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NEGOTIATING WRITING, LITERATURE, AND THE NEW LITERACIES: EXAPNDING AND MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES IN A 9TH GRADE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

By

J. David Gallagher

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

NEGOTIATING WRITING, LITERATURE, AND THE NEW LITERACIES: EXAPNDING AND MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES IN A 9TH GRADE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

By

J. David Gallagher

Scholars have highlighted the changing contexts of literacy education in recent times, emphasizing the role of new information technologies, an overwhelming abundance of visual texts, and the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of today's classrooms. As a result of these changes, the language classroom becomes a place where these definitions and practices of literacy become paramount, where what it means to be literate, to read, to write, to make meaning, are contested and played out as they are co-constructed in the classroom. This ethnographic case study examined the construction of English and literacy in a ninth grade English classroom, as the students and teacher negotiated what counted as valued texts, and reading and writing practices. Data collection consisted of 8 months of classroom and out-of-classroom ethnographic observations, semi-structured interviews, and artifact collection. The purpose of the data collection was to understand the texts and practices, the influences and processes at play in the construction of literacies, as well as the role of the teacher and students in this co-construction process.

The findings of the study suggest that the teacher and the students engaged in the expansion and maintenance of the boundaries of what counted as texts, reading and

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writing, as they became actors in the processes of dialogically constructing the practices of the English classroom. The findings from this study point to two important aspects of the integration process and broadens our understanding of the relationship between students' literacies they engage with in their everyday lives and those that schools promote. First, the teacher (and the students) were involved in the processes of expanding as well as maintaining the official practices of the classroom. Second, the students contributed to the integration of students' literacies in ways that are often overlooked in the literature. These two aspects of the integration process provide evidence that the "bridging" of in-school and out-of-school texts and practices is a complex, fluid, and contested process. The research findings suggest implications for future research in curriculum theory, literacy development as it is conceptualized in and out of schools, and insights on pre-service and in-service teacher education.

DEDICATION

To my parents, Jim and Diane Gallagher

To my wife, Amy Buckingham

To my grandmother, Elizabeth Ann Gallagher, who always knew I would earn my Ph. D.

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The past six years have been full of excitement and hard work. I am grateful to have the many people in my life during this journey. Their support and guidance touched many parts of this project.

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I also wish to thank the Mount Saint Mary College community and the Division of Education for their understanding and support in the final stages of this project.

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In addition, the support of my family has been so important during this process. They seemed to know when to talk about the dissertation and when to avoid talking about it. Sometimes I wonder how this process was so smooth, and I know much of it has to do with their belief and support in me and my work.

Finally, I owe more than I can express to Amy Buckingham, my wife. She listened and supported me during all the peaks and valleys, and asked important questions that helped guide the development of the project. She grew with me as this project evolved. She read drafts on her vacation, stayed up late into the night going over chapters when I had little energy left, and gently pushed as any skillful editor could have. I truly cannot thank her enough.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

It is late February and the ninth grade class has dedicated two weeks to reading and discussing several poems in class. The teacher, Mrs. Oakley[1]*, shared poems from a variety of sources as part of their poetry unit. The poems were by contemporary poets and about themes related to family, rites of passage, and personal loss of some kind. One of the poems that the class discussed was an excerpt of a choreopoem from a contemporary African American poet, Ntozake Shange, titled, "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf" (1975) (see Appendix A). The students were especially surprised with the way in which Shange played with conventions of standard print within her choreopoem (e.g., waz, enuf, &, yr).*

After reading the poems, Mrs. Oakley assigned the students to write a poem about one of the themes they had been focusing on in the poetry unit (e.g., family, rites of passage, or personal loss). The poem had to be 30 lines long and dedicated to someone. Joshua wrote his poem about the relationship with his brothers, to whom he dedicated his poem (see Figure 1). Mrs. Oakley passed the poem back to Joshua with a score of 35 out of for his lack of "specifics regarding [his] relationship" and for misspellings. Upon receiving the poem, Joshua confronted Mrs. Oakley, pleading to her that his misspellings were intentional, something he did purposefully. Laughing, Mrs. Oakley said that she "was not buying that," and did not reconsider Joshua's grade. As he walked back to his desk, I asked him if he really intentionally misspelled the parts of the poem. Joshua replies, "Yeah, but she doesn't buy it."

[1] All of the names used for the people and places in this study are pseudonyms.

Figure 1. Joshua's Poem with Mrs. Oakley's Comments

My Bro is the Best, Sometimes

My Brother is everything and nothing to me,
Y he is a jerk most the time is a still standing mystery.

By my side we help each other,
Really he is cool when he wants to be,
Other times hes not
The longer we know each other the more we enjoy each others company,
He thinks he can rap, but its worse than me
Each time I wake I find him grinning in my face because he thinks its
Really cool cause he no so need sleep and loves taking that away

I think he is the biggest lazy @$$
So he must think the same

Thats how sibling revary works
He;s nice 2 me when he needs something
Eveytime i need help he;s no where to be found

But he is awesome
Everyday I wait 2 talk to him after
School, I can't belive who luck I am,
To have an awesome brother like him

So all in all
One for all and all for one
Me lucky and
Enjoy
The best brothers
In the world
My mom is lucky to have us
Everyone says we look alot alike
So actually I have two brothers, but I can't dedicate this to one of them so

This Poem is dedicated to
Both of my
Brothers who r the best and
The Worst
(Brothers' names)
I think your the best

how lucky?

Need to devote more of the poem to specifics regarding your relationship.

Nice tribute to the love you share with your brother!

Need to ✓ spelling

35/50

While some of his spelling and grammatical "errors" were likely unintentional (e.g., "belive who luck," "revary"), Joshua navigated the constraints of the official writing practices of the classroom, pushing the boundaries of what was appropriate and

acceptable in the classroom, and what counted as the official conventions of the writing practices of the classroom. Having chosen to create a poem with each letter of the title starting each line, Joshua adjusted the message of his poem to find a balance with the form of his poem (e.g., "Y" instead of "why"). Additionally, Joshua's spelling and grammatical decisions often reflected writing consistent with his texting, chat, and email practices (e.g., "hes," "nice 2 me"). Integrating his digital resources into this official writing practice was met with some resistance, as the official conventions of the classroom were ultimately maintained by the teacher. However, as mentioned earlier, Mrs. Oakley provided a model of a poet (i.e., Ntozake Shange), who's choreopoems challenged the conventions of official genres and languages, allowing for a negotiation with the official practices of the discipline and of the language.

This tension and struggle that is modeled in Shange's choreopoem and is highlighted in Joshua's "misspellings" become illustrative of the joint negotiation of what it means to be an English student and to read and write in the English classroom (Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur, & Prendergast, 1997). Mrs. Oakley, Joshua, and the other students in the class negotiated what counted as appropriate and privileged literacy practices in the 9th grade classroom. This process of negotiating the literacy practices of the classroom was essential to the curriculum and instruction in the classroom, and the learning possibilities for the students.

Ethnographers of literacy and those scholars studying literacy as a social and cultural practice have illustrated the ideological model of literacy. Street argues that literacy,

> is always contested, both its meaning and its practices, hence particular versions of it are always 'ideological', they are always rooted in a particular world-view and desire for that view of literacy to dominate and to marginalize others (Street, 2001a, p. 7-8).

Street argues that when researching literacies (community, local, and classroom) using an ideological model lens, the contested ways in which literacy is understood and practiced becomes a central point of analysis. In this way, what is taught and learned depends on and is situated in the conceptions of literacy held by a variety of people (e.g. policy makers, administrators, and the teacher), as well as whether it is refuted, adopted, or misunderstood by the students in the classroom. Therefore, within this line of research, understanding the joint negotiation of literacy practices between the teacher and students in the classroom, and the constructions of literacy, are of utmost importance (Cairney, 2000). The classroom becomes its own culture, with its own "dynamic system of values, beliefs, and standards, developed through understandings which the teacher and the students have come to share" (Au, 1993, p. 9). As the teacher and students negotiate the literacies of the classroom, they bring with them their own purposes, beliefs, and conceptions of literacy in interaction with those of the teacher and institution of schooling to co-construct the negotiated literacy practices of the classroom (D. Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005).

The purpose of the following ethnographic case study was to examine the negotiation of literacies as they were constructed within one ninth-grade introductory English classroom. The main research question and the sub-questions that guided my

study were as follows: *How do the teacher and students negotiate the literacy practices of one secondary school English classroom during the school year?*

- What does it mean to learn English in the classroom? How do the texts and practices that the teacher designs for the students construct what it means to be a reader and a writer in the classroom?
- How do the students respond to what it means to learn English as they co-construct the practices of the classroom? What textual resources do students draw upon in order to help shape what it means to be an English student and to learn English?

Designed to examine the literacy practices in the context of one high school English classroom, this study focuses on the joint negotiation of literacy practices between the classroom teacher and students, and the shaping of literacy practices in the current times of changing technologies, growing cultural diversity, and increasing pressures for standards and assessments (The New London Group, 1996). As a result of these changes, the English classroom becomes a place where these changes become paramount, where what it means to be literate, to read, to write, to make meaning, are contested and played out in a co-construction of literacy practices. Of particular interest was the role the students' personal (i.e., out-of-school) literacies played in the negotiation of literacy practices of the classroom. These literacy resources, which are often unrecognized as literacies in the classroom (Knobel, 1999; Mahiri, 2004; Moje, 2000), played an integral role in the shaping of classroom practices.

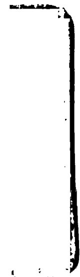
To set the context for this study, I begin by drawing from the theory and research related to viewing literacy as a social practice. Next, I locate the current study within the

changing contexts of literacy and the reconstruction of English that result from new technologies and new theoretical perspectives on literacy. I then turn to the literature on "bridging" out-of-school literacies with classroom practices and offer a Bakhtinian perspective for viewing this negotiation.

Literacy as a Social Practice

Over the last three decades, the view of literacy as an autonomous, decontextualized skill that remains solely in a reader and writer's head has been the focus of a major point of critique. Researchers examining literacy situated in various groups of people's social and cultural practices have begun to point out the way that literacies fit more of an "ideological model" than an "autonomous model" (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Street, 2001b). Street (1984; 2000) argues that an "ideological model" of literacy, in contrast to the "autonomous model," points to a notion of literacy that is multiple, embedded in social and cultural practices, and is shaped by issues of power. Street's notion of the two different models of literacy remain to be influential in literacy theory today and have pushed scholars to think about multiple literacies rather than a singular literacy, and to examine how literacies are shaped in particular contexts.

One theoretical route that researchers have taken with this new perspective of literacy is in viewing literacy as a social practice. Building off of Hymes' (1972) ethnography of communication research, Heath (1982) examined literacy events, which she defined as "any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes. ... A literacy event can then be viewed as any action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production



and/or comprehension of print plays a role" (p. 93). These events are the actual instances in which literacy is used as to fulfill the goals of an activity. Most often written texts were involved, either with or without oral discourse around the text. In a variety of contexts, in and out of school, researchers (Cazden, 1986; Heath, 1983; Mehan, 1982) explored how literacy was intimately connected to different activities and intertwined with particular social and cultural relationships and purposes for literacy (Dyson & Genishi, 2005).

Expanding upon the work of literacy events, researchers have been using practice theories to describe the ideological nature of social and cultural activities (Miller & Goodnow, 1995) and those activities where literacy is central. Practice theories acknowledge that culture is not a set of beliefs and values. Rather, culture is a "social dynamic organized within and by interconnected practices…[which become] resources that individuals draw on, produce, and potentially transform as they respond to structural conditions" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 89). Literacy researchers have utilized this practice theory of culture and developed a socially and culturally situated view of literacy. In their research of the literacies in one community, Barton and Hamilton (1998) theorize literacy as a social practice, which they define as the repeated "cultural way[s] of utilizing literacy," which are embedded in people's social activities. Literacy practices include "people's awareness of literacy, constructions of literacy and discourses of literacy, how people talk about and make sense of literacy" (Barton and Hamilton, 1998, p.6). As such, literacy practices are social, cultural, and "straddle the distinction between individual and social worlds…existing in the relations of people, within groups and communities" (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 8).

Research on the literacy events and practices that are part of people's everyday literacies reveal that in any given culture, and among cultural boundaries, there are a variety of ways in which people use literacy, and these are intimately connected to their local lives (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Barton et al., 2000; Gee, 1996; Street, 2001b). Studies examining adolescents' use of literacy in and out-of-school point to similar findings: students, including academically "at-risk" students, spend a great deal of time engaged in literate activities in out-of-school contexts, "mak[ing] sense of and tak[ing] power in their worlds" (Moje, 2002, p 217). Students engage in reading magazines and popular fiction (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002), reading the newspaper and community announcements (Knobel, 2001), writing notes and graffiti (Finders, 1997; Moje, 2000), zines (Knobel & Lankshear, 2002), and poetry and journals (Camitta, 1993). In these studies, students who were thought of as academically "at-risk" were indeed engaging in literacy practices that were part of their everyday lives. In addition, these studies revealed that adolescents used literacy for meaningful and purposeful reasons, as they shape and became shaped by the social and cultural practices in which they engage (Knobel, 2001; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, & Shannon, 1994). In a study of adolescents labeled "at-risk" (Gallagher, 2006), I examined the literacy practices connected to three different social spheres that were important in the students' literacy lives: home/community, youth culture, and the official school sphere. In each of these spheres, these "at-risk" adolescents utilized literacy (a) as a means to an end (e.g., writing a recipe to bake a cake), (b) to participate in their sociocultural networks (e.g., writing to family members to let them know you are off the street), and (c) for

understanding and positioning oneself in the world (e.g., writing poetry about social injustices experienced).

While much of the research on literacy as a social practice has been influential in understanding literacy in out-of-school contexts, recently researchers have explored how seeing literacy as a social practice furthers our understanding of how meaning associated with reading and writing vary according to the social and cultural practices of literacy learning in schools and in classrooms. A few studies have examined the negotiation of literacy practices within classrooms, examining the construction of literacies as the interaction between teachers and students. Working with at-risk and gang-connected youth in a writer's workshop classroom, Moje, Willes, and Fassio (2001) encouraged students to write expressive texts, focusing on sharing personal experiences in public settings. Their work revealed how some students refused to write personal texts, suggesting that when their normally unsanctioned literacies and identities were given space in the classroom, some adolescents refused to allow their out-of- school literacies to be recognized in the classroom.

Conducting an ethnography of literacy in a fifth-sixth-grade classroom, Lewis (2001) examined the local classroom construction of four literacy practices related to the reading and discussion of literature: read-aloud, peer-led literature discussions, teacher-led discussions, and independent reading. Lewis illustrated how sociopolitical aspects (e.g., peer status and social codes in the classroom, discourses and popular narratives) of the classroom shaped and were shaped by these four practices. She found that the four different practices allowed for students to position themselves differently "in relation to peers, teacher, and text" (176). For example, in the peer-led discussions, students were

given space to negotiate social positions and more voices entered the space of the classroom, negotiating the status and power relationships. Lewis' research details the relationship between classroom social and cultural norms (including power and status) and classroom literacy practices.

With the goal of examining how adolescent girls use literacy in different contexts and how social roles are mediated by literacy, Finders (1997) conducted a yearlong study at a junior high school. She used an ethnographic approach in order to examine how literacy mediated her focal students' lives as they were situated within cultural, historical, and institutional settings. Finders observed how the youths used literacy as a tool to mediate their relationships with their family, friends, and teachers, as well as negotiate their evolving identity during a time of adolescent changes. Finders illustrated how the participants used literacy to negotiate the boundaries between the two social groups, The Social Queens and The Tough Cookies. Literacy mediated the way they defined themselves and the way they were defined in the context of the classroom and the school. Whether it was the stance toward academic literacy, the materials the different social groups read, the way they folded a particular note, or whether they chose to write on the stalls of the bathroom, literacy was at the center of these negotiations. In addition, Finders argued that the "literate underlife" that many of the students participated in (e.g. writing jokes, parodying adults, creating meaningful symbols that were undecipherable for adults) often influenced whether the girls engaged in or resisted academic literacies in the classroom. For example, caring about learning and engaging in academic literacies were signs of weakness for the Social Queens, whereas for the Tough Cookies, engaging in academic tasks were seen as important for doing well in school. Finder's work with

adolescent girls reinforced the necessity of understanding literacy as a social practice in order to better understand the adolescents' engagement while in and out of classrooms.

These classroom ethnographies highlight the importance of viewing literacy as part of the social and cultural practices of the classroom. Through their connection of the micro-analyses of interactions with macro-analyses of the broader social and cultural practices, these researchers were able to explore how literacy is understood and practiced among young and middle aged students. While these studies highlight the social and cultural influences of literacy engagement in the classroom, it is important to note that they do not examine the role that changing definitions of literacy and changing contexts of literacy influence the negotiation of classroom practices. I now turn to a discussion of these changes and to the new literacy studies and the context of English curriculum and instruction.

Literacy and English in New Times

Multimodality and the New Literacies

In their text, *New Literacies: Changing Knowledge and Classroom Learning*, Lankshear and Knobel (2003) distinguished between different conceptions of 'new literacies', the chronological and the ontological. The chronological sense of 'new' refers to those literacies that have recently been argued to be thought about as literacies. For example, many of the literacy practices that are "found" to be important to people as they navigate their lives, which never attained literacy status before recent theories of multiple literacies, can be understood as new literacies. Practices such as scrapbooking, collecting and using recipes, and creating and reading zines are examples of literacies that are new

because they have been recognized by researchers as valuable literacies (i.e., as were many of the literacies in the discussion above).

The second sense of 'new literacy' that is relevant to this discussion has to do with the ontologically idea of new, the idea that there are new literacies that are a result from changes in the media, economy, and technology and communications. In the last two decades, scholars have highlighted the changing contexts of literacy education, pointing to the technological revolution and the increasing globalization of markets as the impetus of change (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2000; Leu & Kinzer, 2003). One major change that scholars have emphasized as radically shifting the definitions and practices of literacy in current times are the new forms of communication and representation related to information and communication technologies (ICT), such as the Internet and multimedia technologies. The advancement of the world of ICT has led to new literacies and new possibilities for peoples' working, public, and personal lives (The New London Group, 1996). Many of these new possibilities involve forms of production and communication, such as text-messaging, emailing, navigating hypertext domains on the Internet, and utilizing computer word processing and publishing software.

Lankshear and Knobel (2003) have documented and described the nature of many of the "new literacies" that are possible as a result of information and communication technologies. One of the new literacies that Lankshear and Knobel highlight in their research is blogging, publishing of personal weblogs. Weblogs vary in their structure and use, but are similar to on-line diaries or journals where people communicate about topics and issues of interest to themselves. These topics are often "nutty and can be painfully banal, prejudiced, angst-ridden, or downright nasty, [or] they can also be erudite and

scale the pinnacles of sophisticated commentary and critique" (38). Lankshear and Knobel describe most weblogs as consisting of some sort of reflection of print with links, depending on the "personal style and nature of the topic" (38). Blogging allows opportunities for people of all backgrounds and ages to publish their writings on a variety of topics (e.g., news, sports, relationships) in spaces where they have significant amount of influence in the production of the text. Weblogs, like many of the "new literacies," allow people (who have access to the technology) to publish with virtually little gate-keeping and be read by an audience of a small group of friends or up to several thousand readers (Kress, 2003).

One change that literacy researchers (Kress, 2003; C. Luke, 2000; Unsworth, 2002) have documented has been how texts have become increasingly more reliant on the visual aspects of design. This transformation that reflects more attention to the visual aspects of texts is seen in newspapers and in the textbooks that students use to learn content knowledge in schools (Kress, 2000a). Visual aspects are integrated into the text to represent a significant amount of the information, and not simply just repeating what was written. Kress argues that the written information involves the action and events, whereas the visual aspects of the text (i.e., diagrams) often represent the "core information" of the curricular content (197). Therefore, in certain textbooks, making sense of the visual is just as important, or more important, for learning the content than is the written information (Kress, 2000b).

While texts have become (and are becoming more) increasing multimodal in their integration of print and images in newspapers and textbooks, multimodality has become central to the texts on the Internet. The new media (ICT) makes it easier for the creation

of multimodal texts, or "the multiplicity of modes, and in particular the mode of image—still or moving—as well as other modes, such as music and sound effect" (Kress, 2003, p. 5). Kress (2000a; 2003) has been at the forefront of establishing a language for understanding the various modes of representation (e.g., audio, spatial, visual, gestural), in addition to the language and linguistic mode, which often holds the position of being "fully adequate to the expression of anything that we might want to express" [(Kress, 2000b, p. 193). Arguing that language holds a privileged place in society and schools, Kress (2000b) writes that "the assumption underlying a multimodal approach to communication and representation is that...humans use many means made available in their cultures for representation precisely because these offer differing potentials, both for representation and for communication" (194). With new technologies come new ways of representing and communicating, which will have serious social and cultural effects.

Kress' research has led to the beginnings of a language for describing multimodality and the "deep changes" occurring as a result of the movement from the page to the screen (1). One change is that reading the screen offers the reader alternative paths to construct meaning of the text, whereas the page consists of a pre-arranged "reading path...along the lines of writing, from top to bottom, from left to write, as well as in its simple sequential unfolding" (152). The screen, which is dominated by hypertextual links and the integration of images and print, does not have such a clear reading path. Reading images lack the force of conventions and the grammar for reading them a particular way, although not fully "beyond conventions," as Kress reminds us (154). Using the example of a video-games magazine, reflecting the textbook discussed above with the integration of images and text, Kress illustrates that the reader comes to

the text with different strategies. Watching readers of these magazines is similar to those who play the video-games, and Kress argues that the "guiding principle is that of 'following relevance,'" which belong to the reader (162). The path for reading the page is not regular (many ways of reading the page) as in the traditional page, images are of immediate relevance, and the path is ordered by the "principles of relevance" of the reader. This change from page to screen, according to Kress (2003) has dramatic implications for the reading process:

> The former [reading task] coded a clear path, which had to be followed. The task of reading lay in interpretation and transformation of that which was clearly there and clearly organized. The new task is that of applying principles of relevance to a page which is (relatively) open in its organization, and consequently offers a range of possible reading paths, perhaps infinitely many (162).

A second major change that arises due to the change from page to screen is the interactivity of new media. In addition to interacting with the text through hyperlink environments, the reader can engage with the text often by writing back to the author or the producer of a text in a way that was difficult to do with the page. This interactivity afforded by new media positions the reader in a different way than the traditional page does, allowing for more than just the traditional unidirectional flow of communication (Kress, 2003, p. 6). Kress argues that the contexts of literacy have changed, as reflected in the above discussion, and the continual change will require a reconsideration of the value of the multiple forms of representation.

These changes in the contexts of literacy have pushed literacy educators to continue reconsidering the nature of literacy, classroom practice, and the literacy

standards for the new millennium (Alvermann, 2002). Some scholars have gone so far as to argue that traditional schooling (students traveling between classes) with the focus on the "the static linearity of the print and book-based models of literacy" will not be the model of schooling and learning for the future (C. Luke, 2000, p. 81). Luke forecasts a time when ICTs have transformed contexts of literacy learning and practice to the point where it demands that we reconsider the current and evolving practices. Similarly, Leu and Kinser (2003) argue that "our students' success [will] be in a world where reading will take place more often within networked ICT than within the pages of a book" (20). While these transformations of literacy and education might be distant to our current context, the current changes in the contexts of literacy resulting from ICTs, have an impact on our conceptions of literacy, and influence the definitions of literacy, and thus literacy research and classroom practice.

English in New Times

Recently, many scholars who have some affiliation with the discipline of English (i.e., literature studies, composition studies, adolescent literacy, cultural studies) have argued that the field of English education is at a crucial point in its history, and at a time when what is needed is a "rethinking of the very intellectual field that we are supposed to profess" (Luke, 2004, p. 86; see also Nelms, 2000; and Barrell et al., 2004). Calling for a "reconstruction" of the English discipline, Ben Nelms (2000), a past editor of *English Education* and the *English Journal*, reflected in a recent article on the tumultuous history and the current context of the English discipline. Discussing the history of the discipline, Nelms described the eventual effects of the 1890s Conference on English of the Committee of Ten, a group of seven university representatives, a Boston headmaster,

superintendent, and a school teacher, led to the unification of what might have been two separate disciplines, communication (or rhetoric) and literature. The unification of these two possible disciplines combined the "Jeffersonian ideals of an enlightened citizenry, capable of discernment and articulate expression of ideas," with the "aristocratic longing for cultivated taste and the opportunity for enhanced sophistication" (p. 51). While originally constituted as mutual goals for English, Nelms argued that "literature has emerged as the master, at least with older, college-bound students; communication skills the handmaiden—with all the inequality those gender-laden terms imply" (p. 51). Many scholars in the last fifteen years have articulated the eventual division that resulted over the last 100 years (Purves, 1990; Willinsky, 1991), acknowledging the privileging the study and appreciation of literature over the study of communication and rhetoric.

There has been a renewed effort in the redefinition and reconstruction of English as a result of the increasing importance of preparing students to face the challenges and possibilities of the changing contexts of literacy (Barrell, Hammett, Mayher, & Pradl, 2004; NCTE standards for the English language arts, 1996; Nelms, 2000). This reconstruction has led to the recognition of the value of communication and rhetorical aspects essential to be an educated participant in the 21st century. One area of this reconstruction of English instruction and curriculum involves building critical literacy skills for engaging with multiple forms of texts, such as film, music, literature, and advertisements. Morrell (2002) argues that a critical analysis of students' musical and film texts, should be integrated with the critical analysis of academic texts in English classrooms.

The influence of cultural studies has led to the broadening of what "counts" as a

text and the expansion of the possible repertoires of texts studied in English classrooms (Nixon, 2003). Cultural studies (1997) offers even the most "mundane" and taken for granted semiotic practices, or practices that are important to the local culture, as sites of sophisticated examinations and educative experiences (Morgan, 2004, p. 41). For example, studies of popular media texts (e.g., films, music) allow for critical analysis "requiring an understanding of its role within the network of social relations it is part of" (Morgan, 2004, p. 43). These critical analyses of media provide students opportunities to critically evaluate texts that are part of their cultural landscape, exploring the larger social processes and contexts within which they are produced. Therefore, reading becomes the semiotic exercise of investigating the social and cultural relations essential for the production of the texts (whether "popular," or official) (C. Luke, 2000).

In response to the changing contexts of literacy, another aspect of the reconstruction of English involves the reconsideration of the writing practices and the production of texts in the classroom. Writing development, within this perspective, is seen as a process of expanding upon students' "diverse communicative repertoires" of production practices, as opposed to learning a "correct" way of writing (Dyson, 2004, p. 214). This perspective challenges the notion of promoting a "correct" way to write, and presents a concern for the reproduction of a hierarchy of practices (i.e., print-based, formal grammar), acknowledging that writing and other productive practices should always be understood as consisting of affordances and limitations. Therefore, different modes of production (i.e., linguistic, spatial) become possible tools used to represent and/or communicate meaning, each with their possible resources for meaning making (Kress, 2003). While not arguing for the replacement of literature from the English

curriculum, these researchers are reconsidering the importance of other areas of the field of English, with contributions from cultural studies, communication and media studies, multimodalities and semiotics (A. Luke, 2004), that are essential for preparing students for the diversity of texts of the 21st century.

While many researchers and leaders in the English field have begun to embrace the new literacies (both chronological and ontological), and while many of the students are intimately involved and adept with multiple forms of engaging with various texts related to ICT technologies, textbook writers and curriculum developers, as well as the policies and practices of English in schools, have been relatively slow to change (A. Luke, 2004; Knobel, 1999). One impetus for this slow change has been the call for a back to the classics approach. This return to the classics has been fueled by Hirsch's popular texts (1987; 1996) in which he argues that there is a core set of knowledge, or cultural literacy, that he believes all people should know. The contents of the cultural literacy that all teachers must teach if students are to be educationally successful has been a constant debate by many. Hirsch offered his own list of the most important knowledge for students, which was heavily dominated by a cultural literacy that reflected ancient Greece and the West (pre-1900s). This popular theory of the common cultural literacy has contributed to the maintenance of the traditional cannon of texts and knowledge, as seen in policy (national and state standards) and in the local practices within classrooms.

In addition to promoting a shared cultural literacy, many argue that the classics should continue to be taught because there is something about particular texts that furthers development of reasoning and moral thought (H. Bloome, 1994). Carol Jago writes that "a critical reading of classical literature results in a deep literacy that I believe

is an essential skill for anyone who wants to attempt to make sense of the world" (cited in Brimi, 2005, p. 21-22). These arguments for an underlying quality of classic texts continue to reinforce the importance for the traditional literary cannon. A study of the texts of English classrooms (Applebee, 1993) reveals that most secondary English classrooms focus on the study of novels and plays, while non-fiction and other texts made up 14.5% in grades 9-10 and 6.2% in grades 11-12 of the required texts in English classes. The five most common book-length texts in public schools were *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth Huckleberry Finn*, *Julius Caesar*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird.* 92% of the authors were from the United States or Great Britain, and of the required texts in English classrooms, 98.7% were written by white authors and 85.9% written by male authors. In large part, despite the vast changes in the contexts of literacy described above, the texts and curriculum of English education remains heavily focused on literature and the "classics", and dominated by white and male authors.

In the *Gutenberg Elegies*, Sven Birkets asks, "What is the place of reading…in our culture?" (cited in Faigley, 1998, p. 13). Birkets provides the answer that reading is losing its place, "with the attendant effects of the loss of deep thinking, the erosion of language, and the flattening of historical perspective…[and] calls on the rest of us to resist the tide of electronic media" (Faigley, 1998, p. 13). This fear in the disappearing of reading and the book is real, and the differences between reading a book and on the Internet should continue to be of steady interest. However, statements that only denigrate one or the other, work to perpetuate myths about the "erosion" of thought, language, without having fully evaluated the affordances and limitations of the different media.

Nelms' reminds us that "curriculum, like politics, is local," and that "individual teachers and local planning committees [are] to whom the task of reconstructing English will finally and eventually fall" (p. 58). It is essential, for this reason, for further examination of the process in which those at the local level construct and reconstruct English. The following study is one such exploration of the construction of English within one classroom, with the possibilities of understanding the ways in which the teacher and students construct English in new times. Working within and through the various contexts of change and reconstruction described above, Mrs. Oakley and her students made sense of and produced what it meant to read, write, and to be a student of English.

Negotiating Literacies: From Bridging Literacies to Expanding Boundaries

Bridging Out-of-School Literacies with Classroom-Based Practices

Hull and Shultz's (2001; 2002) two texts highlight the recent literacy research with students in out-of-school settings, and set forth a series of areas for future research. The first of these research agendas addressed questions related to "how to bridge students' worlds with classroom practice" (2001, p. 603). As part of this research agenda, they include the following:

> How might out-of-school identities, social practices, and the literacies that they recruit be leveraged in the classroom? How might teachers incorporate students' out-of-school interests and predilections but also extend the range of the literacies with which they are conversant? (p. 603).

Recognizing the great amount of research that had been conducted in out-of-school settings, Hull and Shultz argued that in addition to continuing to explore literacies in out-

of-school contexts, research must also focus on the examination of the "bridging" of students out-of-school interests and practices with those that are traditionally valued in the classroom. Although Hull and Shultz's call for research into the bridging process was timely, as it called for a continued exploration of how the research about literacies in out-of-school contexts can inform practice in schools, the call for a research agenda that aimed at bridging literacies was not necessarily new to literacy researchers, as they noted in one of their texts (2002). Scholars have been conducting research on the relationships between school and out-of-school literacies in a variety of settings, and have been arguing for classroom instruction that recruits and utilizes students' literate resources (Alvermann, 2001).

A significant amount of the research in this tradition explores how years of prior ethnographic fieldwork conducted on the population allows for uncovering cultural mismatches and providing teachers with the knowledge and awareness to build upon students' linguistic and literacy practices (Au, 1993; Heath, 1983; Lee, 2000; McCarthey, 2000). Research on bridging out-of-school literacies with academic literacies can be traced back to Heath's (1983) work with teachers. With Heath's ethnographic insights and guidance, the teachers, or "learning researchers" as she referred to them, learned about students' language practices in their communities and adapted classroom instruction to help the students learn to code-switch, and ultimately "translate and expand knowledge gained in activities outside of the classroom to focus on different aspects of the curriculum and school skills" (355). In a similar tradition, Moll and his colleagues (Gonzalez et al., 1995; Moll, 1994, 2000) have designed a responsive approach in which the teacher is trained as an ethnographer of their students' communities in order to recruit

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funds of knowledge, "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). The teacher designs learning activities that aim to tap into the various funds of knowledge the students bring with them to school.

Carol Lee and her colleagues (1995; 1997; 2000) sought to adapt instruction as a result of consistently low performance among African Americans in an urban high school. Lee hypothesized that if students were to understand how irony exists in signifying, a form of talk in the African American community that may involve ritual insult and figurative language, with the proper cultural modeling by the teacher, the students would be able to draw upon the strategies to understand irony within curricular texts. In the study, Lee designed an instructional practice that asked the students to read African American texts rich with instances of signifying. The students learned about the rules and of signifying, as well as the particular strategies they used to comprehend the texts. The knowledge and strategies were then applied to the process of understanding irony (and answering inferential questions) in additional texts. The results of the experimental group showed far higher scores on the inferential questions than did the control group who did not receive the innovative instruction. Therefore, Lee found that these underachieving students had the necessary strategies to understand irony when they were asked to use their previously learned systems of meaning making, seen in the ways they communicate and interact outside of school. This understanding of irony in signifying served as a cultural foundation for the students on which to bridge the school curriculum.

In large part, this tradition of research involves the teachers and researchers recruiting the linguistic and cultural knowledge of students with backgrounds who are of one ethnic minority. Dyson (2003) reminds us that when thinking about responsive teaching, we must view students not solely as part of singular ethnic groups, where stereotypes are likely to form, but rather as students drawing from a rich and varied cultural landscape, with multiple cultural influences that must be negotiated in the classroom.

One area that scholars have looked to for building upon students' knowledge and literacies is popular culture, which is "popular" for students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Much of adolescents' out-of-school literacies are connected with the music, movies, video games, and language of popular culture. Researchers have explored the possible uses of popular culture in English classrooms as ways for teachers to utilize the vast resources that students bring to the classroom (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999; Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Hinchman, Alvermann, Boyd, Brozo, & Vacca, 2003; Vetrie, 2004). In a secondary English classroom, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002; 2004) explored the impacts that utilizing Hip-hop culture had on students' academic and critical literacy development. They found that students used their prior schemas for interpreting literary texts when analyzing Hip-hop texts line by line. The students soon were able to draw comparisons between the influence of society in a Renaissance poem and the political nature of current Hip-hop songs. Their findings suggest that by integrating Hip-hop culture into secondary English classrooms, students' engaged with traditional academic texts and goals, while also affirming the everyday lives of the students.

The studies discussed above that promote a bridging of out-of-school literacies and knowledge to the academic practices of the classroom tend to reinforce rigid boundaries between home and school, and between out-of-school and academic literacies. When literacies and knowledge are recruited and designed to be built upon, boundaries between the texts and purposes are reinforced, further creating the distinction between the literacy practices students engage in and those that are valued by the school. While the "bridge" metaphor contributes to the "great divide" between in school and out of school, Hull and Shultz (2002) recognize that this distinction often leads to an understanding that out-of-school practices are good and school-based practices are inauthentic, and sometimes dismisses students' engagement with texts as less serious and "remedial" (p. 3). Recent research reveals that literacy practices are much more blended across boundaries than previously understood in the literature. In this way, literacies are better thought of as connected to social domains and networks (Brandt & Clinton, 2002; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, & Ellis, 2004; Purcell-Gates, 2006) that are not locked down to particular physical spaces.

In addition, while some researchers have begun to argue for a reconsideration of the value of students' literacies in English classrooms (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Mahiri, 1998; Morrell, 2002), the bridging metaphor tends to further reinforce ideological boundaries between students' literacies and school-based practices[2]. Recruiting and utilizing students' literacies as a scaffold to the academic practices often does little to the official curriculum. Heath (1983) argued that the "central role [of the teachers'

[2] Distinctions between certain practices can be important, and practices differ in value and complexity, although because one is valued it does not necessarily lead to it being complex, and vice versa. However, the bridging metaphor further produces the privileged status of certain practices.

responsive instruction] was to pass on to all groups certain traditional tools and ways of using language...reformulating to different degrees their home habits of handling knowledge and their ways of talking about knowledge" (354-355). While students' practices may be recognized in the act of bridging, they are still recognized as "out-of-school" literacies in relation to those "academic" literacies privileged in the classroom. The students' practices are seen as different, and although respected and bridged, not expanding the boundaries of the privileged school-based practices.[3] This work has been and continues to be important as it pushes to make classrooms more meaningful for students; however, there is a need for a reconsideration of the relationship between students' literacies and those traditionally practiced in schools.

Maintaining and Expanding Boundaries: Toward a Theory of Negotiating Literacies

The discussion of the literature above speaks to the need for further research into the complexities of the social practices of literacy in the classroom and the integration of students' knowledge and multiple literacies in current times of change. As the contexts of literacy change, the English classroom becomes a place for the negotiation of what English is and what role the students' multiple literacies (and those they see important to many in the 21st century) play in the negotiation of the practices of the classroom. The growing concern for bridging literacies demonstrates the value of the relationship between students' practices and those that are valued in the academy. In the following study, I explore the processes involved in the negotiation of literacies in one English

[3] Dyson (1993) has a similar critique with the language and cultural styles research. She argues that cultural styles do not fully account for contextual aspects of communicative events, leading to seeing the cultural style as a difference associated with a particular group, and something that might be bridged, but not ultimately "situated and incorporated" (p. 218).

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classroom, as a way of furthering our understanding of the relationship between students' literacies and those valued in the classroom.

Bakhtin's dialogic studies (1981) provide a promising theoretical frame for examining the negotiation of literacies in the classroom. Bakhtin uses dialogism to explain the constant interaction involved in discourse, language, and culture. According to a theory of dialogism, languages and cultures are always in a dialogic state, where tension and struggle exist, even when language and cultures are overly controlled and dominated by one force or group. Drawing from a Bakhtinian theory of dialogism, Nystrand and his colleagues (1997) examined the relationship between the dialogic nature of classroom interactions and a variety of learning outcome measures in a study with a large sample of 8th and 9th grade English classrooms. Focusing mainly on questions, the dialogic classroom was understood as allowing for authentic questions that did not have prescribed answers and that allowed for more of a negotiation around what became knowledge in the class and with the texts. They determined from their analysis that students learned more, as measured by assessments at the end of the school year, when in classrooms that were more dialogic. The little amount of time the researchers spent in the classrooms (i.e., four class periods) in their large-scale study, however, calls into question how able the researchers were to understand the literacy events as they are situated in the literacy practices of the classroom. Therefore, the findings of this study highlight the need for continued exploration of the negotiation of literacy practices in English classrooms to better understand the process and the negotiation that takes place in a dialogic classroom.

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Also using the theoretical constructs of dialogism and monologism, Gutierrez and her colleagues examined competing scripts between teachers and students as they played out in the classroom (Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995; Gutierrez & Stone, 2000). By analyzing these scripts, which they defined as expected ways of interacting based on past experiences, Gutierrez and her colleagues explored the tensions and contradictions that surfaced, and identified and examined the interactions that occurred. Gutierrez and her colleagues (1995) illustrated how one teacher's script constructed the classroom in such a way that stifled students' cultural and local knowledge they brought to the classroom. As a result of this "monologism," the students' counterscripts developed as an unofficial event or in specific confrontation to the teacher script. The authors argue that the only way that a "true interaction" can occur between the teacher and students is within a "third space," where competing discourses and constructions of literacy becomes a collaborative, dialogical act.

Other studies have looked at the joint negotiation of practices in the classroom, looking at the dialogic nature of the students and the teacher negotiating space and knowledge in the classroom. Moje and her colleagues (2004) explored students' funds of knowledge that shaped their literacy practices in science classrooms, and looked for possibilities for students bringing in knowledge and literacy practices in science classes. The researchers theorized the possible instances where students' funds of knowledge were integrated as "third space," drawing from Bhabha (1994). While the study focused a great deal on the actual funds of knowledge and whether they were integrated in the classroom, a focused examination of the classroom interactions and the process of creating the third space was not the focus of the reported study. The study does push

educators to seek opportunities for valuing the literacies and knowledge of content of the students and their families for producing new knowledges, and working towards a third space.

Important to Bakhtin's idea of dialogism is that, "language and discourse of any given time and place are continuously shaped and pulled in different directions by interacting forces of stability and change" (Nystrand et al., 1997, p. 12). The shaping and pulling occurs due to the centripetal and centrifugal pressures of a language and discourse of a particular time. The centripetal pressures consist of the pressures towards convention and normativity. Bakhtin (1981) used the canonization of ideological systems and the teaching of dead languages as examples of ways in which a unitary language is formed. These centripetal pressures "struggle to overcome the heteroglossia of language…creating within a heteroglot national language the firm, stable linguistic nucleus of an officially recognized literary language, or else defending an already formed language from the pressure of growing heteroglossia (p. 271). In describing centripetal forces, Nystrand and his colleagues (1997) write that they include "rules of grammar, usage, 'official genres,' 'correct' language, privileged ideologies" (p. 12). Amidst these centripetal pressures are the centrifugal pressures of difference and change, which are "the forces of life, experience, and the natural pluralism of language" (Nystrand et al., 1997, p. 12). The centrifugal pressures are those that push for creativity and difference, and are often expressed in areas that do not have a central language, like street songs, anecdotes, and parodies of official texts (Bakhtin, 1981).

The dialogic nature of the pressures for unifying and stratifying languages reveals a view of language, and classroom interaction, that highlights its "multivoicedness" and

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constant conflict and struggle (Nystrand et al., 1997, p. 13). For studying the literacy practices and nature of English in the classroom, during the current time of change, a Bakhtinian theory of dialogism can offer a view of the English classroom that highlights the tension between the pressures for stability and convention, and pressures for creativity and change. Rather than viewing the classroom as a site for "bridging" students' literacies, which does little to challenge the official practices of the academy, the following study examines the *processes* in which the teacher and the students negotiate the practices of the classroom, in ways that explore the expansion and maintenance of the official practices of the classroom. Therefore, a view of the integration process becomes one of negotiating the boundaries of the practices of the classroom, amidst the changing contexts of literacy, not solely a discussion of the "bridging" of students' literacy practices. This perspective highlights the changing and multivoiced nature of the practices of the classroom and sees the boundaries as fluid.

Statement of Purpose

The literacy and English fields are experiencing great change as a result of new information technologies, an overwhelming abundance of visual texts, and the increasing diversity of today's classrooms. Due to these changes, questions arise as to what counts as literacy, as reading, and as writing (Leu & Kinzer, 2003). How much will changing literacies result in changing distributions of power (Kress, 2003)? What forms of knowledge will be important for students to know, and what skills must students be adept with in order to live successfully in their working, public, and private lives (The New London Group, 1996)? And, finally, what role do English teachers play in creating contexts where students develop these new knowledges and new literacies? "What might

it mean to teach and to profess English in a multilingual and multicultural, heteroglossic and multimediated world?" (Luke, 2004, p. 85).

As these questions are being asked at the local, state, and national levels, various groups are seeking to define, construct, and reconstruct English. As texts and practices are becoming more diverse, pressures are continuing to mount for a state and nationally standardized curriculum that seeks to narrow the conceptions of literacy. Ironically, the literacies with which students must become proficient and knowledgeable in their social, personal, and work related lives are becoming more abundant and varied. In their *Position Statement on Adolescent Literacy*, Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, and Rycik (1999) argued that:

> Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future (p. 99).

Those with the task of determining what finally becomes English during this restless time of change are the teachers and students in English classrooms. This study illustrates how a teacher and her students creatively worked within constraints (i.e., conventions of a language, rules defined by the English department and state standards), and negotiated the literacies of the day-to-day curriculum, expanding and maintaining the boundaries of literacy and of English. This study not only captures the texts and practices that became important for Mrs. Oakley and students as they engaged with English, but

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the study also reveals the *processes* and *influences* that were important to the shaping of the literacy practices of the classroom. In order to explore these processes and influences, I have focused on three essential aspects of the classroom practice: a) the texts they studied, b) the reading practices that were integral, and c) the writing and production practices that came to define engagement in 9th grade English for Mrs. Oakley and the students.

Motivated by the existing literature, the following study explores the construction and reconstruction of English, as the students and teacher negotiated what counts as valued texts, and reading and writing practices. Essential to the study is an exploration into the constructions of English and the ways in which students' literacy practices become integrated and/or influential in the expanding and maintaining of the literacy practices of the classroom.

The goal of the study is not necessarily to evaluate or chart whether students are expanding or maintaining their understandings of academic literacy. The goal is, rather, to examine the practices and processes that are involved as the students and teacher negotiate the literacy practices of the classroom, and to examine the nature of the interactive processes of expansion and maintenance (pressures for stability and pressures for change) as they play out in the English classroom. This study provides a comprehensive investigation into the construction of literacies in the classroom and affords us the opportunity to better understand the following areas: a) what becomes valued as English in New Times, b) the role of both the *teacher* and the *students* in the negotiation process, and c) the role of the many social and political forces involved in the negotiation of literacies.

CHAPTER 2: METHOD AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In order to address the research questions listed in chapter 1, I designed the following 8 month long ethnographic case study in a ninth grade English classroom. Drawing upon a social practice framework, this study was designed to capture the practices and processes involved in the negotiation of literacies during changing times. In what follows I explain the rationale for selecting ethnographic methods, and introduce the school, class, and participants. I also explain my procedures for data collection and analysis.

Methodology

The ethnography of literacy, within the tradition of ethnography in education, has a rich history of exploring the local ways of using language and literacy within individuals' social lives (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2003; Purcell-Gates, 2006). Researchers have used ethnography to "grapple with uncertainty and confusion, how meanings emerge through talk and collective action, how understandings and interpretations change over time" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p 4). Ethnographic case studies in the qualitative tradition (Erickson, 1986) are important for studying phenomena within the "messy complexity of human experience" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 3). By analyzing the local practices in a particular context, ethnographic case studies are powerful for developing a situated view of "what counts as literate practices in the local group across actors, times, events, and spaces" (Green et al., 2003, p. 212).

Ethnography was essential for addressing my research questions for two important reasons. First, studying literacy as a social practice involved the examination

of the uses and meanings of literacy situated in people's everyday lives (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Purcell-Gates, 2006). Therefore, ethnography afforded me the opportunity to interpret the negotiation of literacy practices, in terms of the teacher and students' "immediate and local meanings" (Erickson, 1986). It was this reason that I developed ethnographic questions and utilized ethnographic methods of data collection. I assumed the role of a participant observer, collected several forms of data, and was part of the classroom for the school year. These ethnographic methods allowed me the opportunity to get access to the situated meanings and the ways the participants valued and understood literacy in their lives. Secondly, with an ethnographic design, I was able to examine and appreciate the holistic aspects as well as the particularities of the co-constructed classroom. As Barton and Hamilton (1998) inform us about the ethnographic study of literacy: "It is about connecting the particular to the larger context of patterned practices, how specific things, people and processes are related, how the specific is connected with its social and historical context" (p. 72). Therefore, ethnographic methods allowed me the opportunity to situate each person as a member of larger social networks, as well as an active participant negotiating the literacies of the classroom.

Setting and Participants

The Research Site

This research project was conducted in a ninth grade English class at Middleview High School, located in a university town in the Midwest. Middleview was a compelling research site for several reasons. Middleview was located in between a medium sized city and affluent suburban towns. As a result of being between the urban and wealthier suburban areas, both rich and poor, white and non-white students from different class

backgrounds attended the school. Therefore, the school was unique in that it was ethnically, as well as, economically diverse.

The school district prided itself on having a diverse student body and high academic achievement, as seen through the yearly state tests. The school boasted an international student body representing 43 different countries. With nearly 1200 students, 85% of graduates (.86 overall dropout rate, 2.21 senior year rate) attend post-secondary colleges. Demographic data reflect a school with 73% Caucasian, 15% African American, 7% Asian, 5% Hispanic, and .04% Native American. The yearly assessment data shows the school as being consistent with state test scores in reading and writing disparities between Caucasian students and students from minority groups. Figure 2 shows a comparison of student proficiency (i.e., defined as whether student meets or exceeds state's standards) on 2003-2004 state standardized tests for reading and writing, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and economically disadvantaged. The school shows significantly higher academic proficiency on reading and writing state mandated tests when compared to the average state scores. However, the disparities between different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds remain an issue in this school.

Figure 2. Comparison of Proficiency on the State Standardized Assessment (2003-2004)

	Grade level	Subject area	Male	Female	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged
School	**7th**	**Reading**	**76%**	**90%**	**74%**	**64%**	**80%**	**90%**	**64%**
State	7th	Reading	57%	66%	71%	40%	46%	68%	44%
School	**7th**	**Writing**	**59%**	**78%**	**63%**	**51%**	**55%**	**75%**	**52%**
State	7th	Writing	47%	38%	62%	31%	40%	52%	35%
School	**11th**	**Reading**	**88%**	**85%**	**64%**	**79%**	**<10**	**92%**	
State	11th	Reading	70%	82%	78%	60%	63%	79%	60%
School	**11th**	**Writing**	**70%**	**83%**	**68%**	**61%**	**<10**	**82%**	
State	11th	Writing	40%	56%	63%	28%	35%	52%	29%

Like many communities located in the Midwest, Middleview felt the effects of the changing economic landscape. Within the region, the shift from manufacturing to information-based economies put people's careers and their families in difficult, and sometimes desperate situations. While many communities are still recovering from this economic shift, towns like Middleview have been met with the demands of embracing this shift to an information-based economy. Therefore, this community was representative of many communities looking to provide students of all cultural and economic backgrounds the skills and knowledge to be successful active participants in the increasingly information and global society.

One advantage that Middleview had in adjusting to the economic shift was the close partnership the town and district had with the local University. This partnership was evident in the formal ties between the University and the school community, as in the program established with grant money whose goal was to connect teachers to ideas and research related to cross cultural education. They had periodic meetings and discussed cross cultural issues, while trying to promote global issues in the K-12 curriculum. The partnership was also evident in that the town and University were often involved in mutually organizing programs that provided rich experiences for all in the community, such as the One Book, One Community program, and the Martin Luther King celebration (which Mrs. Oakley encouraged her students to attend).

The Class and the Classroom

Ninth grade English is the first class of four required years of English at Middleview High School. For the first three years students must take a sequence of courses that are required for all students, which then allows them up to have the option of

taking a variety of English classes during their senior year (e.g., film study, creative writing, etc.). Ninth grade English is the first in this sequence and a course that is required for all freshman in the school. Therefore, unless the student had placed out of the class the summer before[4], regardless of interest or ability, all students enroll in and must pass freshman English to continue with the other English classes in the sequence.

Ninth grade English was an introduction to what it meant to be an English student at the high school level. As mentioned in the course description (see Figure 3), the course was an introduction to old and new literature, as well as literature studies, and writing skills. As a result of the nature of this introductory English class, it was an opportunity to get a glimpse into the process of defining and negotiating the boundaries of English, what counted as texts and literacy, and what was privileged reading and writing and interactions around literature. For this reason, ninth grade English was a rich context in which to explore negotiations of literacy.

Figure 3. Course Description in "English Course Offering" Pamphlet

> This course provides instruction in both classic and contemporary literature. The literary selections are presented in thematic units and have been selected from works which present the wide diversity of cultural views and values in society. Writing instruction is provided both by the classroom teacher and in the Writing Seminar where students will use a computer to compose, edit, and publish all writings completed there. Skill development includes the following areas: literature studies, writing skills, language usage, grammar, group and individual projects, and oral presentations. Content tested on [state exams].

[4] Students at Middleview High School have the opportunity to place out of the first two English courses if they read a selected amount of texts and pass a comprehensive exam. Therefore, some students in 8th grade have placed out of introductory English, and some students in 9th grade English placed out of sophomore English for the next year.

Participating and engaging in Mrs. Oakley's ninth grade English class was a multisensory, multimodal experience. The class engaged in shared reading experiences of several literature texts, discussed the literature in large groups, analyzed poetry, and composed and edited a variety of print texts (e.g., 5 paragraph essays, responses to literature prompts). In addition to these reading, writing, and speaking activities, the members of the class often engaged in dramatizing characters, sharing recipes for dishes they prepared, flipping through picture albums, sharing scrapbooks they created, quizzing each other before vocabulary quizzes, listening to a variety of music, and discussing political and social issues. These experiences were a result of the curriculum that was partly designed by Mrs. Oakley, and partly the result of the vast resources, experiences, and motivations that students brought with them into the classroom.

As a result of the building construction that was underway on the school during the year of the study, the class shifted classrooms half way through the year. During the first semester, they were utilizing another English teacher's classroom. Since the teacher taught a film as literature course, there were film posters hanging throughout the room. The desks were in rows and students were free to sit where they wanted to sit, as long as they did not talk too much with others. When the class moved to the Mrs. Oakley's new room after winter break, the class was welcomed in to Mrs. Oakley artistic and aesthetic touch. A collection of fashionable hats lined the perimeter of the ceiling of the room. Large pictures of and quotes from Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr. filled the back of the room. Students' projects wallpapered the sides of the room, adding color and artistic design to the white walls. A couch and chairs provided comfortable seating for those who are able to get to them first. Others sat in a horseshoe

shape around them. Everything about her new room was welcoming and designed for comfort.

The Teacher

One of the central reasons I selected this site was because of the teacher, Mrs. Oakley. I was looking for an experienced teacher whose classroom would allow me a chance to see students' literacies play some role in the classroom during the school year. In this way, it was essential that I selected a site with a teacher who made an attempt to represent diverse texts and literacies in the classroom (e.g., letters to authors, critical responses, artistic responses, descriptive stories, film reviews, and opportunities for multimedia presentations). At the end of the 2003-2004 school year, after exchanging a series of emails and visiting her classroom, Mrs. Oakley offered for me to undergo this study in her classroom. We corresponded over the summer and I began meeting her and sitting in her class in the middle of October, and began getting to know the students and the routines of the classroom.

Although this was the first time teaching ninth grade English for Mrs. Oakley, she had taught 7th and 8th grade English language arts in the same district for over fifteen years. Mrs. Oakley made the shift from teaching 8th grade to teaching two classes of ninth grade English language arts and two sections of courses for juniors and seniors (on of them being Advanced Placement Literature for seniors). Mrs. Oakley was excited to move to the High School and be teaching a variety of English courses.

Mrs. Oakley saw herself as someone who tried not to censor students' writing and the books they read. She talked about topics that may be considered taboo in other classes, and did not seem to shy away from issues that many teacher might have thought

were risky to discuss in school (e.g., Catholic priests involvement in the sex abuse scandal, issues regarding whether we should be involved in the war in Iraq). This non-censorship was important because it provided an opportunity for me to see how she and the students were to negotiate the boundaries of these topics.

Through the local Writing Project, Mrs. Oakley participated in a community of outstanding teachers, researchers and leaders who came together for four weeks in the summer and periodically throughout the year to share their teaching experiences and develop research projects that explore and highlight current theory in the teaching of writing. She was knowledgeable of current research on literacy education and was actively looking to always learn more. In addition to the writing project, she was also part of the group that met to learn about cross cultural issues. Through this group, a few years prior to the study, Mrs. Oakley received a Fulbright Study Award to collaborate with other teachers to develop and teach a language arts curriculum in Nepal. Mrs. Oakley had many of the qualities and experiences that would make this study in her classroom a rich opportunity for examining the negotiation of literacies.

The Students

All the students in the classroom who gave consent were included in the study. During the school year there were a total of 24 students that were in the class for at least a semester, and 17 students agreed to participate in the study. Four of the students were enrolled for only one semester (either the fall or spring semesters). The students were an ethnically diverse group of students (see Figure 4). As a result of the nature of the class, being a "untracked" required course for all ninth graders (except those who test out the

summer before), the students represent a diverse range of academic "levels" and abilities, where the class consisted of a mixture of "honors," "average," and "struggling" students.

Figure 4. Participating Students' Sex, Ethnicity, and Time Enrolled in the Class

Name	Sex	Ethnicity	Only one semester
Cadence * ^	F	European American	
Sam	M	European American	X
Larissa ^	F	European American	
Pauliana	F	Polish	
Ruth	F	Kenyan	X
Joshua * ^	M	European American	
Amisi	F	Egyptian	X
Janu ^	M	Nepalese	
James ^	M	European American	
Stephen * ^	M	Korean	
Anthony	M	European American	X
Skye ^	F	European American	
Miles ^	M	African American	
Ella ^	F	European American	
Marcus * ^	M	European American	
Brianna * ^	F	African American	
Catherine ^	F	European American	X

* Focal student
^ Interviewed

After I had been involved in the classroom events for some time, using purposive sampling (Bogdan & Biklin, 1998), I selected five students as informants from the general participants. These students were representative of the cultural diversity as well as their participation in whole class discussions, some being quite vocal in class (i.e., Brianna, Marcus), and others being fairly quiet (i.e., Stephen and Joshua). In making the decision of the key informants, I selected at least three students (i.e., Marcus, Brianna, and Cadence) who were key members of the classroom discussions in ways that contributed to the negotiating the literacies of the classroom. While I collected data on and came to know all the participants in the class during the year, I focused my attention

on the focal participants more specifically (i.e., when in small group work, out of class) as a way to provide rich data about the ways in which students work within and through the boundaries of what it means to learn English in the classroom.

Marcus

Marcus was a dedicated athlete and tried hard in school in order to earn decent grades in all of his classes. Much of Marcus' involvement with literacy was a result of his athletic and social identities in the home, on the practice field, and in the school. Marcus was a tall, athletic, and successful in football, basketball, and baseball. He was an avid video gamer, being one of several of the male students in the class who played video games at home on regular basis. Marcus managed to balance his classes, sports, friends, and family during the year, without much observable stress or effort. He was European American and turned 15 during the school year. Marcus was quite articulate about the role that literacy played in his life, both in class discussions, as well as in his interviews, and was a central figure in many of the events that were important in the negotiation of the literacies of the classroom.

Brianna

As an active member of a local martial arts school, Brianna had competed successfully at the national level since she was young. She was tall and confident, and determined to succeed in school. Not afraid to ask questions, she became a vocal member of the class during whole group discussions. She admitted several times that she loved being in Mrs. Oakley's class because she had so much fun. She repeatedly received full scores on with her projects, and performed well in all the writing

assignments. She did not like reading, but was willing to do what she had to do for an A in the class. Brianna was African American and turned 15 during the school year.

Cadence

A self-proclaimed "bookworm," Cadence was an avid reader of fiction. She would tell the class about what she was reading, and would confidently contribute to class discussions the authors that she thought were great (e.g., R.L. Stein). Cadence also had written short stories that she shared with her friends, and wrote her own music that she published on her online journal. Her mother was a creative writing teacher at the local community college, and this provided Cadence with confidence and support for her own reading and writing. According to Mrs. Oakley, though, Cadence underachieved in the course, sometimes not passing in work, other times talking with other students and not paying attention. Regardless of her level of performance in class, she positioned herself and was positioned by others as a competent reader and writer. Cadence was European American and turned 15 during the school year.

Stephen

Always precise and particular in his class projects, Stephen aimed for perfection in every aspect of the class. Even his handwriting was like a work of art, as he spent much time being extremely deliberate in his penmanship, even for small assignments and class quizzes. Stephen had moved with his family from Korea three years ago, and his father was often traveling back and forth between the U.S. and Korea. He was quite proficient in speaking English, and said that he still prefers to read books written in Korean rather than English. Stephen had high aspirations for college, volunteering at the

library and being active in sports, because he heard that colleges looked for students who had community service. Stephen was Korean and 15 years of age.

Joshua

Sitting next to Stephen for most of the year, Joshua and Stephen became friends. Told that he "doesn't try" by Stephen, Joshua always had other things that he was doing that seemed to be more important than what was happening in class. At one point in the year, when the class was in the computer lab writing their formal essays, Joshua was composing a half page email to on of his friends. Cleverly hiding this email from the teacher with a paper propped up on the screen, he spent nearly all of class composing emails. An avid email user, with five email accounts, Joshua was sure that he would have enough digital space for his active emailing life. It seemed that Joshua would do what he needed in the course and in school to perform at a level where he would pass and not upset his parents or the teachers. Joshua was European American and 14 years of age.

Researcher's role

> In learning about others through active participation in their lives and activities, the fieldworker cannot and should not attempt to be a fly on the wall (Emerson et al., 1995, p.3).

My participation in the classroom was not one of a "fly on the wall." Rather than thinking about my presence in the classroom as strictly that of an observer in the back of the room taking notes, remaining distant to the teacher and students, I chose to position myself in the classroom in ways that my participation would become a valuable part of

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my data collection. The researcher's ability to negotiate and become a participant in the social community is a crucial factor in the quality of data that is collected (Emerson et al., 1995). I believed that in order to collect the data that was important for my question, I needed to be a part of the classroom community and someone that the participants trusted and would feel comfortable talking to.

Through my interactions and relationships with the teacher and students, I remained a participant-observer, where I rarely "participated" in class discussions, but was a fixed staple in the classroom during the school year. My role was one of a college graduate student who was learning about the ways in which students learn and use literacy in their lives, both inside and outside school. When in the classroom I was there to support the students with their work and provided feedback when they asked. On the other hand, I did not formally assess students' work or take positions in which I was seen as the teacher who grades or sets and enforces the rules—this was the job of the classroom teacher. In the few instances when Mrs. Oakley left me with the class, or I was in class before she made it there, students would routinely act in ways that would not have happened if I was a classroom teacher. On a couple of occasions, the students engaged in activities that they would not normally do when Mrs. Oakley or another teacher was there (e.g., threw balls back and forth to each other). On one particular occasion, when Mrs. Oakley was running a couple minutes late to class, and Brianna and Anthony decided they were going to block Mrs. Oakley out of the room. As the students looked at me, while bracing the door shut, I quickly realized that this was a time for me to allow them to be students, and for me to not be a disciplinarian. Mrs. Oakley managed to convince them to open the door, and she came in with a smile on her face. While it was

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in good fun, it was a moment for me to establish myself as someone who would not team up with Mrs. Oakley against them.

My participation in the classroom and in the lives of the adolescents was an important part of the research process. My immersed role allowed me access to spaces for examining the way that the teacher and students negotiated the literacies in the classroom, as well as provide access to spaces outside the classroom where I was be able to observe students as they participated in after-school settings (e.g., clubs, band, or sports team) and in their out-of-school communities (e.g., with their family, at church, circle of friends).

It was my intention to help out as much as Mrs. Oakley needed in the classroom. Usually this took the form of running to the office to make copies or to talk about possible activities she was contemplating in other courses. Through our conversations, Mrs. Oakley came to understand my participation there as working with her to learn about literacy learning in her classroom, as well as to understand the different ways that students in her class used literacy in all parts of their lives. By letting her know that I was a graduate student and that I had some (but little) experience as a full time teacher, I believe she saw me as a student of the profession and someone she could "teach", as well as someone who also might be a professional colleague providing helpful (and different) ideas throughout the year about the class.

Data Collection Procedures

Methodologically, this qualitative study borrowed from ethnographic traditions in education. As a source for my analysis, I collected the following data using ethnographic methods.

Classroom Observations

During my involvement in the project, from mid-October to the end of May of the 2004-2005 school year, I attended and observed Mrs. Oakley's English class on average 3 class periods (each an hour) per week. Spread over the duration of the study, I conducted classroom observations for 71 class periods. At the end of each observation, using the field jottings and audiotapes (I had audio tapes for the last 56 observations), I wrote ethnographic fieldnotes, narrative descriptions of my observations at the site (Emerson et al., 1995), and transcribed dialogue when it helped enrich the description.

My primary aim of the study was to explore how the teacher and students negotiated the literacy practices of the classroom. Negotiation was defined as the co-construction of meaning, a process in the classroom in which people mutually construct ideas of what is accepted and valued through their interactions with one another and through the sociocultural practices of the group (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Erickson, 1986). To that end, the purpose of the classroom observations and the written fieldnotes was to understand the practices and principles that were constructed by the teacher and students as they negotiated the norms, roles, and expectations of English and literacy learning in the classroom. By focusing my attention on the activities, materials, and the dialog in the classroom, as it was understood in the local meanings of this particular classroom culture, I strove to understand how the participants make sense of what is happening and how they are jointly constructing the practices of the classroom.

Collection of Artifacts

Artifacts were an important source of data collection during the study. These artifacts consisted of samples of students' work (e.g., essays, short responses, multimodal

projects), texts the teacher handed out to the students (e.g., assignment sheets and class handouts), and other texts around the classroom that were an integral part of the classroom community (e.g., the poster of Gandhi in the back of the room). In the cases that I could make photocopies of these I would and handed them back to students. For the multimodal projects, I would either take pictures or make a scanned copy of the text to attempt to capture the color and visual design that a normal black and white photocopier would not be able to attain. For some of the students, I had copies of email messages from our correspondences, and copies of their written and multimedia work on their on-line journals.

I also collected artifacts that were part of the larger school community. Signs that read announcements, posters advertising the literary journal, and the bi-weekly student newspaper were all examples of artifacts collected in the larger school-wide context. In addition, I collected any district wide newsletters and policies related to literacy and English.

Interviews

I interviewed Mrs. Oakley and the participating students in the class. I conducted two different forms of interviews in order to learn about their understandings of the literacy practices of the classroom and of the students' everyday lives. One type of interview was short and improvisational, and they consisted of the discussions with the teacher and students that occurred in-between class periods, or during the class period as they are reading, writing, and working on activities for class. In these interviews with the teacher and students, I was able to ask questions I had about an interaction or activity, or to probe the participants about what they are thinking when in the middle of activities.

The second form of interviews were semi-structured interviews for both the teacher and participants scheduled outside of the classroom to allow for time and space for a conversation that may not occur within the activity of the classroom (e.g., student reaction to teacher's actions, the teacher's purpose for certain activities).

I interviewed 12[5] of the 17 participating students (see Figure 4 for the students who were interviewed). The semi-structured interviews with the students were used to explore the different ways that they used literacy in their lives (see Appendix B for student interview protocol) and to gain insight into the texts that were important to them, the purposes for the literacy practices, and the social context in which the practices occurred. At the beginning of the interview, I informed the students that I was interested in the many things they read and wrote in their lives, including letters, music lyrics, posters, movies, video games, and road signs. For the interviews, I used different prompts to help the students think about different situations and social domains in which literacy may be used (see Appendix B for interview protocols). I usually started with these prompts; however, the interviews often took the form of a discussion and rarely ever went in the same order. In addition to the prompts for texts in their lives, I also asked them about their views of what literacy meant to them, and what they believed the goals of literacy were to be in the classroom. These interviews were conducted during their specific study hall time (a block of time in the day that each student has to meet with teachers or to study), at times that were convenient to them.

[5] There were a few students who I was not able to interview due to the busy school schedules and their busy lives, and/or the students leaving the class before I could get the opportunity to interview them.

I informally interviewed Mrs. Oakley three times during the year. We often informally spoke before and after class about how students were responding to the texts and activities, and her rationales for certain activities. However, during the semi-structured interview, I generated a list of questions or points-of-discussion based on themes or aspects of confusion for me that I was reflecting upon in my fieldnotes. These semi-structured interviews were designed for me to gain insight into her beliefs of literacy, and her reasoning for particular activities, texts, and lessons she designed for the course.

Out-of-Class Observations

In addition to the classroom observations, I also observed students outside of the classroom. During the year, I observed focal students in other courses, in their home contexts, at ball games, and in social activities. Observing these contexts allowed me to explore the variety of literacies associated with particular social practices that were not necessarily evident in the interviews and classroom observations. As in the classroom observations, I collected artifacts and recorded fieldnotes of the ways in which they read or wrote texts, the purposes, and social contexts for these practices. These observations were aimed to gain a rich understanding of building an understanding of the role literacy played in their lives, as well as the literate resources the students brought to the classroom.

Utilizing a variety of tools for data collection (e.g., extensive observation in both the classroom, informal interviews, the collection of artifacts, and observations in out-of-class contexts), I was able to collect different forms of data that would help me address

my research question, as well as triangulate the various forms of data during analysis (Erickson, 1986).

Data Analysis Procedures

Inductive data analysis began shortly after data collection started. Through open coding (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) of the data, I began to cluster episodes of fieldnote data into themes to help me organize and develop a language for understanding "the social meaning or importance of what [was] happening" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 85). Through this open coding, I developed a small list of initial codes (e.g., student questions, official and unofficial texts, technology) with the goal of coming to an understanding of the complexity of the negotiation process and the students' literate resources they drew upon (see Appendix C for development of codes). In addition to the coding, I also wrote memos that included initial ideas and evolving hypotheses about the analysis of data (Purcell-Gates, 2004).

Many qualitative researchers have argued that meaning is not found in the data; the researcher constructs meaning using the frames of reference as he or she creates and analyzes the data (Emerson et al., 1995; Erickson, 1986). It was during this reading and refining of the coding scheme that I fully came to understand the inductive process of qualitative research. As I read and reread the data, and refined my coding themes, I struggled with how I was understanding what was official and what counted as unofficial. Early in the analysis process, I understood official texts as anything that the teacher endorsed, as it was part of the official classroom culture. However, at times, this was difficult to code because rarely did Mrs. Oakley ever rule out any text that students mentioned in her classroom. By acknowledging a wide variety of texts, she would blur

the boundaries between official and unofficial texts. So as I reread the fieldnotes, I came to understand other ways (that were not necessarily explicit) that Mrs. Oakley—as part of the institution—created boundaries between what was official and unofficial (i.e., having required texts, reading certain texts to look intelligent). Additionally, this allowed me to see that Mrs. Oakley also did a variety of things that blurred these boundaries between official and unofficial, making what once was normally unofficial something that was valued in the classroom (i.e., discussing a comic as a classroom text).

Much of this change in thinking pushed me to reconsider how I was thinking about negotiation. Rather than thinking about the negotiation of texts as a process (usually involving a form of resistance and the transformation of a practice) that happens between the teacher and students, like I understood it prior to the study, I began to see literacy negotiation as the constant processes of maintaining and expanding the official practices of the classroom. Expanding and maintaining did occur as an explicit negotiation around a text, like that of the introduction when Mrs. Oakley's laughs off Joshua's intentional misspelling and challenging of the official conventions. However, I also came to understand maintaining and expanding boundaries as being important in the way that a course is designed and in how the literacy practices are constructed. As I reread the data, I moved from seeing negotiation as a process that involved visible resistance and/or transformation (i.e., students refusing to read an official text) to a process that involved maintaining and expanding the boundaries of the official.

With this new refined understanding of negotiation (among other refined themes) I then read through the fieldnotes, interviews, students' work, and my memos, and continued to refine the initial codes as well as identify new ones. In addition to the initial

and general coding, towards the end of the data collection phase of the study, I underwent additional methods of analyses, and utilized analytic tools useful for studying language and literacy in social practices (D. Bloome et al., 2005; Dyson & Genishi, 2005). As the purpose of this study was to determine how literacies and English was negotiated in the classroom, and the role of students' literacies in this process, I focused on the literacy events and practices as a way of organizing and making sense of the activity of the classroom. Literacy events were defined as any activity involving the use of media (print, drawing, picture, music) for some purpose (Dyson, 1993, p. 27). Organizing by literacy event provided me the opportunity to keep the texts and interactions situated in the context (i.e., purposes, contextual meanings, norms). From these literacy events, I inferred the general cultural ways that the participants utilized texts (adapted from Barton and Hamilton, 1998). By organizing the data by literacy events and practices, I was able to examine the construction of literacy practices, the texts that were important for each event, and the ways in which the production of the practices maintained and expanded the boundaries of literacies in the classroom.

In addition to organizing the data by literacy event and practice, I organized the data by informant. For each of the informants, I studied the literacy events, interviews, and out of class fieldnotes to examine how each of the focal students' utilized literacies in their everyday lives, which resources they integrated into the class, and how they participated in the negotiation of literacies in the classroom.

After coding the data as described above, I looked for key themes across the variety of data sources and organized related items based on patterns (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). In this pattern level of analysis, I further developed a set of categories

with which to describe the shaping of literacy practices in the classroom, and the resources that students brought to the classroom. I grouped several of the codes (related to the processes and influences) under the larger category of maintaining and expanding boundaries, and developed codes for understanding the various literacy practices in the classroom, as well as the resources that students brought with them. Among the codes that I chose to capture the negotiation process were: touchstones, textual hierarchy, springboarding, offering texts, official texts and practices, and unofficial texts and practices (see Appendix C for development of codes). These themes led to developing assertions (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) about the negotiation of literacies in the classroom, as the expansion and maintenance of the classroom practices. Through this process, I looked for disconfirming evidence or potential data that might contest my assertions, as well as engaged the research literature as a way of making sense of and complicating my analyses.

CHAPTER 3: CONSTRUCTING ENGLISH: THE NEGOTIATION OF TEXTS IN NEW TIMES

Late in the school year, Mrs. Oakley is discussing the Literary Bake-off activity, where the students create a cake or some type of food that reflects a particular symbol, theme, or character from a text they had read together during the year. For the activity, the students will get a chance to vote for which cake or other food best represents the text.

Mrs. Oakley: Prizes will be awarded, I'll make a ballot, and you'll vote for the top three. For the top three I'll give some kind of prize.
Larissa: Any cash? (some students to begin to laugh)
Mrs. Oakley: I was thinking more in terms of like a small gift certificate to maybe—
Brianna: The mall
Larissa: McDonalds™
Brianna: The mall
Mrs. Oakley: No, like Barnes & /Noble™/
Marcus: /The mall/ (Not believing that Brianna just said what she did.)
The class erupts into laughter, including Brianna.
Mrs. Oakley: Would you rather have a [certificate] to the movies?
Several students say yes.
Brianna: Barnes & Noble™? Mrs. Oakley, are you—
Marcus: She's an English /teacher!/
Mrs. Oakley: /Barnes/ & Noble™ has music too. (Brianna and others are still laughing). Or [name of local ice-cream shop], would you like a gift certificate to [name of local ice-cream shop].
Several students are talking and offering what they would like the certificate to be.
...
Brianna: I like Barnes & Noble™, I just don't read though.
Mrs. Oakley: Barnes & Noble™ and Schuler's™ [Bookstore] both carry music too, so—
Larissa: They have DVDs too.
Mrs. Oakley: Coming from an English teacher it is probably best that I give you that [Barnes & Noble™ gift certificate], so we'll see.

In the interaction above, Mrs. Oakley attempts to think of a reward that will spark students' interest, but one that also is appropriate for students to engage with as a result

of her English class. Through this interaction, questions arise as to what an English teacher should encourage students to consume (i.e., books, music, film, ice cream)? Is it appropriate for an English teacher to encourage students to watch popular movies or buy music rather than the classics? Should the prize consist of a gift certificate to buy only official texts that are part of the literary cannon? Underlying these questions are assumptions of the teacher's role and the participants' constructions of English. The teacher and students are in the process of negotiating what it means to be an English student and teacher, and what the boundaries of appropriate texts and practices are for English students. An integral part of "doing" English involves the negotiation of what counts as "official" texts, what texts become selected for study, and what texts are valued as resources for meaning making. While the focus of this particular interaction concerns the appropriateness of texts for students' out-of-school time, the negotiation of what counts as an appropriate text was integral to the construction of English in the classroom throughout the entire year.

Specific interactions like the one above, where the negotiation of what counts as an English text becomes an explicit focus of the interaction, are rare instances during the course of the school year. The construction of what counts as an English text occurs throughout the English class (as well as in a variety of contexts, in and out of the classroom), and is largely constructed in the assignment and study of the selected texts of the classroom. I will argue that it is through a variety of processes throughout the year where the teacher and students maintained and expanded the valued practices of the classroom, negotiating what English is during this time of change. In the following sections, I will discuss the many texts that were central to the classroom literacy

practices, the way in which the teacher and the students maintained and expanded upon traditional notions of "official" texts, as well as the beliefs associated with the hierarchy of texts that were important to the practices of the course.

The Official Literary Texts of the Formal Curriculum

At the heart of Mrs. Oakley's 9th grade English class was the reading of a variety of literary texts—novels, plays, short stories, and a Greek tragedy (See Table 1). These novels, plays, and short stories became much of the subject of English content (i.e., plot storylines, knowledge of characters), as well as the main vehicle in which literary analytic skills were learned (i.e., character development, symbolism). Therefore, these texts served as the cornerstone for many of the pedagogical units and literacy practices that the class would engage in during the year, including teacher-led shared reading and literature discussions, quizzes and exams, individual written or artistic responses, take-home reading assignments, and from time-to-time, in-class silent reading. It was partly through the study of these official texts that the students and teacher came to negotiate which texts were valued, which were worth serious study, and which were "official".

All of the texts assigned to the students were fictional pieces of literature that had been approved by the English department. The curriculum was designed to include texts that would introduce students to "classical and contemporary literature". Therefore, traditional texts of the English curriculum were included, such as Homer's *The Odyssey,* Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet,* Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, and a collection of short stories ("Scarlet Ibis," by James Hurst; "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," James Thurber). These texts have long been part of the high school English cannon (Applebee, 1993), and reflect the school's curricular focus in the mythology of

ancient Greece, Shakespearean plays, and American literature. The curriculum also included literature by contemporary authors (*Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver; *At Risk* by Alice Hoffman) as well as texts that reflect multicultural and cross-cultural issues (*Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry; *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee). Each of the texts fell into at least one of the three thematic categories (from innocence to experience, the heroic journey, and multiple perspectives), and many of the texts had topics that reflected contemporary issues in students' lives (AIDS, multiculturalism, poverty). Indeed, the curriculum was designed to introduce students to both traditional and contemporary literature, while also at times focusing on themes that reflected the age of the students ("from innocence to experience") and the current issues of the day (e.g., growing cultural diversity).

Figure 5. Assigned Novels, Plays, and Short Stories, in Order in which they were Studied

*The Old Man and the Sea** (Ernest Hemingway)

A Selection of Short Stories:
"Scarlet Ibis" (James Hurst)
"The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" (James Thurber)

Bean Trees (Barbara Kingsolver)

At Risk (Alice Hoffman)

Students chose to read one of the following books for their "Reading Buddies" assignment:
Bless the Beasts and the Children (Glendon Swarthout)
So Far from the Bamboo Grove (Yoko Kawashawa Watkins)
When the Legends Die (Hal Borland)
Waiting for the Rain (Sheila Gordon)
Children of the River (Linda Crew)
Jemmy (Jon Hassler)

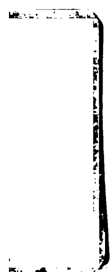
To Kill a Mockingbird (Harper Lee)*

Raisin in the Sun (Lorraine Hansberry)*

*Romeo & Juliet** (William Shakespeare)

*The Odyssey**^ (Homer)

* Selected by the English department as required texts of all English classes; the rest were part of a list of optional texts
^ Was not able to get to during the year



Maintaining Official Texts

Curricular Decisions and Developing "Touchstones"

While these official texts of the formal curriculum played a central role in the day-to-day events of the classroom, the decisions as to which texts were to be the focus was not entirely Mrs. Oakley's. The curriculum established by the school's English department[6] designated five texts as required reading for all 9th grade classes, and included a list of optional texts from which Mrs. Oakley could choose to fill the remainder of texts for her course (the required texts as well as the optional texts she chose are listed in Figure 5). Therefore, Mrs. Oakley had little space for making decisions to incorporate particular texts that fell outside of the established curriculum that she deemed important for students. This lack of choice (outside of the alternative list) in her curriculum was rarely something that was discussed by Mrs. Oakley or the students. On one occasion, Mrs. Oakley made her constraints transparent to her students, revealing how the English department influences the texts of the classroom:

> As teachers, we have some books that we have to teach as a whole class, like *The Old Man and the Sea, To Kill A Mockingbird, and Romeo and Juliet*, then there is another list of books that we can either teach as a whole class or we can do in small groups, or we can do individual novel projects, or whatever we want with them.

Later in the year, Mrs. Oakley explains that one of the reasons that they spend very little time much in the class with creative writing is that "there is a certain cannon of literature

[6] Since Mrs. Oakley was new to the English department and the High School, she was not part of the decision process that led to the required texts.

that we have to cover here at the high school, it's just part of the program." Making this departmental decision known to the students in these interactions contributed to establishing the fact that there are systematic forces outside of the classroom that contribute to the regulation texts. Revealing that a group of English teachers have agreed upon these texts further reinforces the importance and value of these texts for the students.

Mrs. Oakley rarely explained why they were reading the particular text or piece of literature. At times, she would highlight an author's powerful use of description, saying that it is some of the best symbolism or character description she has ever read. However, the literary texts they spent weeks studying were accepted as normal and appropriate for 9th grade English students. Rarely did the students vocally question, resist, or express excitement over the text they were reading. Throughout the semester, the students accepted the selected official texts as routine, normal, and an aspect of the class that they had no real choice in changing. The one large exception to this was the students' disgust of *The Old Man and the Sea*, which I will discuss later in the chapter when discussing beliefs associated with official texts.

While Mrs. Oakley did not individually select many of these assigned traditional texts, she did believe that these texts provided "touchstones" for the students and were important for the students in preparation for future classes. Mrs. Oakley believed that 9th grade English was responsible for informing students of specific influential characters and texts that were expected for first year students. This included knowing about the characters and storylines of texts that all classes were required to read during the year (e.g., *The Odyssey, Romeo & Juliet*). After not being able to read the abridged version of

The Odyssey to fully read *Romeo and Juliet* due to a lack of time, Mrs. Oakley was upset at the possible ramifications for this lack of attention to these canonical texts:

> I'd like the 10th grade teachers to at least be able to say, 'well you know this character from…' They are supposed to have some touchstones and be able to talk about those characters like in Romeo and Juliet with some proficiency.

This desire for students to have "touchstones" was evident throughout the semester and was an important impetus for much of the decisions that Mrs. Oakley made for the students. At various times in the semester, she would highlight certain references that were common in particular literary works, with the hope that the students would have these "touchstones" for access in the future.

The "touchstones" that Mrs. Oakley wanted students to learn surpassed characters and storylines and focused on literary traditions. When reading To Kill a Mockingbird, Mrs. Oakley focused on the way in which Harper Lee created a sense of the history of the land and people, and how her techniques reflect what many other southern writers attempt to capture in their literature. She explains to the class:

> There is a whole southern tradition of writers, Carson McCullers, and there is Tennessee Williams, and William Faulkner. A lot of these writers you will be exposed to when you hit English 3 with American Literature. They have a deep sense to the longing to the place where they are. You will see this in *To Kill a Mockingbird* as [Harper Lee] talks about the family history, and how that evolves over time.

Presenting the literary elements in *To Kill a Mockingbird* as part of a larger tradition they will continue to explore as they take other English classes in future years, Mrs. Oakley

creates opportunities for students to have these "touchstones" for which to read future texts. An integral part of the 9th grade English experience, Mrs. Oakley sees her task as preparing the students for future engagement in practices by creating a series of characters and texts that they may utilize in future courses and during future experiences with texts. These pressures for students to have these "touchstones" for later classes influenced the curricular decisions of the classroom, and were integral to the pressures to teach and expect students to read and remember these official texts.

Values and Beliefs Associated with Official Texts

"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them." -Mark Twain

Written in bold across the top of the page, Mark Twain's quote headlines the recommended reading list of over 200 books Mrs. Oakley gave to the students for their summer break. Works by Emily Bronte, William Shakespeare, Daniel Defoe, Ralph Ellison, Sylvia Plath, and William Faulkner appeared on the "Recommended Reading List" list of good books recommended to the students. This document highlights two important beliefs that were integral to the construction of texts in the classroom, contributing to maintaining the authority of the traditional cannon of literature and of literary studies in English education.

The first line of argument is that there is such a thing as a hierarchy of books, and texts that are not plays or novels that might appear on the list are of little value. This belief is part of a long tradition of valuing select books over others (H. Bloome, 1994), and was integral to the construction of texts in the classroom. At times, students did not recognize other books (e.g., non-fiction, romance, mysteries) as "real" books. During a

side conversation in one class period, a student told me "I have a book right now that I'm reading. Well not a book, a biography." For this English class, fictional texts (classical and contemporary) were recognized as the privileged texts. These texts were the center of most of the activity in the classroom (i.e., writing and assessments in reaction to these texts, literature discussions), and were considered the serious texts of study, the official curriculum.

Connected with this belief in the hierarchy of books was the idea that reading certain texts would lead to a privileged and heightened intellectual position. Reading canonical books or traditional fiction associated with the English discipline revealed a person's intellectual rigor and sophistication. This was most articulated in the course when students were expressing their disgust for *The Old Man and the Sea.*

> Throughout the year, students would often mention how much they disliked *The Old Man and the Sea.* Several months after reading *The Old Man and the Sea* students still expressed disgust with the book. Realizing this dislike and understanding that it has become an aspect of the class, Mrs. Oakley enters in on the classroom banter.
>
> Student: (Entered Mrs. Oakley's class from a different English class) You guys already read Old Man and the Sea?
> Mrs. Oakley: Oh, yah
> Student: Thank Jesus!
> Mrs. Oakley: (Laughing) Did you think that you were going to have to read it again? No we already [read] it.
> ...
> Student: It's about an old man and boy fishing and buying beer.
> Mrs. Oakley: They know it, they know every detail of that book. They loved it.
> Cadence: Yah, right.
> Mrs. Oakley: They loved it.
> Cadence: She's being really sarcastic. (The class erupts in laughter)
> Mrs. Oakley: You know you guys, when you are at a party someday, and you are sitting there and you could say, 'Hey have you read any

Hemingway?' You could talk about the fact that you read The Old Man and the Sea, you're going to impress the crap of somebody, you will.

Cadence: I'll tell them that I hate that book. (Students and Mrs. Oakley laughing)

Impressing people with reading Hemingway was not Mrs. Oakley's sole reason for teaching the students this particular book. She often would focus on the beauty of the language or the relationships you attain with characters as reasons for reading. However, the fact that impressing people was mentioned as an important rationale for reading *The Old Man and the Sea* reinforces the idea that certain books remain privileged and worth reading (even though it may not be a good experience), because it can provide you some sophistication and cultural capital in certain situations.

Closely connected to the sophistication argument is the idea that studying Hemingway and other traditional English texts will enhance one's general intellectual skills. This argument, while embedded in Twain's quote and summer reading document, was also provided for taking Advanced Placement Literature. Responding to Brianna's question of why she would want to take the Advanced Placement Literature course as a senior, Mrs. Oakley explained that "an A.P. Literature class will train you to be an absolute thinker, writer, analyzer of things." Therefore, not only do classical texts provide sophistication and "culture", studying official texts in an Advanced Placement setting will also make the student into a more sophisticated thinker. This connection between canonical literature and intellectual abilities is a belief that underlies the recommendation to read canonical fiction over the summer, so that the students may improve their "thinking" and "analysis" skills.

The second line of reasoning that follows from this quote and the summer reading document is the hierarchy between the types of texts with which one may engage. By establishing a list of summer reading containing only literary fiction, it reinforces the belief that certain forms of texts are worth one's time, while other texts are not. This notion that literary texts were of higher regard was integral to what counted as texts in the classroom. Although other forms of texts were integrated into the classroom (e.g., comic, film, music), they never received the formal attention that the fictional print-based texts received. This hierarchy was most prevalent when literature was placed in contrast to film texts. Although Mrs. Oakley and the students included film texts in discussions and curricular decisions, these texts rarely received the curricular space that would allow these texts the seriousness that fictional texts were afforded (see later section for discussion of the integration of film texts). Connected to this belief was the idea that print-based texts deserve serious study, whereas discussing and engaging with other forms of texts (e.g., film, music, cartoon) involved just playful activity.

Valuing print-based texts over other multimodal texts has a long tradition in the English discipline (C. Luke, 2000; Scholes, 1998). This practice diminishes numerous other texts that fall outside the traditional print-based texts privileged in English classrooms. As many scholars have pointed out, these non-print centered texts and multimodal texts, such as movies, music, weblogs and online journals are valuable texts in sophisticated literacy practices (Alvermann, Hagood, & Williams, 2001; Knobel, 1999). Not only are these texts integral to multifaceted lives of the students, but they are important for the changing literacy landscape the students must negotiate in the future (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). However, this belief in the hierarchy of texts (canonical

fiction and print over other forms of texts), which still underlies activity in English classrooms, continues to be an important belief that maintains the official texts of the 9th grade English classroom.

The Expansion of Texts through the Teacher's Curriculum

Although Mrs. Oakley had little choice in the texts that she selected for her course, she found curricular opportunities for her students to engage with texts that were outside of the standard curriculum. Many of the official texts offered were print-based texts, either in the form of novels, plays, or short stories. In addition to these selections, Mrs. Oakley integrated a number of texts into the class that were not part of the standard texts designated by the English department, as represented in Table 3.1.

While poetry is often an important aspect of many English classrooms, in this class poetry was not a part of the 9th grade English curriculum. Therefore, one of the ways that Mrs. Oakley expanded the curriculum was by including a poetry unit during the second half of the semester. Although poetry was not part of the official curriculum, Mrs. Oakley intended it to be an important part of the 9th grade English experience. In the poetry unit, the class dedicated a few weeks of the year to reading, writing, and discussing poetry. Mrs. Oakley compiled a packet of poetry, consisting of poems from an anthology of poetry for adolescents, as well as other poems from contemporary poets, and included some of her own poems. After the students wrote poems, these poems became texts that were shared in the class, with some of the students reading and discussing them aloud.

Mrs. Oakley also integrated a variety of more multimodal texts into the curriculum that included texts that were graphic texts, a combination of print and graphic,

musical texts, film texts, and events and experiences that were quintessentially multimodal in nature (e.g., a celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. at the local University where the event included song, dance, poetry, and some of his speeches and writings; a film and discussion of Sudanese refugees' experiences).

Graphic and Print texts: Cartoons and Comic Strips

Texts that combined graphics and print, usually in the form of traditional comics strips, were one of the more frequent of these multimodal texts that were integrated into the curriculum. A common literacy practice for the class was to be introduced to new vocabulary words through a vocabulary packet provided by Mrs. Oakley about every week or two. In this packet, there would be a page for each of the twenty words the students had to learn the meaning. On each page a word was represented by a cartoon intended to help the student remember the meaning of the word. For example, in one of the packets, the word to learn was *bedlam*, and the cartoon displayed lambs jumping and causing commotion on a bed. Underneath the cartoon was the quote, "BEDLAMB in the LAMB'S BED" (capitalization in original). At the top of the page was a definition of the word, and underneath the cartoon and quote were three sentences using *bedlam* in a sentence. Mrs. Oakley would allow the students time during class to read through the packets and use the graphics to help them remember the meanings of the words.

Using cartoons for learning words were sole repeated practice of using graphic texts in the classroom; however, cartoons were given space in the classroom at different times during the year. Mrs. Oakley included cartoons that she cut out from the newspaper in assignments and quizzes that she gave to the students during the year. Usually the comic was just something that students would read on their own if they chose

to do so. In a couple of instances, Mrs. Oakley used a cartoon to lead the class in a discussion of a particular topic. On one such occasion, late in the year, she distributed Gary Trudeau's cartoon *Doonesbury*, where he titled it "Operation Iraqi Freedom: In Memoriam," and listed the U.S. men and women who had died in the war since April 28, 2004, in a way that resembled the names on the Vietnam Memorial. Not having enough space in the cartoon for all the names of those U.S. soldiers who had died, Trudeau writes at the end, "CONTINUED NEXT WEEK" (capitalization in original).

> Mrs. Oakley introduces the cartoon by saying that Trudeau often comments on political topics, and in this cartoon he presents a perspective on the war, one that is different than just the normal "statistics on the front page, 12 people blown up today, or 12 people die in suicide bombings." She tells the class that she thinks they are in order of death dates.
>
> Catherine: That's depressing, why did he do that?
> Mrs. Oakley: Well, because this country has sort of forgotten in some ways that we are at war, and every single name on here represents a family and a group of friends that have lost this person. It is an extremely powerful statement that Gary Trudeau is making here.
>
> Mrs. Oakley goes on to tell the class that it appears to her that there is a very different atmosphere now than there was during Vietnam, when they used to display the names of those killed each day on the evening news.
>
> Mrs. Oakley: I think we sometimes forget that there are young men and women over in Iraq and Afghanistan that are dying. Many people are questioning why we are even over there, or why we have been over there this long, or how the heck we are going to get out of there once we're there. Anyway, so that's a reminder about that, and I think that putting the names just like on the Vietnam memorial—have any of you gone to the Vietnam memorial in Washington D.C.?
>
> ...
>
> Student: I've been there...

Mrs. Oakley: What was your experience there?
Student: Last year, I went with the 8th grade trip to Washington, you got to go—I walked through, me and my friend walked through, we touched the whole wall, it was getting dark, it was the prettiest time, it wasn't pitch black but it was ( ).
Mrs. Oakley: A very moving experience. (The student goes on to discuss other places she visited on that trip.)

Recognizing the importance stylistic decision, Mrs. Oakley pointed out the similarity between the way in which Trudeau listed the names on the cartoon and the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C. Asking students who had seen the memorial opens up space for students' personal experiences and texts to enter into the classroom. Mrs. Oakley's initial intention was for the students to quickly view the cartoon, its message, and then move on to the activities of the day. However, like other times in the year, when powerful texts were provided, students asked questions and welcomed conversations on social and political issues, and Mrs. Oakley allowed them to go where it took them.

Mrs. Oakley: Well, we need to move on (She calls on Marcus who has had his hand up since Mrs. Oakley started talking about Vietnam.)
Marcus: I, I don't know, the Vietnam War, there was, if you think the—you don't want to compare deaths, but if you amount of deaths in the Vietnam War to the amount...It's not even close to being the amount. I think that is probably the reason why they are not it on the news because it is not 300 people a day that are dying, or 3000 people a day that are dying.
Mrs. Oakley: But my point is, that to those families that //lose those//
Marcus: //I know, I know.//
...
Mrs. Oakley: But your point is well taken, we had what, 58 thousand die in Vietnam.
Marcus: There was way more than that.
Student: The names on the wall, it was huge.
Mrs. Oakley: For some reason that number sticks in my head, but I'm not sure.
Student: The wall was like that long. (motioning with her hands) The names were very small, and people had to look real close.

Allowing students to continue the discussion provided an additional opportunity for the student to utilize her experience with the Vietnam Memorial. This time, her experience becomes an important resource for conveying the number of people who died in the war, which was being disputed at the time. Although she could not give the number, the student was able to communicate the experience of seeing the entirety of the wall with the small printed names.

> Later in the discussion, Catherine tells the class of her recent experience attending a function where someone was not being quiet during a moment of silence. Mrs. Oakley mentions how we take our freedom for granted, and we are fortunate compared to many other countries.

Student:	That's the thing, my thing with something like that, I think that we are human beings and we shouldn't have to be oh so thankful about our freedom, because that's our right to have our own freedom, I understand—
Marcus:	That right there, that's how your taking it for granted, //right there.//
Student:	//No listen// I understand—
Marcus:	Take it for granted, //right there//
Student:	//Listen// Would you stop talking. (giggling) Listen, I understand exactly what you guys are talking about, take freedom for granted and other people can't do that, and stuff like that…they have a right to have their freedom, no one is better than somebody else to have power over anybody. The only person that has power over me is my momma.
…	
Marcus:	Freedom costs money because people are going to always want to oppress people so you have to fight to have your own freedom. I don't know, I have two cousins that just, they're going over to Iraq in about 3 months, but they have been waiting to go, they just graduated HS, and they are waiting and waiting to go to Iraq, they want to go over so bad.
…	
Larissa:	But do they think that going over to Iraq is going to help our freedom?
Marcus:	They are spreading freedom around, they want everyone to have the freedom that we have.

...

Mrs. Oakley:	Will take one more comment and then they need to go on. (Calling on Cadence with her hand up)
Cadence:	We talk about peace, but we go over there and kill them.
Skye:	That is the only way you can solve anything,
Mrs. Oakley:	Well—
Skye:	You can't go over there and try to talk to them because they're going to blow us up, right."
Mrs. Oakley:	There's a lot of philosophies about that. (Students laughing at Skye's comment)...Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mandela, who are all on the back board there. (points back to the large whiteboard in the back of the room) Look at the middle one, (reading a quote) "Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love."
Cadence:	Exactly.

During the twenty minutes that they engaged with this unofficial text and the issues that arose as a result of it, they discussed important current social and political issues related to topics that were important to them and their families. The teacher and students were evidently moved by the cartoon and by what they had been watching and hearing in the media about the women and men in Iraq (Marcus was especially passionate about the importance of supporting the soldiers who were involved in the war, especially since his cousins were enlisting after they graduate from high school). The class was also moved by the questions and conversations raised in the discussion (e.g., what is meant by freedom? what is the role of government in "defending" freedom? when is war justified? what is the role of texts like the cartoon in raising important issues?). It was this reason that Mrs. Oakley, while recognizing the need to continue reading *Romeo & Juliet*, allowed the students to continue the dialogue. In instances like this one above, unofficial texts (e.g., the comic that started the discussion, the posters on the wall) became sites of entry into important discussion topics.

Film Texts

The formal use of film texts in the class occurred very little over the course of the year. They watched one movie as an expansion upon another formally assigned text (i.e., the movie *Philadelphia* in connection with *At Risk*, the novel about the young girl with AIDS), and watched three other movies while they were reading or after they had read the corresponding novels or plays (e.g., *To Kill a Mockingbird* film while reading the novel). While watching the plays or films, Mrs. Oakley engaged the students in conversations about the ways in which the films and the printed texts differed. These discussions often took the form of focusing on things that the film left out from the play or novel. However, on a few occasions, Mrs. Oakley and the students focused on the textual differences between the two mediums.

While film texts had a relatively minor role in the formal curriculum, films were prevalent during class discussions throughout the entire year. During just about every class meeting, a film text was referenced, quoted, and/or entered a conversation. Mrs. Oakley often included the description of scenes from a film to illustrate a theme or point she was making. She also welcomed film texts as important resources for students to contribute when discussing any other text or idea (as discussed in a later section, Students Offering Personal Texts). Film texts, though often not included as part of the formal curriculum and official texts, were centrally positioned as a form of resource for students to make sense of the formal curriculum.

Newsprint

On several occasions during the year, Mrs. Oakley brought to the students' attention the school and local newspapers. Talking about the recent national news on the

front page of the newspaper, Mrs. Oakley said, "Sometimes even if you only read one page of the paper you can get a lot of information." In one instance, she provided a window into the formal class time to discuss the then recent Tsunami disaster, and its effects on the children, especially in regards to the story in the paper about child trafficking. She conveyed to the class that they "might want to read the whole article," in order to learn more about the issues stemming from the Tsunami disaster. After a discussion of topics that start with the Tsunami disaster and end with the story of Prince Harry dressing up as a Nazi at a party and the implications of this (as well as mentioning the Nazi's bombing of England during WWII), she tells the class, "If you read this one page, you learn so much. And this is basically true everyday with the paper." (1/13/05) Often during the year, Mrs. Oakley dedicated some time in class to discussing the events and issues in the newspaper, and to reinforce the idea that these texts are available for them to read and learn about current issues in the news.

Multimodal (and Multicultural) Experiences

Opening up the possibility for students to engage with a variety of people and texts that were not part of the formal curriculum, Mrs. Oakley would often have "extra credit" opportunities for students to participate in and reflect upon. In most cases these involved some form of multicultural theme (e.g., celebration of Martin Luther King Jr., a film and discussion of Sudanese refugees). Mrs. Oakley required the students to attend the event, collect the ticket or brochure for proof of them going, and write a reflection on the event. Anywhere from about two to a third of the class participated in these extra-credit events.

These events differed to the other events that were part of the official curriculum. These events were in the community and involved non-school affiliated organizations and groups, necessitating students to have the support and participation of family and friends for transportation. In addition, participation in these events often required engagement with a variety of texts usually integrated as part of the event. Brochures, songs, films, lectures, discussions, artwork were all part of these extra-credit events. The Martin Luther King Jr. event was titled "Jazz: Spirituals, Prayer, and Protest". It included an eclectic collection of music performed by a wind symphony and a jazz band, and included several selections of Dr. King's speeches. While students went to this event, wrote about it, and received extra credit for it, the event was not discussed in class. The space in which it was given remained outside the formal assessments and class discussions. In addition, the possible focus of the events could have included the multimodal nature of these texts and the way in which certain forms of media interacted with other forms, like many suggest for English language arts classes in new times (Kress, 2000b). However, Mrs. Oakley did provide opportunities for these texts to have space in her classroom, furthering the expansion of boundaries of official fictional literary texts.

A result of this expansion of the texts of the classroom was that Mrs. Oakley's 9th grade class was unable to read *Romeo & Juliet* in its entirety, and was unable to read the textbook abridged version of *The Odyssey*. While including class time to read, write, and discuss poetry, to analyze cartoons, to show films, to let conversations go away from focused areas of study, to allow students to read each others' work, Mrs. Oakley had less time to fully study the standard texts like *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Odyssey*. The most

significant example of the expansion of the curriculum was that two of the official texts were not included in the school year. While this was not her intention (disregarding required texts), it is the result of the processes of expansion and maintenance elaborated in this chapter, which is the negotiation of both the teacher, as well as the students.

Expanding Texts: Negotiating Curricular Decisions

Mrs. Oakley's also allows the students voice in the text selection process for the next school year, revealing that what becomes official in the classroom is partly the result of the students' experiences. For the alternative books that the students read over the week prior with a buddy, Mrs. Oakley explains that she wants to get some feedback from them about the books they read, "to see which books should stay, and should I offer these books again to kids or not." The students took this opportunity to rate the books on a scale of 1 to 10, and provided an explanation as to why it would be important (or not) for students in future classes. The students quickly became active reviewers of their books, mentioning whether their book was "difficult to get into", if they "had a friend who they could relate it to," or if they "thought it was a good way to learn about things that were happening at that time." Allowing the students a voice in the text selection process for future classes was a reflection of the amount of student feedback she asked for throughout the year in many different aspects of the class. Later in the year, based on several students mentioning how depressing much of the curriculum is that they have had in their English classes the last few years (especially the 2 month long Holocaust unit), Mrs. Oakley told the class that a humorous book, Firoozeh Dumas' *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America*, was being piloted in a different English class and they were going to see if they could fit it in to the curriculum for the year. They were

unable to include Dumas' text into the curriculum, however this discussion again makes apparent the coherence Mrs. Oakley had with the class about the selection of texts for the English classroom, as well as the many influences playing a part in the enacted curriculum. I will now turn to the students' role in the maintenance and expansion of the texts of the classroom.

Students' Personal Literacy Texts: Texts as Resources for Meaning Making and Expanding Boundaries of what Counts as Texts

While Mrs. Oakley was active in expanding classroom texts, the students were also keenly aware of opportunities where they could incorporate their textual resources in classroom literacy events. In Mrs. Oakley's classroom there were few texts that were out of bounds for students to integrate into classroom events. There were texts that received more privilege in classroom, however, and this was negotiated throughout the semester, as part of a process of maintaining and expanding the boundaries of appropriate literacy texts for which to include and study in 9th grade English.

As the year progressed students learned that they could take advantage of this broad range of available texts and were largely responsible for the textual diversity in the classroom. In any class period, students would include their own digital (video games, websites), musical (Hip hop, jazz), and television and film texts (independent films, popular films, television series) as sources of meaningful connection or for expansion of classroom texts.

Resources as a Scaffold: The case of popular movies and television shows

While discussing the names that Harper Lee chose for her two protagonist characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Scout and Jem, Mrs. Oakley says the names are androgynous, and asks, "Do you know what androgynous means?"

Larissa:	That means something that goes both ways.
Mrs. Oakley:	Yah, it can have characteristics of both, male and female, or not specifically male or specifically female.
Larissa:	Like Pat, on S-N-L [Saturday Night Live]
Mrs. Oakley:	Yes, okay, (laughing) how many of you have seen that, those skits with Pat, they are trying to desperately find out she/he is a boy or a girl, and every time they do something backfires, very funny scenes.

Mrs. Oakley asks the students who has never seen the Saturday Night Live clips with Pat that they are referring to. Many of the students raise their hands. After Larissa mentions that they can watch the DVD of the videos, Mrs. Oakley says that they should bring it in to watch it because its "worth watching, and a great parody too." Mrs. Oakley then makes the point that Harper Lee had a reason for naming the character the way that she did.

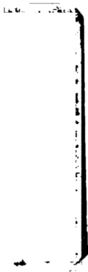
It was evident from being in the classroom for any short amount of time that the students had a wealth of film and television knowledge that they could draw from during any of the class discussions. Often these texts were used to illustrate a concept, character, or theme that they were discussing in relation to one of the official texts of the classroom. Other times, film and television texts were offered when defining words (like androgynous), and when discussing current issues that arose from these texts (e.g., the use of protective gloves in medicine in connection to current issues in AIDS when reading *At-Risk*).

Since Mrs. Oakley wove these film and television texts throughout classroom activity, it was normal for students to do the same. Drawing from these film and television texts became a valued way of participating in the classroom. Instances like the discussion of Pat from Saturday Night Live were common ways that the teacher and students expanded the boundaries of potential resources for making meaning of official texts (Fairclough, 2000). These film and television texts were mostly utilized as a scaffold for understanding, appreciating, and making sense of the formal, official texts of the classroom. However, at times, the boundaries of what counted as valued texts and practices were expanded and these texts were included as something to be studied as a text themselves. In the "Pat" discussion above, although the possibility of bringing in the DVD of the scenes from the television program to study as text was mentioned, neither the teacher nor the students followed through with bringing in and incorporating the film clips as part of the texts of the classroom.

Expanding Notions of Appropriate Texts: The case of **The Onion**

When students offered their own literacy texts, and Mrs. Oakley welcomed this interaction and their resources, the classroom transformed into a place of student participation and textual diversity. Students' outside texts and literacy practices become sites of resource and the classroom becomes one of sharing textual experiences and resources. During one of Mrs. Oakley's discussions centered on reading the newspaper (this time the school's newspaper), Marcus and Anthony claim classroom space and expand the discussion.

> Before going on to the activities of the day, Mrs. Oakley wanted the class to focus on a couple of things in the school's newspaper.



Mrs. Oakley: I would like to call your attention to two things in this paper before we go on. (she holds up the current version of the school's newspaper)
Marcus: (interrupting) There is one really good article about [friend's name].
Mrs. Oakley: I don't know [Marcus' friend].

Mrs. Oakley discusses an insert of the paper that they might want to keep for the future, as it has a list of the events of the last year. She also mentions that they misquoted her in a story.

Mrs. Oakley: How many of you like to get the newspaper, and actually spend some time with it, read it? (about half the class raise their hands)
Anthony: (turning to the class) Does anyone read the back page?
Student: Yah
Mrs. Oakley: Yah, this short stories thing is very funny, and they kind of springboard off of each other, and it is done in a very non-traditional way, would you say Anthony?
Anthony: Yah

Mrs. Oakley describes to the class the point-counterpoint feature of the opinion section of the paper, and tells them that it is similar to how it is done on 60 Minutes.

Mrs. Oakley: They pick an issue, and I don't know how really they pick the issue, and they pick an issue and do a pro and a con, point and counterpoint. So they are always very interesting to read, and they have very, very different opinions and different references and people they are talking to and interviewing to support their particular ideas.

Mrs. Oakley begins talking about the newspaper, a text that is not part of the formal curriculum and often seen as the students' voice on the high school campus. Students are often flipping through the paper the day that it comes out, looking for the many stories about students (as Marcus points at), major news stories, and controversial issues. This begins as a quick discussion of a couple points from the newspaper, and

soon turns into a discussion of different sections of the paper. Mrs. Oakley has spoken during much of the discussion to this point, as it was supposed to be a quick deviation from the plan for the day. The discussion soon becomes a space for students to engage with their own texts and practices, and expand the texts of the classroom.

Building off of the point/counterpoint discussion, Anthony turns to the class and asks: "Anyone read *The Onion* in here?"

Mrs. Oakley:	*The onion*? Is that the cartoon?
Anthony:	The fake newspaper.
Marcus:	My aunt was talking about that.
Mrs. Oakley:	What is *The Onion*, I don't know what it is?
Anthony:	It is like a fake newspaper with all kinds of ridiculous articles with actual pictures and stuff. It's kind of like the *World Weekly News* and *The National Enquirer*, but it's more intelligent and not ridiculous humor, like they put out a parody of our terrorist colors, but the lowest one was like the lowest chance of seeing your children blown away in front of you, or something. (Mrs. Oakley and some students laugh) And the highest one is like, paradise is coming, or whatever.
Mrs. Oakley:	Where do you get this, is this a printed thing, or on-line?
Anthony:	Yah, you can get it in Chicago, that's where //I got it.//
Marcus:	//They have// it in San Diego.
Anthony:	They have it all over the place. I'm trying to get the local 7/11 to start it but you know, it started in Madison, Wisconsin, but the point and counterpoint just reminded me of...the point was like Sudan: a developing nation with a lot many new cultures. And the counterpoint was get me out of this Hell-hole or something like that. Just //totally ridiculous.//
Mrs. Oakley:	//It sounds like// those of you who like watching *The Daily Show* would like that paper, right.
Anthony:	Yah.

Mrs. Oakley asks the class if they know about the yearly paper that a group writes once a year and distributes at traffic lights.

Mrs. Oakley:	It is sort of like that, a parody, satires on a lot of stuff, taking situations and turning them into funny things, and it's meant to be a very funny paper, not necessarily a biting sarcastic, funny paper. But it sounds like *The Onion* because of the biting edge. Who have you contacted to see if we could get that here?

Anthony: Oh, just a couple of the guys at the [local store chain], the manager's daughter works there. You can go to theonion.com.
Mrs. Oakley: They do an on-line version of it? onion.com (announcing to the class)
Anthony: (correcting Mrs. Oakley) No, theonion.com
Mrs. Oakley: No, theonion.com, theonion.com.

At the center of this discussion are Anthony's questions to the class about *The Onion*, and his willingness to connect *The Onion* to the point/counterpoint. While starting with the school's newspaper, a wide range of texts are included as part of the discussion: *The Onion, 60 Minutes, The Daily Show, The World Weekly News* and *The National Enquirer*, and the local newspaper created and distributed once a year. Anthony contributes *The Onion* as a text that might be meaningful if you like parody, and by the end of the discussion, Mrs. Oakley had made the suggestion that others might enjoy reading it. At the end of *The Onion* discussion, Marcus asks for Mrs. Oakley and the class to consider his friend's wrestling story in the paper.

Mrs. Oakley: Any other comments about the newspaper, today?
Marcus: (raising his hand and following up what he mentioned at the beginning of the discussion) Ah, that section on [friend], that I was going to say.
Mrs. Oakley: I didn't read that, what is that about?
Students and Mrs. Oakley talk about the boy, trying to figure out who he is.
Marcus: He has the record for 96 wins and he also is going for the record of 49 pins.
Mrs. Oakley: Very neat.
Anthony: How many pins?
Marcus: 49
Mrs. Oakley: Well, there's always 2 pages of sports, and they obviously feature some accomplished athletes, or athletes that are trying to achieve some goals. So, the paper is really pretty interesting to read from front cover to back cover. I just haven't had time to read the whole thing yet.

Marcus pushes to include his friend's story to the discussion, claiming classroom space for the sports section of the paper, a section of the paper that Mrs. Oakley had not read and would not likely be something that she would comment on during class, and did not follow up when first asked. Mrs. Oakley recognized Marcus' persistence and allowed him to include this section as part of the discussion of the paper. Often throughout the year, the teacher and students would contribute texts that were often outside of the formal curriculum, at times utilized as meaningful resources, and at other times making their way into the curricular space of the classroom, expanding what counts as text in the classroom.

Expanding Valued Practices: The case of online dictionaries

On a few occasions, the students' experiences with technology entered into the classroom discussion and succeeded in transforming the valued texts and practices of the classroom. During one particular instance, Marcus utilized his resources as an opportunity to show resistance with the practices associated with the valued texts of the classroom. The following interaction occurred shortly after Marcus offered dictionary.com as an on-line resource.

> Cadence informs Mrs. Oakley that she does not have her packet that has the list of words and definitions that they were supposed to study from for the vocabulary exam. This mean she will need to look up each of the words on the list.
>
> Cadence: I kind of um, threw away my packet.
> Mrs. Oakley: Okay, dictionary.com, or a real—you know, have you guys ever seen the old fashioned real dictionaries.
> Student: Yah.
> Anthony: The <u>real</u> dictionaries?
> Mrs. Oakley: (grabs her dictionary off of her desk) They look like something like this.

. . .

Mrs. Oakley: How many of you of you have a really good dictionary at home, like this? (raising the dictionary up in the air)

About 1/4 of the class raises their hands.

Marcus: I have a question. //I have a question//.

Mrs. Oakley: //How many of you// use dictionaries online more now a-days?

Marcus: There is no need for that. Why would you ever need that? (speaking quickly and with a bit of frustration) You have a computer that can go online.

Anthony: When you are playing scrabble and you don't want to run to your computer all the time.

Marcus: It's way //faster than trying to figure it out//

Mrs. Oakley: //Well, this one// well it depends on what I haven't used dictionary.com, but this one gives you word origins, there's several definitions—

Several students begin talking loudly about online dictionaries.

Marcus: You can get that online, everything.

Mrs. Oakley: I just keep this next to my desk and it's kind of funny because a lot of times if I'm reading something, like if I come across a word in a book I'm reading and I don't know it, I write it at the bottom. Like this word (pointing to the bottom of a book she is reading for another class), I didn't know this word, 'raillery.' I had no idea what 'raillery' means. This books was written in the late 1800s, so there are some words in here that are kind of archaic, and when I sit and read I sit with a dictionary next to me, and look up the words, or I'll read like 20 pages and then go back //and check the words I don't know.//

Marcus: //But, how long is it going// to take you to look a word up like that?

Mrs. Oakley: Well, you gotta open it and find and stuff, but I'm sure it would be, and I don't even think about doing it. I'm less thinking of technology.

. . .

Mrs. Oakley: But if I read my 20 pages and sat at the computer and looked up my 5 words I didn't know (students talking), well I will have to try that, because really I'm sure it is a lot faster.

. . .

Mrs. Oakley: It's nice that you are offering it as a suggestion, cause I hadn't thought about doing it.

Marcus: I always go online, because I don't have a dictionary at my house. I have a little one but it doesn't have the words and that kind of thing.

Marcus, the students, and the teacher negotiate the privileged texts and practices of the classroom. In the moment that Mrs. Oakley acknowledges the point of tension between

traditional dictionaries and online dictionaries, Marcus and the students draw from their resources, being tech-savvy teenagers, and seek to transform the privileged forms of texts and practices that were evident in the teacher's talk ("Real dictionaries?"). The students push their texts and contexts into the activity of the classroom, while also seemingly making an impact on the way the teacher might use dictionaries as a result. Even if the teacher or Cadence end up not becoming users of online dictionaries, Marcus and the students participated in transforming the practices of the classroom, as well as the privileged status of particular texts (online dictionaries) and practices.

Summary

A select group of traditional fictional texts have remained fairly standard in English classes in most schools across the country, even despite rapid changes in technology and the growing diversity of the classrooms. The inclusion of film, music, visual texts, and multicultural literature are often non-existent or receive little valued space in the English classroom and formal curriculum (C. Luke, 2000). We see in the case of this 9th grade English class, the way in which texts remain official texts, and how other less official texts may gain space in the confines of the English classroom and curriculum.

Through the assignment and study of required texts, the beliefs and values associated with official texts, and the personal texts that the teacher and students integrated into the curriculum, the students and teacher negotiated the texts that were selected and valued for classroom learning. This process of negotiation involved both the maintaining and expanding of the official texts of the curriculum. The study of traditionally canonical texts were integral to studying English, although Mrs. Oakley

created space for students to engage in texts that were normally unsanctioned in the English classroom. The expansion of texts involved newsprint, contemporary poetry, and graphic and multimodal texts. While this expansion occurred, pressures to maintain the official texts remained vital to the activity of the class, as Mrs. Oakley believed it to be important for students to have the "touchstones" for future classes and contexts. The teacher and students also reinforced notions about a textual hierarchy that further established official texts as privileged over the personal and non-traditional English texts, such as newsprint, and visual and multimodal texts.

When Mrs. Oakley offers Barnes & Noble™ as a possible store for students to receive the gift certificate in the interaction to begin the chapter, we see a specific moment where together the teacher and students negotiate what it means to be an English teacher and an appropriate text for English students. When examining the practices of the classroom throughout the year, we see the processes and practices in place that are involved in the expansion and maintenance of the texts of the classroom.

CHAPTER 4: READING AS "9TH GRADERS": NEGOTIATING BOUNDARIES AND IDENTITIES

Important for studying English was learning what it meant to read as a 9th grader. Learning to be a reader involved becoming familiar with the literacy practices valued in the classroom. In this chapter, I examine the ways in which the boundaries were constructed of what it meant to be a reader and what counted as reading. Through the examination of two literacy practices, I will introduce what it meant to "read" as a 9th grader and how this was expanded and maintained in the classroom. Additionally, I will discuss one students' sophisticated literacy practices and how he actively positioned himself in opposition to the reading practices of the classroom, further maintaining the privileged notions of the reader.

Teacher-Led Shared Reading and Literature Discussions

Sitting at the front of the room with a book in her hand, Mrs. Oakley read with an animated voice, often incorporating various accents for appropriate characters. Students sat at their desks, in a horseshoe shape, listening and following along with their own copies of the text, turning the page when she reached the end. Students became familiar with this practice and understood that it was appropriate to stop Mrs. Oakley to ask questions or make comments. More often though, Mrs. Oakley stopped her reading to highlight a particular piece of "beautiful description," connection to another text, or an important analytic tool for understanding a character's development in the novel. At times, what started as a discussion of a character usually digressed into extended class discussions of gripping topics and thoughtful arguments.

Through the teacher-led shared reading practice, Mrs. Oakley and the students shaped the constructions of what it meant to read in the classroom. There were three patterns important for understanding how the teacher-led shared reading practice shaped the construction of what it meant to read as a 9th grader. The first pattern important to this practice was that reading involved *literary analysis*, which involved more than just decoding and comprehending the text. Early in the year, Mrs. Oakley made explicit to the students that 9th grade English was an introduction to literary analysis. In describing the reasoning for her having the students complete an assignment, she tells the class:

> Keep in mind that in 9th grade English, one of the big things that English teachers have to do is a lot of literary analysis. It's a big introduction. You have done some of that in middle school, but it is much more full-blown when you get to high school, looking at characters and themes, and why people do what they do, and looking at images and motifs...and things that authors write about and care about, and how you respond to those as readers. That's all literary analysis.

Being an English student in Mrs. Oakley's classroom meant becoming familiar with and engaging in literary analysis. Mrs. Oakley used the teacher-led shared reading practice as an opportunity to model the ways of interpreting and the types of interactions with texts that she valued in the classroom, as illustrated in the following series of interactions taken from a teacher-led shared reading event.

> Mrs. Oakley is reading Alice Hoffman's novel, *At Risk*, about a family dealing with their daughter's battle with AIDS in the 1980s, when they encountered a moment when the daughter was having nighttime dreams of gymnastic moves that

she was now unable to do because of the disease. At this moment, Mrs. Oakley asks the class,

> What other story do you remember that a character was dreaming, and the character in real life really couldn't walk very well, and in the dreams, he would fly?

James answers correctly, recalling a character from a short story they read together earlier in the year. Mrs. Oakley then discusses how dreams of this nature are common for people who might not have full use of their limbs or other body parts. She foreshadows future dreams that will be discussed in this section of the book.

Mrs. Oakley: In this section of the book too, there is another dream that is mentioned, so the author is taking you through characters' dreams. Why do you think an author would focus on a character's nighttime dreams?

Marcus: Maybe to have the reader become more in touch with the characters.

Mrs. Oakley: Yah, okay cause a lot of time the stuff that we dream about is just right beneath the conscious level. It might not be stuff we regularly share with everybody, might not even be stuff that we share with ourselves, but comes out in our dreams, and sometimes it's things we're worried about or things that we are trying to fix or solve.

The teacher-led shared reading practice was a powerful way for Mrs. Oakley to demonstrate the types of thinking and analysis that were important for participating in class. During teacher-led shared reading events, Mrs. Oakley would often point to literary analytical devices that were common in the English discipline for understanding and interpreting texts. This example illustrates the way that the reader must dig below the surface when reading texts. Over the course of the year, students learned to view

reading as a process of making interpretations of character's personalities, beliefs, and motivations through inferences based on the details of the text.

In the interaction above, Mrs. Oakley emphasized using dreams as a way of analyzing a character's internal motivations and psyche. A little later in the interaction, she prompted the students for future instances where dreams may be interpreted to analyze a character. Later in the discussion she reminds them to:

> Think about dreams a little bit and especially when authors put them in literature and they do it for a reason. They are trying to show you something or reveal something about the character.

But first, students' curiosity about dreams leads to a discussion about the role of dreams in their lives and in other cultures.

> Mrs. Oakley: Native American culture places a great emphasis on the value of dreams and the meaning, and if you study Eastern culture too, any of the Eastern Hemisphere countries, a lot of the Asian countries...put a huge value on dreams. It's not like you get up and say 'oh, I had the stupid dream' and everyone laughs at you. You might say your dream and your whole family might sit around and talk about what do you think that means. And how can you incorporate that into your life. Or what's that dream trying to tell you. Something that maybe you need to do.

Mrs. Oakley sees several students smiling and looking at her with questioning faces. She then discusses the different ways that cultures value dreams.

> Mrs. Oakley: And you're looking at me like crazy, crazy wacko, but our culture doesn't place a lot of value on dreams, but many other cultures do. Have any of you ever kept a dream journal, just kept a notebook next to your bed to write down your dreams when you wake up? [Rachel raises her hand] When you kept the dream journal, did you find that you had more dreams than usual? Or about the same?

Mrs. Oakley says that many people use the dream journal to see what is coming out in their dreams.

Cadence: I kind of just had a good dream and I decided to write it down.
Mrs. Oakley: It is very cool to go back and read what you're dreaming about too.

Marcus says that he does not remember his dreams very well. Several of the students talk about dreams they have had, if they remember their dreams, and how they think it happens.

Anthony: I heard that dreams take all the memories and stuff from the day and mix them together.

Building from Anthony's comment, Mrs. Oakley describes a surrealistic film where the director "juxtaposes" a variety of images with one another.

Mrs. Oakley: There's all kinds of things that come out in your dreams that is kind of everything coming together in a weird sort of way, but sometimes it is very symbolic.

Making sense of texts in Mrs. Oakley's class involved making connections with outside texts, as well as between texts. Mrs. Oakley often made connections to other texts (e.g., video, music, and literature) during this shared reading practice. The first question in the above interaction was intended for the class to make intertextual links between texts they have read, each pertaining to a character's dreams. These intertextual links occurred frequently during these teacher-led shared reading events. At times, the texts were not texts they had read together for the class, but other texts that allowed the teacher or student to make sense of the current text or theme (e.g., the surrealistic film, reading journals). These intertextual links revealed the multiple worlds of texts that could be analyzed (surrealism in a movie) or may be utilized as resources for interpretation (e.g., books for interpreting dreams, symbols for interpreting people's actions and motivations). These messages about what it meant to study English (e.g., digging below the surface,

text-to-self connections, intertextual connections) were prevalent throughout the teacher-led shared reading practice.

Not only did Mrs. Oakley raise the significance of analyzing dreams as a literary technique, in the above interaction, but she also demonstrated the importance of making *text-to-self connections*, the second pattern important to this practice. Mrs. Oakley encouraged the class to explore the role dreams play in their own lives. Cadence mentioned the dream journal that she used at times to record her dreams, focusing on how the text influenced whether or not she remembered her dreams. Anthony offered what he had heard about dreams (i.e., dreams being just a mixture of your experiences with no real meaning), which was an alternative interpretation on the meaning of dreams being offered in the class.

Throughout the teacher-led shared reading practices, Mrs. Oakley would often try to help the students make connections with the text by engaging the class in questions that prompted them to make personal connections to the texts. Questions like, "How many of you remember your parents taking you on your first day of school" in referring to Atticus (in *To Kill A Mockingbird*) not taking the children to school, were common during the teacher-led shared reading practice. They discussed the importance of the first day of school in their lives, and then why Atticus might not bring his child to school on the first day, and what this might say about Atticus as a father. Mrs. Oakley engaged the students in this elaboration in ways that she intended to make the text interesting and personally meaningful for them.

The third pattern was that the teacher and students connected topics in the book to current issues in the news (e.g., Catholic Priest's child molestation cases, the growing

presence of surveillance cameras in schools). As topics were read in the text, Mrs. Oakley or the students would use them as a "springboard" to current events. When reading *Bean Trees* early in the year, Mrs. Oakley came to a section in the book when it discussed how holy places were supposed to be sanctuaries for people to seek safety. Mrs. Oakley mentioned to the class that this was important now in the war in Iraq. Marcus raises his hand, and mentions how an American solder killed an unarmed and wounded Iraqi person in a Mosque. Mrs. Oakley and students discuss how this current situation might be different than the one in the novel, as the insurgents in Iraq were fighting from the place of worship. Throughout the year, reading in the teacher-led shared reading practice was constructed as an activity that involved interactive discussions of current issues and personally meaningful explorations.

The "Reading Assignment": Reading of School Texts Outside of Class

Early in the school year, students quickly realized that an important practice for learning to be an English student and a "9th grade" reader was the "completion" of their reading assignments, which consisted of individually reading a specified number of pages or chapters of the class text as homework.

On one occasion early in November, a little over two months into the school year, Mrs. Oakley assigned the students to read a chapter and a half (pages 109-145) of the text they were reading (*Bean Trees*) for the next day. After giving them the last fifteen minutes of the class period to read silently, she mentioned that they would have a reading quiz the next day to make sure they had read. Several students made public their disgust with this assignment. Some students expressed the many other things they had to do in their busy lives (e.g., basketball games, homework for other classes) and other students

voiced their general discontent by letting out a sigh of disgust. Marcus announced, "That's not going to happen…it will take me two hours to do that." After hearing a bit of the discussion, Mrs. Oakley let the class know that this much reading is "not that much to ask for with freshman." During this event early in the year, Mrs. Oakley made explicit the expectations of reading assignments and the amount of work they were to be expected to do during this school year, as well as in the future. Likewise, the students made explicit their resistance to this literacy practice; in addition, they made aware their struggle to negotiate their role as "9th grade" readers with other areas of their lives, in and out of school.

Unlike in the teacher-led shared reading and literature discussions, where comprehension and retaining details were a necessary but not sole purpose of the practice, the primary emphasis with reading assignments were students' ability to elicit information and illustrate their "completion" of the reading. Quizzes that evaluated if students "completed" their reading were important events that contributed to constructing the purpose of reading in this particular practice as primarily recalling details from the text. Mrs. Oakley started the class off with a quiz three to four times during the reading of a novel. Most quizzes were in the form of fill-in-the-blank or multiple choice, which directed the students to elicit information and details about characters and events from the novel (e.g., Who lectures Scout on not using swear words? In this section of the book, who do we discover has died?). Mrs. Oakley's said that her intent was to make sure the students read and knew the details of the novel. Other quizzes prompted students to make generalizations and analyses (Nystrand et al., 1997) across characters and themes. For example, for one essay question, Mrs. Oakley asks the students to:

> Discuss Atticus' way of operating in the courtroom thus far in the novel. How does he act in the courtroom? Give examples from the testimony scenes thus far. What do his actions reveal about his personality/character?

These questions pushed the students to draw from a variety of parts of the chapter to make conclusions about a character's personality, or a particular theme or symbol in the novel. The reading quizzes contributed to the construction of reading in this literacy practice (e.g., reading and understanding the details of the texts in order to elicit information, drawing from various parts of a chapter to make generalizations about a character or theme).

The construction of reading as recalling details and generalizing about characters and themes became further emphasized in the explicit focus on comprehension and self-regulation strategies during the first few months of the year. When some of the students expressed that they were having difficulty with the quizzes and finishing the entire reading assignment, Mrs. Oakley engaged the students in a brainstorming activity where they created a list of 38 strategies for "succeeding on literature quizzes," (see Figure 6). The question posed to the students was: "What are strategies for succeeding on literature quizzes?" (In the following class periods Mrs. Oakley referred to the list as strategies for becoming active readers.) The students contributed many different kinds of strategies, most having to do with comprehension and self-regulation strategies, which worked (or they thought would work) for them. While some of the strategies are intended to be humorous (e.g., write hints on hand, take book home, read to dog), the list illustrates patterns that reflect a particular view of reading, one that further stresses the importance of comprehending and eliciting details from the text. In the list of strategies, a main goal

was to more effectively comprehend the passages (e.g., reread passage for comprehension), be able to recall more details, and ultimately, do better on the quizzes (e.g., think of quiz and doing well to motivate you).

There were two additional patterns from the list of 38 strategies that were also reflective of other interactions and events associated with the construction of reading in the classroom. The first pattern is that the act of reading is a solitary undertaking that is to be done where it is quiet, where they will not be disturbed, and where there are no distractions (e.g., get away from television and computer, lock yourself in your room). For the most part, reading class texts outside of the classroom was meant to be a solitary practice, where one might cuddle up with the book and spend hours reading. They were not asked to share what they read, or asked to explore how what they read may connect with current social, political, or personal issues. When the students came to class after their reading assignment, they did not share with the class the possible implications of what they had read on their understanding of the characters or the themes they had been discussing. When coming to class, the students would either demonstrate what they remembered from the reading with a quiz or test, or present their ideas in an essay or assignment that would be turned into the teacher. Reading as constructed in this practice was an act that was an individual and private experience between the person and the text, rarely ever becoming the social event resembling the teacher-led shared reading and literature discussions ever were.

Figure 6. How to Succeed on Literature Quizzes

Get up earlier and read, especially on weekend
Read it aloud—loudly—to the wall, brother, dog, etc.
Drink coffee
Force yourself to read
Listen to it on tape
Think of quiz and doing well to motivate you!
Think of happy parents when you get good grades
Think of how good it feels to get homework done
Write assignment in planner
Write assignment (clue words) on hand
Take book home
Carry novel with you everywhere
Read whole book up front and review chapters as assigned
Read each passage two times
Focus on reading
- Work in a quieter atmosphere
- Get away from television
- Get away from people
- Tell family you are concentrating
- Try to clear mind of other stuff
- Lock yourself in your room
- Get away from computers
- Don't lay down to read
- Sit in a not so comfortable chair
- Turn off your cell phone

Get cuddly and comfortable—works for some
Quiz yourself each chapter—what happened?
Reread passages for comprehension
Picture what's going on—like a movie
Get really involved with one character
Take breaks for snacks and bathroom
Reward yourself after reading
Use internet for support services
Get as many of your senses involved as you can
- Sight
- Hearing
- Touch
- Taste/Smell imagery

A second pattern reflected in this list of strategies is that reading was a chore, an assigned responsibility that one must struggle through, and when finished one may be rewarded (e.g., force yourself to read, think about the feeling of getting homework done). For many of the texts they read, students would see overnight reading assignments as bothersome and tiresome. After asking Mrs. Oakley if they were going to have a reading assignment, students would often cheer if there were no assignment and verbally whine and complain if there were one. This discontentment for assignments usually did not change depending on the text offered. In my interviews with students towards the end of the year, the students generally told me that they liked each of the literary texts they read (e.g., with the exception of *The Old Man and the Sea*!), although this did not seem the case when they were required to have reading assignments. Undoubtedly, much of this animosity for their reading assignments was a result of it being school work they were required to do during their busy lives, and not exclusively related to the act of reading alone, as students did also at times make similar complaints about other assignments that involved a great deal of time. However, it is important to highlight that reading assignments, unlike the teacher-led shared reading and literature discussions, were often seen as a tiresome undertaking that were a chore to finish.

Expanding and Maintaining the Boundaries of Reading

Through these two common literacy practices (i.e., teacher-led shared reading, reading assignment) and the interactions around texts, reading was defined as comprehending and remembering large amounts of literary texts, while being able to draw from a variety of parts of a text to make an argument about a character or theme. Literary analysis involves knowing what to look for in a text (e.g., dreams as ways of

looking at character development) and how to connect details from different parts of the text into a response. Throughout the year, the students and teacher negotiated the boundaries of these privileged ways of reading, at times resisting and expanding what it meant to read. The teacher and students maintained and resisted/expanded these practices, while also positioning themselves in particular ways within and through the negotiated boundaries.

Resisting Reading as a Solitary Practice

On several occasions, when Mrs. Oakley wanted students to spend the remainder of class silently reading their assignment, students would express their desire to continue reading aloud in the teacher-led shared reading practice (e.g., Brianna: "I like it when you read aloud"; Marcus: "'You add character!") In one particular instance during the Novel Buddies assignment, a few students resisted the assigned reading practice. The "Novel Buddies" assignment was a weeklong activity where the students paired with each other and choose a book from a collection of possible books to read. Each day they wrote a letter to their "buddy" about the book, the characters involved, and any questions they had. Since there were multiple texts being read in the class, students read silently during the class period[7]. Brianna and five of the girls made their case to Mrs. Oakley for transforming the silent reading event into a shared reading practice, since all six of them chose to read the same book with their buddy.

Brianna: I think it would also be cool if we could read out loud to our partner. What do you think Mrs. Oakley?
Mrs. Oakley: I'm sorry what was that?

[7] The class was split in half, due to the writing lab schedule (half of the class was involved at the writing lab, the other half of the class in the classroom), allowing only eight students in the classroom during this assignment.

Brianna:	I think it would be cool to read out loud, that way we could both be involved, and if we don't understand something, we could ask our partner.
Mrs. Oakley:	That would be. (hesitating) I can't really let you do it in the room because it will be disturbing to others.
Brianna:	Us girls could read together, because we all have the //same book//
Student:	//same book//
Brianna:	That's why I was saying if they were—
Mrs. Oakley:	But to read it out loud, you are never going to finish it in the time that I want you to, because it takes a lot longer.
Cadence:	We can read the rest at home.
Mrs. Oakley:	Is that how you would rather do it?
Brianna:	uh-huh!
Mrs. Oakley:	Okay, and gentlemen, would that be disturbing to you, probably if they are reading aloud?
Stephen:	I don't mind.
Joey:	I don't pay attention to them. I tune it out.
Mrs. Oakley:	Okay, all right. That's fine, take turns reading.

Mrs. Oakley had repeatedly told the six girls to stop talking and to read before Brianna mentioned reading aloud. As soon as they were given the opportunity, they began reading and read through to the end of the class period. Brianna started reading aloud and the six of them took turns reading. When they did not understand something that happened in the text, they asked the question to the group, and together discussed the question in a similar way to how the class would discuss the text as a whole group. These six students resisted the silent reading practice and changed the literacy event, away from a solitary and individual event, to a shared and interactive experience.

As a class, the students enjoyed reading aloud in the shared reading practice. At one point in the year, interested in what students thought about shared and individual reading, Mrs. Oakley heard from several students that they benefited from the shared reading. Responding to Mrs. Oakley's request for student opinions,

Marcus:	I like whole class.
Mrs. Oakley	Why?
Marcus:	Because I like talking.

. . .

Mrs. Oakley:	You miss out on the full class [discussion], and what the whole class thinks when they are reading silently and with a partner.
Marcus:	You don't get—I don't think it's as interesting.
Mrs. Oakley	So it is easier for you to get involved with it when you hear more people talking about it

As part of negotiating the classroom reading practices, students managed to influence the construction of reading in the class. Through their resistance to the independent reading and their encouragement for Mrs. Oakley to read as part of a larger group, students were further shaping the practices in the classroom.

Expanding Discussion Topics: Texts as Springboards (Part 1)

While the main focus of the teacher-led shared reading practice involved reading, comprehending, and analyzing literature, the topics that were discussed often deviated from the actual text. As briefly mentioned earlier, this was an important difference between the reading assignments and the teacher-led shared reading practices. "Reading" literature became more than analyzing and recalling details from texts. The boundaries of reading literature were often expanded to include utilizing literature as a springboard for conversations about topics that were not directly related to the details or themes of the literature text. These digressions allowed for the expansion of topics deemed appropriate to discuss in the classroom and became central to the day-to-day practice of what it meant to read in the classroom.

Mrs. Oakley encouraged these digressions (as seen in the Doonesbury comic interaction in chapter three) by asking questions and moving to topics that she felt were important but not directly related to the text they were reading. Negotiating these digressions became central to the teacher-led shared reading practice, as both the teacher

and the students would sometimes ask the question, "How did we get to this?" Mrs. Oakley wrestled with the idea of getting through the plan for the day, but also giving the time for the students to discuss these topics. On several occasions Mrs. Oakley spent up to ten minutes pursuing topics distantly related to the text, while also throughout the discussion, telling the students that it was time to return to the novel.

Making Student Topics Central: The Case of Brianna.

While Mrs. Oakley often led the topic of focus away from the direct details and themes of the text, the students would also actively pursue these topics by asking questions or telling anecdotes that were indirectly related to the novel. Many of the students would offer these digressions; however, Brianna was most active in using the text as a springboard to important issues that related to current events and themes in their lives. In one instance while reading *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Mrs. Oakley, who after having been absent for two class periods, decided to have the students perform in what the class called a "discussion quiz"[8]. For the discussion quiz Mrs. Oakley asked the students to talk about what they remembered about certain characters or certain events that occurred in the previous few chapters, to make sure students have been "completing" the reading, and to also discuss the parts of the text that they had yet to discuss as a class. She asked students questions like, "Where did Jem and Scout sit in the courtroom, and what is significant about this?" While in the middle of this teacher-directed event, after talking about if Atticus had a choice in taking the court case to defend Tom Robinson,

[8] This was the only "discussion quiz" I am aware they had during the year. When Mrs. Oakley mentioned the quiz, it seemed that the students were aware of the practice, although it was the only time she engaged the students in this practice during the year.

Brianna asks a question that leads into a ten minute discussion about moral and philosophical rationales for the justice system.

Brianna:	In the real world...do lawyers have to take sides in cases they don't believe in?
Mrs. Oakley:	Yes, and //especially//
Brianna:	//How// do they fight for something they don't believe in?
Mrs. Oakley:	When you go to law school you practice taking both sides. When you have a client, your job is to give them the best defense possible according to the law. Okay, because everybody—
Larissa:	What if they killed someone and they told you what they did to the person?
Mrs. Oakley:	They still have to give you the best defense they possibly can.
Brianna:	Isn't that morally wrong though?
Student:	No (said quickly and loudly)
Mrs. Oakley:	Not according to the law.
Brianna:	Wait, so if your client tells you that they did the crime, would //you still have to say they didn't do anything wrong. Isn't that wrong?
Mrs. Oakley:	Well, lots of times, you guys have seen enough lawyer shows, when you see a client tell the lawyer that I did it, the lawyer kind of hushes them up and says, 'you really don't want to tell me that.'...lawyers will have a definite feeling that the guy is guilty, okay but he deserves a defense, just like anybody does, everybody deserves to be defended...even if people can't afford a lawyer, the state or the country will appoint a lawyer...there are several in [the town].
...	
Mrs. Oakley:	According to our system, it is better to have a hundred guilty people go free than one innocent person imprisoned, that's what our system is founded on.
Brianna:	I don't know about that.
Mrs. Oakley:	If you think about putting <u>yourself</u> in a position where <u>you're</u> accused of a crime that you didn't do, you would want all those benefits, you would want somebody who is going to fight for you to the death, and you would want them to believe in your innocence. Okay, and this is where Tom Robinson is at, he wants someone to believe in his innocence.

Brianna transformed the classroom space from a teacher-directed recalling practice to a student directed discussion focusing on themes of justice that were integral to the text they were reading, *To Kill a Mockingbird.* Brianna's distinction between the discussion of texts in themselves (recalling and discussing details from the text) and what is

happening in the "real world" is significant to understanding what it means to read and discuss literature in the classroom. She is positioning the practice of close analysis of texts as something that is (at least partially) removed from everyday experience. Therefore, her motivation to push the conversations to more "real world" topics might be a result of her belief that the texts they were reading were somewhat distanced in time and place from her situation. While they may have been distanced from the "real world", for Brianna and the students, the texts they read through the year often acted as a springboard to discussions of current issues and topics. At the end of the interaction above, Mrs. Oakley asked Brianna to put herself in the shoes of an innocent person accused of a crime, and then connected the discussion back to the text, to help the class understand the importance of having a lawyer as dedicated, talented, and honorable as Atticus.

While this digression may seem to be irrelevant when compared to the privileged reading practices (i.e., literary understanding), students engaged with these texts in ways that provoked meaningful questions and opportunities to explore philosophical issues, as well as the complexities of the situation in the text. At times, these instances of springboarding afforded students opportunities to discuss current social and philosophical issues and formulate and support reasoned arguments. While these reading practices were not directly connected to the text, they often provided a context for which students could engage with the literary texts in new ways and with new understandings (e.g., an understanding for the Atticus' predicament).

It was also through these moments of digression that topics and texts related to the students' lives became central to the class discussions, while the specific details of the

text moved to the background temporarily. These digressions allowed space for students' questions, texts, and opinions.

A little later in the interaction, Brianna continues the discussion further sparking curiosity and discussion.

Brianna:	Have innocent people ever gone to jail?
Mrs. Oakley:	Of course
Student:	Of course

Mrs. Oakley discusses how some people on death row spend many years there before they are found to be innocent. Larissa asks if the class has heard of a serial killer that was caught in the area many years ago. Just as Mrs. Oakley was going to go on, Joey raises his hand.

Joey:	Have they charged Scott Peterson[9] yet? I know they are trying to do a mistrial but—
(several people talk aloud)	
Cadence:	(speaking quickly) It happens all the time, people kill their wives with an unborn child, this case is just overrated, like I understand it is bad, it's been like two years, just get over it. Charge him. It's overrated. Everyone is making it such a big celebrity craze.
Student:	Exactly, somebody just [killed a women]
...	
Mrs. Oakley:	That has become sort of a celebrity //focused trial//
Cadence:	//it shouldn't be// cause it's sad, it's just sad, and there are making a big celebrity craze.
...	
Mrs. Oakley:	I don't want to get into all these trials, but the concept is important that we are mentioning, okay. (continuing to the "discussion quiz")

Mrs. Oakley welcomed these digressions and believed the discussions were important for students to be having, whether or not they were necessarily directly related to the text. On a few occasions, when at the end of a discussion, Mrs. Oakley mentioned to me privately that she thought the students believed they were getting her off topic and

[9] Scott Peterson was found guilty for killing his pregnant wife. At the time of the study, Scott Peterson's court case was a constant discussion on news stations and in newspaper.

away from "doing work", because they were not reading the usual literary book together or studying the vocabulary assignments. She understood that these digressions were important for the students and was deliberate in the way that she allowed students to expand the topics of discussion around the texts being read.

Maintaining Reading as Close Analysis: Texts as a Springboard (Part II)

While Mrs. Oakley often privileged the use of texts as a springboard in the teacher-led shared reading discussions, when it came time to responding to literature on formal assessments, the reading and response that counted was close analysis of text. This tension between what counted as an appropriate response to literature was highlighted in a discussion after the students' midterm exam. Based on their reading of *At Risk*, Mrs. Oakley had them write essays for two questions (see Figure 7) that allowed the students to demonstrate their understanding of the characters from the novel, as well as what they learned about AIDS from reading the novel.

Figure 7. Essay Questions for the *At-Risk* Assessment

1. Think about the people you met as you read *At Risk*. Consider their lives and their circumstances. Then, select three people that you felt compassion for as you read. Devoting one paragraph to each person, discuss why you felt compassion for this person. In other words, devote one paragraph to each of the three people your heart went out to as you read *At Risk*. Be sure to fully develop your ideas about all three characters, using a great deal of specific support from the novel.

2. Think about what you learned about AIDS as you read this novel. Then, below, write three paragraphs discussing three separate things you learned about AIDS as a result of reading this book. Focus on specific characters and scenes in the novel to support your ideas. Think about how AIDS affects the person with the disease, their family, and their friends. Devote one elaborate paragraph to how AIDS affects the person with the disease, another paragraph to how AIDS affects the friends of the person with the disease, and another paragraph to how AIDS affects the family of the person with AIDS. (Mrs. Oakley had three sections below the question, one for each of the three parts of the question.)

After the essay exam, a few of the students were confused (and upset) as to why they received so few points for their responses on the second question. Mrs. Oakley recognizing their frustration, and while wanting to help the students understand what they need to do well on future essay exams, she discusses this concern with the students.

Mrs. Oakley: On the first set of essays where you had to write about the person you felt compassion for, or your heart went out to, you did great, they were excellent...you did beautifully. It is the second three that caused a problem for some of you. Look at the directions:

Mrs. Oakley reads the first part of the second question, highlighting the part where it says, "Focus on specific characters in scenes in the novel to support your ideas."

Mrs. Oakley: That's what we have been doing when we talk about literature, all year long. Some of you for all three of the questions didn't mention anything about the book. You kind of talked about what you knew about AIDS in general, just from what you knew, which is fine that you know that but you didn't tie it in with the book at all, and that is where you lost points.

She continues reading the question, and tells the class that many of them wrote about how AIDS affects the person with the disease. She tells them that for the second part of the question they were to write about how AIDS affects the friends of the person, and another about how it affects the family.

Mrs. Oakley: You had to talk about specific people in the novel, not just "oh, friends are disappointed and they don't know if they are going to catch it.' And some of you kind of just talked in general, and you didn't bring the novel into it at all. So that is why you lost points. So I want to show you a few examples here, if it is okay with these people, who I think did a really nice job on this.

After getting permission from a few students, Mrs. Oakley reads through a couple of their responses. One of the examples that she reads is James', and she includes

her comments (in parentheses) about how his responses might connect to specific details from the text.

The friends of Amanda (okay right away he is talking about the book) are greatly affected as well. Amanda can only hangout with Jessica, her best friend, instead of other friends. However, she has met Laurel because of Polly (Okay, and some of you really remembered that; you tied Laurel into the friends too, excellent). Amanda hangs out with Laurel and they get along very nicely. A lot of her friends at school left because she has AIDS. This doesn't always affect Amanda's friends, but Charlie's as well (Look at all the stuff he is bringing in here). Charlie is no longer to hangout with Severn, because Severn's mom is scared that her son will catch the disease. Last, Amanda's family has a tough time finding an orthodontist for Amanda to get her braces off. This is an example of how Amanda's AIDS affected her friends. Her normal orthodontist did not agree to have a patient with AIDS (Okay, he's got tons of evidence there, okay that is an example of a really good answer).

After reading through [Lauren's] response, Marcus explains that he didn't feel that the directions were explicit enough.

Marcus:	I think if you ah, do this test again, for like next years classroom, I would say if I was you, //I'd be little more specific.//
Mrs. Oakley:	//Really emphasize that//
Anthony:	Yah
Mrs. Oakley:	Would it have helped if I would have boldfaced that?
Marcus:	Or if you would just have said, "Describe in the book how people in the book were //treated with the disease."//
Mrs. Oakley:	//I mean saying,// "focus on specific characters and scenes in the novel to support your ideas"...did you just whip through this?
Marcus:	I thought support meant a couple of details, not about //how it—//
Anthony:	//not how it// affected them, but how would it affect someone because it affected someone like this because in the novel it showed this. Instead of just like this—

Mrs. Oakley: So you think the question is "using the novel as a sort of a little springboard to talk." [Marcus and Anthony nod their heads up and down and say, "Yes".] And that is not how I meant it...because [the two character's experience in the book] were very different with AIDS, very different than the experience that Andrew was having in Philadelphia (the film they had started watching). So, that is why, this is a novel about Amanda and her family, and I really wanted you to really focus on that, and that is the focus of 9th grade, literary analysis, looking at the literature, using it to support what you have to say. So, if I use it again, I will make a bigger deal about that, like remind people about ten times during the exam or something.

Mrs. Oakley made explicit that being successful on essay exams involved providing lots of specific detail from the text. In their responses to the essay questions, Mrs. Oakley expected for students to write more than what they already knew about AIDS. They should write developed essays about the characters and the topic, drawing upon evidence from the different parts of the text. This became an area of confusion for some students, especially Marcus and Anthony, who voiced that they thought that an appropriate response would involve a more general account of how AIDS might affect someone based on their experience with the text. This could have been a result of the way that the question was written, where it first asks what they have learned "about AIDS as you read this novel", possibly suggesting for a reflective response based on the characters, while then asking them to write about specific aspects of the novel (affect on person, friends, and family). This tension could also have been a result of the way in which using literature as a springboard was valued in the teacher-led shared reading practice. Mrs. Oakley made clear, however, that there were two separate instances in the question where it mentioned that they should support their responses with details from the text, and some students, "for all three of the questions didn't mention anything about the book." The essay exam and the interaction above reinforced what counts as reading

in the class and as 9th graders: "literary analysis, looking at the literature, using it to support what you have to say", and not simply using some part of the text as a "springboard" for issues that are not supported by details from the text. While Mrs. Oakley and the students worked to expand reading to include using texts to "springboard" to personal and current issues through the teacher-led shared reading practice, when being assessed, reading only included the recalling of details and the analysis of fictional texts.

Negotiating Being a "Reader"

Mrs. Oakley and the students worked within and through these constructions of what it meant to read to position themselves as readers or as non-readers in the classroom. This positioning also helped to construct the boundaries of what counts as reading in the classroom. Through the examination of what it meant to be a "reader", I illustrate how the participants positioned themselves in the classroom and how this in turn also helped to maintain or expand the boundaries of what it meant to read in the classroom.

Being a "Reader": Books and Pleasure

Although reading assignments were seen as a chore for most students, for a few students reading literature (either for school or on their own) was a rewarding and pleasurable experience. Reading literature was an intimate part of who they were and what they enjoyed doing. Mrs. Oakley modeled this love for reading through her excitement and passion for characters and the language in poetry and literature. The stories she told to the students of her childhood often characterized her as a future

English teacher, "kissing each book before she put it on the [classroom] bookshelf." She told the class that, "when I read I just have all kinds of cool stuff going on in my head, I can hear the voices, I love to read."

Mrs. Oakley connected English class and being an English student with reading large amounts of literature.

> You guys know of course I was an English major in college...as I was going through all that reading, and you know reading underneath my pillow with a flashlight, and reading on into college, literally thousands of books...After doing all that and continuing to read, every year I'm reading new books that haven't read before, that I haven't taught before.

In addition to Mrs. Oakley, Cadence also contributed to defining reading as a joyful experience with fictional books in the way that they positioned themselves as "readers" in the classroom. Cadence, more than any student, verbally positioned herself as a "reader" of fiction.

> At one point in the year, Cadence said that she liked mysteries, and mentioned R.L. Stein and other authors that she liked. Marcus smiled and looked at James in disbelief.
>
> Marcus: (to Cadence) How do you know all these?
> Cadence: Because I'm a bookworm.

Being a "reader" to Cadence and to the students in the classroom meant that she grew up devouring books at a young age, and delves into books (fiction) in and out-of-school. On a few occasions Cadence told the class about her mother who was an English teacher at the local community college and taught writing courses. Her mother, and her fiction-rich background provided Cadence with confidence as she approached texts in class and navigated the boundaries of what it meant to be a reader.

During a "springboard" discussion of how children learn to read, Cadence proudly told the class,

> my mom used to read to me all the time, and all I can really say is look at me now. (Mrs. Oakley and the class laughs) My mom she, instead of most [mothers] are like, get out of the front of the television, [my mom says] 'Cadence put down the book'.

Through their interviews and during interactions in class, these students constructed reading as a deeply pleasurable and personal experience. They positioned themselves as readers and writers, and possibly future English teachers. Mrs. Oakley and Cadence, through their positioning themselves as "readers", who individually read large amounts of fiction for pleasure, further maintain the boundaries of the English student as a "reader" of literature.

Being a "Reader": The Case of Marcus (Part I)

"I'd rather clean my room than read a book".

Marcus was a key informant who was central to the negotiation of literacy practices in the classroom. Like Cadence, Marcus was quite vocal about his relationship with reading. However, unlike Cadence, Marcus was quite sure that he was not a "reader", at least in terms of a reader who reads fiction for pleasure in the ways that are privileged in the construction of reading and being a "reader" described above. However, Marcus read other texts that he and others did not value as "English" texts. Therefore, he considered himself a "non-reader" in the constructions of a reader privileged in the classroom. In an informal interview with Marcus and his mother, he said that he had not read for pleasure in years.

Marcus: I have other things I can do that are more fun. I don't think reading is fun. I think it is a chore. I don't view it as something fun to do. I would rather clean my room than read a book.

Upon hearing that Marcus placed reading lower than cleaning his room surprised his mother, who knew that Marcus did not like cleaning his room much at all. Marcus' mother was an avid reader of literature, enjoyed going to plays, and loved creative writing. She told me that she provided lots of books for her children when they were young and read to them often, with the hopes that all three of her children would love to read like she does. According to her, this is not the case. Her daughter, Marcus' older sister, had just disclosed to her that she had not read an entire book from cover to cover while having just graduated from high school. She stated to me in embarrassment: "So I have three kids and none of them like to read." She explained that Marcus "does not love reading like I do." When reading is viewed in this way—someone who reads book length fictional literature from beginning to end, reads for pleasure, and for long hours of the day and night—Marcus positioned himself (and was positioned by others) in opposition to this construction of the reader.

Finding Space within and through the Boundaries of the "Reader".

In the classroom, Marcus was consistently positioned (and positioned himself) as a non-reader when reading was constructed as being associated with the practices of the classroom—reading fiction, analyzing for symbols and themes, and reading for pleasure. Positioning Marcus as a non-reader in the classroom was acknowledged and even perpetuated by the teacher. When introducing the books from which the students have to choose for their "Novel Buddies" project, Mrs. Oakley joked with Marcus and the students, "we have *Famous All Over Town* [to read], which Marcus is picking because

it's the longest one." Marcus' positioning by the teacher as in opposition to the privileged constructions of being a reader similar to this were woven into discussions and texts[10] throughout the year. It became a running joke with the class, where other students (and good friends) participated in making comments about his lack of reading when defined by the valued constructions of the classroom. It was even a joke in which he took part; when describing a poetry assignment, the teacher asked the class to write a poem about something that "moves" them.

> Mrs. Oakley: (pointing to Marcus) you know, if poetry moves you, like when you go home, before you go to sleep at night, you read a poetry book and you go 'mmm' I love this.
>
> Marcus: It <u>moves</u> my eyelids down. (he uses his fingers to move his eyes closed)

Positioning Marcus as a non-reader was a practice that became a staple of the classroom culture, and was one of the many ways that the class constructed what it meant to read. Through the work of the teacher, other students in the classroom, and Marcus himself, he was positioned as a reluctant reader, choosing the smallest book and only reading when required to do well in school.

In the following series of interactions, each occurring during the "Novel Buddies" weeklong activity, Marcus struggles to find space within and through the boundaries of reading and the construction of the reader. Right before class started on the first day, a few students began talking about the assignment they heard Mrs. Oakley was going to give them. After hearing that they were going to start to read a new book, Marcus lets out a sigh.

> Marcus: All summer, I never picked a book up...I don't like to read.

---

[10] A few times, Mrs. Oakley included in multiple choice tests responses that reflected Marcus' lack of enjoyment of reading the texts of the class. [Example]

Cadence: How can you not?
Marcus: I can read perfectly fine, I just don't like ( ).

Marcus struggles to position himself within the definitions of what it meant to read, by stating that he can read "perfectly fine," but just not in the way that Cadence or Ella might. On other occasions Marcus states that he knows how to "read" (i.e., skills and comprehension), but that he just does not participates in the ways privileged in the classroom (i.e., book-length, fiction, for pleasure, and as a solitary practice).

In two interactions later in the week (during two class periods), we see Marcus trying to navigate the possible positions of being a reader that were available for him in the classroom. In the first interaction, a few students were talking amongst themselves and when Gary Paulson's name entered the discussion, Marcus joined in.

Marcus: [*Hatchet*] is the only book that I ever really liked.
Mrs. Oakley: Cool, have you read anything else by him?
Miles: I read the second one ( ).
Mrs. Oakley: They are good books. Did you like ( )?
Marcus: I liked *Night*, that was a good one too.
Mrs. Oakley: *Night*, Elie Wiesel, yeah. So you like more either adventure, realistic kind of stuff?
Marcus: Something has to happen. (Mrs. Oakley laughs.)

Marcus is struggling to make sense of his place within the boundaries of being a reader in the classroom. He attempts to provide some logic for why he likes some of the books read in class and not others. Marcus' most clear way of putting it was: "something has to happen."

At the end of the week long "Novel Buddies" unit, Mrs. Oakley asked for some feedback on the books they read.

Mrs. Oakley: I want to get some feedback on the books from you right now real quickly. Should I offer these books to kids or not? Okay, what was your opinion on *Bless the Beasts and the Children*?

Marcus:	I actually think it was an alright book—
Cadence:	Marcus thinks a book is good?
Marcus:	I didn't say that, I didn't say it was good.
...	
Marcus:	Yeah, it was all right, I mean, I think it was good cause it did seem like the only kind of guy relating book here.

Cadence challenges Marcus' comments because he moves away from his non-reader position. Her comment forced Marcus to consider how he fit within the boundaries of what it meant to be a reader in the classroom.

Mrs. Oakley, Marcus, and the students construct reading as "9th graders" as reading for fiction and individually reading for pleasure, further shaping the boundary of the reader in the classroom. While Marcus wrestled to try to understand his place in a classroom where the possibilities of being a reader are narrowly drawn, he remains to be a "non-reader" in the classroom.

Being a "Reader": The Case of Marcus (Part II)

While Marcus spent much of his time in the classroom claiming space as a non-reader and helping to shape (and resist) the constructions of the reader, he carried on an active literate life, where reading texts were integral to his day-to-day social activities. Marcus was an active reader of texts when examined from a broader perspective of a reader, one that includes a more encompassing variety of practices than simply reading literature, recalling and analyzing details of the text, and reading for pleasure in solitude.

Much of Marcus' involvement with literacy resulted from the social practices he engaged in related to athletics, in the home, on the practice field, or at the school. Marcus was a successful athlete and much of his daily activities involved aspects related

to sports (e.g., lifting weights, discussing games with his friends, reading the sports pages of the newspaper).

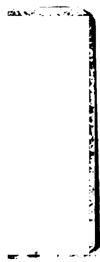
The textual saturation of the sports world for Marcus was quite remarkable. It incorporated texts from the radio, television, computer, school and city newspapers, informational and shopping magazines, daily conversations with peers and adults, team play books, and records of statistics. These texts were always nested within particular social practices where the act of reading was an important part of being intimately connected and up-to-date with the local, state, and national sports worlds. In addition, the reading took many forms and utilized a variety of skills (critical and strategic), whether it was reading the large amounts of text on popular sports websites, scanning the newspaper box scores, or reading multimodal advertisements for best performing shoes. Indeed, Marcus' reading practices related to sports were an integral part of his participation in a variety of social practices and communities, and will likely continue to be important for years to come.

Marcus' reading practices were largely multimodal in nature, as were other students' practices. Participating in the video game culture was the most obvious instance of a multimodal social practice. Like many of the boys in the class, video games were an important social and textual resource for Marcus. He engaged in conversations about video games and arranged times to visit friends to play multiple player games (at times up to 4 people on one game station, and many more when connected to the internet).

An integral part of the X-Box Live game station that Marcus and his friends played was the communication with those that were on his buddy list. One way they

would communicate was through text messaging on the video game screen. This was similar to using instant messenger on the Internet, or sending text messages with their phones. The second way that they communicated when playing the game was verbally. Using a headset with a microphone, Marcus would talk to the other players who were playing the game with him, whether they were down the street or in the country of Mexico.

In addition to video gaming, Marcus' multimodal textual experiences included information searching and evaluation on the Internet. Positioned as a "researcher" by his mother, Marcus utilized both hierarchal subject guides and search engines to find information that would help him compare cars and other family purchases. Not using the Consumer Reports website because it costs money to join, Marcus does the researching and compilation of information himself by going to a variety of websites (The National Highway Safety Association for crash test results; various car manufacturing websites) in order to "see what each car has and then compare them." He "[does] a lot of reading on that," to gather the information about the cars' features, safety tests, and prices to then make a recommendation to his parents about which car to pursue further. When looking to buy palm pilots, phones, or new sports equipment, or when exploring research on the physical effects and potential side effects of using certain protein shakes, Marcus was the "researcher in [the] whole family, according to his mother" Marcus' interest and ability to access and evaluate content on the internet was a valued practice in their household, and Marcus' mother recognized that Michael could make a lot of money one day because of these skills.



Summary: Marcus as a "Reader"

It is important to point out that most of Marcus' reading practices, as well as many of the other students in the class, were largely different than those that were privileged in the 9th grade English classroom, not necessarily "better" or "worse", or more or less complex than those in the classroom. Marcus' involvement in this rich array of literacy practices illustrates three patterns that were reflective of the students' personal reading practices, which were different than the reading practices of the classroom. The first is that Marcus' literacy practices consisted of reading multimodal texts or practices that involved many different modes. Film, television, internet, magazine, newspaper, and video games provide opportunities to utilize multiple modes for design, as well as meaning making. Students were actively engaging in a variety of practices that required their consumption of multimodal texts. Second, Marcus' reading practices afforded him possibilities of interaction. He was able to interact with multiple players in video games through a variety of ways, discuss baseball highlights seen on television with friends, and make decisions in a hypertext environment where each click of the mouse changes the future possible options. And third, the texts that were important to his reading practices were designed in such a way as to offer multiple paths for the reader to make sense of and construct personal readings (Kress, 2003). This (relative) openness that is seen in Marcus' video games can also be observed in the way he chooses how to read the box scores for his rival teams performance, or in the way that he chooses what to focus on when researching a website for automobile safety.

Summary

Through these two common literacy practices (i.e., teacher-led shared reading and assigned reading) and the interactions around texts (e.g., the quizzes and tests, and the joint creation of the list of strategies), Mrs. Oakley and the students came to define what it meant to read, to interpret and analyze texts, and to respond to and connect with texts. The teacher and students began to expand upon the construction of the reader to allow for reading to involve more social interaction (e.g., resisting solitary reading) as part of the reading process and to allow for the purposes of reading to include the "springboarding" to current issues unrelated to the details and analysis of the text. In the end, the expansion of the boundaries of reading are limited and the privileged forms of reading become the close analysis of fiction, as illustrated by the various assessments (e.g., quizzes and midterms).

The boundaries of what it means to be a reader were narrowly defined and became limiting for Marcus. He positioned himself as a "non-reader" (further maintaining the boundaries), which is in opposition to the privileged ways of being a reader in the classroom (e.g., reading large amounts of literature for pleasure, an individual and personally meaningful activity). Based on the constructions of the reader privileged in the classroom, Marcus fit the role of a "non-reader". However, when examining Marcus' textual practices outside of the boundaries established in the classroom, as compared to in-school and out of school boundaries, he was a reader who was engrossed in texts in several areas of his life (e.g., internet searching and evaluation, video gaming, sports involvement). Through the maintaining and expanding of reading practices, Mrs. Oakley and the students constructed the boundaries of reading in ways

that proved to exclude Marcus as a reader, having possible implications for his future literacy learning and participation as an English student.

CHAPTER 5: WRITING AND TEXTUAL PRODUCTION: MAINTAINING CONVENTIONS AND EXPANDING BOUNDARIES

While the boundaries of what it meant to read as "9th graders" were relatively narrowly constructed in the classroom, the boundaries of what counted as writing and textual production were expansive and wide reaching. Mrs. Oakley created many opportunities for students to produce texts that represented a variety of modes and genres, and were for a range of purposes. Writing and producing texts as 9th graders ranged from writing print-based persuasive and position essays to multimodal personal texts. Messages about the nature and purposes of writing became central to the construction of literacy and what it meant to study English as "9th graders" through the negotiation of three writing and textual practices: formal essay writing, representing and responding to literature, and personal writing.

Representing and Responding to Literature

Since the primary focus of Mrs. Oakley's 9th grade English class was the reading of selected literature and the analysis of characters and themes central to their plots, writing became an integral means to interacting with and responding to texts. Mrs. Oakley provided several production practices that centered on responding to or representing the literature texts they were reading as a class. Usually these production practices were worth a large percentage of their quarter grades and occurred when the class had finished reading a piece of literature. The primary purpose of the written events were to allow the students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the literature, as well as their ability to analyze from the literature that they had read together

as a class. The textual production that resulted form this practice took a range of forms during the year.

Responding to Literature in Essays

Essay quizzes and tests were one form of the responding and representing practice, which required students to respond in print to particular questions the teacher posed. The essay questions were intended to evaluate the way in which the students were able to draw upon what they read and discussed in class. For example, common response focused questions were: "Describe the newspaper clippings Lou Ann collects [and] discuss why she does this and what this reveals about her personality" (question related to the *Bean Trees* novel). The responses were written in class without the use of the text. The primary purpose of these written texts were to demonstrate through writing their understanding of the text, and their ability to recall and generalize about a character's personality from various parts of the texts (for more of a discussion of this practice, see discussion in chapter 4).

Expanding Response Texts: Multi-genre Texts

A second literacy event that students engaged in that reflected the response to literature practice was writing from a character's position in the novel. One example of this was after reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, when Mrs. Oakley provided six different options for students to write about, each asking them to pretend or imagine they were a character. Depending on the option they chose, they wrote a eulogy, an editorial, a letter, a dialog between two characters, or an entry in a diary (see Figure 8). This assignment afforded students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the novel and a

character's development by producing a text in a different genre than the essay exam form. Each of the questions pushed students to draw from the text, based on what they have come to know and think about a particular character (e.g., Arthur "Boo" Radley) and speculate as to what type of interaction or text might be created (e.g., a eulogy for Tom Robinson, or a letter to Bob Ewell).

Figure 8. Character Reflections for *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Directions: Choose ONE of the following options relating to our study of To Kill a Mockingbird.

1. Pretend you are Reverend Sykes. Write the eulogy that you will deliver at the funeral of the Tom Robinson.

2. Pretend you are Mr. Underwood. Write the editorial he wrote for the Maycomb Tribune regarding the trial of Tom Robinson

3. Imagine for a moment that Bob Ewell was not killed by Boo Radley. You are an attorney. Make up a lawyer name for yourself. Bob Ewell has asked that you defend him against the charge of attempted murder of the Finch children. Write a letter to Bob Ewell in which you agree to accept his case or reject it. Whichever decision you come to, be sure that you clearly explain it to Mr. Ewell.

4. Pretend you are Mayella Ewell. You have just learned of your father's "accident." Ever since Tom Robinson's conviction and subsequent death, you have wanted to tell Atticus Finch how much you regret having participated in the trial. Since the trial, you have come to realize that Atticus was not trying to "mock you" and you know that, because he is an accepting and caring individual, he will not betray your "confession" to anyone. Now that your father is dead and you no longer have to fear his wrath, you decide to tell Atticus your feelings and explain why you felt you had to do what you did. Write a dialogue between Mayella Ewell and Atticus on this subject.

5. Imagine that you are Scout. Several year have passed and you are still brooding about the fact that you and Jem never gave Boo Radley anything in return. Imagine that you see Boo again. Write a conversation with Mr. Authur Radley in which you apologize and Boo reacts to the apology.

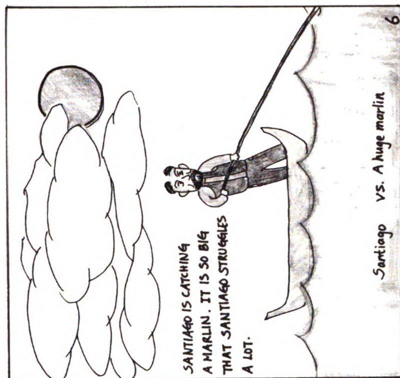
6. Imagine that you are Boo Radley. Write an entry in your diary in which you describe a typical day in your life.

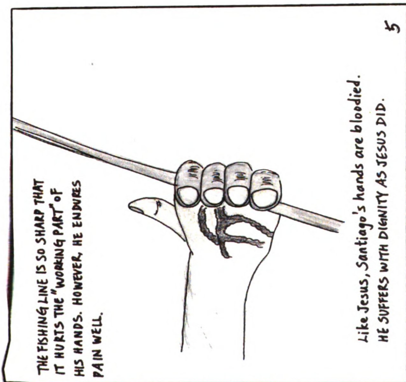
Similar to the purposes of the essay exams and the combined print/visual texts, the character speculation assignments centered on one of the official texts and expected the students to demonstrate their understanding of the text, by asking them to draw from the text to speculate on a character's action or interaction. The task was primarily focused on the content of what was written and required a particular orientation to reading the text, one that was consistent with the construction of the reader in the class as described in chapter four. Since the genre or the design of the multimodal text was deemphasized in these practices, these practices did not reflect an expansion of the textual diversity that was also part of the practice.

Expanding Response Texts: Print/Visual Multimodal Texts

In a conversation with Mrs. Oakley she explained how she believed that the class does enough of the formal literary responses. Therefore, Mrs. Oakley assigned opportunities other than essay tests for students to respond to and represent an official text they read, expanding the appropriate ways of responding and demonstrating knowledge of the text. For two of the novels during the year, students produced texts as part of a "culminating activity", where they combined print with visual design. The first assignment was a "reduction" of their first novel of the year, Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, into "essential happenings". Mrs. Oakley asked them to create a reduction of the novel, where she wrote in the assignment sheet that the purpose was to "crystallize the novel into its essential and significant parts...and will also help you remember the storyline of the novel for the rest of your life." Each student represented the novel by selecting 12 significant events, and illustrating them on large white poster board paper in graphic novel form, with quotes and plot lines beneath each picture. The

Figure 9. Two Frames of Stephen's *Old Man and the Sea* "Reduction" Text





students included three references to symbolism and some representation of the literary thematic elements of heroic code and grace under pressure, which they discussed in class when reading the novel. Many of the students produced extremely well detailed and colorful texts. They were displayed during the class so others could look at the projects, and then a few particularly colorful and well-detailed projects were displayed on the wall of the room (see Figure 9).

Texts that combined print with visual media became a common textual practice. In another "culminating activity", students created a Turning Points Scrapbook about a character from Barbara Kingsolver's *Bean Trees*. Students selected eight points in the development of the character they chose and created a page that illustrated and described the "turning point". Since they had already created a scrapbook of their own "turning points" (explained in more detail in the "personal writing" section), the students were familiar with the structure of the scrapbook that Mrs. Oakley was intending: a story about the turning point, a message about what was learned, and visual symbols representing the turning point.

Most students followed a fairly common textual design, like James' scrapbook (see Figure 10). Each of the eight pages reflected a standard print essay in paragraph form. Between the turning point story and the message was a visual representation, either drawn or clipped from a magazine or a website. The images inserted into the text usually illustrated one of the important concepts that the student was trying to convey in the print part of the text (e.g., holding hands representing friendship as illustrated in James' text).

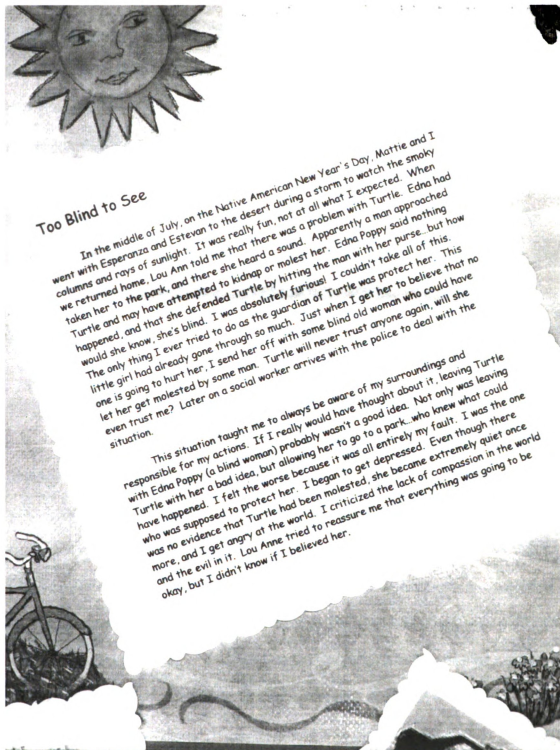
Figure 10. James' "Turning Point" Text

Another significant turning point that happened in my life was when I met Esperanza and Estevan. Esperanza and Estevan are a married couple and are friends of Mattie from Guatemala city; "The man had been an English teacher in Guatemala City." Estevan could actually speak better English than any of us. We were all having a picnic near a beautiful creek when I was introduced to him. It was Mattie, Lou Ann, Dwayne Ray, Esperanza, Estevan, Turtle, and I. Esperanza and Estevan had lost there family and friends including their daughter Ismene because Guatemala was at war and the the enemy government took these people so that Esperanza and Estevan would feed them information. It was very hard to listen to what they had to go through. When Esperanza stares at Turtle, Estevan explains to me that she reminds her of there daughter. I sort of developed a crush on Estevan as I became more and more of his friend. This was a significant turning point for me because getting to know these people led me to have two more very supportive and caring friends.

Friendship

I have learned a lot from meeting Esperanza and Estevan. From their stories, I now know and understand how and why there are so many illegal immigrates in the United States. This made me want to hold on to them even tougher because the thought of them leaving me was unexplainable. Estevan's "hell and heaven" story was very interesting and made me realize how much I really do like Estevan and how much I admire his intelligence. The was about how in hell, people sit around a big table with plenty of food, starving to death because they must eat with long-handed spoons and cannot manage to get the spoons in their mouths. He says that in heaven, the people use long-handed spoons to feed one another. Estevan then feeds Turtle, who has been struggling with her food, a new piece of pineapple.

Figure 11. Brianna's "Turning Point" Text



Too Blind to See

In the middle of July, on the Native American New Year's Day, Mattie and I went with Esperanza and Estevan to the desert during a storm to watch the smoky columns and rays of sunlight. It was really fun, not at all what I expected. When we returned home, Lou Ann told me that there was a problem with Turtle. Edna had taken her to the park, and there she heard a sound. Apparently a man approached Turtle and may have attempted to kidnap or molest her. Edna Poppy said nothing happened, and that she defended Turtle by hitting the man with her purse...but how would she know, she's blind. I was absolutely furious! I couldn't take all of this. The only thing I ever tried to do as the guardian of Turtle was protect her. This little girl had already gone through so much. Just when I get her to believe that no one is going to hurt her, I send her off with some blind old woman who could have let her get molested by some man. Turtle will never trust anyone again, will she even trust me? Later on a social worker arrives with the police to deal with the situation.

This situation taught me to always be aware of my surroundings and responsible for my actions. If I really would have thought about it, leaving Turtle with Edna Poppy (a blind woman) probably wasn't a good idea. Not only was leaving Turtle with her a bad idea, but allowing her to go to a park...who knew what could have happened. I felt the worse because it was all entirely my fault. I was the one who was supposed to protect her. I began to get depressed. Even though there was no evidence that Turtle had been molested, she became extremely quiet once more, and I get angry at the world. I criticized the lack of compassion in the world and the evil in it. Lou Anne tried to reassure me that everything was going to be okay, but I didn't know if I believed her.

For a few students, the textual design reflected less of the formal written essay text and more consistent with that of a multimodal scrapbook. Brianna's pages of her project (see Figure 11) were designed in such a way that the print was off-center and rotated left slightly. The border of the printed text was designed and a different color than the background. These features allowed for a visual separation between the print and the rest of the text, where the image was not simply an insertion into the essay (as in James' page in Figure 10). The spatial and visual separation of the print from the rest of the larger page worked to deemphasize the essay-like qualities of the text and highlighted the scrapbook genre and the possibilities for multimodality that were there to utilize. The print of Brianna's text was also more informal (e.g., Brianna writes, "Not only was leaving Turtle with her a bad idea, but allowing her to go to the park…who knew what could have happened"), again reflecting the personal and intimate way that the character might have designed a scrapbook of her "turning points".

By providing the students with an opportunity to design a non-traditional essay response text, Mrs. Oakley provided different possibilities and resources for the students to construct their text. Providing the visual and spatial mode of representation offered students new "ways of conceptualizing, thinking, and communicating" (Kress, 2000b, p. 195). As each mode has its affordances and constraints, combining the two modes of linguistic and visual offered students different possibilities than if they were to just write responses to essay questions. It allowed students opportunities to construct a setting and theme and to reflect a "style" of the character, that they might not been able to do without these modes of representation. While the scrapbooks provided opportunities for students to explore the "turning points" for a character, they also provided opportunities to value

other forms of design than the traditional print-based, which dominates English texts in schools.

Maintaining Print and Content in Multimodal Texts

With these writing events there was a strong concern for engaging the students in literary analysis, especially character development, during this first year in high school English. Therefore, although Mrs. Oakley provided opportunities for expanding the privileged texts of the classroom, the central focus of *The Old Man and the Sea* "reduction" activity and the *Bean Trees* Turning Points scrapbook was to evaluate the students' understanding and analysis of the novel. The focus was on producing a representation of the novel in a "reduction" form. As a result, much of the attention and emphasis of the assignments remained on the assessment of the print, and whether or not the student had an accurate and in-depth understanding of the official text.

The lack of emphasis on the visual production of the text was partly due to the fact that assessment of visual and spatial aspects of texts were unclear, when compared to the print-based text. Mrs. Oakley made explicit on the assignment sheet for the reduction assignment for *The Old Man and the Sea* that the students were not assessed based on their "artistic talent, per se," but on their "neatness and attention to detail." Discussions about expectations of what consisted a neat and detailed text were non-existent. At times, Mrs. Oakley would hold up a project that was particularly careful in detail (and usually drawn fairly realistically), and say, "Isn't this wonderful." She would hang up certain projects on the classroom walls recognizing texts that she described as examples of being created with thought and meticulous detail. She often told the class that many of the projects looked beautiful and looked like they spent lots of time on them. Often the

reactions from students would reveal what they thought good texts were. When looking at Brianna's scrapbook, which was about twice the size of most students' scrapbook (in order to fit all the carefully chosen colorful overlapping text and pictures), Marcus remarked to his peers that Brianna was going to receive "tons of extra credit" for her work. It was obvious to him that, even without reading her scrapbook, Brianna's text was impressive and would be valued by Mrs. Oakley just by the visual design alone.

Mrs. Oakley and the students had not explicitly discussed what distinguished a "good" multimodal (especially visual and spatial) text from a "less good" text, although there were implicit standards that were followed having to do with details and neatness. There were no rubrics for evaluating the design of the scrapbooks, the way there were rubrics for the formal assignments. While there is a grammar (which is in the developing stages) for visual representation (Kress, 2003, p. 163), in the English classroom it was not established and conventionalized in the way that students' formal writing (e.g., 5 paragraph essays) was presented and evaluated. Therefore, in these practices, the print-based aspects of the texts were highlighted during the evaluation, advantaging print-based text over the visual and spatial aspects of the texts.

Scrapbooks and other multimodal texts expanded the possibilities of the classroom, enabling space for other normally unsanctioned texts and practices to enter the official space of the classroom. While these practices were important in expanding writing texts in the classroom, they ultimately were unfulfilled in the possible ways they might have led to valuing the diverse textual practices available. Importantly, students did not receive explicit guidelines or have a comprehensive understanding of what distinguished a good design from a bad one, except for one's attention to detail and the

appearance of the amount of time put into the project. Additionally, students were graded on the content they provided (although extra credit for especially detailed pieces like Brianna's), and the printed aspects of the text. Therefore, James and Brianna's text were both seen as exemplars and shown to other English classes, although Brianna's multimodal design was much more characteristic of the scrapbook genre. Ultimately, the lack of attention provided to design in the construction and assessment of the texts worked to maintain the traditional aspects of the practice, privileging the print aspects of the text and official goal of recalling details from the text.

"It's almost like writing notes to each other, but using the literature too": Hybrid Writing Practices and Opportunities for Expansion

While goal of responding to official texts remained consistent throughout many literacy events, the genre of texts were expanded to reflect a variety of different forms. These practices were important spaces for facilitating the dialogic interaction between the official and unofficial texts and practices, and further valuing textual diversity and students' personal literacies in the classroom.

The Novel Buddies letters that the students wrote to each other for the Novel Buddies project (see chapter 4 for more detail of Novel Buddies project) were an important expansion of the representing writing practice. After individually reading a few chapters of the selected book each day, students wrote letters to one or two other students who were reading the same book. The assignment sheet (in Appendix D) that Mrs. Oakley handed out described the letter as a "personal letter," where they could discuss their "response[s] to the novel…focus[ing] on section[s] [they] found particularly fascinating, shocking, surprising, enlightening, etc." In addition, she writes that they

should talk about characters, what they are learning about the historical context, how they relate to a character or how they would respond in a particular situation, as well as any emerging themes they notice in the book. "So many things to talk about as you read," Mrs. Oakley writes in the assignment sheet. Although the letters were to be "personal," according to the assignment sheet, the letters were very similar to the literature response practices described above (e.g., demonstrate understanding, discuss thematic and character analyses). However, Mrs. Oakley pointed out during the discussion of the assignment that:

> Mrs. Oakley: You get to write these to each other, it's almost like writing notes to each other, but using the literature too.
> Cadence: Ugh
> Mrs. Oakley: I know occasionally you will talk about personal things in the letter too.

Mrs. Oakley recognized that Cadence and Skye saw these letters as opportunities for them to write about personal issues to each other, which they had voiced in the previous class period (Cadence mentioned that she was going through a personal relationship that was similar to the character in the book).

The students in the classroom wrote letters to each other, describing and responding to the book they were reading. Like other students, Cadence utilized this opportunity to integrate her social relationships and personal literacies into the classroom hybrid literacy event. Figure 12 shows Cadence's first letter to Skye, after reading four chapters of *Children of the River* (Linda Crew, 1991).

Figure 12. Cadence's First "Novel Buddies" Letter to Skye

Hey, I'd rather be writing you a casual note, but...... yeah~ anyhoo, Sundara, right. I don't know, I think she was very brave. She seems like the type of person that I would be friends with. I really like "Children of the Wind" so far, even though I've only read 4 chapters hahaha... She's very brave, to help her Aunt and Uncle with her younger cousin, and to ask complete strangers for help on the ship. And this Jonathen character... hmm... he sounds HOTT! LOL... yeayuh I also noticed that they use a lot of "Indian" terms like "sarong" and I love how they call flip-flops "thongs." Do you think that Sundara and Chun-Ling will become friends??!! I think it's very cool how the author, Linda Crew put herself in their shoes like how they didn't know what a football game was, and their reaction when they saw, and heard the crowd. I thought that was intresting

for some reason I feel really close to Sundara, I don't know why. Maybe it's because Sundara's relationship with Jonathen reminds me so much of his and mine. Not allowed to date, I mean, at least I'm allowed to date when I'm 16. But her husband is

Figure 12 continued.

CHOSEN for her, she can't marry
for love. *sigh* LOL I mean, you
can't CONTROL your emotions.
If you like someone, you gotta
go for it! This is such a chick book...
I love it! I dunno, oh, also, new
developments on the Rachel/Ken
relationship. letcha know later I'll
write you a note tomorrow... anyhoo,
back to the book... Sundara seems
like me alot I think. I mean, she cares
about kids, as do I. I relate to
her in alot of ways. where exactly
IS cambodia? seriosly? I mean
is it even in North America.
anyhoo, what is your favorite
character, part, ect... was there anything
you didn't get? well, I should
go, ttyl. (talk to ya later)

LYLAS (love ya like a sister)

While starting her letter off by stating that she would rather be writing just a "casual note" to Skye, Cadence continued to write an informal letter focusing on some of the areas that Mrs. Oakley wanted the students to direct their attention to in their letters (e.g., initial impressions of the characters, things they noticed when reading). There were many differences between this letter and Cadence's usual classroom writing. First, she wrote simple sentence constructions and in a form that resembled a dialog (or an invitation to a dialogue), including interrogatives and shared knowledge. Second, Cadence utilized abbreviations and graphical constructions (e.g., "lol" [laugh out loud],

sigh) reflecting personal textual resources, which were unsanctioned in other practices privileged in the classroom. Finally, she wrote about topics that would normally be unsanctioned in a formal essay response, specifically her romantic relationship and inability to formally date Ken (whose code name Cadence and Skye created so Mrs. Oakley did not know). Throughout the letters, the relationship with Ken resurfaced and became a point of social connection between herself and Skye, where Mrs. Oakley was on the outside. The affordances and constraints of the genre allowed for Cadence to construct "a response" to this reading in a way that was significantly different than if she were writing an in-class essay response.

This writing practice afforded Cadence the opportunity to integrate experiences and textual resources that would otherwise be unsanctioned from the classroom. The design of Cadence's letters about the novel resembled the form of her online journal (see Figure 13). While Cadence engaged in a variety of textual practices in many aspects of her life, one area that was important to her was her on-line space. On her website, Cadence shared music lyrics she had written, "rant[ed] about stuff going on in [her] head" in a journal, and posted her stories written in past classes asking friends for feedback. She was quite proficient in each of the genres of writing. When examining her journaling practices on the website, it became clear that Cadence utilized this informal, personal "ranting" genre in ways that she (and others) found important and meaningful.

Figure 13. A Section of Cadence's Online journal

2/15/05
Oh! this week were watching PEAR HARBOR in us history...Ben Affleck...Josh Harnett...*drools all over the keyboard* lol we took evil notes in science today, and then we had that weird quiz thingy...yeah, anyhoo, I had a bad day!!!! But its all good now...I got to go to piano and write some more music...

Clearly, her "Novel Buddies" letters reflected her textual resources important to her journaling on the website, utilizing the informal and intimate style. While Mrs. Oakley provided space for Cadence and other students to incorporate unsanctioned knowledge and textual resources into class, truly reflecting students' practices and expanding school definitions remain a tricky situation, as Cadence shares in her letter. As a result of the "Novel Buddies" letter being a hybrid between a school task (i.e., demonstrating knowledge of book) and a personal literacy practice (i.e., writing a personal letter to a friend), the practice would unlikely ever reflect the kind of text that Cadence might send to Skye, or the type of text that Cadence writes on her online journal. Cadence wrote about this often in her letters. She signaled in the letter that she would write about more personal information (e.g., "new developments on the Cadence/Ken relationship. letca know later. I'll write you a note tomorrow") and that it would be much more enjoyable writing about topics other than the book they were required to read. In part of her second letter (one which she chose to type), Cadence highlights this difference (see Figure 14).

Figure 14. A Section of Cadence's Third "Novel Buddies" Letter to Skye

> Yeah, all my letters are turning out to be VERY friendly. I mean, all I want to talk about is boys. I would say that Sundara's and Jonathan's relationships remind me of yours and Jack's (code name. I donno, let me know if you come up with a better one.) yeaya!

The nature of the assignment allowed for Cadence to engage in some of the same design practices and social topics that she was able to do in her journal. She also engaged

in some thoughtful reflection on the book, which was the teacher's main goal. This writing practice allowed for expanded ways of engaging with texts, integrating students' experiences and textual resources.

Formal Writing: Maintaining Official Writing Practices

> A unitary language makes its real presence felt as a force for overcoming this heteroglossia, imposing specific limits to it, guaranteeing a certain maximum of mutual understanding and crystallizing into a real…unity (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 270).

In the midst of textually diverse and stratifying practices, pressures remain and limits are imposed that work towards the stability of the official practices (i.e., conventions, privileged genres). These pressures for centralizing and limiting language to defend a formalized and unified official system of language "from the pressure of growing heteroglossia" were most evident in the formal Writing Lab events (p. 271). The formal writing that students engaged in during Writing Lab became an integral practice in defining what it meant to write in the classroom, and was an important force in maintaining official writing practices. The Writing Lab was the formal "seminar" integrated into all first-year English courses. During four separate weeks of the year (four one-week periods spread out over the year), Mrs. Porter (another English teacher) led the class in a week-long formal writing seminar. During the week, the students would be given a few essay prompts with the task of writing a formal essay in response to the prompt during the week. They spent class time outlining their ideas, developing theses statements, writing rough drafts, editing each other's essays, and writing final copies. Once finished, Mrs. Porter and a group of English teachers evaluated the essays. The essays included a variety of topics (e.g., characters or themes in official and unofficial

texts, whether or not to allow cell-phones in school), all with the goal of improving students' expository writing.

'Being' Verbs and "Being" Intelligent in the Writing Lab

Two patterns pertaining to the construction of what it meant to write in 9th grade English were significant to the Writing Lab practice, and the maintaining of official practices of English. The first pattern was the recurring attention to the students' language use. During the first week-long session in early fall, the students learned that the focus of their time during the lab, and the assistance that Mrs. Porter would provide for the students, would be directed towards the mechanics and stylistic features of their writing, one major area[11] of the state assessment they would take their junior year. Within the area of mechanics, Mrs. Porter told the class that they would focus on "upgrading vocabulary," and specifically on 'being' verbs (i.e., is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been). As part of the Writing Lab curriculum, Mrs. Porter handed out a sheet titled, "Strengthening sentences: Lesson #1: Being verbs." The document lists a short definition of "being verbs" and "action verbs" and a few strategies and examples for how to "eliminate 'being' verbs in your writing." These elimination strategies included replacing 'being' verbs with action verbs to "provide more information," "to clarify meaning," and to "eliminate the monotonous repetition of being verbs."

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[11] The four areas measured in the state mandated writing assessments were content, mechanics, organization, and style. These four areas were presented to the students during these writing lab sessions to be important to those grading the state assessments in their junior years. The state assessments were rarely explicitly discussed in Mrs. Oakley's ninth grade classroom. The only times that I heard anyone mention the state assessments were just a few times during these writing lab sessions.

From this writing session early in the year up until the last writing session in April, the students were reminded to focus their attention on their use of 'being' verbs. They circled and counted all 'being' verbs in their drafts, as well as the drafts of their peers when editing, making sure to stay under the number of 'being' verbs Mrs. Porter established. After having circled the 'being' verbs, they substituted words that were more "precise" or "specific" and/or showed movement. Mrs. Porter and Mrs. Oakley modeled the type of substituting that was expected of students by giving examples of this kind of "variation" in their language. After the teachers' presentation for substituting 'being' verbs, Mrs. Porter did inform the students that it may not always be appropriate to fully eliminate all 'being' verbs; however, changing them, she reminds them, makes you "sound more sophisticated."

The emphasis on few to no 'being' verbs was one of the important and explicit rules that became central to writing in the formal writing practice, as illustrated in the following set of fieldnotes.

> It was nearing the end of the class period and students were reading individually at their seats. Marcus looks up from his book, smiling, and asks me "why do they teach you the 'being' verbs if they tell you later that you are not supposed to use them." After a response from Mrs. Oakley about how difficult it would be to not use them in your speech, I ask Marcus:
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | David: | Is this the first year that you were told to try not to— |
> | Marcus: | Yeah, I just don't understand why they tell us now, when we have learned [to write 'being' verbs] all along. |
> | | . . . |
> | David: | How many being verbs did you use in your letters? (As part of the Novel Buddies assignment, students wrote letters back and forth to one another about the book they were reading together.) |

Marcus:	I used a million
James:	I just wrote it.
Marcus:	I don't pay attention unless I'm writing a final copy, I don't pay attention.

Marcus wanted to know why "they" enforce this rule now when they could have just told them from the beginning not to use 'being' verbs in their writing. Why this is the first time in their writing careers that they have explored the possibilities of using more active verbs in place of 'being' verbs is a reasonable question. It might be the case that "they" (e.g., English teachers or classroom teachers) have never before been so explicit about this particular writing strategy. It might also be the nature of Marcus' and the students' understanding of the lessons. For Marcus, eliminating 'being' verbs seems to be more of a "rule" enforced by English teachers and those distanced from he and the students than a flexible strategy for creating diverse sentence patterns and constructions.

With a bit of questioning on my part, Marcus and James discussed the way in which their use of 'being' verbs may differ depending on the text. For many of the students, eliminating 'being' verbs became a rule enforced from outside of the classroom by the English teachers grading the essays (e.g., "How many can we use?"), not something that was going to change the quality of their writing, or something that depended on the audience and/or purpose of the text. When writing reflective essays of what they learned in Writing Lab and what they still have to improve, students cited 'being' verbs as an area of improvement. Cadence writes, "I still struggle with being verbs, and I think I always will." From the beginning of class to the end, students understood that they were to eliminate as many 'being' verbs from their writing as possible, even if as James writes in his reflection, "it just takes me a while to think of the possible substitutions for the being verbs."

Rubrics and Outlines: Regulating Conventions in the Writing Lab

The second pattern that was important for the construction of writing in the Writing Lab, and maintaining the official practices of the classroom, was that the students were exposed to and held responsible for conforming to the conventions for expository and persuasive writing. These conventions (i.e., one sentence thesis statements, using quotes for evidence, the introduction-detail-detail-detail-conclusion essay genre) were strictly regulated by the formulaic guidelines for each essay, which conveyed the appropriate way of writing the essay. The two most common essays that students wrote as part of Writing Lab were expository and persuasive essays, each with their own standardized formula for composing it. For the expository essay (see Figure 15), students were to follow the five-paragraph essay structure, down to the individual paragraph sentences (e.g., topic sentence, first example, second example, etc.). Many students jotted notes down on the outline for each section before writing their draft. One way that the students learned and reinforced the structure of these essay formats were with their peer editing. The students checked off "yes" or "no" for questions about the other student's essay. Of particular importance were how well the student followed the paragraph and essay structure, reduced their use of 'being' verbs, and whether the student included enough sentences and details in each paragraph. Similar to the expository essay, the persuasive essay outline consisted of three to four paragraphs, leading the student into introducing the topic, acknowledging the oppositional view, providing support for the author's view by including prior knowledge and two quotes from the article given to them, and finally, restating the position and ending with a "creative idea."

Figure 15. Outline Students used for Expository Essays Written in Writing Lab

Outline for Essay
Topic:

I. Intro Paragraph

A. Two to three opening sentences
B. Thesis Statement

II. Body Paragraph One

A. Topic Sentence
B. First example
Detail
C. Second example
Detail
D. Third example
Detail
E. Concluding Sentence

III. Body Paragraph Two

A. Topic Sentence
B. First example
Detail
C. Second example
Detail
D. Third example
Detail
E. Concluding Sentence

IV. Body Paragraph Three

A. Topic Sentence
B. First example
Detail
C. Second example
Detail
D. Third example
Detail
E. Concluding Sentence

V. Concluding Paragraph

A. Re-wording of thesis

B. Final Comments

The assessment of the Writing Lab texts strictly regulated the process and structure of the essays. Students' final assessment consisted of completion of all five parts of the writing process (i.e., outline of essay, two rough drafts, self editing, peer editing, and final copy). In addition, successfully writing the expository and persuasive texts involved adopting and following the structure of the essay outline, and making sure that all the parts were included (e.g., two quotes, topic sentences, correctly placed thesis,

etc.). Therefore, students were evaluated on how well their essays aligned with the conventions of the genre that were established and given to the students, more so than the content and articulation of their ideas.

The Writing Lab practice was like no other practice in the classroom. It was regulated and institutionalized from outside the classroom in the way that it was set apart from the day-to-day events and by the formal evaluation with multiple external graders. As a result of this writing being positioned as an institutionally privileged practice, the writing that the students engaged in during the Writing Lab sessions was important to the construction of writing in the classroom. Messages about what it meant to write formally and "officially" were embedded in students' comments about the importance of needing to "work on" being verbs, as well as the rigid formulaic outlines that textual production required.

Personal Writing

While the formal English curriculum emphasized expository and persuasive writing, in addition to writing/production in response to the official texts, Mrs. Oakley made space in the curriculum for diverse textual events that focused on issues central to their experiences and lives. Early in the year, the activities were meant to introduce the students to each other through creating and sharing a variety of autobiographical texts. As the year progressed, she engaged the students in writing poetry, personal scrapbooks, interviews and biographies of family members, writing about their beliefs and experiences on certain issues they would read about (e.g., adoption or abuse, which were topics important to *Bean Trees*), drawing their childhood neighborhoods, and writing their "3 year letter" (a letter written to themselves that Mrs. Oakley mails to them for

their high school graduation). Writing in Mrs. Oakley's class, in addition to the expository writing mentioned above, included the production of personally motivated texts about memories and reflections of childhood, family and friends, and things gained and lost.

Mrs. Oakley's Poetry: An Introduction to Being an Author

Writing and producing texts that captured moments in time and that drew from personal experience became a common practice in the classroom. One way that this practice became valued in the classroom was through Mrs. Oakley modeling herself as a writer and poet and sharing her poetry with the class. Poetry and other forms of texts were important ways of capturing moments and telling stories, and this point came to the forefront during a class period when the class read and discussed a poem that Mrs. Oakley had written.

> The students were sitting at their desks and Mrs. Oakley asked them to grab the poem that she had handed out to them. Mrs. Oakley told the class that this is a poem that she had written, and Cadence asks to confirm, "You wrote this?" Mrs. Oakley tells the class whom the poem is about, and several students recognized the name, some started telling stories of the boy who was a few years older. The boy committed suicide almost three years before, and she wrote the poem after having the boy in her 7th grade class, and after attending and reflecting upon the boy's funeral. The following is an excerpt of the poem.
>
> > . . .
> > And he wrote poems
> > That relatives read
> > At his memorial service.
> > Poems about being on his own

With no parents to tell him what to do.
Poems about windows
And touching things through the glass
Beyond the glass
And how that contact with the strawberries,
Like the summer rain,
Made him smile,
Remembering how the water tumbled off
The side of the berry,
Ripe for his lips.
Poems about just being there
Listening to good ole day stories at family reunions
Or listening to the Vietnam stories
From the guy in the park
With the metal plate in his head.
Poems that just
Gave thanks
For a dad that was always there, always
Generous with his advice, his time.
...

Mrs. Oakley mentioned to the class that during the funeral the parents had displayed many of the poems that the boy had written for her 7th grade class, a year before his death. The parents told her that they were grateful for having his poetry to remember him.

The reading and discussion of this poem was crucial for the students in revealing the impact that texts can have as both a powerful tool to capture a moment in time with powerful and beautiful language. The poems were a way for her to secure this tragic moment in time and share her thoughts and reflections with others. Additionally, the boy's poems displayed at the funeral represented the way in which students could be "authors," writing "real" texts that have an impact on other people, compared to texts that are solely for school assignments, that are often chucked in the trash after receiving a grade. The poems that the boy wrote as part of Mrs. Oakley's class became one way for his parents and others to remember him. This message of the role of poetry and other

texts was central to this literacy event, and continued to be important for students as they wrote their own poetry in the following weeks.

Students as Poets/Authors/Designers

Armed with a packet of poems they had read and analyzed as part of the class' poetry study, the students had the opportunity of creating their own powerful poem, capturing a moment or story of personal experience or reflection. With the task of writing a poem 30 lines or more about either some kind of loss they have experienced, or related to a theme or topic of one of the poems they have read in class, many students wrote about life changing events, moments with siblings, and reflections on loss, love, and family. Writing about a powerful incident that changed her life, Skye (who struggled to turn in many of the assignments during the year) managed to write a poem that captured the sounds and feeling of her last moments with her Grandmother (see Figure 16). Marcus captured the loss and desire to reclaim his sister's friendship (see Figure 17).

Figure 16. Skye's Poem Dedicated to Her Grandmother

February 28th
By: Skye

February 28th, 2000 I lost a dear friend
Hoses in her nose and side
Hospital room dark and damp
Only sounds from the respirator echoed throughout the room
Her chest rose slowly and collapsed with every exhale
I held her hand and desperately tried to remember the good times
Christmas day, only smiles
No one knew what lay down on the road ahead
Junie B. Jones she once read to me
As she sipped from her satiny red wine
Everyday I saw her, so healthy so strong
Her pearly white smile lit up the room

Aging was unknown to her
Her eyes still young
Skin had just begun to wrinkle, in the most beautiful way
She kept the family as one
She was the strong one
And there I sat watching her take her final breaths
In so much pain
Trying to hold on
Her fingers grew limp with every struggling breath she took
My heart grew weak as silent tears rolled down my stained cheeks
Her always-warm skin was now cold and clammy
Color slowly faded from her face
Her eyes remained shut
I could only imagine the tired grey look that had befallen them
As she laid there silent slowly losing her battle, he made the decision
The doctor returned to the room, the family talked in whispers, as not to let us children over hear
I knew she would not suffer anymore, as they the shut the respirator off
The room was deathly quiet
Only the sounds of carts going by the medications for the patients who still had a chance
Her chest rose one last time and fell
Her hand let go
Silent tears now sobs
Six months to a year cut down to nine days
We sat silent, watching her peaceful body
One by one we kissed her goodbye and walked away
A strong independent woman had lost her life
A piece of me was gone
February 28th, 2000
I lost a dear friend

I dedicate this poem to my grandmother who died of cancer on February 28th, 2000. She meant a lot to me and I will never forget her. She was truly my dearest friend. So in Loving Memory of my Grandmother.

Figure 17. Marcus' Poem about His Sister

"A Sister is a friend provided by nature."
-Legouve Pere

Big Sis
By: Marcus

It's quiet now,
But quiet isn't always a good thing.
It seems everything around me is leaving,
Just like you did last summer.
I hate to say it but I actually feel that I really miss you.
When I was little I hated to even be near you,
Now I wish I could talk to you.
I find it amazing what distance can do to siblings.
I was counting the days until you left,
Now I am counting the days until you comeback.

In elementary school you constantly put me down,
Either I was too fat, too slow, or too stupid to be your brother.
I remember I would wish for years that I could defend myself against you,
Eventually that day would come.
Until then I would have to try to fight back,
I always lost.
I remember how dad would defend me,
Even when I started it.
Now I feel how you felt,
It's the same exact scenario with Chris.

The day had finally came,
I had no idea about what was going to happen.
The lawn had just been cut.
I walked into the office,
We mixed words,
But nothing physical.
I walked away,
You came after me.
The can of pop was poured over my head,
I went ballistic.
We fought,
You gave me a scar,
I won the fight.
To this day I am deeply sorry for what I had done.
I thought that I was getting revenge,
Now I turn there is no such thing as revenge.
I am truly sorry,
I miss you,
I hope I have not lost you.

In many instances, the personal texts became important in the lives of the students outside of the classroom. Marcus' mother heard about the poem and it sparked a conversation with him about the relationship between he and his sister. In the dedication to her poem, Ella mentions one of her friends who helped her find the courage "to write the poem and share it with others". Students pleaded for Mrs. Oakley to hand back the Turning Points scrapbook so they could show their parents and friends. The nature of these practices encouraged students to take the text seriously, to make it personal (i.e., writing about a life altering incident), and in many cases, to share their writing with others. In a sense, when engaged in these literacy practices, they truly became authors of authentic texts, as did the boy who wrote poetry that family members and guests at the funeral read in Mrs. Oakley's poem.

One of the purposes of writing these personal texts, unlike the expository texts above, was for the students to find them valuable outside of the classroom. In fact, the 3-year letter was never to be read by anyone but the students themselves. Mrs. Oakley promised the students that she would not read it, and would just look at it to make sure it was a letter that met the requirements of the assignment to give credit. This letter was a text that was truly intended to be meaningful for the students outside of the borders of the 9th grade classroom.

When creating their personal Turning Points scrapbook, Mrs. Oakley told the class that creating it was more for them than it is for her, emphasizing the importance of seeing the text as something that they could keep for personal use. The scrapbook that the students created were eight page booklets that focused on eight turning points, or memorable events in which they learned something important about themselves, other

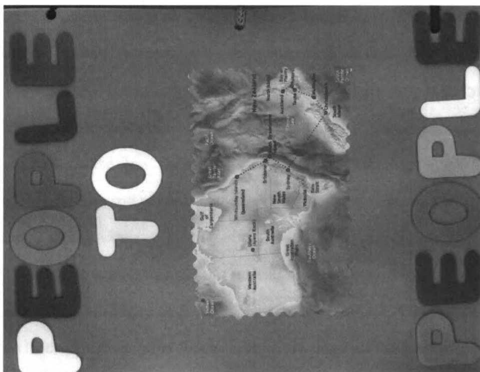
people, or the world. On each of the eight pages of the booklet were written descriptions of the experience and a discussion of the lessons they learned as a result of the experience. Students combined several resources, including clip art from the computer, their own drawing, photos, and construction paper in order to personalize and represent their turning point. The scrapbooks provided a space for students to record important events in their lives, and do so in a multimodal form. Representative of the students' scrapbooks is Ella's scrapbook (see Figure 18). On multicolored paper, with large letters at the top that rose from the page, and a handmade cloth binding, Ella's

Figure 18. One of Ella's "Turning Points"

Last year during the school year, I had an exchange student living with me. While she was here I developed an urge to travel overseas myself. I researched numerous exchange programs before I stumbled across one entitled, People to People; Student Ambassadors. I learned that this program was founded by President Dwight D Eisenhower in hopes of promoting peace among the nations. People to People takes students ranging from 5th to 12th grade overseas for a period of 2-3weeks. I also discovered that you travel with around 40 other delegates and about 3 teachers to a handful of different countries. Depending on what program you choose you travel to different countries including Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, France, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Austria, Italy, England, Belgium, The Netherlands, Greece, Malta, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, China and Japan. After learning more about the program I decided this was the one for me. I wouldn't have to miss school since the trips take place during the summer and I wouldn't be gone for a long period of time. I discussed my plan with my parents and they agreed to let me go after a great deal of persuasion. I applied for the program, and was accepted, along with two of my friends and we were informed that we would be traveling to Australia and New Zealand for a period of 20 days, between July and August 2005 with other delegates from the Michigan area.

Even though I haven't traveled with this program yet, I've already learned a great deal about myself and others. I've learned to be assertive when it comes to your goals; because nothing is going to be handed to you. Luckily my parents didn't require me to pay for my trip, but my friends' mothers did. I've helped fundraise for their first payment of tuition. This took a lot of dedication and determination; something I didn't realize I had. I've also learned that the adults in my life install a massive amount of trust in me. Not many parents would allow their 14 year old daughter to go gallivanting halfway across the world. Especially without being allowed to be there every step of the way to keep a watchful eye. The teachers who chose me to participate in this program also showed trust in me. I will be acting as an ambassador for my country, and they trusted me enough to allow me to meet with government officials as well as ordinary people on behalf of all Americans. That to me says a lot, I feel honored to be allowed to partake in this experience and extremely lucky to do so at 14.

Figure 18 continued.



Scrapbook displayed many personal design decisions that she made when creating this scrapbook, beyond those that she chose to write about as turning points. The "Turning Point" illustrated in Figure 18 is about Ella's opportunity to participate in a student exchange program.

One aspect of the personal writing and producing practice that differed from the expository texts and responses to literature practices was that the personal writing texts were more public than those other texts of the classroom. Sharing these personal texts with others in the class were part of the practice, at times even having students write comments about each other's texts. For the Turning Points scrapbooks, each text was responded to at least three times by another student in the class. During the sharing of these texts, students were actively seeking out their peers in order to "read" their

scrapbooks (Anthony called out from the front of the room, "Marcus, I want to read your scrapbook"). As can be seen in the three students who responded to Ella's scrapbook (see Figure 19), students responded to the personal experiences (e.g., "cool that you got to spend time with that [exchange] student"), as well as design decisions (e.g., "you had fun with the felt letters; you put a lot of time into this, I can tell"). Considering that Mrs. Oakley did not focus the class' attention on the "grammar" of visual and spatial representation, students still pointed out the way that the author's decisions influenced their "reading" of the texts.

The personal writing practices that students designed were an expansion on the official curriculum, privileging students' experiences and literacies. Within these classroom literacy practices students were authors, creating texts that became important in their personal lives (e.g., facilitating discussions with family and friends, kept for the future), and sharing these texts with classmates, family and friends.

Figure 19. Peer Comments for Ella's "Turning Point" Text

1.

- we both wrote about Marble!
- That stuff about your grandparents is so sad, I could really see you with that tear stained face!
- For some reason, I thought that you had always lived in the same house... I guess thats just me.
- I love the felt letters and bright pages
- Thats very cool that you got to spend time with that student, I have always wanted to have one!

2. you had fun with the letters. you put alot of time into this, I can tell. Lindsey & Zoe r on the front! good luck in New Zeland! you'll have lotsa fun.
ur puppy is adorible she's so cute!
your book is very creative, and I can tell you spent alot of time on it

3.

Its really cool that you [illegible] an exchange student. Its really cool that you play softball. I enjoyed reading your book.

Summary

In negotiating the writing and textual production practices of the classroom, Mrs. Oakley and the students expanded what they understood as the narrow possibilities for formal writing which are often privileged in English classrooms (e.g., 5 paragraph expository essays). Mrs. Oakley provided the students opportunities to integrate marginalized ways of representation, such as vernacular texts (e.g., letters, scrapbooks) and visual and spatial modes of representations. Mrs. Oakley also expanded the purposes of writing by creating spaces for students to become authors and designers of texts that become part of their personal lives (e.g., letters to themselves not to be read by anyone, scrapbooks that were more for them than Mrs. Oakley). Amidst these possible points of expansion in the classroom, the students were involved in a formal writing seminar that included rigid guidelines regulated by external teachers and reviewers. Students went through the motions, counting and substituting 'being' verbs and formulating written texts to be aligned with the assignment guidelines. Through these three writing and textual production practices, Mrs. Oakley and the students work within and through the pressures for stability and the pressures for change as they utilize multiple modes of representations and imagine the purposes for textual production in the 21st century.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This ethnographic case study examines the negotiation of literacies as they were constructed within one ninth-grade introductory English classroom, with the intent of understanding how the practices of English become shaped, and understanding the role of students' literacy practices in the class constructions of literacy. This study provides insights into what became the valued literacy practices in the classroom, the influences and processes at play in the construction of literacies, as well as the role the teacher and students play in this negotiation process.

In this final chapter, I will highlight the texts and practices that were important to engaging in the class, and weave together the processes and influences related to how the teacher and students came to engage with the practices of the classroom. Finally, I will suggest implications that the findings might have for teacher education and classroom practice.

English Texts and Practices in "New Times"

Luke (2004) suggests that the English education field must consider how it has "responded to realities of new and culturally diverse student populations, new texts and communications media, changing job markets and life pathways?" (p. 85). As we see in Mrs. Oakley's 9th grade English class, the content of English is in the midst of change. The content reflects a mixture of traditional and classical literature (e.g., *The Old Man and the Sea*) with multicultural, contemporary and non-traditional print texts (e.g., *Bean Trees*, films, comics). The products that the students created were a mixture of formal essays, following strictly regulated outlines, as well as pieces that were combinations of

visual and print texts, reflecting a variety of less formal genres (e.g., story reductions, scrapbooks).

In the reading of texts, the participants' constructions of reading practices largely included reading, recalling, and interpreting print-based literature. However, reading other genres and forms of texts, and for other purposes (e.g., autobiographies, magazines, films, music), was not understood as really counting as "reading" or "English" in the way that they were being constructed in Mrs. Oakley's English classroom. The majority of the time in class, and the greatest portion of the assessments and students' grades centered around reading practices related to the comprehension, recalling of details, and interpretation of print-based fictional literature. With that said, students were also asked to experience out-of-school events with multimodal characteristics for extra credit (e.g., multicultural events), and explore various philosophically and socially important topics that were only indirectly connected to the recalling and interpretation of literature. Indeed, the constructions of English in this introductory course reflect the changing nature of literacy and of English within the contexts of multicultural and technological change.

The work in which Mrs. Oakley and the students engaged compels us to not only consider the content of English during these changing times, but the purposes of English in the 21st century. Scholes (1998) suggests that:

> Knowledge of English literary history is simply not the password to managerial and professional positions that it may once have been...What this society wants of those who graduate from its schools and colleges with degrees in humanities...are

at worst docile and grammatical competence, at best, reliability and a high level of textual skills (p. 19).

For Mrs. Oakley and the students, the study of literature was constructed to be that which provided the students with a form of cultural literacy that would help them be more "sophisticated," as well as knowledgeable about certain "touchstones" for future English courses. If we take Scholes' argument seriously, a reconstruction of English is necessary to provide opportunities for students to gain the textual skills, in a variety of forms needed to be successful in the workplace. For the students in Mrs. Oakley's class this would entail more of a focus on the texts and media that they consumed or produced in all aspects of their lives. Therefore, in addition to "reading" a variety of forms of texts (e.g., comics, newsprint), they would also engage in an analysis of the textual features and their reading of them. Similarly, in addition to alternative assignments that allow for multimodal possibilities (e.g., scrapbooks, artistic story reductions), the teacher and students might also engage in a discussion of the aspects of texts and the possibilities that certain textual forms offer and fail to provide. While Mrs. Oakley and the students did engage with a variety of texts, they did not fully explore the form of these texts in ways that would allow students the ability to be more adept multimodal consumers and producers. This lack of explicit discussion around the textual form of these non-traditional texts contributed to the de-privileged status of textual forms in the classroom, when compared to the textual interpretation that Mrs. Oakley and the students engaged in when studying the literature texts.

For the students in this study, with their multiple texts and contexts for literacy, critical exploration of the affordances and constraints of textual forms will continue to

become an essential skill in the ever increasing information-based society. In their *Position Statement on Adolescent Literacy*, Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, and Rycik's (1999) quote deserves repeating from earlier in the dissertation. They argued that:

> Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future (p. 99).

These students will need an awareness of literacy that extends beyond the study of literature and formal essay writing. Students will need to learn to be proficient with consuming and producing texts in a variety of media and for a variety of purposes. Lankshear and Knobel (2003) suggest that "knowledge work" is the "highest order of productive activity," as texts and representational forms change, and that the "most potent and valued forms of literacy will be—and in the foreseeable future will continue to be—those that tend toward the highest order of manipulation of symbols to generate the 'data, words, oral and visual representations' (p. 55). Therefore, those literacies that belong to the "non-material realm," which Marcus and other students were beginning to gain skills and knowledge with by engaging in these literacies on their own outside of school (e.g., using the Internet as a search tool; consumption and manipulation of video game texts), are the types of literacies which will be needed to participate in the work and public sphere. As a result of the traditionally focused construction of literacy, and the lack of

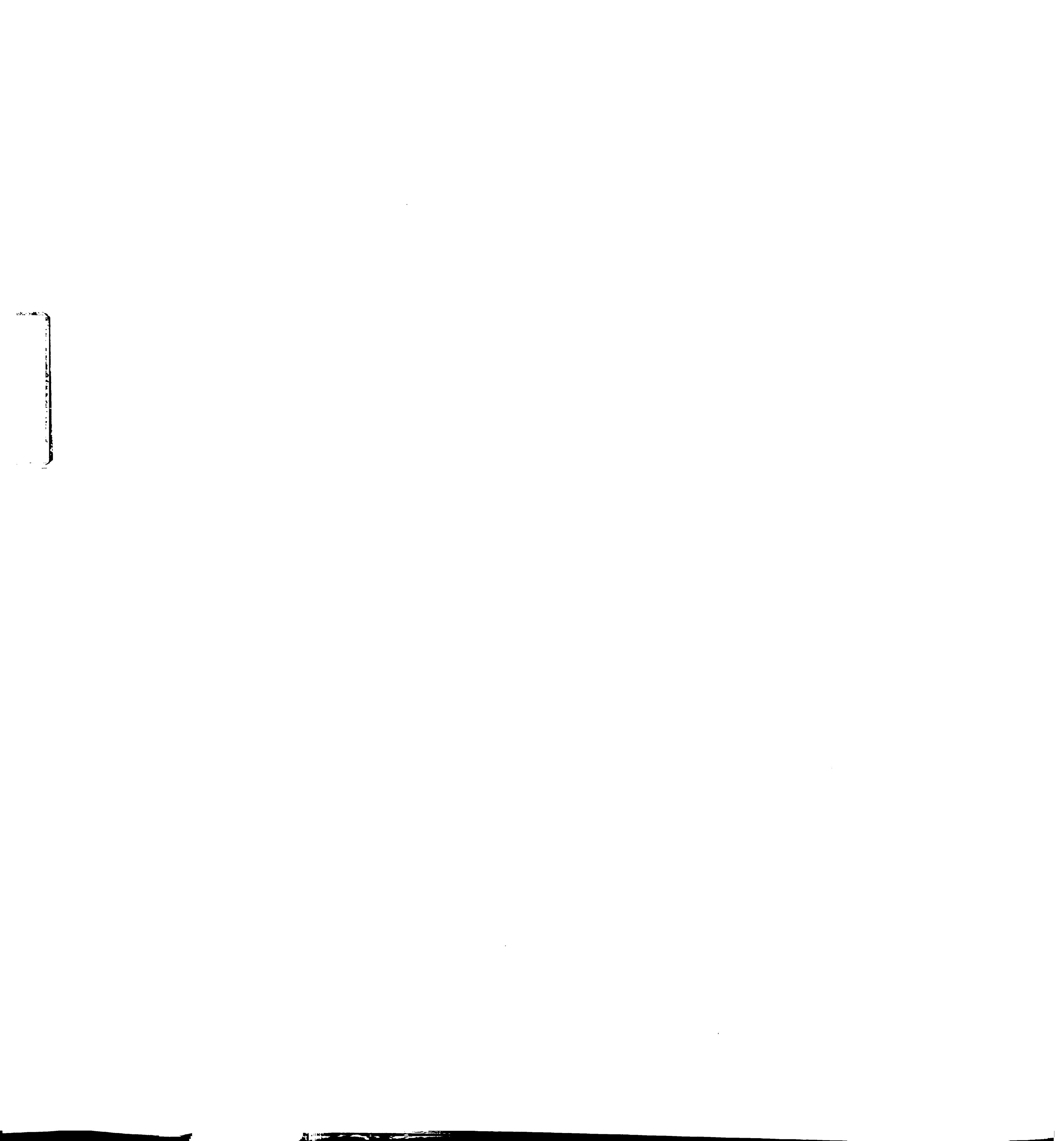
attention on the form of texts, attention to these literacies related to the ICTs were non-existent in the privileged English texts and practices of the classroom.

When questioning the content and the purposes of English, Scholes (1998) further argues that what should be pursued is for students to be "imbued with critical skills and values," and be "antagonistic" to those who are in privileged positions in society (e.g., the marketplace, legislative bodies) (p. 19). While some of the discussions and topics that the students and Mrs. Oakley pursued in the class focused on critical explorations of contemporary issues (e.g., discussion of whether or not to continue in the war in Iraq), explicit discussions around issues of textual power and privilege of texts were not part of the activity of the classroom. Considering the texts with which students already engage, and the possible texts they will likely engage with in the future, it is important that a reconstruction of English include a critical awareness of the interrelatedness of language and literacy to issues of power and privilege (Fairclough, 1995; Morrell, 2002).

Negotiating Boundaries of Literacy and English

> The boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, between literature and nonliterature and so forth are not laid up in heaven. Every specific situation is historical. And the growth of literature is not merely development and change within the fixed boundaries of any given definition; the boundaries themselves are changing (Bakhtin, 1981b, p. 33).

Bakhtin's insights into the development of language and literature, and the understanding that the boundaries are historically formed and are indeed changing, is helpful in understanding the changing state of English, as well as the negotiation of



literacies and of English in the classroom. Bakhtin's discussion of the pressures towards "convention and normativity, and pressures of difference and change" (Fairclough, 2000, p. 174) offer a way of viewing the constant negotiation of the boundaries within the English classroom. In this way, Mrs. Oakley and the students engaged in the expansion and maintenance of the boundaries of what counted as texts, reading and writing, as they became actors in the processes of dialogically constructing the practices of the English classroom.

Utilizing this framework, the findings from this study point to two important aspects of the integration process that broadens our understanding of the relationship between students' literacies they engage with in their everyday lives and those that schools promote. First, the teacher (and the students) were involved in the processes of expanding as well as maintaining the official practices of the classroom. The practices were not always traditional or expansive; students' practices were recognized at times, and there were other moments in the class when the students' familiar practices were unsanctioned in the classroom. Second, the students contributed to the integration of students' literacies in ways that are often overlooked in the literature. The students often pushed their texts and practices into the space of the official practices. These two aspects of the integration process provides evidence that the "bridging" of in-school and out-of-school texts and practices is a complex process. They also suggest that the relationship between in-school practices and out-of-school practices are not "fixed"; rather, they are fluid and contested, as a Bakhtinian perspective might suggest. In the next two sections, I elaborate on these two characteristics of the integration process, providing insight into how they might broaden our understanding of in-school and out-of-school literacies.

Processes of Maintaining and Expanding

Abundant in the literature related to bridging students' literacies with academic practices is the dichotomy between teachers who bridge students' literacies to classroom practice, and those teachers who do not. Studies in the field tend to polarize teachers into either doing "positive" things to value, acknowledge, and connect students' literacies to the practices of the classroom, or doing "negative" things that devalue students' practices and reproduce the power structures within schools. Mrs. Oakley and the students engaged in a variety of processes reflective of the "positive" and "negative" aspects above that shaped the constructions of English in the classroom. These processes included instances when the official practices were ignored, challenged, and at times changed to reflect a different practice or a broader perspective of literacy. There were processes as well that led to maintaining the official and traditional texts and practices of the classroom. The negotiation of texts and practices involved processes that privileged and strictly regulated certain forms of texts over others, as well as processes that led to the acknowledgement and integration of a wide variety of practices as counting as a valuable form of literacy (e.g.., various genres of writing, multimodal representations of texts).

Expanding the practices of the official curriculum was apparent from the way that Mrs. Oakley designed the course. Mrs. Oakley believed that English involved a range of different texts and writing practices, and she designed the class to fit that philosophy. In several instances she engaged the students in a variety of texts that were different in genre and form than the canonical texts that were traditionally part of the English curriculum (e.g., comic strips, movies, multimodal experiences). Mrs. Oakley excluded

certain texts of the official curriculum (e.g., not fully reading *Romeo & Juliet* and *The Odyssey*) to include this wide variety of texts.

Mrs. Oakley also created opportunities where she presented the curriculum as flexible and adaptive to the everyday activity of the classroom, as well as to the needs, interests, and voices of the students. We see instances of Mrs. Oakley providing students time to share their experiences with certain texts to determine if she would include the text for the next year. We also see this flexible curriculum being formed in the moments when, after students mention how many of the texts of the curriculum are depressing, she mentions that she will try to fit a new book into the curriculum, *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America.*

Providing opportunities for students to utilize unsanctioned texts and practices in the classroom led to the expansion of the boundaries of the valued practices of the classroom. The digressions from the official texts, or "springboarding" discussions, provided opportunities for students to explore issues remotely connected to the official texts, further establishing the idea that these discussions are valuable and worthy of class time. These instances of springboarding either led to discussions of official texts, or at other times, stood on their own. During these springboarding practices, Mrs. Oakley often made intertextual links to other normally unsanctioned texts (e.g., television shows, movies, cartoons). At times, these unsanctioned texts were utilized solely as a scaffold to the official texts; in other situations (usually when Mrs. Oakley was offering the text, rather than when the students were offering) these normally unsanctioned texts became privileged texts of the classroom.

Amidst these processes of expansion in the classroom, Mrs. Oakley and the students maintained traditional forms of texts and practices. However, in order to fully understand the complexities of the negotiation process, one must fully view the teacher and students as being involved in processes that are intimately connected to influences from outside the classroom. Mrs. Oakley and the students engaged in productive processes and were influenced by a variety of pressures (e.g., systemic regulations, constructions of privileged reading, formal writing practices), as they negotiated what counted as texts, and as reading and writing practices. Often these processes included either the teacher or the students providing statements that further reinforced the privileging of certain texts, which was highlighted in the Mark Twain quote that appeared at the top of the summer reading list: "The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them." These beliefs and values, which were related to the traditional forms of texts, were integral to the construction of practices in the classroom (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005). Reading and writing were not independent from the beliefs and values that surrounded certain practices, further reinforcing the importance of the ideological model of literacy in classroom contexts (Street, 1993, 2001).

Two common processes that led to maintaining the boundaries of official texts and practices were a) developing "touchstones," and b) defining the curriculum as a static formation, with rigid boundaries, regulated from outside the classroom walls. These two processes, which contributed to the maintaining of official practices, were deeply connected to pressures that were integral to contexts that encompassed more than that of just the 9th grade English class. Mrs. Oakley's involvement with the Advanced

Placement Literature course at the high school provided a backdrop for the kinds of privileged practices (i.e., "deep" literary analysis, independent analysis of text) that she aspired for all students. This course set the standard for those students "who challenged themselves," and who were wishing to go on to college. For Mrs. Oakley, this course was to be taken by those at the highest level of literature studies, and was a privileged course in the school. For Mrs. Oakley to prepare students for this privileged course, students were to need to learn to think, read, and write like a certain type of English student. This pressure was likely part of her recognized importance in developing "touchstones" for students, as well as for stressing the importance of English reading practices, including independent reading of large amounts of text and literary analysis.

An additional pressure that influenced the maintenance of the boundaries of official practices was the influence of decisions made by the English department and the presence of local and state standards. These pressures made their way into the classroom through the Writing Lab, which the students quickly learned was about writing formal essays. They also were important in determining the official curriculum, and the kinds of reading that would be valued and acknowledged. Through these processes, we further see the variety of pressures for maintaining the official practices of literacy and of English. In the end, we see Mrs. Oakley and the students shaping, and being shaped, by a variety of pressures that influenced whether or not expansion or maintenance is paramount.

This study offers insight into the complex negotiations of literacy and English, while being cognizant of the tendency of research that is quick to characterize good and poor teachers, and those that bridge and those that do not. What this complexity reveals

is that maintenance and expansion likely occur in all classrooms, with all groups of teachers and students. This study illustrates that the bridging process is not one that involves simply just learning about students' literacies and then designing curriculum that is "appropriate" (as seen in much of the bridging literacies literature), but one that involves the constant negotiation related to the shaping of what becomes official practices of the classroom, as seen through maintaining and expanding the boundaries of what is official.

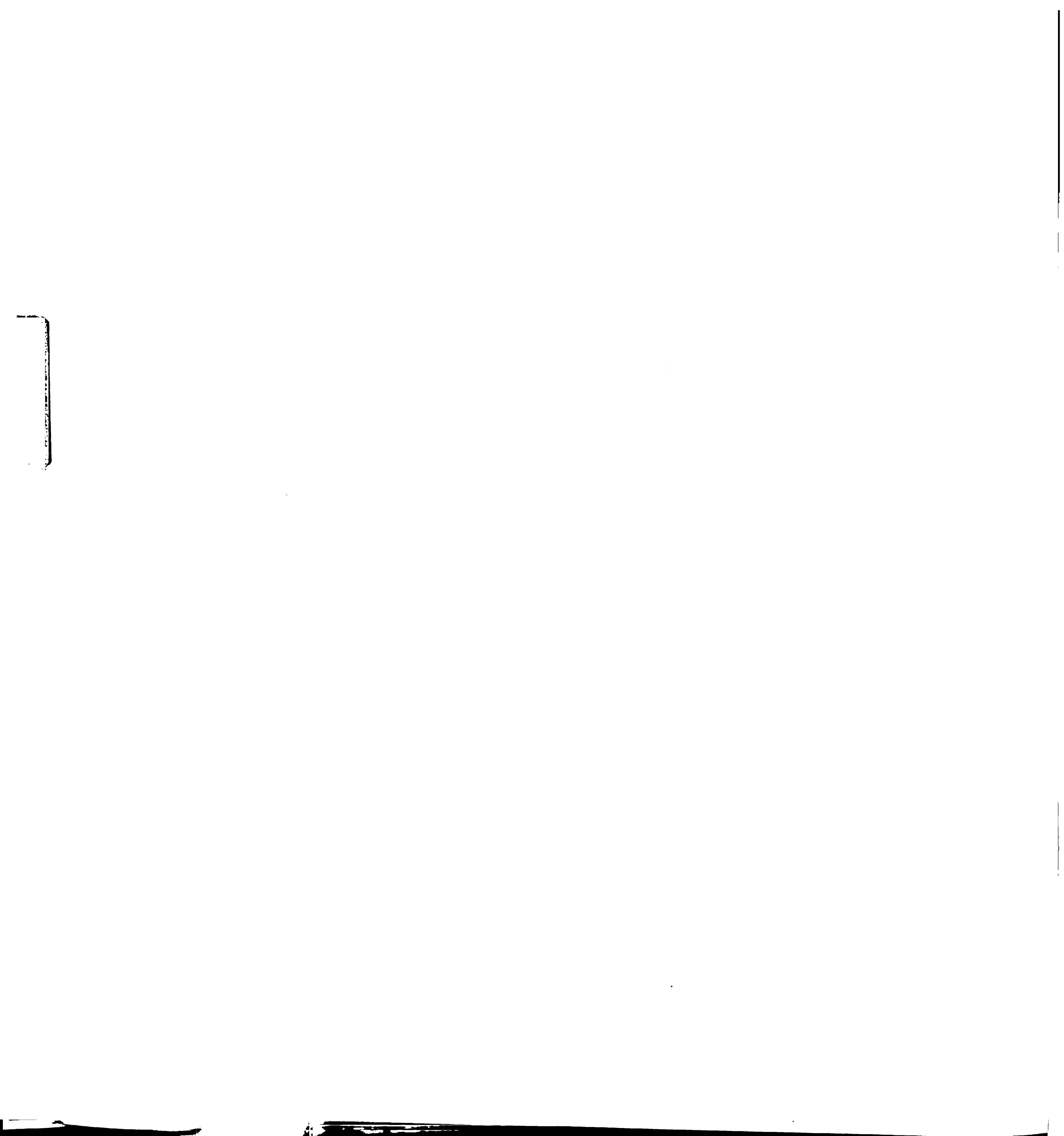
Students as Participants in the Negotiation of Literacies

Many who have studied the integration of literacies in classrooms have theorized the process as largely, and almost entirely, a teacher directed activity (Lee, 1997; Moll, 2000). The teacher has full responsibility, and full control of whether or not students' literacies become integral to the classroom practices. A few studies reveal the role the students play in this bridging process (e.g., Finders, 1997). What is important from the current study is how the students' texts and practices were instrumental in the shaping of the texts and practices of the classroom. Similar to Camitta (1993) and Moje, Willis, & Fassio (2001), the students' resources helped shape the valued practices of the classroom, positioning them as active members in the construction of literacies in the classroom.

While Mrs. Oakley established a classroom context that allowed for students to write about their lives, sometimes even allowing students to utilize familiar literacy practices, and to contribute and make meaning using normally unsanctioned texts, the students often pushed their texts and practices into the classroom space. These resources became important for the construction of practices, as the topics, texts, and practices tended to become part of the classroom practice (i.e., recurring mention of certain

movies, music). At times, students would go to great lengths to include a text or practice that would not normally be valued in the other English classrooms (e.g., Marcus, after realizing that Mrs. Oakley missed his friend's segment in the paper, repeatedly called Mrs. Oakley's and the class' attention to the text, and claimed curricular space in the classroom).

What we find when looking at the resources that students are including as part of the expansion process is that the texts and resources they incorporate reflect the changing nature of literacy that Kress (2003) and Lankshear and Knobel (2003) and Alvermann (2002a) describe (i.e., digital technologies). This expansion of these texts into the official texts of the classroom allows for engagement that many argue are important in future involvement in important literacy practices. Therefore, not only did the students include their literacies into the classroom, but they often provided rich resources that become opportunities for heterogeneous texts and the transformation of official practices (Bakhtin, 1981a; Fairclough, 1995). When Marcus' use of online dictionaries became an integral part of one class period, it was used as a possible resource thereafter. At first rejected by Mrs. Oakley as an unofficial practice, the use of online dictionaries became a valuable resource for the students in the class and even Mrs. Oakley recognized the advantages that the text offered. Therefore, it can be through the offering and integration of these resources that change occurs and new practices are formed, and students' resources are often the catalyst for such change. These findings suggest that students play a role in pushing their literacies into classrooms, and carving out a space for their literacies.



Despite these small openings of students' voices and personal literacy practices apparent during the school year, the valued literacy practices of the classroom were largely sanctioned by the teacher and those institutional officials outside of the classroom (e.g., English departments, state boards of education, etc.). The negotiation of literacies is not a neutral process between the teacher and students, independent of those outside pressures (institutional officials, educational discourses); rather, the negotiation of literacies is influenced and interconnected with these pressures and constraints. Those researchers in critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2000; Gee, 1996) have theoretically and empirically begun to show the ideological saturation and formation of social contexts, and this study contributes to these, as it illustrates the complexities of the prcoesses and practices of the negotiation literacies with adolescents.

Looking Ahead: Implications for English and Literacy Teaching and Practice

The insights gained from the study of the negotiation of literacies in Mrs. Oakley's 9th grade English class have implications for how we might support pre-service and in-service teachers, as well as educate adolescents in English classrooms.

The major findings in this study suggest that we must fully understand the complexity of the processes related to shaping the literacies of the classroom. Integral to this process are the roles that the teacher and students each play in shaping what counts as English. Therefore, it is important for pre-service and in-service teachers to understand their important role in contributing to the construction of the texts and practices of the classroom, and the possible affordances and constraints of these boundaries with different students. Teaching should be seen as a political act, where frequent decisions are made that recognize certain students as "readers" or "non-readers."

Additionally, during this time of cultural and technological change, we see the significant need for teachers to be aware of the changing contexts of literacies. Along with this understanding comes an appreciation of the various "new literacies" and the importance they have in the all aspects of students' lives in the 21st century (Alvermann, 2002b; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). Mrs. Oakley's awareness of the variety of texts in students' lives and the ways in which the students utilized them to make meaning in the classroom led to an appreciation of these resources and flexibility in expanding the official practices of the classroom.

The findings from this study also suggest that we must reconsider the preparation of pre-service teachers and the professional development of in-service English teachers. One of the significant reasons why the non-traditional print-based literacies received less attention and privilege than those traditional texts and practices was due to the lack of a focus on the multimodal and genre specific features of these texts. For English teachers to fully address the multimodal characteristics of texts, the affordances and constraints that different texts provide, teachers must be knowledgeable about these features of texts, and have familiarity of how to teach for multimodality. Current research is involved in developing a grammar for extending the ways in which we understand and talk about multimodality (rather than just a grammar of literature texts) (Kress, 2000, 2003). As this develops, it is important that educators be knowledgeable of the current developments with the multimodality of texts, receiving instruction in these areas within English teacher preparation programs and teacher professional development.

As literacy educators broaden their perspectives of literacy and English to include students' multiple literacies, it is important that the process of literacy negotiation be seen

as involving not just using students' texts and practices as a scaffold to the valued texts and practices of the classroom, but as possibilities for the expansion of the official texts and practices. The integration of students' multiple literacies, and the expansion of the valued practices of the classroom, does not necessarily imply that we must dissolve or remove the privileged "academic" practices of the English classroom. It is important to note that literacies are not equal (Gee, 1996, 1999), which is a reason why critical awareness as part of an English curriculum is essential for students of the 21st century. However, simply reproducing the cannon, teaching the literacies of power, and delegitimizing reading and writing practices that are different than the traditional fictional text or 5 paragraph essay, does little to critique the power relations that exist. As Scholes (1998) and Kress (2003) argue, it is important that we teach students ways of navigating across a wide variety of texts, as well as ways of critically examining the power relationships involved with different forms of texts and practices. Having some space for expansion to occur in English classrooms, which are largely dominated by traditional and canonical texts and formal essays, would broaden students' repertoires and allow them to become more proficient and more knowledgeable of the sorts of practices that are important to them, as well as those practices important in the social and work speheres. The insights and analyses from this study reveal the possibilities of examining this process, and provide a deeper understanding of the ways in which students and teachers will negotiate English and adolescent literacies in "New Times."

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE WHEN THE RAINBOW IS ENUF

Without any assistance or guidance from you
I have loved you assiduously for 8 months 2 wks & a day
I have been stood up four times
I've left 7 packages on yr doorstep
Forty poems 2 plants & 3 handmade notecards I left
Town so I cd send to you have been no help to me
On my job
You call at 3:00 in the morning on weekdays
So I cd drive 27 ½ miles cross the bay before I go to work
Charmin charmin
But you are of no assistance
I want you to know
This waz an experiment
To see how selfish I cd be...
If I waz capable of debasing my self for the love of another
If I cd stand not being wanted
When I wanted to be wanted
& I cannot
so
with no further assistance & no guidance from you
I am endin this affair

This note is attached to a plant
I've been waterin since the day I met you
You may water it
Yr damn self

-ntozake shange
from *for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf*

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Semi-structured interview with <u>students</u> conducted during the school year.

Out-of-school literacy practices

1. What kinds of things do you read when you are at not in school?
   Prompts (to possibly ask to help them think of certain domains of life in which reading might by used)
   - with your family?
   - for entertainment?
   - for information?
   - on the internet?
   - for religious purposes?
   - for your future?
   - with friends?
   - when listening to music?
   - in enrichment programs/extra-curricular activities?
   - when shopping?

2. What kinds of things do you write when you are at not in school?
   Prompts (to possibly ask to help them think of certain domains of life in which reading might by used)
   - with your family?
   - for entertainment?
   - for information?
   - on the internet?
   - for religious purposes?
   - for future?
   - with friends?
   - when listening to music?
   - in enrichment programs?
   - when shopping?

3. What different sorts of media do you watch, listen to, or experience when you are not at school?
   - what things do you watch on TV? how often?
   - what movies do you watch? how often?
   - what music do you listen to? how often?
   - what sites do you visit on the internet? how often?
   - what activities do you do with a computer? (play games? build websites? create movies? listen to music?)

Classroom literacy practices

1. What kinds of things do you read when you are in Mrs. Oakley's class?
   Prompts (to possibly ask to help them think of certain domains of life in which reading might by used)
   - that the teacher asked you to read/write/draw/listen/dramatize/discuss
   - that you chose to read/write/draw/listen/dramatize/discuss
   - for homework?
   - for group work?
   - when you were supposed to be doing something else?
   - that is unrelated to the topic at hand?

2. Which texts do/did you enjoy? Dislike? Find difficult? Boring? Why?

3. Which assignments do/did you enjoy? Dislike? Find difficult? Boring? Why?

4. Which activities do/did you enjoy? Dislike? Find difficult? Boring? Why?

5. If you could read anything in Mrs. Oakley's classroom what would you read?

6. What would you change about being in Mrs. Oakley's class if you had the opportunity to do so?

7. What do you think Mrs. Oakley could do to help you with your learning to be a better English student?

History with schooling

1. What are your goals for your education?

2. Who was your best teacher? Why?

3. Who was your worst teacher? Why?

4. What does literacy mean to you?

Semi-structured interviews with the teacher to be conducted at different times during the school year.

(Possible questions that might arise after observing the classroom)

1. Why did you incorporate the texts that you did into the curriculum?

2. Why did you assign the particular assignments that you did?

3. What made you decide to choose to present the material in that [referring to an observation] way?

4. What do you see as important for the students to leave your class knowing?

Demographic Information

1. Date: ______________
2. Name ______________________________
3. Age _________
4. Gender __________________
5. Race/Ethnicity ______________________________
6. Country of birth ______________________________
7. Native language ______________________________
8. Language spoken in the home? _________ In community settings? _________
9. Are you a U.S. citizen? Yes No
    a. If not, what is your status____________
10. What schools have you attended in the past?______________________________
11. Mother's occupation: ______________________________
12. Father's occupation: ______________________________
13. Do you have a computer in your home? _____________
    a. If yes, is it hooked up to the internet? Yes No
    b. If no, do you have access to one outside of school

First Semi-structured Interview with Mrs. Oakley

Background

- How many years have you been teaching, and at what schools?
- You have mentioned research you have done in the past. Could you tell me about that that work. What work do you do with the local writing project?
- Could you tell me about the organization that you are part of where you discuss cultural issues.

Goals and philosophy

- What are your goals for your students?
- What do you see as important that the students leave the school year with and why?
- How would you characterize your teaching philosophy?
- What do you feel makes up a successful teacher?

Catching me up

- Since I missed the first few weeks of the year, could you catch me up with some of the highlights of things that have happened?
- What texts have you read so far? Art? Movies? Music? What is your rationale for starting with these texts?
- What have been the types of assignments that you have given and why?
- Any incidents that happened in class that would be helpful for me to know? (e.g., For example, the newspaper incident—student being suspended, did the class discuss this at all?)

Requirements for her as a teacher

- What are the requirements in place for you as a teacher related to the curriculum, to meeting state standards, and preparing students for the state assessments?
- How do you go about making sure these requirements are fulfilled?

Second Semi-Structured Interview with Mrs. Oakley

Please discuss your rationales for doing each of the following with students. What were your goals and expectations? How do you think it went?

- Books/short stories
  - *The Old Man and the Sea*
  - Selection of short stories
  - *Bean Trees*
  - *At-Risk*

- Assignments
  - *The Old Man and the Sea* final project
  - Quizzes for *Bean Trees* and *At-Risk*
  - Interviews of family members
  - Extra credit—movie on Sudanese refugees
  - Two truth, one lie
  - Scariest memory
  - Scrapbooks of *Bean Trees* character
  - Scrapbooks of self
  - Writing lab assignments

- Activities
  - Classroom creation of the Halloween story
  - Creation of the reading completion list
  - Class discussion of texts

APPENDIX C: DATA ANALYSIS CODES

Open Coding

- What it means to read
  - Literary interpretation
  - Reading independently
  - Reading for pleasure
- What it means to write
  - Following rules
  - Following conventions
  - Visual texts
  - Print texts
- Negotiation
  - Students ask questions
    - Off topic
    - Challenge teacher
    - Advances discussion
  - Complaining
  - Expressing excitement
  - Teacher considers/Adapts
- School texts
- Out of school texts
- Teacher goals
- Beliefs of Literacy
- Technology
- Video games
- Students' lives

Developed Categories and Codes

What is being Maintained and Expanded?

Texts
- Official
- Unofficial
- Genre
- Mode
- Purpose

Topics
- Official
- Personal
- Taboo

Writing
- "looking smart"
- Aesthetics of writing
- Important authors
- Writing for improvement

Conventions
- Grammar
- Spelling
- Essay structure

Resources
- Prior knowledge
- Unofficial text
- Official text
- Official practice
- Unofficial Practice

Constructions of the Reader
- "Bookworm"
- Non-reader

Processes—Maintaining

"Touchstones"
Stable Curriculum
Hierarchy of texts
Enforcing conventions

Processes—Expanding

Springboarding
Flexible curriculum
Student-Offering (text to class)

Teacher-Offering (text to class)
Resisting norms/rules
Unofficial scaffolding text
Claiming space

Larger Context

State assessments
English department
AP class/Exam
The discipline of English

Official Practices—associated with the official curriculum, and traditional practices of English curriculum

Teacher-led shared reading
Reading assignment
Responding to literature
Formal essay writing
Personal writing
Vocabulary study
Routines
- Solitary reading
- Discussion
- Formal writing

APPENDIX D: NOVEL BUDDIES ASSIGNMENT SHEET

Novel Buddies

Over the next week, you will have the opportunity to read a novel with a "buddy" in class. After you have selected a novel that appeals to both of you, create a reading plan, which you will record below.

Then, for each section you read, you will be composing a personal letter to your buddy. In that letter, you will discuss your response to the novel. Focus on sections that you found particularly fascinating, shocking, surprising, enlightening, etc... Talk about characters: decisions they are making, turning points in their lives, why you think they do or say the things they do... Talk about what you are learning about a particular time in history. Talk about which characters you identify with, which ones are most like you and least like you, how you might handle a situation in the book differently and why. Talk about themes emerging as you read, what you think the author is trying to say as a result of writing this book. So many things to talk about as you read...

You will exchange letters with your buddy each day. It is your responsibility to stick to the reading plan so that you are reading the same section of the book each day/night. Respond to what your buddy tells you in his/her letter in your next letter as you go along.

You will receive credit in class for each letter. Be sure that the letter is grounded in the novel and that your letters are "alive" and fascinating for your buddy to read!!!

Create a reading plan. You'll need to look at number of pages or chapters and then divide by SIX to develop your schedule for reading.

APPENDIX E: CONSENT LETTERS

Student Assent

Dear Student:

You are invited to participate in a research project that will explore how students in Mrs. Oakley's class read and write in different parts of their lives, and how they learn to read and write in school. As part of this research, I am trying to learn about the various ways and for what reasons students read and write in different situations, especially in and out of school.

I will spend 2-4 hours a week in Mrs. Oakley's classroom, observing students, taking notes, audio taping activities, and chatting with students whenever it is convenient for the students and for Mrs. Oakley's. If you choose to take part in this project I will be watching for what types of things you read and write in class and how you talk about it with Mrs. Oakley and your classmates. At times, I may ask to copy your schoolwork or other things that you have read or written. In addition, I may ask to observe you in other situations where reading and writing might be involved. These may be any extracurricular activities or clubs that you may participate in. If you agree to be observed in your extracurricular activities it would just be a few times over the course of the school year, when convenient and comfortable for you. By watching you read and write in different situations, and by chatting you about how you use reading and writing in different aspects of your life, I will learn more about literacy learning in and out of school.

The data that is obtained in this study, including any demographic information, will be kept strictly confidential. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. I will protect the identity of individual children, their families, and their school districts. As part of collecting information about your reading and writing activities in and out of school, I will be audio taping discussions that you may have with your peers, with the teacher, and with myself. I will lock up the audiotapes and I will be the only one who will listen to them. In reporting the project's results, your name will not be used. I will use a pseudonym to ensure strict confidentiality. After the completion of the study all audiotapes will be erased and thrown away.

I do hope that you will allow me to learn about the many ways that your read and write in and out of school. However, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your participation or nonparticipation will not affect your grades or performance in the classroom in any way. You are also free to withdraw permission from the study at any time without penalty. You are free to refuse to answer any question at any point during the project. If you are interested in the research results at the end of the project, then I'll be happy to provide you with this information.

If you would like further information or have any questions about the study, please contact the investigator, David Gallagher, 118 Erickson Hall, email gallag93@msu.edu,

phone (517) 702-9363. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish –Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, e-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Thank you,

David Gallagher

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I have read the above statement and voluntarily give my consent to participate in this research project.

Student's Signature ________________________ Date ____________

****

Parent/Guardian Consent

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your daughter/son is invited to participate in a research project that will explore how students in Mrs. Oakley's class read and write in different parts of their lives, and how they learn to read and write in school. As part of this research, I am trying to learn about the various ways and for what reasons students read and write in different situations, especially in and out of school.

I will spend 2-4 hours a week in Mrs. Oakley's classroom, observing students, taking notes, audio taping activities, and chatting with students whenever it is convenient for the students and for Mrs. Oakley. If your daughter/son takes part in this project I will be watching for what types of reading and writing she/he does in class and how she/he talks about it with Mrs. Oakley and classmates. At times, I may ask to copy your child's schoolwork or other things that she/he has read or written. In addition, I may obverse your child in other situations where reading and writing might be involved. These may be any extracurricular activities or clubs that she/he may participate in. If your child is chosen to be observed in his/her extracurricular activities it would just be a few times over the course of the school year, when convenient and comfortable for your child. By watching students like your daughter/son read and write, and by chatting with them about how they use reading and writing in different aspects of their lives, I will learn more about literacy learning in and out of school.

The data that is obtained in this study, including any demographic information, will be kept strictly confidential. Your child's privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. I will protect the identity of individual children, their families, and their school districts. As part of collecting information about your child's reading and writing activities in and out of school, I will be audio taping discussions that he/she has with peers, with the teacher, and with myself. I will lock up the audiotapes and I will be the only one who will listen to them. In reporting the project's results, your daughter/son's name will not be used. I will use a pseudonym for your child to ensure strict confidentiality. After the completion of the study all audiotapes will be erased and thrown away.

I do hope that you will allow me to learn about the many ways that your child reads and writes in and out of school. However, your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your child's participation or nonparticipation will not affect her/his grades or performance in the classroom in any way. You are also free to withdraw permission from the study at any time without penalty. She/he is free to refuse to answer any question at any point during the project. If you are interested in the research results at the end of the project, then I'll be happy to provide you with this information.

If you would like further information or have any questions about the study, please contact the investigator, David Gallagher, 118 Erickson Hall, email gallag93@msu.edu,

phone (517) 702-9363. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish –Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, e-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Thank you,

David Gallagher

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I have read the above statement and voluntarily give my consent for my child to participate in this research project.

Student's Name ______________________________

Parent or Guardian Signature ________________________ Date ____________

I have read the above statement and voluntarily give my consent for my child to be audio taped.

Parent or Guardian Signature ________________________ Date ____________

****

Teacher Consent Letter

Dear Mrs. Oakley:

Your are invited to participate in a research project that will explore how students in your classroom read and write in different parts of their lives, and how they learn to read and write in school. As part of this research, I am trying to learn about the various ways and for what reasons students read and write in different aspects of their lives, in and out of school, as well as how you come to know them as literate people and literacy learners.

As part of this study, I will spend 2-4 hours a week in your classroom, observing you and the students, taking notes, audio taping activities, and chatting with you and the students whenever it is convenient for the you and the students. I will be watching for what types of reading and writing students do in class and how they talk about it with you and their classmates. In addition, I will be interested in the many texts and activities that you engage in with the students, as well as the discussions that you and the students have around texts and activities. At times, I may ask to copy their schoolwork or other things that they have read or written. In addition, I will observe your students in other situations where reading and writing might be involved. These may be any extracurricular activities or clubs that they may participate in. These observations will just be a few times over the course of the school year, when convenient and comfortable for the student. By watching students like those in your classroom, and by chatting with them about how they use reading and writing in different aspects of their lives, I will learn more about literacy learning in and out of school.

If you take part in this project, I will ask that you participate in audio taped interviews over the course of the school year to ask you about particular activities you ask of the students. These interviews will not take very long and will be done on a casual basis, over short visits at times of convenience for you. The data that is obtained in this study, including demographic information, will be kept strictly confidential. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. I will protect the identity of you, the individual children, their families, and their school districts. As part of collecting information about yours and the students' reading and writing activities in and out of school, I will be audio taping discussions that they have with peers, with you, and with myself. I will lock up the audiotapes and I will be the only one who will listen to them. In reporting the project's results, your students and your name will not be used. I will use a pseudonym for all names to ensure strict confidentiality. After the completion of the study all audiotapes will be erased and thrown away.

I do hope that you will allow me to learn about the many ways that your students read and write in and out of school, and how you come to navigate these literacies in the classroom. However, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are also free to withdraw permission from the study at any time without penalty. You are free to refuse to answer any question at any point during the project. If you are interested in the research results at the end of the project, then I'll be happy to provide you with this information.

If you would like further information or have any questions about the study, please contact the investigator, David Gallagher, 118 Erickson Hall, email gallag93@msu.edu, phone (517) 702-9363. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish –Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, e-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Thank you,

David Gallagher

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I have read the above statement and voluntarily agree to participate in this project.

Signature ________________________ Date ____________

I have read the above statement and voluntarily agree to be audio taped in this project

Signature ________________________ Date ____________

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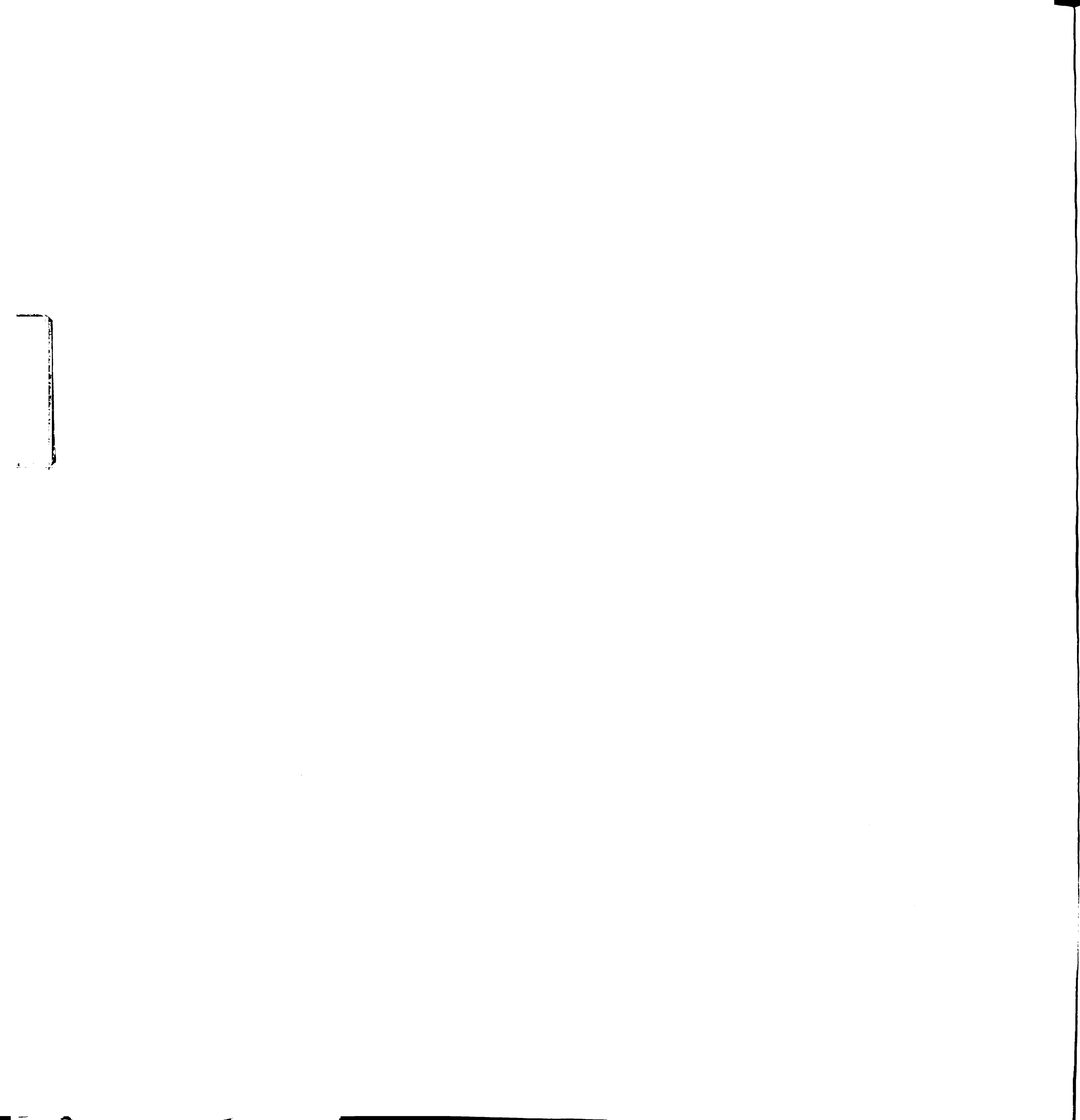

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