modeling reasoning

			processes
Teacher	29 Do we agree with what Kia just said?	Gathering	Inviting opinions
Several Students	30 YES! She is just a big liar! 31 Poor Gilly! I feel sorry for her 32 that her mom doesn't want her. 33 How can a mom not want her own 34 child?	Supporting	Revoicing interpretations
Teacher	35 Did the author ever come out and 36 say, "Gilly does not want her child?"	Supporting Gathering	Revoicing interpretations Inviting opinions
	Section III: Solidifying Claims		
Student 1	37 No, but we have all the proof we need 38 in the chapter. She did all those 39 things in the airport.	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
Student 8	40 And...the grandma, she knew, too.	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence

Analysis of Section I: Setting the stage

This particular section of the transcript opens with an utterance Tannen (1989) describes as summarizing dialogue. Although it is not a summary of the talk of another member of the discourse community, it captures the gist of the most salient information from the ending chapters; it is a summary of the voice of the author. Student 4 is shocked that Gilly's mother truly does not want her child. This utterance foregrounds what has been revealed in the chapters, and also sets the stage for the dialogic event about to unfold. Student 4, the initial speaker in the transcript, foregrounds the entire literary conversation by making prominent her shock at how Gilly's mother really felt. Because students have come to understand their "way in" to a literary work is through an aesthetic stance, they are able to generate a receptivity to entertain ideas, overtones, or attitudes. Rosenblatt (1938/1976) explains that one can think of this as an altering of certain areas of memory, a stirring up of certain reservoirs of experience, knowledge, and feeling. As

the reading proceeds, attention is fixed on the reverberations or implications that result from fulfillment or frustration of those expectations.

Her statement, "I can't believe that mom!" makes visible the most important feature of the reading – we realize that Gilly's mother did not want her child after all. Student 4 works in *gathering* mode by both initiating the literary conversation through this exclamatory claim and by drawing her classmates in, inviting them to dialogue with her. She is involved and wants her peers to become involved with her.

Several students support Student 4's claim with overlapping speech (lines 2, 3) by saying, "It was a lie! That letter was a lie!" They accept the invitation and engage. Often, overlapping speech indicates an interruption. In this case, however, it indicates agreement and solidarity - a *cooperative* overlap (Tannen, 1990). This overlap would be considered cooperative, as the responses include words of encouragement or elaboration about the topic. Specifically, the students are offering positive verification that they, too, agree with Student 4's assertion that Gilly's mother is a liar. Evidence again that this overlap is cooperative is the exuberance with which the words are expressed. Students are responding as "high involvement" speakers (Tannen, 1990) as they are expressing enthusiastic support through simultaneous speech. Most students are shocked at the behavior of Gilly's mother and have realized her letter, in which she indicated that she wanted her daughter to be with her, is *not* true. Lines 2 and 3 also paraphrase what Student 4 uttered to open up the dialogue as a way to show agreement and support for Student 4's claim. The cooperative overlap represents the *supporting* mode of engagement. Students are revoicing the interpretation of Student 1's utterance.

In lines 4-8, I revoice the claims of what has been uttered by my students so far and reframe their words. Students have worked to set the stage for our literary discussion by leveling claims about the mother's true feelings toward Gilly. This is a critical moment. I want to continue to nurture their degree of involvement, yet they are in such a state of high emotion, that I feel the need to slow them down, so we can unravel why they have come to this conclusion about Gilly's mother. I need to hear their utterances clearly in order to use them to lead us forward. So, I use a stalling tactic by using three sentences instead of simply asking, "What do you mean?"

I want them a bit more grounded so we can do the work good readers need to do. I am honoring that they have strong opinions and indicating that I want to hear more. I support them with metacognitive questions (Duckworth, 1998) and use these questions to call attention to student thinking and knowledge-building. I am working in the *supporting* mode as my focus is on scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1980). These questions and my stalling tactic are platforms on which to construct on-going talk. This scaffold will move us into deeper analysis of the reading. I "shoot a literary arrow" (Langer, 1990) by reformulating student responses into questions, in order to face them back toward the text. Facing students back toward the text will reposition them so we can build stock of common knowledge with textual evidence. I continue to socialize students' attention to language, opening it up for analysis. Socializing their attention to where they are being successful is also likely to continue to develop their sense of self-efficacy or agency (Bandura, 1996). This question also works as a bridge between the discourse that sets the scene of the literary conversation, and the opportunities in the next section, in which we will dig more deeply into textual analysis and do the work of critical readers.

Analysis of Section II: Collecting evidence

Authors use imagery and details to engage readers. In this section of the transcript, the students use imagery and details to engage each other. The images (lines 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20 and 21) are repetitions of the author's images from the ending chapters. Specifically, they are repetitions of the images the author created as she wrote the scene at the airport where Gilly *finally* met with her mother. Katherine Paterson underscores the significance of ideas by repeating them, and by clustering them at the climax of the story. This allows for a greater emotional response on the part of the reader. The author bombards the reader with image after image of the mother's words and actions, to force the reader to draw the conclusion she wants them to see:

Line 12 ...how she acted at the airport.

Line 13 She didn't even pay for her own ticket!

Line 14 And...she didn't even hug her!

Line 15 Well, she sort of hugged her but she
Line 16 kept that bag in the way.

Line 18 ...and then she wasn't even going to
Line 19 stay very long...And...she called Gilly
Line 20 'the kid' instead of
Line 21 'my daughter.'

Line 26 ...the grandma kept giving
Line 27 Courtney dirty looks

This section of the transcript includes a predominance of repetitions that assist students with both production and comprehension (Tannen, 1989). With regard to the ways in which repetition aids production, it enables a speaker to produce language more efficiently. The speaker can produce fluent speech while formulating what to say next. With regard to comprehension, repetition and variations provide semantically less dense

discourse; the utterance is not completely new information. The redundance of words already said in one variation or another allow the hearer to receive information at roughly the rate the speaker is producing it. Repeated in this section of the transcript are those things Gilly's mother did *not* do. In these ways, then, repetition allows members of the dialogic event to make meaning together.

Accountability to knowledge

Directly related to this, Resnick (1990) discusses the kind of "accountable talk" needed in a community of learners to contribute to the overall learning of the group. Two of these refer to intellectual, academic utterances. The first is accountability to knowledge meaning that participants make use of specific and accurate knowledge, provide evidence for claims and arguments, and recognize the kind of knowledge or framework required to address a topic. Students make use of the text, allowing the author's rhetorical moves to inform them. They access this textual information to find evidence for their claim that Gilly's mother does not want her. They work as strategic readers who recognize that claims need support. Students have integrated accumulated information (Anderson, 1982) by identifying key images in the text. Students reveal they are cognizant of how the author used imagery in the "airport scene" of the chapter to construct Courtney's true feelings about her daughter. I draw their attention to this, showing them how their decisions and strategic actions were responsible for validating their claim. This increases the perception of their ability and the effectiveness of their focused efforts (Pintrich & Blumenfeld, 1985).

Students repeat these images in their literary conversation with each other as a way to evidence the initial claim by Student 4 (Line 1) in which she says, "I can't believe

that mom!" This is a paraphrased allo –repetition, repeating the words created in images by the author. By repeating the images, they give each other additional snapshots that spark strong emotion. These images work to show characters in relationship with each other, which is highly emotive. Through the repetitions of these images, students are involved by the extremes in behavior. This has a dramatic effect on them and keeps them involved. The repetition of images in the text paired with the repetitions of students retelling them creates involvement, as it is "through the details and emotions brought about through imagery" (Fredericks, 1986) that meaning is made – where students integrate knowledge and perceptions. The students work together in student-to-student exchanges to integrate their knowledge and understanding of how certain rhetorical moves provide evidence for their claim.

Student 5 then self-repeats with variation as she reframes and rebroadcasts to the entire group, "I told you guys!" (Lines 10-11) This works to give her own claim a "bigger voice" and to draw other students into the literary conversation. Student 5 continues to advance her claim (Lines 11-13) with another self-repeat with variation. "I know for sure" (Line 11) is a paraphrase of her initial utterance, "Courtney doesn't want Gilly..." (Line 9). She is doing the work of a competent strategic reader here. She is using evidence from the text to support her claim that Gilly's mother does not want her. In lines 12 -13, she first utters a global statement, "...because of how she acted at the airport" and then becomes more precise when she repeats a specific action on the part of the character with, "...She didn't even pay for her own ticket!" She works from a general claim to a specific piece of textual evidence, as a competent, strategic reader is able, combining the evidence from the text, with what she knows to be appropriate social

behavior, confirming her suspicions that Gilly's mother does not want her child. She is highly invested in making her point to the class as she speaks in exclamatory sentences, while also uttering several lines to enable her to hold the floor.

Student 5 (Lines 9-14) advances this section of the transcript as she builds on what Student 4 and several others have claimed in lines 1-3. Repetition is pervasive throughout the transcript as format tying evidenced again here, working to highlight the point of the story; the official conclusion. She paraphrases by saying, "Courtney doesn't want Gilly after all" (Lines 9-10). She directly addresses a fellow student in Line 10 by saying, "I told you, Dustin."

She and Dustin had been in a debate for several days over whether or not Gilly's mother really wanted her. This friendly debate had spilled out of the classroom and into the hallway. This is strong evidence of involvement as text processing occurred not only during the reading act but after the reading had ceased (Koriate, Greenberg & Kreiner, 2002). Dustin was holding fast to his belief that Gilly and her mother would find a happy ending with each other. Student 4, on the other hand, was far more skeptical. Although she directly addresses Dustin, she is not criticizing him. She is attempting to prove her claim with evidence gleaned from the airport scene. During a follow-up interview with these students, Dustin stated that upon reading the last chapters of the book, he, too, was completely convinced the mother had lied. Not even Dustin, who was holding out hope for a happy mother-daughter reunion, could refute the obvious.

Accountability to standards of reasoning

The second realm of "accountable talk" Resnick (1990) discusses is accountability to standards of reasoning, meaning that participants use rational strategies

to present arguments and draw conclusions, and to challenge the quality of each other's reasoning. As strategic readers, students recognize that an inference is validated through textual evidence as well as world knowledge. They are showing an accountability to standards of reasoning as they measure the actions and words of Gilly's mother, against what they deem to be appropriate and loving treatment toward one's own child. Student 7 (line 14) begins his utterance with "And..." as a way to get the floor but also to show agreement with what has been said previously. He utters yet another piece of evidence from the text as he says, "...she didn't even hug her!" He reveals his shock that this is *not* how a mother would respond to a daughter, especially since they had not seen each other for over nine years.

They also recognize the inaccuracies in claims on the part of others in the group and respond as invested members of the discourse community. Student 11 (Lines 15-17) advances the conversation further as he initiates his comment with a backchannel, as a way to show a degree of agreement with what Student 7 has said, and also to get the floor. His explanation, "Well, she sort of hugged her, but she kept that big bag in the way," provides the group with a closer and more accurate observation of the image Katherine Paterson portrayed. Gilly's mother *did* hug her, but she held a shoulder bag between Gilly and herself –

> At this point, Courtney hugged her, pressing the bag
> into Gilly's chest and stomach...
>
> (excerpt, p. 145)

Student 11's comments are elaborative. He is repeating the comments made by Student 7 and clarifying them – there was a hug that was not *really* a hug. Katherine Paterson used this detail as she described the scene to the reader to reveal yet another

distancing mechanism Gilly's mother used to keep herself away from her daughter. And, again, it was a choice. This segment of the discourse evidences how peers are coming to view each other as a diverse group of readers. This further consolidates their identities as competent and varied readers. They are becoming *literate*, not simply learning the skills of literacy. They are developing different personal and social identities – uniquenesses and affiliations – that define the people they see themselves becoming (Johnston, 2004).

Student 11 adds, "That's cold, man!" (line 17) as a way to paraphrase more globally what he had said in the previous lines. He captures in his own words the image from the text, evidencing it as additional proof of how Gilly's mother truly feels, then code-switches to level an opinion about the cruelty of her actions. He is involved on two levels in this literary conversation – first, as a member of a reading community who uses the academic language appropriate for a literary discussion. Second, as a member of a group of middle school children, who relate to and engage with each other through the use of slang – who have a world and a language outside the walls of a classroom.

In the following lines of the transcript, Student 4 (lines 18-21) gets the floor by backchanneling, "Yea..." which evidences agreement with what has been discussed beforehand. She advances the claim that Gilly's mother does not want her child by adding two pieces of evidence from the text. She paraphrases the words of the text by saying, "...and, then she wasn't even going to stay very long" (lines 18-19). She stalls as she begins her next sentence by using "And..." to maintain her position of speaker, and paraphrases the dialogue spoken by Gilly's mother in another scene from the chapter (lines 19-21). Student 4 has contributed to the evidentiary purposes of this part of the dialogue by capturing two additional images from the text. She has highlighted yet

another of the distancing mechanisms Gilly's mother uses when relating to her own daughter – referring to her as "the kid" instead of "Gilly" or "my daughter." Student 4 was persistent in the ways in which she gained and held the floor through the use of backchanneling, stalling, and the amount of words uttered. She had important contributions to make and wanted to be heard. She advanced the conversation for the entire group as she worked as a strategic reader by pinpointing evidence from the text, and by paying careful attention to the powerful rhetorical moves used by an author.

Each student is working in the *advancing* mode in this section of the transcript. The *advancing* mode emphasizes strategic reading comprehension through the interjecting of, naming of, building upon, or confirming a strategy in use. Students advance the conversation amongst themselves through the cataloging of images, proving they have taken on identities as sophisticated readers, who are able to access the cognitive functions associated with inferencing.

In lines 22-23, I gain the floor by asking, "So, what do you think this all means?" I am attempting to glue each of these pieces of evidence together so students can begin to recognize that they are able to inference, which is a sophisticated reading strategy and one deemed "central to meaning-making." (Pearson, 1985). I want to underscore their capacity to read as highly competent readers and highlight the metacognitive processes they enacted to do so. I want them to see their own thinking so I scaffold with this type of question. Again, I am working in *supporting* mode here to tie together the textual evidence we have accumulated thus far.

Student 6 responds to me with, "She does NOT want her child." This response draws perspectives together, which is a characteristic of *supporting* mode as well. This is

not only a response to my question, it is a repeated statement with variation of lines spoken by other students in lines 1, 2, 3 and 9:

Line 1 I can't believe that mom!
Line 2 It was a lie! That letter was
Line 3 a lie!

Line 9 Courtney doesn't want Gilly.....

Line 24 She does NOT want her child.

Student 6 invites herself verbally into the conversation by taking the floor as she involves her classmates by voicing a paraphrased agreement.

She continues in line 25 with a variation repeat of her initial statement by saying, "She just doesn't care." Student 6 wants to keep the floor evidenced through the use of "And..." in her next sentence (lines 25-27) when she adds yet another piece of evidence to support her claim that Gilly's mother does not want her. She repeats another image from the text, in which the reader sees the grandmother giving her daughter dirty looks.

Not only are we appalled by Courtney's behavior, her own mother is. She varies her statement by adding in lines 27-28 that "She was mad at her, too." Her use of the adverb "too" is intriguing. Student 6 is saying that grandma also is angry at Gilly's mother for her behaviors at the airport, which prove she does not want her child. Gilly, however, is the only other person involved in this scene. Gilly's emotions are not those of anger; Gilly is heartbroken. The question becomes, then, Who are the others with whom grandma is being included? The adverb 'too' is used to include grandma with us – the readers who are also enraged. This evidences Student 6's involvement with the text as she puts herself, emotionally, into the scene. Arguably, she plucks grandma out of the story world and gives her life beyond the page, as she also makes *her* one of *us*. One of

the characters (grandma) feels like we do – very angry. Her statement works in *supporting* mode, drawing perspectives together as she adds the perspective of another character in the story, who is formulating the same truths as the readers. In line 29, I reframe Kia's statements in a question by asking if we agree with what she just said. I am inviting additional opinions to gain concensus. I am working in *gathering* mode here as I attempt to tie the discussion together. I am attempting to collect all opinions, seeking out any dissent if any exists.

Several students overlap their responses (lines 30-34) and agree, "YES! She is just a big liar! Poor Gilly. I feel sorry for her that her mom doesn't want her. How can a mom not want her own child?" The interjection 'yes' shows agreement and is also a variation repeated from line 18. The next sentence in which students say "She is just a big liar" has been repeated from lines 2 and 3, changed slightly in form. Other students reveal the compassion and pity they feel toward Gilly, that her own mother does not want her. She feels sympathetic toward her, evidencing her emotional engagement. Lines 32 and 33 are paraphrased repetitions of each other, and are also paraphrased repetitions of lines 9 and 24. In lines 33-34, reframing the statement into a question moves the realization that Gilly's mother does not want her, out of their cognitive realm as critical readers making sense of claims and evidence, and into the emotive realm. "How can a mom not want her own child?" is really a statement of shock and wonderment – cognitive dissonance – that says to the heart of a child, This is *not* how a mother is supposed to feel.

I recognize that students have used a multitude of textual evidence and reached concensus about Gilly's mother. Therefore, I reframe and revoice the question from lines

33-34 to give it a bigger voice, as I rebroadcast it to the entire group, "Did the author ever come out and say, 'Courtney does not want her child?'" I am working in the *supporting* mode. This mode focuses on drawing perspectives together, monitoring metacognitive strategies, identifying textual evidence and valuing and validating contributions. Again, I lead from behind (Dewey, 1938) using this question as a scaffold nudging them into the second component of inferencing, which involves world knowledge. Inferencing is the glue that cements the construction of meaning (Pearson & Anderson, 1984) and I aim to nudge students to recognize that inferences are implied, and can be proven, through the use of *both* textual evidence *and* what people know from living in the world. This leads us into the last section of the transcript.

Analysis of Section III: Solidifying claims

Student 1 responds in lines 37-39, "No, but we have all the proof we need in the chapter. She did all those things in the airport." Student 1 evidences the work competent readers do – they look for evidence from the text. Her statement also paraphrases in a summary statement what her classmates have been evidencing in the body of the transcript. The scenes created by Katherine Paterson become evidentiary images repeated in the words of her classmates. Gilly's mother did not buy her own ticket. She kept a bag between Gilly and herself when she hugged her. Gilly's mother was not going to stay permanently, and she referred to Gilly as 'the kid' and not "my daughter" or "Gilly." These were scenes from the airport. These overt actions affirm how she feels. Student 1 works in *advancing* mode as she verbalizes that the implication is clear.

Student 8 takes the floor (line 40) by reminding us that we were not the only ones who witnessed these behaviors, and made the appropriate conclusion about how Gilly's

mother really felt, that "...the grandma, she knew, too." This is a paraphrased repetition of Student 6 in lines 26-28. It works as yet another piece of evidence that an additional person both saw and was shocked by what Courtney's behaviors and words meant. Students were evidencing that they could work within a literary discourse community as highly accomplished readers who knew how to inference. Readers who inference gather evidence from the text as well as their own minds to draw conclusions. The images written in the text, combined with what these students have come to know about appropriate actions and words one shows another when offering affection, have led them to the conclusion that Gilly's mother neither loves her nor wants her. Student 8's comments about "...the grandma, she knew, too" seal their conclusion, creating a bounding episode (Tannen, 1989) that is a variation on the initial utterance by Student 4, who both initiated and framed this dialogic event by saying, "I can't believe that mom!" (line 1). Bounding episodes operate as theme-setting mechanisms, which Student 1 established in the beginning, and as a coda, bringing the literary conversation full circle by Student 8's claim that "...the grandma, she knew, too (line 40). It ties the dialogic event together.

Students evidenced how they used various discourse moves to involve each other as competent, strategic readers. These discourse moves worked to bind them as learners in a literary discourse community – members who could use the language spoken by critical readers to talk about reading in critical ways. Language, however, works in many ways at once. In this transcript, students are working as readers in a discourse community, yet they are also working on an interpersonal level. The functions of repetition are also social. Repetition works to build relationships and to accomplish

social goals. It not only ties parts of discourse together, it bonds participants to each other, linking speakers in conversation and relationships. In order for individuals to mutually participate in sensemaking (Cazden, 2001) they must be involved in this way. Language operates *within* relationships and also to *build* relationships. Several discourse moves were enacted by these students, revealing their involvement on a personal level as well.

Accountability to the learning community

When discussing "accountable talk" Resnick (1990) describes a third aspect that is more social in nature. She terms this *accountability to the learning community.* She describes this as participants engaged in talk who listen attentively to one another and ask each other questions aimed at clarifying or expanding a proposition. Participants who learn how to disagree without making it a personal attack, and how to receive criticism without feeling rejected. This is social learning in the service of the topic under discussion. Students learn how to ask, add, and refute with peers and do so politely. This transcript also evidences an array of discourse moves enacted by the students as they involve each other socially.

The way in which Student 4 initiated the conversation worked to involve the entire class in conversation. She exclaimed, "I can't believe that mom!" (line 1), not only to reveal her shock at a character's behavior, but also to call her classmates together to meet for a literary dialogue. She was working in *gathering* mode here, bringing the group together; calling on her peers to converse with her. Immediately, several students overlap with comments that the letter was a lie (lines 2-3). Again, this overlapping talk is not showing disregard for each other, it works to reveal their overwhelming agreement;

their solidarity with their classmate and her claim. Students are not being rude, forgetting how to "get the floor" in school, which, typically, is through teacher nomination after hand-raising. Instead, they are showing respect for their classmates and their voices. They want to involve themselves in this conversation, so their overlapping talk operates as an acceptance to an invitation, showing that they want the dialogue to carry on.

The overlapping talk occurring again in lines 30-34 operates in the same way. Turn-taking demands participation and reaction in social interaction of the dialogic event (Hymes, 1989). Speakers must take responsibility for giving conversation a life and also *sustaining* that life. Students are *not* being impolite with each other. They do not use language that would indicate they want the conversation to end. To the contrary, their voices, in unison, add to the cohesiveness of the group as they work to involve themselves and create membership through global agreement. This, again, is what Tannen (1990) would describe as a cooperative overlap with high involvement, as students are voicing agreement with Kia (line 29) and do so with strong emotion.

The discourse moves students use to get the floor also evidence how they work to involve each other socially, as members of the discourse community. Bakhtin (1975) discusses the notion of "internally persuasive discourse" as essential to the learning process. He states that internally persuasive discourse is affirmed through assimilation, tightly woven with one's own word. These words, he explains, are half ours and half someone else's. The semantic structure of the internally persuasive discourse is not finite, it is open, enabling ever new ways to mean. He argues, then, that students will be more apt to "try on" new ways to mean if ideas are heard by their peers. The initial claim spoken by Student 4 ("I can't believe that mom!") becomes a template for peers as they

revoiced paraphrased utterances of this initial assertion in line 1. Student 1's initial claim was repeated over and over again, as other students involved themselves in the dialogue.

Line 1 I can't believe that mom!
Line 2 It was a lie! That letter was
Line 3 a lie!

Line 5 Courtney doesn't want...

Line 24 She does NOT want her child.

Line 31 She is just a big liar!

If any students were not quite convinced how Gilly's mother felt toward her daughter after reading the chapters on their own, the spoken words of their peers worked to convince them. They used these words as a pattern for their own utterances – each preceding utterance leaving residuals for the next. These utterances also assisted students in maintaining ownership over this discussion, in terms of establishing the topic to be discussed and moving the conversation forward. It made the group cohesive and involved. The discourse strategies implemented, afforded them opportunities to participate fully in conversation with each other.

They were immersed and so highly involved that they were in pursuit of the task for its own sake. Csikszentmihalyi (1991) describes this as "flow." Students evidenced this through several backchanneling (lines 14, 15, 18, 30, 37 and 40) moves as a way to show agreement, while continuing to move the conversation forward. The use of the word "and" to gain the floor (lines 14 and 40) was connective and supportive in nature. Each time, "and" was used as a way to show agreement for what had been uttered previously and to contribute more. The words were used as a transition to a new speaker, and to maintain the cohesiveness of the entire dialogic event, while the opinions of others

were supported in their claims. Listening in this view is an active enterprise, requiring interpretation comparable to that required in speaking; a joint production (Tannen, 1989).

Even the backchannel response "Well..." (line 15) was used to sustain cohesiveness. Previously, Student 7 (line 14) states, "And...she didn't even hug her!" Student 11 (lines 15-17) gains the floor with "Well..." to show agreement but also to clarify. In a sense, this is indirectness. Lakoff (1979) describes indirectness as a mechanism conversationalists use either to save face, if a contribution is not well received, or to achieve the sense of rapport that comes from being understood, without saying what one means. The use of the word, "Well... is an indirect way to take the floor. It establishes that Student 11 wants to speak, but also that there is something to refute. He is making clear that although Gilly's mother *did* briefly put her arm around Gilly, she kept her overnight bag between them, and clearly did it with intent to distance herself from her own daughter. In essence, he is clarifying that, yes, there *was* a hug, but can one honestly call it an *authentic* hug? He clarifies, however, with great respect for his classmate as a member of the literary discourse community.

He does not enter the conversation and get the floor by saying, "No, that isn't true..." or make use of any derogatory word to gain access and shame his peer. Instead, he softens it with "Well..." which shows that he is going to disagree but not in any way to show disregard for his classmate or her words. He wants to stay involved in conversation with his classmate and not shun her. His entry into the conversation saves the face of his classmate, while he shows agreement *with* clarification.

Yet another way members of this literary conversation show how they used discourse moves to involve themselves, and nurture the overall membership of the group

is through the repetition of particular pronouns. Lines 4, 6, 7, 10, 22, 29 and 37 use the pronouns "you," "Let's" (Let us) and "we" to create group cohesiveness. These pronouns speak globally to the collective body of students in our classroom, who are working together to make meaning and solve problems. The use of these pronouns binds us together and sends the message that we are members of a particular community – a literary discourse community, in this instance, and we are in this work together. We share a universe which is this literary discussion.

Repetition not only ties parts of the discourse together, it bonds participants to the discourse and to each other. It links individual speakers together in conversation and relationships. When discourse mechanisms succeed in creating meaning, it sends a metamessage of rapport between the communicators, who experience and share communicative conventions, and habit the same world of discourse (Tannen, 1989). It forges a collection of individuals into a community and unites individuals in relationship.

Summary

In summary, this chapter reveals how Grade 6 students used a multitude of discourse moves to involve each other academically, as competent strategic readers, and socially, as members of a literary discourse community. Highly involved readers are those who are motivated, knowledgeable, and socially interactive (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997, p. 2). The prevalence of discourse moves utilized by these students confirmed their active participation in dialogue as a coordinated interaction. Goodwin (1981) defines this as conversational engagement in which coherence and involvement are the goals. Building new identities, they are beginning to "wear the mantle" of what it sounds like and feels like to be competent discourse users in a literary discourse community. They

are evidencing greater self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) as they are showing growing confidence in their capacities to produce desired effects.

Chapter 6 evidences students highly involved in a literary discourse event in which teacher scaffolds are removed. Students initiate, sustain, and take full ownership over the dialogic event. They evidence their transformation from readers labeled "struggling" to readers who are thoughtful, purposeful, metacognitively aware, and able to enact the cognitive tools necessary to conduct a literary dialogue – new habits of mind.

These new habits of mind evidence themselves through a variety of stances students are able to assume as they move through affective response and into critical analysis of the text – "multiplicities of response" (Hines, 1997) – in which literary works are responded to in multiple ways, through a wide, interpretive range, utilizing various ways of noticing (Soter, 1999). Students view a literary work through psychoanalytical and rhetorical lenses. They bring questions to the literary dialogue, and also generate additional questions that manifest as a part of the dialogic event itself. They use the text to cite a multitude of evidence to support their claims and positions, and broaden what they consider as text in the process. They cite movies, other novels, television programs, book covers, chapter headings, and life experiences. They model the rhetorical moves of authors as a way to construct knowledge within the group. They use discourse moves to gate-keep and hold the floor for peers who have something substantive to contribute to the knowledge construction of the group. They also show acute and active listenership as they attend to the non-verbal cues of their peers.

Chapter 6

DIALOGIC TRANSFORMATIONS

Introduction

Chapter Six consists of the transcript analysis of a third reading discussion, and a comparative analysis of the modes of involvement, viewed across each of the three discourse transcripts. The transcript analysis of the reading discussion in mid-April of 2005 evidences student transformations from "struggling" to highly competent and critical readers who had internalized the teacher-scaffolded discourse heuristics (Gadamer, 1975). Although students evidenced themselves as highly competent readers in Chapter 5, they did so while still utilizing a degree of support from teacher scaffolds. This transcript reveals students who are in full control of the exploration and selection of strategies, not just the exercise of them. By way of a multitude of scaffolding moves on the part of the teacher, I emphasized both the content and procedural knowledge of strategic readers, in membership in a literary discourse community. This is part of teaching toward the development of "inner control" – freeing the strategy use from the teacher's support (Clay, 1991). This is the goal when apprenticing novices into new habits of mind.

An analysis of this transcript displays student involvement on many levels, through the use of a multitude of recursive stances. Students initiate the literary dialogue and sustain it, due to their involvement with the task at hand, their expertise at viewing literature through multiple lenses, and due to their investment in fellow group members. They reveal both independence and belonging – "collective agency" – as they enact the behaviors of highly competent, strategic and critical readers, who shuttle between the text

and self, response and reflection, public and private understandings (Iser, 1978). In this chapter, students evidence new habits of mind.

The comparative analysis of the modes of involvement also reflects student transformations. Students became highly skilled at working in *gathering mode*, as they initiated the dialogic event, and used questions to both sustain the discourse and to interrogate the text and each other. They were sophisticated while working in *supporting mode* as they identified textual evidence, revoiced interpretations, and modeled reasoning processes. They also worked in *advancing mode* as they were able to inference, which is a highly complex reading strategy. Their use of discourse moves and reading strategies elevated to such complex levels, that there was no demarcation between the "setting the stage," "collecting evidence," and "solidifying claims" stages, as in the two previous transcripts.

Stance: The fabric of our classroom

Bruner (1986) states that no one can teach without transmitting a sense of how the material is to be viewed. Within the social setting of our classroom, my students learned how different forms of knowledge are used and communicated – what counts as knowing and what that knowledge looks like. As they took ownership over the semiotic tools they were taught, their ability to think and reason developed in ways that allowed them to use certain cognitive strategies to structure their thinking in various ways about texts. By mid-April, we had begun our last core novel, and students had transformed into critical readers with capacities to take multiple stances with regard to what they read.

Throughout the year, through encounters with the core works of adolescent literature read in class, and through additional reading lessons using picture books and

illustrated texts, I made explicit how I wished students to view what they read. Viewing texts in particular ways is stance – the manner in which one uses or orients one's mind toward something (Langer, 1989). For example, during a mini-lesson on author's stance, I read *The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest* (Cherry, 1990). In this story, a man walks into the rain forest, sees a great Kapok tree, and begins chopping it down with his ax. He soon tires and falls asleep beneath the tree. As he slumbers, various rainforest animals approach him, with pleas to stop cutting down the great tree. At the end of the story, he is convinced and leaves the great Kapok tree to tower over the rain forest unharmed.

Authors always assume a stance toward the content of their writing (Thompson and Ye, 1991). Authors either support, reject, or are neutral in their position. After reading the story, we discuss the author's stance and our evidence for thinking as such. Lynne Cherry's stance most certainly is in support of preserving the rain forest and we locate much evidence for this. She uses a multitude of rhetorical and illustrative moves to reveal her position. The forest creatures, from the tree frogs to the three-toed sloths, are constructed as watercolor paintings against a backdrop of the lush and equally colorful rain forest. Each has a warm and inviting smile as they snuggle up to the ear of the sleeping man and plea, "Please Senhor, do not cut down our tree..." and level various reasons as to why he should leave the tree alone. Each forest creature is positioned as a close-up on a two-page spread, which also draws us in and helps convince us of the author's stance. The repetition of both the pleas made by each personified creature, as well as the beauty and warmth of the creatures themselves, work, again, to convince us. Cherry also reveals her stance through the colorful, detailed maps of the dwindling rain

forest in the front and end matter of the picture book, emphasizing with a sense of urgency, that the reader must align with her position, or the rain forest will disappear.

To shape my students into critical readers, who possess the capacities to view a literary work through a multitude of lenses, I also want them to assert a position of power by speaking against the text as well (Smith, 1991). Lynne Cherry has made a strong argument in support of preserving the rain forest, yet there are other ways to see; other stances to take. So, we work in small groups and consider the positions – and reasons for them – of each of the following: A group of AIDS researchers who believe they have found the cure for AIDS in the bark of the Kapok tree, a group of lumberers who risk unemployment if they are no longer able to cut the Kapok tree, a group of investors who want to turn the rain forest area into a 5-star resort and employ the indigenous people, and, finally, a group of the indigenous people themselves, who want to preserve their lives and culture as it is. Each small group discusses what their stance would be and why, as well as the positive aspects of their position. Each group then presents their argument to the whole class. A debate ensues as the class considers the negative repercussions of each group's position. Enculturating students to recognize the author's stance and to interrogate it, through the consideration of alternative stances, is to view literature as something to be explored, and invites them into interpretation and critical analysis (Langer, 1987).

Literature as envisionment building

Judith Langer (1989) states that reading is an experience of envisionment building, of growing understandings that change over time. She describes envisionment building is an act of becoming – where questions, insights, and understandings develop as

the reading progresses, while understandings that were once held are subject to modification, reinterpretation, and even dismissal (Iser, 1978; Langer & Applebee, 1985; Langer, 1987, 1989). Langer studied the ways in which envisionments develop – how meanings grow from the reader's vantage point – and she devised a theoretical framework for the stances the reader takes toward the text. Each of these stances adds a somewhat different dimension to the reader's growing understanding of the work.

There are four stances, which are recursive and constantly informing the other stances. The first stance is *Being out and stepping into an envisionment*, in which the reader forms tentative questions and associations about the story world in an attempt to make contact. The second stance is *Being in and moving through an envisionment* in which the reader uses the text and personal knowledge to build and elaborate understandings. In this envisionment, the reader is caught up in the story world. The third stance is *Stepping back and rethinking what one knows* in which the reader uses growing understandings to rethink previously held ideas, beliefs, or feelings. The fourth stance is *Stepping out and objectifying the experience* in which the reader distances him/herself from the text to examine, evaluate, or analyze the reading experience or aspects of the text.

A turn of (on) events

Shortly after spring break, my students stood at the doorway of the classroom whispering amongst themselves. I asked what was going on and one student said, "We would like to have a class meeting." I told them to come in and sit down so we could talk. One student said that the class had been talking at lunch yesterday and they felt they did not need to write reader responses anymore. They "promised" to do a "really good

job" on their reading. They said that they felt written responses were no longer necessary as they "had it in their heads" and "knew what they wanted to say" and "maybe use it to jot down some thoughts, but not write too much if you didn't need to." I told them their argument seemed reasonable, and that we would give it a try, as long as they continued to work hard in class.

Dialogic transformations

The following is the analysis of the reading conversation that took place in mid-April of 2005, shortly after my students convinced me that they had "graduated" from their need to use written responses to assist them with their reading discussions. This analysis not only evidences the appropriateness of removing this scaffold, but others as well. They had no need for me in the discourse, either, other than to view this event behind the lense of the video recorder. Students were involved in this literary dialogue for forty-seven minutes. Due to the length of the original transcript, it has been included in the Appendices section in its entirety (See Appendix A). This section addresses the following research question:

What are the particular discourse strategies used by a group of Grade 6 readers involving themselves and others with reading?

We had just finished reading a section of *Max the Mighty* (Philbrick, 1998) which is the sequel to *Freak the Mighty* (Philbrick, 1993). At this particular point in the story, Max, the main character, and Worm, are running away to Montana in search of Worm's father. Max met Worm when he defended her from a bully who was throwing her backpack and all of her books on the ground. The bully was teasing her for being a "bookworm" which is where her nickname "Worm" originated. Max saves her once

again when he overhears Worm's stepfather, the Undertaker, yelling and hitting Worm's mother. Max breaks down the door, takes Worm (at her mother's urging) and escapes on foot to Montana, where Worm claims her father lives. The Undertaker, Worm's stepfather, calls the police to report Worm as being kidnapped. Now there is a nation-wide search for Max, and a sizable reward for his capture.

While they are making their way on foot to Montana, they meet a retired teacher who calls himself the Dippy Hippy (Dip). Dip is driving a converted van – the Prairie Schooner – to California simply for the sake of adventure. He offers Worm and Max a ride and they accept. Further down the road, the three travelers meet two more characters, Joanie and Frank, who flag them down. Frank claims to have an injured foot because he was hurt by a man who stole their car. Dip offers them a ride, too. During the ride West, Joanie tells the group that she and Frank ran a hospital for orphans who have polio, but their accountant stole all their money, leaving them broke. She adds that they, too, are headed to California in search of employment.

Analysis of April transcript

At this particular point in the story, students are half way through the novel and the author has left a trail of clues about Joanie, Frank, and Dip, in the form of both verbal and non-verbal behaviors. Students have become highly suspicious about their intentions toward Max and Worm: Who is there to help them and who is there to make their troubles worse? Students evidence their involvement and their capacities as critical readers by recognizing these inconsistencies. Their suspicions allowed them to enter the text and the discourse emotively, and move into deeper levels of analysis (Rosenblatt, 1980).

Cognizant that the author had designs on them (Soter, 1999), by constructing characters who were behaving inconsistently, they knew to interrogate the text and identified several pieces of textual evidence to unravel whether characters were trustworthy or not, with regard to the welfare of Max and Worm. Students *stepped in* to the literary dialogue with a focus on a particular character (line 1) with Student 1 asking, "What do we think about Joanie?" Students responded to his question, involving themselves in the dialogue, and began cataloging textual evidence and considering what they deemed appropriate behaviors, as they leveled claims and formulated theories about Joanie.

2 She's trying to get back at Worm...

4 ...like when she told the story about them
5 helping kids with polio...

7 It's probably a lie...

8 ---she's really nosey.

9 ...like "What's your story?'"

Joanie's behaviors were inconsistent and, therefore, warranted a degree of suspicion from the group. As students cite textual evidence, they position themselves in another stance – *being in and moving through* – as they use the text to inform themselves while continuing to build knowledge. They scrutinize the textual elements closely as a way to use them as tools to solidify their claim.

The students were in agreement, thus far, that Joanie warranted suspicion, so focus turned to another character, as student 5 involved the group by *stepping in* and inviting opinions by asking, "What do y'all think about Dip?" (line 47). Dip had entered the dialogue at line 11. Most students, however, felt Dip was well-intentioned and had

Max and Worm's best interests in mind. They identified several pieces of textual evidence to support their claim:

11 I think Dippie Hippie willl go to Montana
12 not to California because he is getting
13 suspicious of Frank and Joanie. I trust
14 him to help Worm and Max.

17 ...and he don't nose in. And he has
18 been feeding them and giving them a ride.

51 Yea, he just wants to do a good deed.

52 Well, he is a retired teacher. Nice person.
53 Likes kids.

Students were able to *step out and objectify* their growing thoughts about Dip, as they cited world knowledge when considering his trustworthiness with regard to Max and Worm. It seemed to make sense that if Dip was a retired teacher and he is being helpful toward Max and Worm, that he must care about children and, therefore, have their safety and well-being in mind.

While working to figure out the legitimacy of Joanie and Dip, Student 9 (lines 54-56) *steps out and objectifies the experience* as she leveled in with a warning. She is able to distance herself from the story world in order to look critically at the rhetorical moves of the author. She stated, "But we don't know what he 'gonna do. We been fooled before by Gilly's mom." Student 9 believed Dip would help Worm and Max, yet was willing to change her opinion as she continued to make meaning with future chapters of the novel. She was cataloging "textual indices" (Iser, 1978) in which she reminded her classmates that all the evidence was not in. She was considering the significance of placements of events in a story (Langer, 1995). When considering significance, critical readers ask themselves how the placement of various events and behaviors contribute to

the overall meaning. Stories continue to inform us and we had half of the novel left to read. It was reasonable, then, to suspend any "official" opinion about Dip's intentions toward Max and Worm, although, at this point, his intentions seemed honorable. So far, his behavior had been consistent, but he could be fooling us!

Student 9 was also *stepping in and moving through* a novel previously read in class as she cautioned the group and reminded them to remain a bit skeptical. In *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, (Paterson, 1978), which we read in class in the fall, Gilly's mother fooled us right up until the last pages of the story. So, Student 9 was warranted in her skepticism. She claimed that Dip's words and actions seemed to indicate that he cared about the welfare of Max and Worm, but HE could be fooling us as Gilly's mom did. Student 9 was clear how narrative works and she understood that texts are not static. Her stance allowed her to question the "reliability of the author" (Smith, 1991). She had learned not to submit herself completely to the words of the text, but to consider also what she knew about how narrative works. Therefore, an expectation of ambiguity and suspended belief needed to be maintained (Diaz, 1992). A reader can have opinions, yet these are dynamic and changing, since more textual evidence reveals itself as the story unfolds. She was willing to build and revise her understanding based on accumulating and adding together details from throughout the text (Marshall, 1993) *and* from other texts as well.

Her caution brought about new envisionments the group must consider, which is evidenced later on in the transcript. Student 4 (lines 98-99) asked, "I have a question. Why is the Prairie Schooner important?" She was aware of the particular rhetorical moves by the author – the placement of items in a story – and so she *stepped in*

to the discourse, questioning why there was so much attention being drawn to the Prairie Schooner at this particular point in the story. The Prairie Schooner is a converted van Dip is driving west across the United States. Student 1 (lines 100-103) responded by *being in and moving through* with, "It helps get them where they need to go because look at the cover. It's a picture of Max and Worm running on foot. They need wheels!" Student 3 (lines 107-109) also responds by *being in and moving through* by adding, "It's important because the Prairie Schooner makes them go faster that walking, and riding is safer." By *being in and moving through*, these students inform growing understandings with textual evidence.

Student 11 responded with a cautionary claim and said, "It's safer as long as Dip is a good person. I don't believe Joanie and Frank work at an orphanage, either." She *stepped back and rethought what she knew* by cautioning her classmates that the Prairie Schooner is a safe way to travel as long as Dip, the driver, is safe himself. She considered what her other classmate pointed out earlier, to continue to shape her growing envisionments – that we *believe* Dip is a good person, but we can't be sure because we were fooled before. She also *stepped in and moved through* with her comment about Frank and Joanie, who are also passengers on the Prairie Schooner. The safety of Worm and Max, since they are riding in the van, too, is contingent on whether or not its other passengers are trustworthy. She used information from the text as well as information from the preceding group discussion – yet another text – to build meaning.

Several other students also had adopted stances that what counted as "text" to validate claims went far beyond just the "text" under discussion. Student 2 (lines 111-112) asked, "I wonder about Worm's mom. Why would she marry the Undertaker?"

Student 4 (lines 113-114) asked, "Yea, why would she and when did Worm start going in her book?" These students *stepped in* to the discussion with these questions and the group *stepped out and objectified the experience* by referencing other "texts" to find answers. The novel itself offered up no solid answers concerning Worm's mom and how she ended up married to the Undertaker. Student 1 (lines 121-122) identified textual evidence by referencing the movie *I Am Sam*, as he considered that it may be possible Worm was simply abandoned by her father. He also identified textual evidence by referring to a court television program, *Judge Joe Mathews* (lines 147-151). He theorized that possibly Worm's father left her mother, and, therefore, abandoned Worm in the process. Student 3 (line 125) referenced another novel, *A Wrinkle in Time* (L'Engle, 1962) as he and his classmates considered whether the significance of this book, which Worm protects, offered information as to why Worm and her father were apart in the first place.

Smith (1991) argues that readers must assert power in order to have meaningful transactions with text. One way readers assert power is to take inferential walks through the writing of ghost chapters (Eco, 1978) as a tool for the interpretation of meaning. Eco explains that, "texts are lazy machineries that ask someone to do part of their job" (p. 214). Readers, therefore, must write ghost chapters to compose events the story leaves out. As Eco explains, "Given a series of causally and linearly connected events *a*.....*e* a text tells the reader about the event *a* and, after a while, about the event *e*, taking for granted that the reader has already anticipated the dependent events *b, c, d*" (p. 215). Eco contends that, in effect, readers compose these dependent events and that authors count on readers' compositions when they construct their narratives. Readers must base

their ghost chapters on the cues the text provides, since the text is a territory for many possible interpretations, yet only some are reasonable and acceptable. Students, by *stepping out and objectifying the experience*, access other texts to construct ghost chapters, as a way to find plausible explanations to questions the novel under discussion could not answer.

Students were also curious as to why Worm hid in her book. Lines 58-95 and 113-156 of the transcript focused on why Worm need to feel "safe inside her book." The students agreed that she used her book as an escape:

> 61 Whenever there's trouble, she hides in
> 62 her book.
>
> 63 She jumps inside.
>
> 64 She doesn't want to get involved.
>
> 65 She likes to feel safe.
>
> 66 Safe inside her book means like she
> 67 doesn't want trouble so she (motions
> 68 by covering her face with book) so she
> 69 doesn't have to deal with it.
>
> 70 The Undertaker hits her mom. She
> 71 didn't want to face it. She hid in her
> 72 book in the hallway.

They wanted a clearer understanding, however, as to why she would behave this way. What was it that Worm hid from? What was she avoiding? Students had *stepped into* the story world with their initial question about Worm's behavior. Worm was a co-protagonist going through a rite of passage. She was experiencing both an inner and outer journey, as one does when going through any rite of passage that, hopefully, results in maturation. Students took the stance of psychoanalytical critics (Soter, 1999) with

regard to Worm as they posed the question, "What makes her behave this way? They had *stepped into* the story world, citing multiple pieces of behavioral evidence, yet had to *step back and rethink what they knew* in order to inform their understandings further.

After listening to multiple repetitions of textual evidence that Worm certainly hid in her book, and that, possibly, she "didn't want to face" the Undertaker's abuse, Student 6 (lines 73-74) *steps back* and asks the question, "What would YOU do? Fight the Undertaker?" Worm's stepfather, the Undertaker, physically abused Worm's mother. Student 6 questioned whether anyone in the group would want to face such an horrific situation. She was really asking, Would any of us, as children, be willing to have a physical confrontation with an adult, who has the physical strength to beat up our mother? Student 1 reiterated the importance of probing this further as he also *stepped back and rethought* with, "Yea, you guys. Let's compare that..." (line 77). Student 1 placed himself in an agentive role, with respect to knowledge production, and all of the rights and responsibilities that confers. Responsibility means that he cross-checks sources and warrants – his classmates. He accessed them as sources of information or logic, which boosts his confidence, and his peers, in the construction of knowledge, rather than having to seek verification from the teacher as "outside authority" (Johnston, 2004).

Students interrogated Worm's behavior – as well as their own, if placed in a similar circumstance – through the use of scenes. These scenes were from their own lives, used to create imagery, to reason through this important question. Fredericks (1986) states that imagery creates involvement as students are integrating knowledge and perceptions in the collective imagination of the group. It is in the imagination, he claims,

where meaning is made. Four different students reasoned, through the use of imagery, as they presented scenes from their own lives:

78 .....I know sometimes when
79 I get mad at home, I'll go to my room just
80 to get away.

81 I stay in my room, make up a dance or
82 read a magazine.

86 I'll play video games or go outside and play
87 basketball.

89 I just get grounded. That's all.

After all these images were put forth as reasoned arguments, Student 8 (lines 94-95) drew perspectives together and said, "OK, so we do some of the same things that Worm does." They had wrestled with this issue and had arrived at consensus. They would not fight back, either. Evidence came from the scenes they shared from their own lives. These scenes worked as images to communicate details in the dialogue. They provided internal evaluation (Tannen, 1989) which led them to come to the conclusion that they would have responded exactly as Worm did. They had avoided situations that were far less troubling than Worm's.

Students realized highly competent readers consider multiple perspectives (Enciso, 1990) which is a very complex sociocognitive process. It entails considering what someone else might be seeing, thinking, or feeling. It requires recalling the reader's own experiences and considering the experiences of others in a situation. They evidenced their involvement, yet again, as they *stepped in and moved through* the story world by recognizing how the author constructed Worm through her behaviors and words. They also *stepped back and rethought what they knew* as they were initially

highly critical of Worm's behavior and had changed their minds. Benton and Fox (1985) argue that the experience of considering perspectives and shifting viewpoints is critical to the development of more sensitive and powerful readings that lead to a greater understanding of self and other.

Through the use of a common strategy – imagery created by scenes from their own lives – they had reconsidered their position with regard to Worm's responses to fear and conflict. They authored the literary discourse, through the creation of images as Katherine Patterson had done when writing *The Great Gilly Hopkins* (1978). In her novel, these rhetorical moves had worked to involve and convince them, so they supplied images, as scenes from their own lives, to reason while interrogating their own position. Students used her rhetorical moves as "strategy talk" – adopting other voices and drawing language from other sources – as a dialogic tool to make meaning. Because students felt so competent, they planned well, chose to challenge themselves in these tasks, and interrogated their own stances. As they posed these challenges for themselves, they deepened their literary strategies. The entire process was cyclical, because as they worked toward academic success on their own, and within the group, they reinforced their sense of agency (Bandura, 1996).

Interestingly, this was also when students called classmates to take the floor, both through direct nomination, and through the recognition of non-verbal cues. This evidenced, again, their high degree of involvement, as they attempted to figure out what they would do in this situation, and if they should be so critical of Worm for her own avoidance. They wanted many contributions, as a bombardment of evidence, in the form of imagery, which allowed them to come to consensus. Students created meaning

through the enactment of a common strategy used for reasoning, and requested multiple contributions from members of the group. They sought further information to glean understanding that was acceptable, and reinforced that people can have opinions that differ. This played out in the context of a real and relevant problem. This sent a meta-message of cohesiveness (Cazden, 1991) between members that they share common communicative conventions as highly accomplished, strategic readers, who inhabit the same world of literary discourse, who honor the communicative function of language, and recognize multiple sources of language as tools for thinking (O'Reilly, 1993).

Students were able to build and re-build envisionments by taking a variety of recursive stances. They were thoughtful readers of text, who could *step in* to the story world, *move through* it, *step back* from it, and *step out and objectify the experience* through the use of a multitude of semiotic tools. They were able to use their prior knowledge as well as the rhetorical cues from the author to inform their growing understandings. They were able to broaden what they considered to be "text" to inform their emerging knowledge. They referenced the chapter headings and book covers of the novel under discussion, other novels read in and out of class, movies, television programs, and the "text" created in literary dialogue with each other.

Students had also come to embrace the stance that questions were yet another semiotic tool critical readers use when transacting with text. Questioning is central to developing understandings, not merely to resolve uncertainties (Langer, 1995). They are treated as part of the literary discourse. Questions are utilized to consider alternatives, weigh evidence and to develop yet other questions. These questions operated as additional mechanisms to sustain the literary dialogue and also to develop thinking.

Students understood that highly competent readers not only ask questions as they read, they pay attention to those questions. Fifteen questions were put on the table by students in this literary dialogue:

1 So what do you think about Joanie?

47 What do y'all think about Dip?

48 Yea, what if HE isn't what he seems?

54 But we don't know what he gonna do next...

59 What does she need to be safe from?
60 What's going to happen next?

73 So what would YOU do? Fight the
74 Undertaker?

95 ...How about Maxwell
96 and the ants?

98 .....Why is the Prairie
99 Schooner important?

111 I wonder about Worm's mom. Why
112 would she marry the Undertaker?

113 Yea, why would she and when did Worm
114 start going in her book?

135 Why are they separated?

145 What if it's like Gilly? What if her dad
146 doesn't want her?

Students had evidenced their understanding that one way to reason with and respond to a novel was through questioning. Questions had become matters of inquiry that had further important properties. This suggests a very different role for the students as knowledge producers, especially when student questions are both solicited and generated by them. Early in the year, students were submissive to the text, viewing it as a

cultural icon to be left unquestioned. Now transformed as active interpreters and interrogators within the framework the text provides (Rosenblatt, 1987), they enacted behaviors of critical readers, who understand the balance of power between readers and texts. They were metacognitively aware, through the use of the questions they had asked of the text, as well as questions they asked while immersed in the literary dialogue – yet another "text." They reasoned with questions for multiple purposes.

Some questions allowed them to *be out and step in* as they brought characters and their behaviors to the literary discussion, in order to be interrogated with regard to their intentions toward other characters (lines 1 and 47). Some questions were brought to the discussion as a warning (line 48) or to suspend opinions (line 54). Other questions were utilized as ways to *be in and move through,* to interrogate the rhetorical features of the text. Students had come to recognize that authors were deliberate in their placement of characters and scenes in stories (lines 59, 95, 96, 98 and 100). Some questions allowed them to *step back and rethink what they knew* and were used to predict (line 60) or to place themselves in the story world (lines 73-74), to examine whether their reactions to events would be the same as the character's. Questions were also used to wonder why characters behaved the way they did (lines 111, 112, 113, 114, 135, 145 and 146).

Students verified they were highly competent and critical readers who carry on dialogues with the text, and with fellow readers. They were metacognitively aware, knowing that the questions posed were significant contributions to enrich the thinking of each member of the literary discourse community. These questions were yet another tool students used to initiate movement (Langer, 1995), to create reasoned positions, and to involve themselves and each other in the dialogic event. They wore the mantle of being

empowered readers with capacities to evidence agentive action by taking multiple stances through the use of questioning.

The discourse community: "Collaborative effort" as stance

Not only had students transformed the ways in which they were able to take multiple stances toward text, as strategic, critical readers. They had transformed, as well, that, when in a dialogic community of readers, they were in collaborative effort with their peers. There was a mutually held expectation that they were responsible for constructing and maintaining the literary dialogue, and that this required certain expectations from the community membership as a whole. They had embraced the stance that they were a collective of one, and, for a time, inhabited the same world of discourse. They enacted multiple instances of active listening, knowing that acute listenership was mandatory for maintaining the literary dialogue. They also recognized that in order for the literary dialogue to be maintained in substantive fashion, they needed contributions from multiple voices. They had embraced the stance that literacy learning was largely a social enterprise (Soter, 1999). This was a far different stance than they embraced at the beginning of the year when they "thought their reading questions came from Massachusetts," and indicated that "...nobody never asked what they thought before."

Students, embracing the stance of "collaborative effort," was evidenced through a multitude of repetition moves, which created a connectivity and cohesiveness to the entire dialogic event. They enacted acute listenership in order to do this. Goodwin (1981) refers to this as "conversational engagement" in which participation is seen as coordinated interaction. Coordinated interaction (Merritt, 1982) exists when both speaking and listening include traces of the other. Listening, in this view, is an active

enterprise, requiring interpretation comparable to that required in speaking. Speaking entails simultaneously projecting the act of listening; a joint production. Through highly attuned listenership and repetition moves, students were able to echo earlier utterances of group members in later utterances of their own. These utterances operated as cohesive devices that wove the dialogic event together.

For example, this literary dialogue was initiated with a focus on Joanie (line 1). Discussion of Joanie took place from lines 1 through 10. At this point, the primary focus of the discussion was on Dip (lines 11-18) yet embedded within this section, was mention of Joanie (line 13). An elaboration of a discussion focused around Dip was again evidenced in lines 47 through 56, which had been retrieved from lines 11-18, earlier in the discourse. Worm was the focal point of the section of discourse in lines 58 through 69, yet she was addressed at length in lines 116 through 165. This revealed dialogic involvement through highly active listenership, and worked to connect the discourse as a singular, cohesive event.

This cohesiveness serves as a referential and tying function (Cazden, 1991) as new utterances were linked to earlier discourse, and ideas presented in various segments were tied to others. The discourse was tied together through a cohesive link of student-to-student turns. One link was a continuous exchange of sixteen student utterances. Another was a link of fifty-five! These student-to-student links not only allowed the literary dialogue to be maintained in substantive fashion, they allowed participation of group members to be highly involved as they tied one member's idea to the next – unity was maintained throughout the entire dialogic event. They *stepped in, moved around,* and *stepped out* of the discourse as they alternated between emotive and critical stances

(Rosenblatt, 1980). The ease with which they both conducted and sustained this dialogue looked like a fluent, polished performance – a highly sophisticated use of mental tools.

A second way in which they revealed their new-found stance as collaborative discourse users was through their investment in the contributions made to the literary dialogue. Each student in the class contributed verbally to the dialogic exchange. Students were so invested in the voices of others that there were five instances in which students were directly nominated by classmates to take the floor. In line 19, Student 3 directly nominated Abria to speak by asking, "Abria, what do you think?" In lines 84 and 88, students nominated two other classmates to take the floor through direct address. Student 8 (line 84) nominated Dustin by asking what he thought. She also added, "I can tell you're thinking something." She evidenced involvement with the group, and the task at hand, by paying such critical attention to non-verbal cues. Dustin responded without hesitation, which worked to validate her assessment that he was, indeed, thinking something. Even Dustin's nonverbal cues themselves evidenced him as being highly involved in listenership. Dustin was called to take the floor again by Student 3 (line 131) through a direct nomination, in which his classmate asked him if he ever read *A Wrinkle in Time* (L'Engle, 1962).

In line 88, Student 8 directly nominated Dullas to take the floor and contribute. Dullas responded in line 89 ("I just get grounded. That's all"). Dullas was in attendance on an average of two days per week. This was all he contributed verbally to the entire discussion, yet, the message was clear from his classmates: When you are here, what you have to say matters. More evidence of voices that "matter" took another form in line 115. Student 4 (line 115) silenced the overlapping talk in response to the question (lines 113-

114), "Why would she (Worm's mother) marry the Undertaker and when did Worm start going inside her book?" Student 4 silenced the multitude of voices by saying, "Wait, you guys. Listen to Maria." Student 4 evidenced highly involved interpretive listening. She was in closer physical proximity to Maria so she heard what Maria said. She felt it warranted a bigger voice. Given that she did hear Maria, she also evidenced her evaluative strategies as a critical reader. What Maria had to say was valuable to the collective understanding of the group. This also evidenced her investment in the knowledge-building of the group as a whole. Maria's valuable insights deepened the envisionment-building being constructed. Therefore, she took the floor and handed it to Maria, in order for her to rebroadcast her contribution to the group.

A third way in which students evidenced their transformative stance as discourse users in collaborative membership with each other was by their use of pronouns. Their use of pronouns indicated a shared universe (Cazden, 1991). This literary discussion was their shared universe – they initiated it, sustained it, and owned it. The use of pronouns indicated their connection with each other as they worked in unison at the task at hand. It also indicated that they were unified in a joint activity around shared goals, possessing not only the ability and desire to collaborate, but understanding that doing so is normal (Johnson, 2004).

1 So what do we think about Joanie?

26 You guys...we should ask Ms. H. if we can make a movie.

28 Can we?...

30 Let's get back to the book...

94 Ok, so we do some of the same things...

115 Wait, you guys.

Pronouns were interspersed throughout the entire dialogic event as a way to maintain the cohesiveness of the conversation, and to sustain both membership and involvement among the group. They had transformed as competent discourse users who embraced the responsibility they had toward the discourse community as a whole – viewing it as a collective of one – as they conducted critical literary conversations with each other. They utilized their collective minds to think, reason, and build and re-build envisionments. The social and the cognitive reciprocally informed each other.

Comparison of Modes of Involvement

Students proved they had transformed into highly competent, strategic, and critical readers, who learned to extend and question responses for themselves, that became socially valued in class. They learned to involve themselves and each other by initiating the dialogic event, asking questions of the text and of each other, and sustaining it through the use of discourse moves, and critical reading strategies. Students developed the capacities to do this through the use of scaffolded, strategic actions on the part of their teacher and, over time, the scaffolds were stripped away, as they had internalized the strategies and could utilize them on their own.

They had transformed into highly involved, competent readers who developed control over the literary discourse. Not only had they taken on the strategies of competent readers, they had moved to levels of critical analysis as well. They had successfully moved out of a monologic participation structure and into a dialogic participation structure. A comparative analysis of the modes of involvement- *gathering*

mode, supporting mode and *advancing mode* – and a comparative analysis of the utterances illustrate this further.

Gathering Mode

September

Students were unfamiliar with a participation structure in which they were able to generate questions and initiate literary conversations based on their emotive responses to text (Rosenblatt, 1985). One student commented earlier in the year that he thought the reading questions "...came from Massachusetts." Therefore, *gathering mode* was enacted solely by me, as I initiated the dialogue to draw them into the discourse. I was also the only one, at this point in the year, who worked in *gathering mode* as scaffolds to move the conversation forward; to shape the dialogic event in specific ways. Students were unfamiliar with the ways in which self-generated questions enhanced a literary discussion. I worked in *gathering mode* to face students back toward the text when they made claims about characters. I was modeling the work of a competent reader who uses textual evidence for verification. I also worked in *gathering mode* to invite more students to take the floor and supply additional textual evidence. I was nudging them to make contributions. I also worked in *gathering mode* to assess their workable knowledge of the term inferencing.

November

I worked in *gathering mode* four times as I continued to "structure consciousness" (Vygotsky, 1978) and shape the discourse. I continued to model the tools utilized by strategic readers involved in a literary dialogue. Students were beginning to supply more textual evidence on their own, so much of my work in *gathering mode* took

the form of revoicing their contributions and asking for elaboration. I worked in *gathering mode* once as a way to gatekeep – I attempted to slow the pace of the dialogue when there was much overlapping talk.

One student worked in *gathering mode* by invoking invitations to discuss the chapters we had read. Central to Rosenblatt's (1978) theory of reader response is her interest in describing the capacity for aesthetic response to bring about involvement. The submerged associations these words and images have for the reader largely determine what the work communicates. These associations evoke emotive responses on the part of the reader. This student was so shocked at the character's behavior, he could not wait to discuss it. This was a critical event. Students realized that they, too, could initiate literary dialogues; it was not solely the role of the teacher.

April

Students worked in *gathering mode* nineteen times. They initiated the dialogue and opened up the literary event. They also worked in *gathering mode* to quiet the overlapping talk, to give a student's utterance the floor and, again, to refocus on the task at hand. They had come to understand that there were mechanisms to put in place to gatekeep overlapping talk, as I had done previously. They did this without leveling criticisms toward those they wanted to halt temporarily. They moved in and out of the dialogic event without any hand-raising; they shared the knowledge building and meaning making.

Students worked in *gathering mode* to ask questions of the text and of each other. They had internalized that questions were a generative and imperative part of the discourse, and a part of what metacognitively aware readers do when they read. They

worked in *gathering mode* to interrogate the intentions of characters, to question the placement of events in the story, to shift the focus to different chapters, and to probe each other further when they felt elaboration was necessary. Students had recognized that they could both initiate and move the literary discourse forward without scaffolding supports on the part of the teacher.

I worked in *gathering mode* once as I invited a student to elaborate on a comment. This was the only utterance I made in the course of this particular dialogic event.

Supporting Mode

September

I worked in *supporting mode* three times. Once I revoiced claims made by students as a way to rebroadcast that they were doing the work of highly competent readers, who used the text as a tool to locate evidence to justify claims. I revoiced again as a way to rebroadcast that students were employing standards of reasoning to validate claims as well. The third time I worked in *supporting mode* was to draw perspectives together, recapping the work we had done in this literary discussion thus far, validating that this was the work of highly competent readers. Through these repetition moves, I was scaffolding the knowledge they contributed as a way to solidify these complex understandings.

Students worked in *supporting mode* five times. Three times students supplied textual evidence. One was through direct nomination. Students were beginning to enact the behaviors of competent readers by locating this evidence without as many scaffolds from me. This was also the first evidence of student-to-student turns. Twice there were instances in which students were taking more initiative, providing dialogue to move the

literary discourse forward, without any nomination on my part. They were starting to move away from the traditional IRE participation structure, with which they were so familiar. They were evidencing growing awareness that they were knowledge brokers, too (Rosenblatt, 1938/1976).

The other instances in which students worked in *supporting mode* were overlapping talk. This is important as students were realizing that in order for a literary dialogue to take place, voices needed to be heard. They were revoicing interpretations, which also showed active listening on their part.

November

Students nearly doubled the work they were doing in *supporting mode*. Students identified textual evidence seven times, and accessed reasoning processes twice, as they sought justifications for assertions they had made. I worked in *supporting mode* three times and each was an instance of revoicing student utterances. I continued to scaffold through these repetition moves, yet the necessity for such scaffolds was dissipating.

April

This transcript evidenced only one instance of working in *supporting mode* on my part. I requested that a student elaborate on his previous utterance. Students, on the other hand, worked in *supporting mode* fifty-nine times. They revealed their transformation as strategic readers, who were competent in using both the text *and* world knowledge, as tools to solidify claims. They identified textual evidence twenty-four times, and even resourced texts other than the novel under discussion to do so. They enacted reasoning processes twenty-four times, in order to apply world knowledge to verify their assertions.

They also worked in *supporting mode* to show listenership to classmates, who were members of their dialogic community, by revoicing ten times, validating contributions eight times, and by clarifying responses. They were able to draw perspectives together as a way to unify the strings of dialogue. They also worked in *supporting mode* by monitoring metacognitive strategies, and they had internalized the importance of question-generating. Enacting such behaviors evidenced them as highly competent readers who ask questions of the text, and each other. Questions were brought to the dialogic event for discussion and arose out of the discourse itself. Students had recognized that questions were an imperative part of the literary discourse.

Advancing Mode

September

I was the sole contributor working in *advancing mode*. *Advancing mode* is a framework representing a highly sophisticated way of discussing a literary work. Working in this mode evidences the capacities to be able to inference – combine textual evidence and world knowledge to justify claims. Early in the year, students were not able to inference and had no working knowledge of the term. I worked in *advancing mode* to shape the discourse through repetition moves, as I named the strategies in use, summarized what we had accomplished, and reiterated that this was the work of highly competent readers.

November

Advancing mode was taken over completely by students. They worked in this mode twice, as two students made inferences by combining their use of textual evidence and what counts as reasonable behavior to justify their assertions. They did not call the

strategy by name, but competent readers do not do that as a rule; they simply enact the strategy and go about their work.

April

More students evidenced their growing sophistication and competence as readers. Eight students worked in *advancing mode*. They inferenced by combining textual evidence and world knowledge to validate their claims. I did not work in *advancing mode* at all. Students had taken ownership over the dialogic event as highly competent, strategic and critical readers. They were ridding themselves of teacher scaffolds, and using highly sophisticated reading strategies such as inferencing. Their capacities to combine the modes of involvement were highly complex. They simultaneously framed questions and comments that operated in more than one mode.

For example, Student 3 (lines 4-7 of the April transcript, see Appendix A) said, "Yea, like when she told the story about them helping kids with polio. They've had a cure for polio for a long time. It's probably a lie." She is working in *supporting mode* by identifying textual evidence and by modeling reasoning processes. This also constitutes *advancing mode* because, together, this is an inference. This is just one example of students' awareness of the power of discourse to serve multiple functions. Table 6.1 summarizes the comparisons of the modes of involvement.

Analysis of Utterances

An analysis of the utterances revealed students' involvement and growing competence from novices, with little understanding of how to navigate within a literary discourse community, to experts who took full ownership over the dialogic event. The analysis of the utterances further illustrates their competence as discourse users.

September

Students and I shared eight speaking turns, yet I still had the majority of utterances. I spoke fifty-one lines to their twenty-two. One of my utterances was twenty-two lines, in which I recapped the event in a lengthy, summative monologue. Most student turns were not self-initiated. I had nearly full ownership over the discourse, yet I was working to scaffold their responses, and apprentice them as both strategic readers and members of a literary discourse community. They did not have command over the cognitive tools, or the procedural knowledge necessary, to enact the behaviors of those learning in a dialogic participation structure. There were two instances of student-to-student turns. These turns were both made up of two student links.

November

Transfer of control was taking place, as students revealed their growing competence in terms of how to conduct themselves as strategic readers in a dialogic community. Many of the scaffolds on my part were no longer necessary. Students had over twice as many speaking turns – their ten to my four. Students spoke three times the number of lines. They uttered thirty lines of dialogue, evidencing their growing understanding of how to operate competently within a dialogic participation structure.

There were three student-to-student links in this transcript. Two were utterances involving two students; one involved four. I spoke ten lines as scaffolds were not completely removed, yet most of my utterances were revoicing moves. I continued to reinforce and validate the dialogic moves they were making as developing critical readers working in dialogic membership. I reinforced that we were rejecting a traditional participation structure as well.

April

Students evidenced transformation into highly competent readers, who moved strategically in and out of the text, as involved member of a discourse community. They had seventy-one turns to my one. They spoke one hundred and fifty-five lines to my one. There were only two student-to-student turns, yet one involved sixteen student voices while the other involved fifty-five. Students revealed their ownership over the cognitive tools necessary to dialogue as strategic readers, and the procedural knowledge to involve both themselves, and others, in the literary discourse. Table 6.2 summarizes this further.

Table 6.1: Comparative Analysis of Modes of Involvement

Transcript	Participant	Modes of Involvement		
		Gathering	Supporting	Advancing
September	Teacher	·evoke 1 ·invite 2 ·assess 1 Total: **4**	·revoice 3 Total: **3**	·draw pers. 3 ·name strat. 1 Total: **4**
	Student	**0**	·textual ev. 4 ·clarification 1 Total: **5**	**0**
November	Teacher	·invite 4 Total: **4**	·revoice 3 Total: **3**	**0**
	Student	·evoke 1 Total: **1**	·textual ev. 7* ·reason 2* ·draw pers. 1* ·revoice 2 * = multiple Total: **9**	·inference 2 Total: **2**
April	Teacher	·inviting Total: **1**	**0**	**0**
	Student	·evoke 3 ·invite* 16 *=multiple Total: **19**	·textual ev. 24* ·reason 24* ·revoice 10* ·validate 8* ·monitor 5* ·draw persp. 3* ·clarify 1* *=multiple Total: **59**	·inference* 8 *=multiple Total: **8**

Table 6.2: Comparative Analysis of Utterances

Transcript	Participant	Turns	Lines	Student-to-student Turns	
					Length
September	Teacher	8	51	2	2 (2)
	Student	8	22		
November	Teacher	4	10	3	2 (2) 1 (4)
	Student	10	30		
April	Teacher	1	1	2	1 (16) 1 (55)
	Student	71	155		

Summary

Although it is true that students internalized new dialogic tools and reading strategies, they did far more. Students were transformed. To be transformed means to change the characteristics, qualities, or behaviors of a thing; to transubstantiate. This section evidenced student transformations into highly involved, competent, critical and strategic readers who could no longer be considered "struggling." They were capable of performing strategies taught, and evidenced not only the habits of their use, but the capacity to judge for themselves when they were useful (Resnick, 1999). They also created images, by sharing scenes from their own lives, to generate understanding. They developed new habits of mind, meaning they possessed the dispositions toward behaving intelligently when confronted with problems, and drew forth certain patterns of intellectual behavior in order to solve them (Costa & Kallick, 2000).

This section also proved that students possessed complete competence in their facility to converse in membership, through their sophisticated and abundant use of

discourse moves, revealed by the modes of involvement. They elicited input from each group member, showing the value they placed not only on the verbalization, but the person as well. Through their use of a variety of discourse moves – primarily cohesive repetition moves – they sent a meta-message that they were involved in fellowship with each other.

Students took multiple stances toward text to create reasoned positions in discussions, capable of performing every strategy needed to do so, and exercised the astuteness to know when to enact each. They connected text and personal experience, questioned the text, each other, themselves, re-evaluated possible interpretations, and generated alternative, plausible explanations. They moved back and forth from the landscape of actions to speculation about human intentions and consciousness (Langer, 1995) and created imagery to generate reasoned understanding.

Instances of thinking and constructing knowledge evidenced in this way is called the "intermental development zone" (IDZ). This is a refined and more social framing of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD). This is where the collective intellect in which a student participates, accomplishes things that the solitary intellect cannot, and in the process and over time, makes it possible for the individual intellect to accomplish the same complexity of thought. The IDZ differs from the ZPD as it is nonhierarchical. It is not a matter of a more advanced other who can already accomplish something, building a scaffold up which a less advanced other climbs. Rather, it is a process in which mutual participation produces development without the associated assymetrical positioning (Mercer, 2000).

Knowing how to participate in and to generate such positions came about, however, through a variety of scaffolding moves – revoicing, repetition, summarizing, modeling reading strategies, stances, and procedures, in the Vygotskian (1980) tradition. Students had to become involved, and take possession of the cognitive tools used by competent readers and literary discourse users, before they could utilize them on their own and with each other.

These cognitive tools were not the only devices enlisted on my part to bring about involvement. The core novels selected by me were chosen based on specific features which would also work to involve my students. My aim was to choose novels that would allow readers to become engrossed by the author's creation of the textual world (Schallert and Reed, 1997).

The next chapter looks closely at the works of adolescent literature selected as core novels for Reading Essentials class. The chapter analyzes the high and low involvement features and readability level of each work. My Reading Essentials students also contribute to the analysis of the involvement features of each core novel.

Chapter 7
TEXTUAL FEATURES AND INVOLVEMENT

Introduction

Chapter 7 is a detailed analysis of the core novels, in terms of involvement features and readability level, read in Reading Essentials throughout the year. The core features of these novels are analyzed with regard to the involvement features of the literary elements through the theoretical framework of Rosemary Chance (1999). An additional analysis of the involvement features is explored through the responses of my students. This section responds to the research question:

How did particular features in works of adolescent literature involve Grade 6 readers?

Designs on the Reader

Certain choices by the author are expressed in particular textual moves that appeal to readers when they encounter text (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997) and these textual moves work to involve readers. Richter (1989) explains that particular features of text operate as a "semantic encyclopedia" on our ability to identify and be informed by the text world. Eco (1979) discusses how these authorial moves, such as narrative shifts in setting and time, major and minor characters, and significance of repeated events, are ways that the text has designs on the reader.

For example, the students were reading *Nightjohn* (Paulsen, 1993), a work of historical fiction about an adult male slave, who escapes from several plantations, and intentionally has himself captured and re-sold to other slave owners, so he can teach the slaves to read and write. Nightjohn, the main character, is repeatedly beaten, and publicly humiliated, as a way for the slave owner to intimidate other slaves, and even has

his toes cut off, when it is discovered that he has taught a particular slave girl the first three letters of the alphabet. The horrific nature of what this character tolerates, due to his beliefs in the importance of learning to read and write, was shocking to my students. The author constructed a character possessing such an incredible degree of commitment to his beliefs, that it brought about self-questioning in the reading discussions. The author forced students to make a connection on a deeply personal and emotional level, due to the conditions he created for Nightjohn to face, and *also* through Nightjohn's response. Students wrote about and wondered out loud whether or not they would be willing to tolerate such brutality for a cause. Mary wrote:

> I don't know if I could be that brave to do what Nightjohn did. I am black so I would be a slave back then but I still don't know if I could be that brave.

There are rhetorical strategies employed by the author as well, that work to involve readers (Soter, 1999). For example, *The Great Gilly Hopkins* (Paterson, 1978) begins with Gilly, the main character, being driven by her caseworker to her fourth foster home in eleven years. It becomes obvious that Gilly is what my sixth-graders term "a brat" as she sticks a wad of gum under the door handle of the car, rolls her eyes, and sticks out her tongue, whenever her caseworker talks to her, and she messes up her long blonde hair, defiantly, before meeting her new foster parent.

The initial aesthetic responses from my students ranged from shock to enjoyment. Many found pleasure in living vicariously through the misbehavior of Gilly, as they could experience it from the outside, and not have to receive the consequences. Immediately, students asked, Why is she such a brat? Why would she act like that? One student, Jeffrey, was mortified. His stance, which he maintained throughout the entire

novel, was that "all she needs is a whoopin." They were intrigued by Gilly. Not only did they want to read more, in order to understand why she acted the way she did, they wanted to read more as they derived sheer pleasure from living vicariously through her defiant behavior.

A second way in which authors have designs on the reader is through the placement of certain rhetorical moves. For example, Katherine Paterson makes provocative rhetorical moves early on to involve readers immediately. On page 28 of *The Great Gilly Hopkins* (Paterson, 1978) Gilly's biological mother writes her a letter in which she says,

> My Dearest Galadriel,
>
> The agency wrote that you had moved.
> I wish it were to here.
>
> All my love,
> Courtney

This placement of words serves a framing function (Soter, 1999) for further developments in the novel. In this case, the letter creates in the reader what Piaget (1970) calls "disequilibrium" which is an intellectual tension that drives literary growth. Upon reading this letter, there was confusion as to why Gilly is not with her mother. After all, it seemed as if her mother wanted Gilly, and that Gilly wanted her mother. The students asked, What's going on? This letter brought about more questions from the students such as, Why isn't she with her mom? Where is her mom? Why can't her mom have her?

Questions were treated as part of the literary experience; they were central to developing understandings – a time to explore possibilities, not necessarily a time to resolve uncertainties, but to move beyond – to consider alternatives, weigh evidence, and

develop more questions (Langer, 1995). We generated a list of possible explanations as we tried to figure out, What's going on? This confusion became the impetus for students to formulate puzzles and welcome, accept, or reject what Iser (1978) calls "hermeneutic challenges." The text called upon readers to set up detective games, in an attempt to solve them. Students theorized that possibly the mom was too poor or too sick to have her child with her, or maybe she went on a trip. They had a limited understanding of the foster care system, which became another part of the discussion, at a later point in the novel. This served, as well, to puzzle and involve them further.

Yet another way texts worked to involve the reader was by using the interest value of topics that have consensual appeal. This included vivid examples, anecdotes, or colorful language (Garner, Gillingham & White, 1989). The consequences of consensual appeal, with regard to involvement, are that students are motivated to read as they connect to characters, their situations, and struggles. For example, while reading *Freak the Mighty* (Philbrick, 1995) students expressed often how they empathized with Max's feelings about himself. Max is a seventh-grade boy who is in special education. He refers to himself as "having no brain" and "being in the stupid classes with other brainless kids." My students knew why they were in Reading Essentials and this made them the brunt of jokes and teasing almost on a daily basis. They certainly connected with Max, since many of them, literally, experienced similar academic challenges and social ridicule. DeAndrea wrote:

> I know how Max feel. I get teased alot.
> Kids say I'm in the dumb class but I tell
> them I'm in the cool class and that we
> read better books. They have to read
> *Christmas Carol* and I hate that book.
> I told them I'm not dumb but that reading

is hard for me. My momma says I'm lazy.

DeAndrea was referring to a particular core text the "regular" track English students read. Her other comments about being teased were typical of those heard by my students.

Student views: Analysis of core class novels

Upon finishing a novel, my students and I would discuss and write about each, and why they found them either involving or uninvolving. Students found *The Great Gilly Hopkins* (Paterson, 1978), *Nightjohn* (Paulsen, 1993), *Sarny* (Paulsen, 1999), *Freak the Mighty* (Philbrick, 1993), and *Max the Mighty* (Philbrick, 1998) highly involving. Students found *Walk Two Moons* (Creech, 1994) and *The View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1998) uninvolving. Several student evaluations of the literary elements of each core novel shed light on why they found certain texts highly involving.

Analysis of literature with high involvement features

Character

Of the five core novels students found highly involving, each had round, dynamic, well-developed characters. The central character in each novel was near the age of the students. Primary characters ranged in age from 11 to 14. The exception was the main character in *Sarny* (Paulsen, 1998) yet the students first met her in the novel *Nightjohn* (Paulsen, 1993) when she was twelve. The characters in each novel also grew in "human terms" - meaning that their growth did not occur in a linear fashion. Instead, they stumbled, made mistakes, and refused to learn before they evolved. Ryan commented:

> The stories don't just tell us about a kid and their life. Like here I am and this is what happens and now the book is over. I didn't know what was going to happen to Gilly or to Sarny until the end. Freak was the same and it really surprised me what happened to him. These books are cool.

Consistent across each novel was the protagonist's telling of the story from first person. My students expressed that this helped to "hook" them into the books. Shania stated:

> I like when the characters talk to each other with quotes. It is more fun to read and I don't get as mixed up. It is more fun because it feels like a movie and makes me feel like I am there in it.

A common discourse pattern for purposes of involvement was the use of first person, direct address. It came as little surprise that this writing convention pulled students into the story world.

Setting

The setting in each novel was integral to the story in terms of characterization as well as plot. For example, *The Great Gilly Hopkins* (Paterson, 1978) opens up with Gilly being driven to a new foster home by her social worker. The settings in each novel operated as symbolic mechanisms in terms of the problems faced by the primary characters, and the challenges they needed to overcome. This framing function (Soter, 1999) used by the authors, pulled readers in, forcing them to ask questions of the text early on. Robert explained:

> I knew there was a big problem if Gilly was going to a new foster home on the first page. Why did she have to leave? Why did they take her to Mrs. Trotter? Why couldn't she go back to be with her mom?

Plot

The plot in each novel was progressive, meaning it had a structure of rising action-climax-falling action-resolution. Characteristic of each of these novels, too, was the pattern of rising action-climax-*cliffhanger* in each chapter. Each author left the reader

wanting more as resolution was not immediate and determined by chapter's end. My students found this highly involving. Veronica wrote:

> I think these books are really exciting because I didn't know what was going to happen next at the end of each chapter. It was exciting like drama. I wanted to know more. That's why some of us girls read ahead and we promised not to tell the boys in the class what happened next. I'm glad we could read ahead.

Theme

Themes in each novel were multiple. They were explicit *and* implicit. The predominant theme dealt with the issue of self-awareness and empowerment. Each primary character faced multiple challenges from other characters, from the social conditions or socio-political tenor of the times, and from their often misguided perceptions of themselves. Involving for my students was that they could recognize and/or relate to characters in these novels on many levels. There were elements of bullying, academic challenges, struggling to fit in, feeling like an outcast, family issues and understanding one's place in the family, temptations from peers or important others, and learning to believe in one's self. These are certainly "coming of age" issues each pre-adolescent experiences. As Collin commented:

> Max and Sarny learned that being a good reader would help them. Max even wrote the story that we read well the author wanted us to think so. Sarny wrote it, too. She wrote the book in African language and Southern language. People thought they were dumb but they just didn't get to learn to read or write or go to a real school.

Tone

The tone of each novel was slightly more varied than the other categories. Common across novels was the combination of seriousness and humor. Characters were

dealing with some difficult, real-world issues such as death, prejudice, defining family, and the meaning of familial love. Most novels, also, had humorous elements, which my students found involving. These humorous elements were often embedded within a novel dealing with very serious issues. This seemed to offer some relief from some of the painful issues characters were facing and also made the stories more realistic - life promises us ups and downs, good and bad, laughter and sadness. Abria elaborated:

> I never read books that made me have so many feelings at the same time. Like Gilly, I thought she was very mean in most of the book, but then at the end I almost cried when her mom didn't want her. I couldn't believe that a mom wouldn't want her own daughter. I am glad that my mom loves me. I also laughed when Trotter fell on Gilly and said "Squished you juicy!" That was so funny.

Nightjohn (Paulsen, 1993) was different with regard to tone. It was serious but also dark. There were points in the novel which were very violent. There was a rape scene implied, and artfully crafted, by the author. There was also a dismemberment scene, in which Nightjohn lost two toes, because he was caught teaching Sarny to read. This was engaging on two levels for my students. First, they are old enough to realize that there is a dark side to the world, and have learned enough about our country during the time of slavery, to have a certain degree of understanding about the violence imposed on slaves, both male and female. They make themselves readily available to ask pertinent questions about these kinds of issues. Second, many students found the horrific scenes enticing by what Soter (1999) calls "engaged resistance." A few of the scenes were so horrific, yet held their interest, as they were too drawn in by the events to skip over them. During one class discussion, we likened this to driving by an accident on the

freeway – we are horrified and concerned for those in the accident, so turn our heads away, yet have this voyeuristic tug to continue looking. Jasmie explained:

> It made me sick to think that Nightjohn got his toes cut off and that Waller smiled when he cut them. He is a sicko and I hate him. Nightjohn is brave that he did not even cry or scream. I would have. I took the book home and read it to my Momma and she said that it was a terrible thing but that Nightjohn was showing his courage and not letting Waller get the best of him.

It was my intent to select core novels that would assist me in involving my students. I sought novels with high involvement features as I wanted to use them as yet another scaffold to connect my students with text. Although students indicated there were five novels they found highly involving, they indicated there were two they found uninvolving.

Analysis of adolescent literature with low involvement features

Students did not find *Walk Two Moons* (Creech, 1994) or *The View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1998) involving. Each of these novels had different features compared to the novels students found highly involving. Students responded as to why these features made these two novels uninvolving for them.

Character

Walk Two Moons (Creech, 1994) and *The View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1998) each possessed an abundance of characters. *Walk Two Moons* (Creech, 1994) had twenty and *The View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1998) had fifteen. Students found this very confusing. As Mary stated:

> I tried to do my character map but I still don't get who all the characters are. I can't remember. This is too confusing for me.

Although the main characters in *The View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1998) were four sixth-grade students, most students still considered them to be inauthentic. Brandon wrote:

> A sixth-grade boy who has a tea party? I don't think any boy that age would do that. These kids are nerdy or weird, too. They talk like they are in college. Normal kids don't talk like that. And, that girl is obsessed with sea turtles. I don't really care too much about sea turtles that much. These kids seem too perfect.

The characters in *The View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1998) were highly intelligent students who had been selected to be a part of the school Academic Bowl team. They did use sophisticated vocabulary, and had interests which were contrary to most of my students. Characters constructed in this way did not involve my students.

Setting

The setting in each of these novels was shifting. In *The View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1998), the setting is determined by whose story is being told, as the entire novel is a series of short stories, written by each of the four main characters. Students found this confusing to the point of frustration. Allie wrote:

> I am very sorry but I do not get what is going on. I can't tell who is talking and where they are. I thought in this chapter they were at the school but they are not. I reread and did some other strategies but I can't figure it out. I do not want to read this book.

In *Walk Two Moons* (Creech, 1994), the setting was also shifting. The setting was either in Sal's house, Phoebe's house, school, or in Sal's grandparent's car. Students did not find this as frustrating as the setting in *The View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1998), but we spent a great deal of time reviewing the chapters for clarification. Austin wrote:

> It helped that we talked about the settings. Can you leave that on the board so we can just add to it? I don't know why the author wrote

> such a confusing story. Why couldn't she just say, OK now we are at Phoebe's house and tell us at the beginning of a chapter?

Point of View

The point of view in *The View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1998) was determined by which of the four main characters was telling his/her story. The novel is a compilation of four shorter stories, each written by one of the primary characters. At the end, each of the stories is tied together and connections are made. One chapter is written in third person limited in which the author's perspective is seen through the eyes of a secondary character, Mrs. Olinski. Unlike first person, which students found highly involving, third person distanced them from the story. Kia stated:

> I cannot tell who is saying this. Why would a writer write a book this way. It is confusing to me and I don't understand what is going on. What is going on?

Walk Two Moons (Creech, 1994) was written in first person, but it is in the reflective stance. Sal, the main character, conveys the point of view of others, as she attempts to understand them through their experiences. The story is written from her eyes, almost as if we are reading her diary. The use of past tense further removed my students from the story and they did not feel as if they were "living in" the story as it unfolded. Jake explained:

> This is a boring story. Why don't the other characters talk with their own words? There are not many quotations. I don't think I really like stories like this too much. Are we reading another book like this? I vote against it.

Plot

Students were highly involved with a progressive plot line of rising action-climax-falling action, especially when each chapter ended in a cliffhanger. Although *Walk Two Moons* (Creech, 1994) had a progressive plot line, the action was not overt.

The rising action entailed Sal's retelling of her friend Phoebe's mother's disappearance. The climax consisted of Sal's drive on a treacherous stretch of highway to view the crash scene of her mother's death. The climax, though, is almost anticlimactic, as students had already figured out where she was going, what she would find, and how she would feel. Kyrah wrote:

> We were right when we predicted this. I knew four chapters ago what was going to happen. I can't believe that the grandpa would let his daughter drive without a license and that she didn't get in an accident. That seems fake to me. I think the author could have come up with a better idea.

The View from Saturday (Konigsburg, 1998) had a looping plot. Students found this to be confusing. Given the non-linear plot, and the way in which the author constructed the novel as a series of four shorter stories, there was not a great deal of overt action. In real time, the entire story takes place in one afternoon. The real-time sequencing is disrupted to recount episodes from the character's past, which, in essence, is the story. Students did not find this involving at all. Collin commented:

> Why don't they get to the point. This is a boring and confusing story. The writer wrote a whole book about one afternoon? That, in my opinion, is too much description. I like more action in a book.

Theme

The novels students found involving possessed both explicit and implicit themes. In *The View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1998) and *Walk Two Moons* (Creech, 1994), themes were implicit only. The predominant themes from *A View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1998) were friendship and teamwork. These are certainly issues with which pre-adolescents deal and relate. Students, however, found many of the other

elements in this novel to be either so frustrating, confusing, or unbelievable that the themes became irrelevant. DeAndrea commented:

> I think the author should have written the book in a different way. She spent a whole book about one afternoon just to say that people need to work together? And, the kids already worked together so they knew it already. This book was sorta dumb.

Walk Two Moons (Creech, 1994) also had implicit themes, primary of which was the role of stories in shaping human experience. Although we spent a great deal of class time discussing how someone's perspective or point of view on something becomes what they believe, this seemed far too sophisticated for my students.

Mark explained:

> So, everyone can have their own opinions. Is that what all this was about? Why didn't the author have the characters ask the other ones how they felt instead of having Sal just think that's how everyone felt? If I asked my Grandpa something he would just tell me straight out.

They could understand having differing perspectives, yet could not see the sense in constructing a story around this. It seemed far more sensible and efficient to "go to the source" to find out how other characters felt.

Since the primary goal was to bring about involved reading, it became necessary to select whole-class novels constructed in ways which would entice my students. I also needed to consider the accessibility of novels in terms of their readability level. At the middle level, this becomes challenging, especially when working with readers who struggle, as they are typical middle school-aged students, when compared to their peers, possessing similar interests and world views, yet, atypical in terms of texts they find accessible. Given that their independent reading levels were so far below those of their more competent peers, the challenge became finding novels sophisticated and

challenging enough to bring about involvement, reading growth, and appeal to middle level readers. At the same time, these novels could not be childish, unchallenging or insulting to students of this age. Therefore, readability level needed to be considered.

Considering reading levels of core novels

Students entered into Grade 6 with an average reading level of 4.05, according to the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension Scores administered in the Fall of 2004. The range of reading levels was from 2.9 – 4.9 according to Fry's Readability Scale (Fry, 1977). This would suggest that the reading levels of each of these novels (possibly with the exception of *Nightjohn* (Paulsen, 1993) should have been inaccessible. *Nightjohn*, however, is written from the point of view of a slave girl during the pre-Civil War. She is not formally educated and speaks in Southern Black regional dialect. Therefore, there is a great degree of circumlocution in her discourse patterns, which makes the novel more challenging than a readability scale can measure. Reading level, however, was not a factor determining involvement or uninvolvement.

Involvement or uninvolvement was determined, instead, by specific features in each novel. Instead of novels being selected by me, which were reading-level appropriate, they were selected as being age- and interest-level appropriate. My students expressed that they were not only capable of reading these novels and understanding them; they devoured them. For them, an involving story, combined in the beginning with guided reading support from their teacher, superseded their "ability" to read books that would normally be deemed "beyond their reach." Involvement occurred as there was an optimal match between students' abilities and the challenge of the task.

Students found the challenge of reading novels – possessing the involvement features analyzed above – appealing as they had to attend to them appropriately. They were not too simplistic to be insulting, or to force students not to devote time to them. They could be wholly involved with these texts, due to their specific features and to their age- and interest-level appropriateness.

Although each novel chosen by me was selected with the *intent* of involving my students, I learned a great deal from conversations with them as to why they found two particular novels uninvolving. I wondered if the positioning of the novels for use during the school year would have changed their degree of involvement with either of the works, especially since, according to reading level, *Walk Two Moons* (Creech, 1994) was the most difficult in terms of readability, at 6.8. We had read *Walk Two Moons* (Creech, 1994) and *The View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1998) during the middle of the school year. I theorized that possibly students needed more directed action on my part, when accessing a more challenging text, and placing the text later in the year, may have allowed them greater opportunity to internalize more cognitive tools. In this way, I thought, they could have found it more accessible and, in turn, involving. Students indicated that this was not the case. They found them, instead, to be opaque texts.

Nystrand (1997) proposes that what creates the possibility of entering into textual space with an author is the transparency to the reader of the language used. For some readers, a text may be opague, too uninvolving, and impossible to render meaning. A text can be opaque due to the complexity or obscurity of language, which can block comprehension. This impedes both the ability as well as the willingness of readers to involve themselves with texts.

Students had indicated they *did* find the language obscure in *The View from Saturday* (Konigsburg, 1998). Although characters were sixth-graders just like them, they were far more sophisticated in their vocabulary, and had interests and considered issues to which my students could not relate. They found both plot lines to be confusing to the point of frustration in this novel as well as *Walk Two Moons* (Creech, 1994). These texts were also opaque to my students in terms of characterization, language use, and theme. Table 7.1 provides a summary of the high and low involvement features of the works of adolescent literature used as core novels in Reading Essentials class throughout the year. Table 7.2 provides a summary of the readability level of each core novel based on Fry's Readability scale (Fry, 1977).

Table 7.1: Core Novels with High and Low Involvement Features

Novel	Character	Setting	Plot	Theme	Point of View	Tone
The Great Gilly Hopkins	round dynamic	integral	progressive	explicit implicit	first person	humorous serious
Nightjohn	round dynamic	integral	progressive	explicit implicit	first person	serious dark
Sarny	round dynamic	integral	progressive	explicit implicit	first person flashback	serious
Freak the Mighty	round dynamic	integral	progressive	explicit implicit	first person	humorous serious
Max the Mighty	round dynamic	integral	progressive	explicit implicit	first person	humorous serious
The View from Saturday	round predictable static	shifting	looping	implicit	multiple first person third person limited	serious humorous (subtle)
Walk Two Moons	round flat	shifting	progressive	implicit	first person reflective	humorous serious

Table 7.2: Reading Level by Work of Adolescent Fiction

Nightjohn	4.6
The View from Saturday	*5.9
The Great Gilly Hopkins	6
Sarny	6.1
Freak the Mighty	6.3
Max the Mighty	6.4
Walk Two Moons	*6.8

*novels students found uninvolving

Summary

Students became highly involved with works of adolescent literature possessing well-developed, well-constructed, round, primary characters and plot lines which had a dual layer of rising action-climax-falling action-resolution embedded within chapters constructed as cliffhangers. Involving for them, as well, were novels written in first person when the setting was integral to the characters and the challenges they would face. They also became highly involved when themes were multiple and inspired conversations in which they could compare, contrast, and wonder about issues connected to their own lives. Although they did not experience the foster care system or slavery directly, they found these issues intriguing, as they could connect them to their lives in contrary ways. They became highly involved, too, when novels were a juxtaposition of seriousness and humor in tone.

They did not, however, find novels involving, which were laden with an abundance of characters, a complex and non-linear plot, and the absence of overt action. They also found novels uninvolving which were not written in first person. Particularly

uninvolving were novels in which the characters seemed inauthentic and the themes were implicit.

Students revealed that novels they found highly involving were those they considered to be challenging, yet not overwhelming. They found great appeal in novels that provided shock, surprise, novelty, complexity, and a degree of ambiguity. These characteristics pulled them into the story world.

Readability level had very little to do with bringing about involvement. My students indicated that certain features in each novel made text accessible – with structural support from me, via scaffolding – regardless of readability level. Historically, texts were selected for students based on their individualized reading comprehension scores. They had revealed they had far greater success as readers when they were given age- and interest-level appropriate pieces of quality adolescent literature.

Chapter 8, Conclusions and Implications, addresses learning opportunities necessary for struggling readers based on the evidence from this dissertation study. It also suggests, with regard to reader response theory, sociocultural theories of learning, and adolescent literature, why readers who struggle benefit from these learning opportunities. Chapter 8 also poses concerns and questions for future research and addresses implications for teacher research and teacher learning.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that involve Grade 6 readers deemed struggling. The analysis of the discourse revealed that the teacher and students, working together, created a literary discourse community of highly involved, strategic readers. Using Vygotsky's (1980) notion of scaffolds as external structures on which to brace other structures being built, the teacher provided graduated assistance to students. These mechanisms enabled students to achieve more sophisticated levels of conceptual and communicative competence as readers, and as discourse users, in a dialogic community of practice. The scaffolds were cognitive tools in the form of modeling, a variety of discourse moves, namely, repetition, and quality works of adolescent literature, which were age- and interest-level appropriate, and possessed certain textual features. Throughout the year, students took on greater ownership over their capacities to utilize these cognitive tools without teacher support. These cognitive tools were identified further as three modes of involvement – *gathering, supporting,* and *advancing.*

The *gathering mode* was enlisted primarily to invite and encourage students to participate, question, and share. This mode was recursive and non-linear, and was eventually taken over by the students, who were so involved with the events in the novel, and their new-found capacities to sustain substantive literary discussions, that they called the discourse community together to dialogue.

The *supporting mode* consisted of scaffolding moves such as revoicing, drawing perspectives together, modeling reasoning, modeling reading strategies, and validating contributions. Eventually, as students began to internalize the dialogic conventions of more competent readers, they gained complete ownership over this mode as well. Scaffolding in this mode was used by students in recursive fashion as meanings were socially negotiated and shaped by the perspectives of many students. Students solicited equal participation from each other, which operated as yet another involvement mechanism.

The *advancing mode* was used to further student disciplinary knowledge with specific regard to the complex reading strategy of inferencing. This came about through the teachers' knowledge of both adolescent literature as a discipline for study, knowledge of appropriate reading strategies, and knowledge of her students. Leading students from the new to the known came through directed action (Dewey, 1973) by building toward a strategy, identifying a strategy, or naming a strategy. Eventually, students were able to work with sophistication in *advancing mode* as involved, strategic, and critical readers.

Works of adolescent literature, with particular features, also operated as scaffolds to involve students. They found several works so involving that many indicated they had read more during the year than in previous years. Students not only evidenced their capacity to become highly involved in these works; they wanted to sustain their involvement with them. Students asked to make a movie or play out of one novel and requested to read the sequels to both *Freak the Mighty* (Philbrick, 1998) and *Nightjohn* (Paulsen, 1993). For them, an involving work of adolescent literature, combined with

guided reading support, helped to transform them into readers who interrogated the text, each other, and their own initial stances.

Students had legitimized themselves as highly competent readers and discourse users in several ways. First, they were able to put forth and demand knowledge that was accurate and relevant to the topic under discussion. For example, they located textual details to validate claims and advanced in their understandings of what counts as "text." They not only referenced the text under discussion, they referenced movies, television programs, other books, paid close attention to book covers and chapter headings, and cited instances from their own lives. Students also recognized that ambiguities and puzzlements are to be expected when reading, and stances are dynamic and changing. They learned that the collective understandings of the discourse community, under the guidance of the text, will reveal which positions are warranted and reasonable.

Students also used rational strategies when they discussed novels, drew conclusions, and challenged reasoning. They were their own knowledge brokers and, therefore, solicited verbal contributions from each group member, as a way to construct knowledge, instead of having to seek verification from the teacher as the sole authority. They understood that multiple perspectives needed to be considered, and that considering such perspectives, and, possibly shifting viewpoints, as a result, was critical to more powerful readings of the text. They brought questions to the text and the group, and generated additional questions throughout the literary dialogue. They had come to understand that questions were central to developing understandings, and tools used for considering alternatives, weighing evidence, and interrogating the text, each other, and themselves. They used the discourse as a meaning-making tool for strategic talk, and

also to create cohesive group membership. They developed the capacities of critical readers – those who possess the know-how – through the enactment of strategies as they viewed literature through a variety of stances – to discuss literature in sophisticated ways. They evidenced "literate minds" (Langer, 1992) as they were able to use language and thought to gain knowledge, share it, and reason with it. Through the building and re-building of envisionments, they were active producers and interpreters of meaning.

Students used pronouns as a part of the literary discourse as a way to confirm their cohesiveness with the task at hand and each other. They shared this dialogic universe and were involved in a joint activity around shared goals. They involved themselves in active listenership by gatekeeping overlapping talk, and giving the floor to members who had something valuable to contribute to the collective knowledge of the group. Students evidenced they were a cohesive and connected group of highly involved, strategic, critical readers and discourse users, who no longer could be considered "struggling."

Quantitative growth as readers

Interestingly, students not only developed into highly involved, strategic readers, who evidenced competence at both initiating and sustaining a literary dialogue, they also grew in their overall reading comprehension, as measured by the pre- and post- scores of the Gates-MacGinitie standardized test (See Appendix B for a summary of pre- and post-scores from both Reading Essentials classes from Fall 2004 and Spring 2005).

The overall growth in reading comprehension for the two classes of Grade 6 students, from the fall of 2004 through the spring of 2005, as measured by the Gates-MacGinitie standardized reading test, was significant at 1.66 years. The overall growth

in reading comprehension for Caucasian males (CM) was 1.989 and for Caucasian females (CF), 2.08. The overall growth in reading comprehension for African American males (AAM) was 1.01 and for African American females (AAF), 1.67. The Caucasian females evidenced the most growth and the African American males the least. Only two students, both African American males, did not evidence at least one year's growth in reading comprehension (Student 16, Student 21). When the scores of these two African American males were subtracted from the averages, the range of growth for the African American males was between 1.1 and 1.6 years. The average growth was 1.3 years.

As with most studies, this one introduces new questions: How do I involve students with works of literature they find opaque? Will it demand different pedagogies? Will students be able to sustain their degree of involvement as they find themselves in English language arts classes in the future, since it is important that strategy use endures to enhance learning? What happens to students' use of these particular dialogic strategies when they find themselves in an English language arts classroom, operating within a traditional participation structure? With regard to the two African American males who did not show significant growth as indicated on the pre- and post- Gates-MacGinitie standardized test scores, what additional instructional interventions might they need in order to improve their growth? Are there ways in which the modes of involvement can be used to interrogate and improve our pedagogical practices as literacy educators? What additional ways can pre- and inservice educators use the study of classroom discourse to talk about and improve teaching and learning? These are questions that warrant further systematic inquiry, as I continue to work and learn with readers deemed "struggling" and continue to consider ways to improve my pedagogical practices.

Implications for readers deemed "struggling"

No Child Left Behind has challenged schools and teachers to ensure first, that the gap between struggling readers and their more competent peers does not widen, and, second, that struggling readers reconnect with books, and accelerate growth toward grade-level reading achievement. The pressures of high-stakes mandates often impose deficit-model pedagogies made up of drill and practice, brief encounters with vocabulary-controlled texts, and pre-packaged literal-level comprehension questions. The focus, becomes "mastery over massive amounts of material to be covered" (Kohn, 2001, p. 2). These interventions are enacted especially with lower track readers deemed "struggling."

Monologic vs. dialogic participation structure

The monologic participation structure, in a classroom in which such treatments are enacted, perpetuates the problem further for readers who struggle, as it denies them additional access to knowledge and opportunities for cognitive growth. First, it establishes a power relationship with the teacher on top, and reinforces that there is a correct answer for each question. Second, this participation structure places the teacher at the center of discussion, which diminishes students' participation and their interpretive options. Third, a monologic discourse structure establishes literature as a cultural icon, with little room for students to develop critical, interpretive skills (Agee, 2000). Fourth, the pattern of teacher question, student response, teacher evaluation (IRE) does little to verify if any real learning is taking place. Verification is more about eliciting a predetermined answer, than a true investigation or discussion of an open-ended issue. Students learn to provide an acceptable answer, yet may not necessarily master the learning; they simply master the structure (Cazden, 1988). This is mock participation

(Bloom, 1952), which is nothing more than a procedural display; not a mark of authentic involvement or understanding. This lack of involvement does little to promote substantive thought (Lukinsky and Schachter, 1978) and limits students' opportunities for involvement and growth as strategic readers. Students simply learn that the role they play is one of uninvolved passivity (Marshall, 1989).

On the other hand, a dialogic participation structure enhances student learning in many ways. First, knowledge construction is shared and socially negotiated. Shared criteria for the validity of interpretation in a social context of this nature allows for different interpretations of the same physical text to be acceptable, while some readings may satisfy the criteria more fully than others (Soter, 1999). Through social negotiation, what counts as knowledge requires both a consciousness of the reader's own angle of refraction, as well as information implicit in the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). Second, student voices are the focal point of the discourse. This shifts the focal point away from the teacher and/or the text as central, and positions the *learners* as central. Not only do student voices transact with the text; they transact with each other. In sophisticated instances – which were evidenced in Chapter 6 – a spiraling, nonlinear, to and fro, continuously reciprocal transaction amongst student voices, and the voice of the text can occur. Third, a dialogic participation structure, in which meaning is socially negotiated, allows literature to become a work to be explored. This provides students with opportunities to move through aesthetic response and into more complex interpretations of literary analysis. Multiple interpretations are arrived at through the implementation of cognitive tools. Fourth, verification of authentic learning is evidenced in the strategic discourse use of students as a legitimate and purposeful exploration of a work unfolds. It

was evidenced through the modes of involvement – *gathering, supporting*, and *advancing* – in this study.

New possibilities

This study indicates that readers deemed "struggling" *are* capable of becoming involved as highly competent, strategic readers and invested, competent members in a dialogic participation structure. Involving readers in a dialogic participation structure, in which they have opportunities to read rich, authentic works of adolescent literature, respond emotively (Rosenblatt, 1978), and have opportunities to learn how to read, think, and discuss as highly competent readers, should *not* be the privileged treatments reserved for those in advanced English language arts classes alone. The teacher must invite readers deemed "struggling" to have some version of, "Yes, I imagine I can do this." A teacher must also view the present child as competent and on that basis, imagine new possibilities (Dyson, 1999, pp. 396-397). These "new possibilities" must then be enacted.

Ensuring this takes conviction and a real commitment in time. Students in this study were *taught* strategies. More importantly, they were taught to *be* strategic. By being strategic, they continued to develop a deeper sense of agency, and were already being agentive by doing so. Agency is the belief in ones' abilities to achieve a thing and the know-how to proceed (Johnston, 2004). By the spring, students organized and executed the course of action as strategic, critical readers involved in a literary discourse community. Employing these agentive actions over time transformed students. They drew from an expansive array of intellectual resources, evidencing this transformation

from readers deemed "struggling" to readers who took competent command over their learning.

These new habits of mind were evidenced through the sophisticated ways in which students behaved intelligently and thoughtfully, through the use of cognitive and verbal tools, working as highly competent, strategic discourse users, involved in a dialogic community of practice. Findings from this study, therefore, urge teachers of readers who struggle, to reconsider what needs changing – students or their pedagogical treatments. Teachers need to relinquish the notion that "struggling" readers need remediation and, instead, embrace the notion that their instructional interventions need remediation.

Teacher research as a means to professionalize practice

This study also has implications for teacher research. Teachers, as they go about their work, are faced with multiple and often conflicting goals and pressures. Top-down mandates add to these conflicts and challenges by de-legitimizing and de-intellectualizing teaching. High stakes mandates impose a technical conception of teaching manifested in the overregulation of teacher behavior, prescriptions for effective teaching, the over-standardization of curriculum, and measurement-driven instruction (Zumwalt, 1987). This further devalues teaching as a profession, as the educator's role becomes one of uncritical and subservient implementor of prescriptive curricula.

Teacher researchers as change agents

Through teacher research, inservice educators have an opportunity to professionalize practice, by evidencing their critical role as discourse users, who construct, manage, and build opportunities for their students. Good teachers know that

authentic learning is brought about neither by commercialized reading kits, nor when left to discovery (Pressley, 2002). Teaching, instead, is comprised of the intellectual activity of a knowledgeable educator, actively guiding and explicitly assisting students to more competent performances. Students become apprenticed into new habits of mind through the expert sharing of the cognitive tools of a knowledgeable teacher. Teacher research that reveals the teacher-student interactions, in which cognitive tools are used to mediate and transform mental actions into new patterns of knowing and doing, (Wertsch, 1995) are *necessary* to debunk the myth of teaching as a non-intellectual practice. Instead, this constructivist paradigm of teaching promotes images of teachers as intellectual, researcher, inquirer, and curriculum planner (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). Therefore, teachers can become change agents for the profession by conducting research that evidences classroom educators putting these images into action.

Teacher research: An intersection of theory and practice

Teacher research is often criticized for possessing little or no theoretical basis. If professional knowledge is considered theoretically based knowledge, then classroom educators can contribute *significantly* to the body of research on learning to teach. Questions generated by teacher researchers are distinctive because they do not emanate solely from theory, or solely from practice, but from a critical reflection on the intersection of the two (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1990). Practicing teachers are in direct contact with, and most responsible for the education of children. They are most familiar with the complex and challenging circumstances they experience in the day-to-day activities in classrooms. Teachers conducting research in their own classrooms also have a vested interest in the outcome – they live with the results. This places them in direct

position to generate a body of theorized practice to contribute to the knowledge base necessary for preservice teachers. Therefore, university teacher educators must regard the findings that emerge from teacher research, *as* theoretical knowledge, since teacher researchers are both consumers and generators of theory.

Teacher research as central to learning to teach

Contributions from inservice teachers should be central to the knowledge base for learning to teach. Teaching is complex and the understandings, knowledge, and language for teaching, generated and used by inservice teachers, should become an integral part of preservice preparation. Teacher research, used in the form of teaching cases in preservice courses, reveal teaching as problematic, shaped by cultural, political, social, and economic forces (Shulman, 1992). Critical discussions around these particular teaching cases reveal teachers doing their work within these forces. These cases may assist preservice teachers in developing the stance of "critical, reflective practitioner" (Schon, 1990) who work to understand and improve the way things are, in relation to the way they could be.

By conducting research that improves practice, teacher researchers are providing teacher-generated knowledge embedded in and emerging out of practice. In this way, teacher research empowers teachers to make a positive difference in terms of classroom practice, while providing relevant information about teaching and learning in actual classrooms. Ultimately, this knowledge directly enhances student learning, which is the point.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Transcript of reading discussion – mid-April, 2005

Participant		Verbal Action	Mode of Involvement	Analysis
Student 1	1	So, what do we think about Joanie?	Gathering	Evoking invitations
Student 2	2	She's trying to get back at Worm	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
	3	(reads passage from text)		
Student 3	4	Yea, like when she told the story about	Supporting	Identifying
	5	them helping kids with polio. They've	Advancing	textual evidence
	6	had a cure for polio for a long time.		Modeling reasoning
	7	It's probably a lie.		processes
Student 4	8	------She's really nosey. (overlap)	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
Student 3	9	Like, what's *your* story? Just us girls.	Supporting	Modeling reasoning
	10	Let's talk. Yea, right...like she cares.		processes
Student 1	11	I think Dippie Hippie will go to Montana	Supporting	Modeling reasoning
	12	not to California because he is getting		processes
	13	suspicious of Joanie and Frank. I trust		
	14	him to help Worm and Max.		
Student 2	15	Yea, because he told the cops they were	Supporting	Identifying textual
	16	his grandkids.		evidence
Student 5	17	------and he don't nose in. And he has	Supporting	Identifying textual
	18	been feeding them and gave them a ride.		evidence
Student 3	19	Abria, what do you think?	Gathering	Inviting opinions
Student 4	20	Yea, Abria, you've been awfully	Gathering	Inviting opinions
	21	quiet this morning!	Supporting	Revoicing Interpretations
Student 6	22	I don't' trust Joanie. She's a fake.	Supporting	Revoicing
	23	I like Dip, though.		Interpretations
Student 7	24	I think the Undertaker in in Montana	Supporting	Modeling reasoning
	25	Already. He knows where they're going.		processes
Student 3	26	You guys...we should ask Ms. H.	Gathering	Inviting opinions
	27	if we can make a movie of this!		
(Several	28	Yea. Yes. Can we? I'm director. I'm	Supporting	Validating
Students)	29	I'm Dip. (overlapping talk)		contributions
			Gathering	Inviting opinions
Student 3	30	Let's get back to the book for now.	Gathering	Evoking invitations
	31	Focus! Focus!		

Student 1	32 Max's character would have to be a 33 good actor. ... (fades to thought)	Supporting	Modeling reasoning processes
Teacher	34 Say more about that, Pierre.	Gathering	Inviting opinions
Student 1	35 Well, like because he helps people 36 but the cops, well, they think he's like 37 his dad, but he isn't. So, his character 38 would have to be like more than one thing.	Supporting Advancing	Identifying textual evidence Modeling reasoning processes
Student 3	39 Yea, like it says on the cover (refers to book). 40 'In search of the truth no matter where it 41 Like I think that means something.	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
Student 8	42 Yea, like you can break the law but still 43 be a good person.	Supporting	Modeling reasoning processes
Student 7	44 Like the Undertaker pretends to be a good 45 - a preacher – but he beats his wife and 46 steals money.	Supporting Advancing	Identifying textual evidence Modeling reasoning processes
Student 5	47 What do y'all think about Dip?	Gathering	Inviting opinions
Student 9	48 Yea, what if HE isn't what he seems? 49 I mean...I like Dip. I think he cares 50 about Max and Worm-------	Supporting	Monitoring metacog-nitive strategies
Student 1	51 ----Yea, he just wants to do a good deed.	Supporting	Revoicing Interpretations
Student 7	52 Well, he is a retired teacher. Nice person. 53 Likes kids.	Supporting	Identifying textual Evidence
Student 5	54 But we don't KNOW what he 'gonna do 55 next. We been fooled before by Gilly's 56 mom.	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence Modeling reasoning processes
Student 3	57 Like in chapter twelve. The title of it.	Supporting	Validating Contributions Drawing perspectives together
Student 8	58 Yea, it says (reads) safe inside her book. 59 That's Worm. What does she need to be 60 safe from? What is going to happen next?	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence Monitoring metacog-nitive strategies
Student 4	61 Whenever there's trouble, she hides in her 62 book. (Flips through the pages of book)	Supporting Advancing	Identifying textual evidence Modeling reasoning Processes
Student 7	63 She jumps inside.	Supporting	Revoicing interpretations

				Validating contributions
Student 3	64	She doesn't want to get involved.	Supporting	Modeling reasoning processes
Student 7	65	She likes to feel safe.	Supporting	Modeling reasoning processes Revoicing interpretations
Student 3	66 67 68 69	Safe inside her book means like she doesn't want trouble so she (motions by covering her face with book) so she doesn't have to deal with it.	Supporting	Drawing perspectives together Revoicing interpretations
Student 8	70 71 72	The Undertaker hits her mom. She didn't want to face it. She hid in her book in the hallway.	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
Student 6	73 74	So what would YOU do? Fight the Undertaker?	Gathering	Inviting opinions
Student 8	75 76	Her MOM didn't fight back. She was mad at her mom, too. I don't know.	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence Clarifying responses
Student 1	77 78 79 80	Yea, you guys. Let's compare that. Safe inside her book. I know sometimes when I get mad at home, I'll go to my room just to get away.	Gathering Supporting	Inviting opinions Modeling reasoning processes
Student 3	81 82 83	I stay in my room, make up a dance or read a magazine. It takes the stress away. She wants to take the stress away.	Supporting	Modeling reasoning processes
Student 8	84 85	Dustin, what do you think? I can tell you're thinking something.	Gathering	Inviting opinions
Student 9	86 87	I'll play video games or go outside and play basketball.	Supporting	Modeling reasoning processes
Student 8	88	Dullas?	Gathering	Inviting opinions
Student 10	89	I just get grounded. That's all.	Supporting	Modeling reasoning processes
Student 4	90 91	When I get in trouble it's because of my little brother.	Supporting	Modeling reasoning processes
Student 3	93	It's always the younger siblings!	Supporting	Modeling reasoning processes
Student 8	94 95 96	Ok, so we do some of the same things that Worm does. How about Maxwell and the ants? I love that chapter!	Supporting Gathering	Drawing perspectives together Inviting opinions

Student 1	97 That was so funny! He's like, "AAHH!"	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
Student 4	98 I have a question. Why is the Prairie	Gathering	Inviting oopinions
	99 Schooner important?	Supporting	Modeling reasoning processes
Student 1	100 It helps get them where they need to go	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
	101 because look at the cover. It's a picture		
	102 of Max and Worm running on foot. They	Advancing	Modeling reasoning processes
	103 need wheels!		
Student 3	104 It's important because the Prairie Schooner	Supporting	Revoicing interpretations
	105 makes them go faster than walking and		
	106 riding is safer.	Advancing	Modeling reasoning processes
Student 11	107 It's safer as long as Dip is a good person.	Supporting	Validating contributions
	108 I don't believe Joanie and Frank work at		
	109 an orphanage to help little kids, either.		Modeling reasoning processes
(Several Students)	110 Me, neither. No way. Nope.	Supporting	Validating contributions
Student 2	111 I wonder about Worm's mom. Why	Gathering	Inviting opinions
	112 would she marry the Undertaker?	Supporting	Monitoring metacognitive strategies
Student 4	113 Yea, why would she and when did Worm	Supporting	Validating contributions
	114 start going in her book?		Monitoring metacognitive strategies

(Student 12 verbalizes a response that is inaudible as others are theorizing out loud in response to Student 2's and Student 4's questions. Inaudible)

Student 4	115 Wait, you guys. Listen to Maria.	Gathering Supporting	Evoking invitations Valuing contributions
Student 12	116 I think her books connect her to her dad.	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
	117 Her dad's in Montana. We don't know		
	118 what happened but look at how important	Advancing	Modeling reasoning processes
	119 his helmet is. It's her dad's.		
Student 8	120 Yea, that's a really good point.	Supporting	Validating contributions
Student 1	121 Like in the movie *I Am Sam*. The mother	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
	122 left Sam hanging.		
Student 11	123 She protects that one book a lot. What's	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
	124 What's the name of it?	Gathering	Inviting opinions
Student 3	125 *A Wrinkle in Time*. She loved that book.	Supporting	Clarifying responses

	126 Maybe the title means something.		Modeling reasoning processes
Student 5	127 Maybe the story is a clue.	Supporting	Revoicing interpretations
Student 2	128 Do you have that book, Ms. H.? 129 We could check.	Gathering	Inviting opinions
Student 9	130 I know. It reminds her of time with her dad.	Supporting	Revoicing interpretations
Student 3	131 Did you read the book, Dustin?	Gathering	Evoking invitations
Student 9	132 No, I saw the movie. The dad is lost 133 and the girl finds him. He's lost in 134 time or something. Like Worm is	Supporting	Clarifying responses Identifying textual evidence
Student 8	135 Why are they separated?	Gathering	Inviting opinions
Student 3	136 Oh, my gosh! Her books ARE her dad! 137 Think how she scrunches up with them 138 and puts on the helmet and falls asleep. 139 She feels like she's in her dad's arms!	Supporting Advancing	Identifying textual evidence Modeling reasoning processes
Student 8	140 You could be right. Look how she tried to 141 beat up that Bully in the beginning of the 142 book and he was way huge but he had her 143 books and was throwing them all over. 144 I still want to know why they are separated.	Supporting Gathering	Identifying textual evidence Evoking invitations Validating contributions
Student 9	145 What if it's like Gilly? What if Worm's dad 146 doesn't want her?	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence Monitoring metacognitive strategies
Student 1	147 Could be. On *Judge Joe Mathews*, this guy 148 wouldn't be with any woman unless she 149 weighed under one hundred pounds and his 150 wife weighed one hundred and five so he 151 left her and his child. He just left.	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
Student 8	152 She puts her daughter in more danger by 153 marrying the Undertaker. He beats them up.	Supporting	Identifying textual evidence
Student 3	154 That's why Worm ran away. She's using 155 her girl power!	Supporting	Revoicing interpretations

(At this point, I looked at the clock and we had one minute before the bell rang to end class)

Teacher: 156 Unfortunately, we are running out of time. You have one minute before lunch begins. This
157 conversation was incredible. Does anyone have anything else they feel the need to add
158 before we end class?

Student 3 159 Can we do a movie or a play of these chapters? There is so much to act out!

Student 8 160 We have lots of questions from this conversation. Can we read ahead if we promise not to
161 tell?

Student 1 162 I hope Worm finds her dad.
Teacher: Pierre, you're really pulling for a happy ending, aren't you?

Student 1: (Smiles)

(The bell rings and students exit class to go to lunch)

APPENDIX B

Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension Pre- and Post- Test Scores

Student	Fall 2004 Level Score	Spring 2005 Level Score	Degree of Change
1 CM	2.9	3.9	1.0
2 CF	2.9	5.1	2.2
3 AAF	3.1	5.3	2.2
4 CF	3.3	5.0	1.7
5 CM	3.4	5.1	1.7
6 CF	3.4	5.2	1.8
7 CF	3.4	5.8	2.4
8 CM,	3.6	5.7	2.1
9 CM	3.7	5.6	1.9
10 CF	3.7	5.4	1.7
11 AAF	3.7	5.3	1.6
12 AAM	3.8	5.2	1.4
13 AAM	3.9	5.3	1.4
14 CM	4.1	5.9	1.8
15 CM	4.1	6.2	2.1
16 AAM	4.2	4.8	.6
17 AAF	4.3	6.0	1.7
18 CF	4.4	7.1	2.7
19 CM	4.4	6.8	2.4
20 CF	4.4	6.7	2.3
21 AAM	4.5	4.9	.4
22 AAF	4.5	7.0	1.5
23 CM	4.6	6.4	1.8
24 CM	4.7	6.5	1.8
25 CF	4.7	6.6	1.9
26 CM	4.7	6.9	2.2
27 AAM	4.8	6.9	1.1
28 AAF	4.8	6.3	1.4
29 AAM	4.8	6.0	1.2
30 AAF	4.9	6.5	1.6

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