

Critical Literacy in the Face of a Mandated Curriculum: Can Children Read Beyond the
Text?

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A Dissertation Submitted to

The Faculty of
The Graduate School of Education and Human Development
of The George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Educational

January 31, 2010

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Acknowledgments

There are so many people who have both supported me and helped guide me on my graduate education journey. I would like to acknowledge the following people for their advice, support and encouragement without which I would not have been able to complete my dissertation.

To my husband for his love and continued support, patience and technological help while writing this paper.

To my parents who have not only financially helped support my graduate education but have given me countless hours of encouragement and emotional support.

Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Jacqueline Comas, Dr. Sylvén Beck, Dr. Patricia Tate, Dr. Julie Crawford, and Dr. Elizabeth Primas, for your wisdom and guidance. Thank you for taking the time to read and encourage my work through your feedback.

I offer special thanks to my principal for her support and allowing me to do my study in her school.

Finally, Dr. Jacqueline Comas, thank you for your help in keeping me on track and pushing me to do my absolute best!

Abstract of Dissertation

Critical Literacy in the Face of a Mandated Curriculum: Can Children Read Beyond the Text?

This study is a qualitative case study in which three case studies took place. One case study focused on documenting and describing the teacher's experiences in implementing a critical literacy approach in her classroom while staying with-in the confines of her mandated curriculum materials. The second case study focused on the students' responses and academic growth in a critical literacy environment. The third case study drew from both case studies to find relational and corresponding data that tie together the research questions.

Study data included student work samples, journal entries, observations and teacher narratives. Data were collected over a three month period. The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not a teacher could implement a critical literacy program while using materials predetermined by her school district. Additionally, this study focused on how the students would respond to learning critical literacy, how the teacher would negotiate between implementing a set curriculum and critical literacy and how her own experiences have impacted her teaching practices.

This study found a direct relationship between the teacher's experiences and her instructional practices. Often past experiences affected her decisions or expectations of what or how she anticipated her students to respond. Also, this study found that the

students in this study were able to learn a critical literacy approach to reading and writing and were able to question text, problematize situations, critique forms of social justice/injustice and take social action.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Allan Luke and Peter Freebody pose four very important questions. “What is reading? What are its social functions and effects? How is it learned? And how is it best taught?” (Luke & Freebody, 1997) The answers to these questions have been debated over the last 100 years and continue to spark new theories, federal policies, and reports.

In 2005, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) published the Nation’s Report Card. This report illuminated what American students know and can do in various content areas (NAEP 2005). This report has significant implications for education as it provides objective information on student performance for policy makers to evaluate the state and progress of education (NAEP 2005). Three alarming statistics found by the NAEP have sparked the need for this study. In the United States, approximately 33% of 4th grade students are reading at the basic level, only 23% of fourth graders are reading at the proficient level, and only 7% are reading at an advanced level.

The NAEP (2005) defines basic reading skills for fourth graders as the ability to make relatively obvious connections between text and their own lives and extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences. For fictional text, this entails retelling what the story is about, providing details, and making text to self connections. For informative text, students should be able to identify the purpose of the reading, provide details about the information, and make connections to their schema (NAEP 2005). Students at the proficient level should be able to demonstrate understanding of the text, provide

inferential and literal information, extend ideas through inferences, draw conclusions, and make connections. When reading literary text, students at this level should be able to summarize, draw conclusions related to characters, plot, and identify cause and effect relationships. For expository text, students at this level should be able to identify author's purpose, as well as recognize cause and effect relationships, similarities, and differences (NAEP).

Finally, at the advanced level, fourth grade students reading literary text should have the ability to make generalizations about the point of the story, extend meaning from connections made to their own lives or other text read, and identify figurative language. For informational text, students can use supporting details to identify author's intent, and can make and support critical judgments regarding the structure and content of the text.

These statistics are alarming. If only 33% of the nation's fourth grade students are reading at the basic level and 23% are reading at the proficient level, what can be done to help increase these percentages? One possible way may be though utilizing a systematic approach for teaching critical literacy to fourth grade students while the teacher reflects and evaluates his/her own practices and beliefs.

Nussbaum (2002) describes the goals of *critical literacy* to Apply critical thinking to achieve deeper understanding of existing social conditions and power relations (p. 488). Through a deeper understanding and the ability to engage in critical discourse students can problematize social and political power structures. Students will be able to examine how authors may have

empowered certain viewpoints while silencing others, develop the ability to “challenge the injustices and inequalities of the status quo” (Ciardiello 2003, p.235).

This is a very complex set of ideas and understandings which can take several years to develop. For younger children, it is important to pull from these goals to construct a more developmentally appropriate set of goals that can lead to critical literacy. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, a more practical definition would involve students developing a more critical understanding of how language is socially constructed and then used in text, which can lead to certain ideas of what is right or wrong, good or bad, or how to behave. Furthermore, critical literacy encompasses a critical conversation in the classroom where students can share their conjectures, ideas, and critiques of what they have read in order to help foster individual as well as group understandings of how the text has represented social conditions and expectations and determine if these representations are privileging one particular notion over another. Through this, students can begin to critically reflect on what these mean to them and what they may or may not want to challenge.

Part of critical literacy is critical reflection. Critical reflection can be best explained through Freire's notion of praxis. Freire (1970) defined praxis as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 51). In order to do this, Freire argues that one can only engage in praxis if they have been conscientized (Roberts, 2000). Conscientization is, “The process by which human beings participate critically in a transforming act” (Roberts, p. 146). In this case, the transforming act would be the

teacher critically looking at his or her practices as an educator, how decisions are made, and what social, historical, and political influences have contributed to his or her belief systems which impact his/her instruction. These two practices, critical literacy and praxis, may help teachers increase student achievement in the area of reading.

In a world that is increasingly becoming more and more diverse, finding a way to rethink how teachers' instructional choices can better address students becoming critically literate as well as implementing these instructional choices is imperative. Additionally, students are immersed in a world that is filled with various forms of text such as media, internet, literature and real world experiences. Having the skills associated with critical literacy will better equip students to read the world. Luke and Freebody (1997) argue that reading is a social practice where the text serves as a means for construction and reconstruction of statements, messages, and meanings. Reading is linked to the political and power relations in everyday life, as well as public and private lives, community relations, and academic institutions. Critical literacy can help both teachers and students begin to uncover what relationships have influenced text and how these relationships have influenced how we construct meaning. This can help students move fluidly from basic reading abilities to advanced reading abilities as defined by the NAEP in 2005. However academic institutions can create a road block for teachers who want to teach their students to become critically literate.

What happens when the teacher is ready to rethink her instructional approach to reading but the school system has created a road block? One example of this is when a school system has adopted a new curriculum for their county and relays the message that

only “these” materials and instructional strategies can be used. How then does a teacher stay true to her belief that all children need to become critical readers which includes exposure to a variety of reading materials and stay within the confines of the mandated school system? Not only is the teacher going to have to do some creative planning but more importantly, he or she will have to embark on a self reflection process that critically looks at his or her instruction, belief systems, and decisions made.

In order to do this, several elements needed to be considered in for the teacher of this study, who is also the researcher. First, I am bound to a certain set of materials that must be used. Therefore, I took the stories in the current anthology, which have a variety of genres and models for my students to use certain strategies that help one to become critically literate. As I do this, I kept my own journal of what I was going through in order to teach these skills to my students. Additionally, I analyzed the students’ growth through work samples, journal entries, observations and conversations I had with them. At the end of this study I analyzed both the students’ progress as well as my own to come up with some final conclusions and recommendations for future teachers who may find themselves in a similar situation. The work from this study can support other teachers who want to rethink their current curricular choices and stay within the mandates of their academic institution.

Conceptual Framework

This case study draws from Vygotsky's (1978 as cited in Daniels, 2001) social learning theory, the Deweyan notion of social constructivism and teacher effectiveness. Dewey (1925, 1981) as cited in Hung (2002) states that

Discoveries and new horizons of knowledge spring from novel ideas co-authored by individuals and through group negotiations.....Through negotiation, students are usually engaged in explaining their ideas, defending their opinion, and trying to convince others of their thoughts. Through such a process, students can establish shared meanings or intersubjectivity (p. 198).

Dewey (1925/ 1981) also noted that the function of learning is to link the tension between what is known and unknown through a dialectical process (as cited in Hung). Through dialectical conversations knowledge is socially constructed and mediated through culture, history, schema, and interactions.

Social constructivism believes learning is heavily influenced by the environment and the social interactions one experiences (Hung, 2002; Hirle, 1996). The social context plays a heavy role in how, what, and when learning occurs. Socially, learners construct meaning to participate in the world, develop social consciousness, and make connections (Hirle, 1996). Communication also plays a key role in this. Through interactions and discourse, people create and construct meaning together.

Vygotsky also embeds social constructivism in his social learning theory. Vygotsky (1978) believes the relationship between learning and development is two fold. First, there is a general relationship between the two, but there are specific features to this relationship once a child becomes school age. Vygotsky argues that a child's learning begins long before they ever reach school. Children begin to associate names with specific objects, encounter addition, subtraction and spatial associations, thus learning happens from the moment they enter the world. As children *develop*, they *learn* to imitate

adults, learn to ask questions to get answers, and through their questions they begin to acquire a storehouse of skills. Therefore, learning and development go hand in hand. To what level a child builds a repository of skills can vary from child to child. (Vygotsky).

In Vygotsky's (1978) theory, he poses that all children come to school with different levels of development, therefore, to some degree, learning should be matched up with their level. In order to do this, one must determine two developmental levels. The first level deals with the child's actual developmental level. This is the level of their actual mental capabilities at the time determined by what the child can already do on their own without any assistance (Vygotsky). This is usually done through a battery of tests that vary in difficulty and judge the extent of their mental abilities based on how they solve problems and at what level.

However, if the instructor offers some assistance or a suggestion in how to solve the problem and the child successfully solves the problem, this will most likely not count as a problem solved independently. Vygotsky (1978) offers an example. Suppose two children enter school at the chronological age of ten and are eight years old in terms of their mental capabilities. Then we can say they are the same age mentally which means they can both independently solve problems that have been standardized for a child who is eight years old (Vygotsky). For most purposes, tests would stop here, but what if one of these children had been sick for half the year while the other student had been in school the whole time. If the instructor chose to continue her assessment and demonstrated various ways of solving problems which led to the first child successfully solving problems up to a twelve year old's level and the other child solved problems up

to a nine year old's level. Now each of their mental capabilities are quite different.

Vygotsky calls this the zone of proximal development.

Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) defines the zone of proximal development as the “Actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.” The zone of proximal development signifies the capabilities in a child that have not matured yet but are in the process of maturation or as Vygotsky calls it, “buds or flowers of development rather than the fruits of development” (p. 86). This zone is important to educators because it takes into account not only the child's already matured developmental cycles but developmental cycles that are beginning to mature thus allowing the child to learn at a higher level.

This framework is well suited for this case study as the participants (both students and the teacher) have learned and constructed knowledge together. Together the students and the teacher have uncovered a higher level of understanding, critical awareness, and self-reflection. As stated earlier in this paper, for the purpose of this study it is the goal for the students to become critically literate in terms of students developing a more critical understanding of how language is socially constructed and then used in text, which can lead to certain ideas of what is right or wrong, good or bad, or how to behave. Furthermore, through their interactions and participation, the students have developed skills with help from the teacher to engage in critical conversations where students shared their conjectures, ideas, and critiques of what they read in order to help foster individual and well as group understanding of how the text has represented certain

social conditions and expectations and determined if these representations are privileging one particular notion over another. Through this, students began to critically reflect on what these mean to them and what they may or may not want to challenge. These skills became possible using the child's zone of proximal development where the teacher assisted them in problem-solving and text analysis while the teacher reflected on the effectiveness of instruction, made timely instructional decisions based on the reflections, and examined her own literary history and how it has impacted her construction of meaning and teaching.

Specially, the students in this study were able to model for each other ways to connect to the text. In one case a student was able to foster another student's understanding of having an alternative perspective during an incident at recess which then let another boy analyze his parents' perspective on sharing. Each of these students were able to help another student reach a higher zone of proximal development they would not have reach independently. Another example is when one of the reading groups read a story about two boys becoming friends with a girl. The girls in the reading group were able to help the boys view the story from a female's perspective and the boys were able to help the girls view the story from a male's perspective. This same group was able to provide a scaffold for each other when we read a story about a famous football player making a difficult decision during a game. At first, the students were having trouble making connection to this story. Then as one student was able to make a text to self connection about a time he had to make a difficult decision, the other students were able to build off of what he said and recall a time they had to make a difficult decision. As

each student shared, discussed, and made connections other students were able to reach a deeper level of understanding they would not have reached independently. This exemplifies how social constructivism can help students create an environment where social interactions and dialectical conversations help build and develop meaning and understanding.

As Vygotsky (1978) states, “Children can imitate a variety of actions that go well beyond the limits of their own capabilities. Using imitation, children are capable of doing much more in collective activity or under guidance of adults” (p88).

Additionally, this case study pulled from Flint, Sluys, & Lewison (2002, 2003) four dimensions of critical literacy instruction to help plan a systematic instructional approach for incorporating critical literacy into my classroom. The four dimensions of critical literacy include: disrupting the common place, interrogating multiple perspectives, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action to promote social justice. I will first explain each component of the four resources model. Then I will provide an example of how a teacher/researcher, Vivian Vasquez has used a similar approach in her kindergarten classroom.

The first of Flint, Sluys, & Lewison’s (2002) four dimensions of critical literacy is disrupting the common place. This calls for one to look at the “everyday” from new and multiple lenses in which unspoken modes of awareness are reconsidered and disrupted (Flint, Sluys, & Lewison). Flint, Sluys, & Lewison illustrate this process as problematizing existing ways of thinking, historical influences, and interrogating texts. This can be done through questioning text, popular culture, media, and examining how

one can be positioned and constructed through these vessels. Disrupting the common place also incorporates the examination of language. Language shapes identities, cultures, discourses, and is a catalyst for one to disrupt dominant hegemonic beliefs (Flint, Stuys, & Lewison).

The next, interrogating multiple viewpoints elicits one to “stand in the shoes of others-to understand experiences and texts from our own perspectives and the viewpoints of others and to consider these various perspectives concurrently”(Flint, Stuys, & Lewison, 2002, p. 383). This entails not only reading alternative perspectives, but reflecting on them. Then using the multiple voices to question whose voice is silenced and whose is privileged. As the authors put it, this can be extremely difficult as western civilization has historically focused on one “correct” answer. The notion of examining conflicting perspectives disrupts the notion that there is always one “correct answer” promoting some students to challenge precise and convenient conclusions.

Flint, Stuys & Lewison (2002) third dimension entails focusing on sociopolitical issues. This invites one to analyze how sociopolitical systems, power relationships, and language are interlaced and inseparable in teaching and learning (Flint, Stuys, & Lewison). Flint et. al. remind us that teaching in itself is not a neutral form of social practice and that it is historically and currently rooted in sociopolitical agendas. Analyzing these dominant systems, one attempts to understand, challenge, and question the legitimacy of these structures, opening up space for subordinate groups to participate

in society (Flint, Stuys, & Lewison). Finally, the last of the four dimensions of critical literacy is taking action and promoting social justice.

Taking action and promoting social justice amalgamates the other three dimensions to take informed action against oppression (Flint, Stuys, & Lewison, 2002). Engaging in praxis, as Freire (1970) wrote is essential. Reflection and action together will help transform the world into a more democratic society. Understanding and using language as the mode for gaining access to the world will also help revolutionize existing single minded beliefs.

One person who has embedded these four dimensions of critical literacy into the elementary setting is Vivian Vasquez (2003). Vasquez quotes Barbra Comber's (2001) definition of critical literacy-

Critical literacies include practicing the use of language in powerful ways to get things done in the world, to enhance everyday life in schools and communities, and to question practices of privilege and injustice (p. 2).

Vasquez also states that critical literacy

is about imagining thoughtful ways of thinking about reconstructing and redesigning texts and images to convey different, more socially just and equitable messages that have real-life effects in the world(p.2)

This is exactly what was done in this study. Through careful reading and examining stories in our fourth grade anthology, my fourth grade class and I rethought and reconstructed the text to create new socially just and equitable meanings and stories that represented each student in a way that was meaningful for them.

Through her research, Vasquez (2003) has had the opportunity to work with some teachers who have applied critical literacy in their elementary classroom. One teacher, Lee, offered six strategies done in six sessions for using picture books with students. These included reading the story aloud in the first session. Then gather a small group together and have them fill out a response sheet that included what was important about the story, what surprised them, what questions they had, and named a possible writing topic from their own lives that could relate to the story. She called this session a picture walk. The third session incorporated a small group discussion to talk about the questions that were generated and then a whole group meeting for the fourth session. The fifth session focused on the students choosing an illustration and having a discussion about it with the final session dedicated to notebook writing. Students take time to write about a topic they chose earlier on the response sheet (Vasquez, 2003).

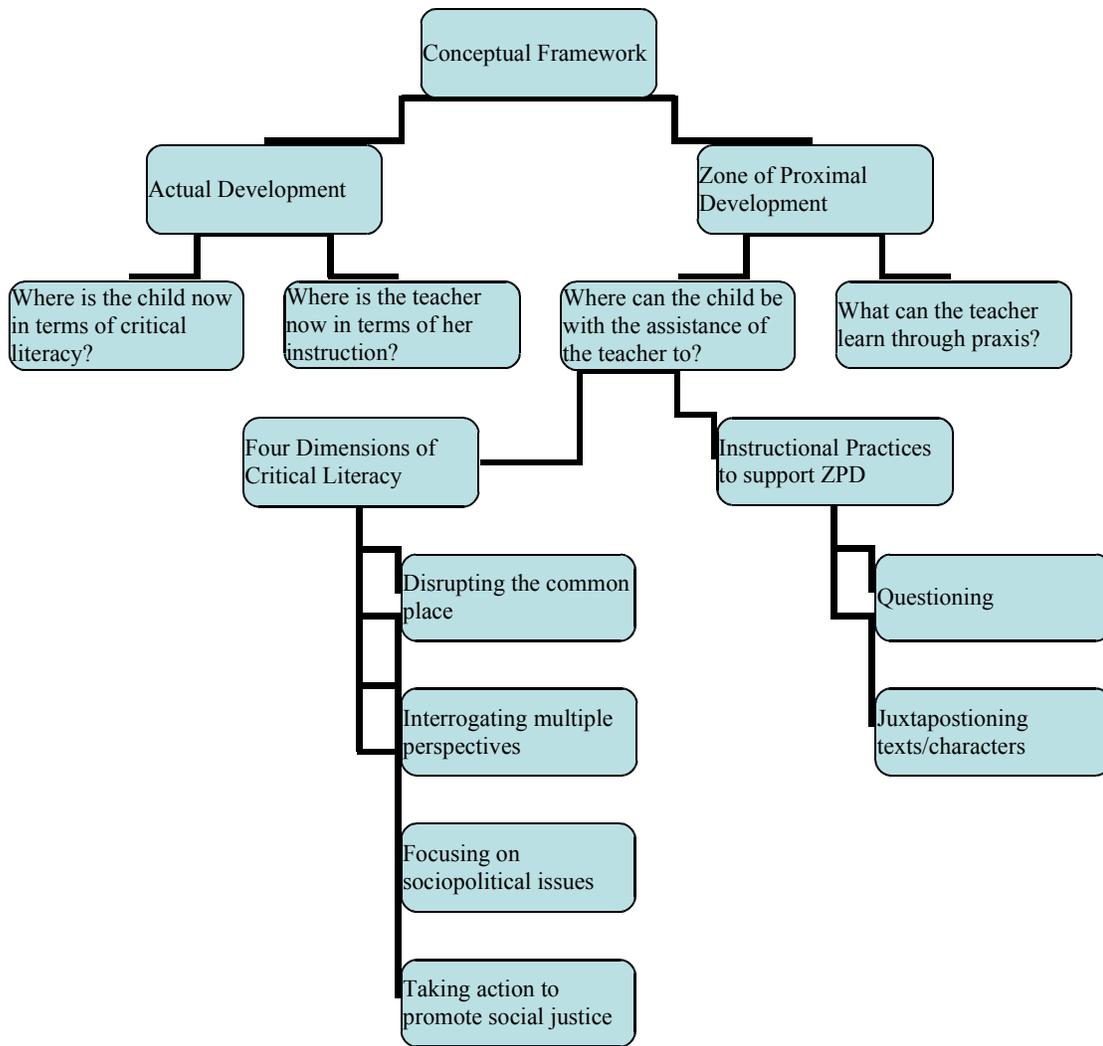
Through these sessions, Lee, the teacher Vasquez worked with, was able to make evident the intertextuality of books as she showed her students pulling from their own experiences and their past experiences with texts to engage in powerful talk (Vasquez, 2003). Lee's third graders were able to extend their understanding of past topics such as racism and shame and use these texts to take other real-world issues and incorporate them

into their classroom. This helps bring to light, how teachers can use the four dimensional framework in this study to bring about new meanings and counter texts in the classroom.

As stated before, the four dimensional structure is an added support to this framework. It incorporates all of the essential elements of critical literacy in an instructional setting. This study has delved deeper into a teacher's journey, me, as I critically examined my own teaching practices in a fourth grade class while trying to negotiate between what was expected of me and what I expected from myself. This entailed using prescribed curriculum materials while navigating my students through Flint, Sluys, & Lewison (2002, 2003) four dimensions of critical literacy instruction. It has helped guide the instructional approach in the classroom using the predetermined readings the county has selected. Students were then able to utilize critical literacy dimensions to dismantle academic roads blocks and pave a new road for students and teachers trying to negotiate between a prescribed curriculum and critical literacy.

The graphic below helps connect Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning and development, Flint, Sluys, & Lewison (2002,2003) four dimensions of critical literacy, and how this conceptual framework worked together for the purpose of this study.

Figure A:



Problem Statement

Initiating the need for this study comes from the work of Paulo Freire. In 1970 Freire developed literacy programs in Brazil in which his practices focused on learning to

read the world. Freire argued that current literacy practices were a form of banking education or a mode of transmitting knowledge from teacher to student. Additionally, Freire was concerned about the frequently used concept of banking prevalent in many schools. Some may even argue that the banking concept is even more prevalent in institutions today due to the increased accountability and mandates imposed by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

NCLB currently mandates all public schools meet certain proficiency standards each year known as Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP). This is assessed through various modes of high stakes testing. Now that NCLB has passed, teachers need to get all of his or her students to pass the state assessments. If one's class does not do well on a particular test, the teacher is held accountable. This personally places a heavy weight on teachers in the public school system to ensure students pass these high-stakes tests. This can lead to teachers teaching to the test. Teaching to the test parallels Freire's notion of the banking concept in that teachers deposit the information solely needed to pass these tests. Higgins, Miller, & Wegmann (2006) state

High stakes standardized testing can greatly influence the teaching of reading and writing. Many teachers change their literacy curricula in order to train students to take the test (Harmon, 2000), and standardized tests drive the curricula in many states (Falk, 1998). Rather than focusing on meaningful learning experiences, many schools spend a lot of time preparing students to take state assessments by engaging them in test-like activities (p. 310).

When a school system adopts new curriculum materials and mandates that only those materials should be used, in hope to ensure all students receive the same instruction in order to meet the requirements of NCLB, then, in essence that entire county is based on a banking system of learning. Essentially, when a school expects teachers only to use a prescribe curriculum, they are in essence teaching to the test. There is one set of knowledge, one correct answer and little room to rethink text, examine whose voice is missing, and how the text can connect the past to current real-world experiences for the students. One has to believe that there is a better way to meet the mandates of NCLB and deliver an instructional approach that is meaningful, experiential, critical and challenging. The International Reading Association agrees with this notion.

One of the goals of the International Reading Association (IRA) states that,

Active, engaged reading means approaching texts with a critical eye—thinking about what they say about our world, why they say it, and whether the view they promote should be accepted. Critical literacy can help reach this goal of reading instruction, particularly for children and adolescents who have mastered decoding and are moving deeply into comprehension. (IRA, 2007).

The question then arises, are teachers fostering children to read with a critical eye or simply transmit knowledge from teacher/test to student?

Purpose

As mentioned before, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2002), many students in fourth grade do not possess the skills necessary

for critical literacy. This indicates that there is a need to rethink how instruction can better address students becoming critical readers.

Critical literacy can be one way to help students read text critically. This study is designed to explore 4th grade students in a northern Virginia public school using critical literacy to increase comprehension and expand on their reader response (McLaughlin & DeVoogd (2004). Specifically, this study focused on one teacher's journey to teach her students skills they will need to become critically literate as well as her own journey as an educator embracing critical literacy in her classroom and dealing with the mandates imposed on her from her school district. This study illuminates her own struggles, questions, and challenges as well as describes how her students have responded and utilized critical literacy in their reading and writing.

This study can have serious implications for educators. As mentioned before, hyper-accountability is not going away therefore prompting the need to reexamine how schools can better serve the needs of all students is vital. This includes examining specific understandings of curricular approaches and how they are implemented.

Freire advocated for rich instruction that focused on the students becoming active participants. Learning how to read the world and understand the social relationships that govern textual authority has become a central ingredient in the purpose of this study. This helps delineate how schools can be the medium for teachers and students to empower their own beliefs, experiences, and ideologies, challenge dominant beliefs and social structures, and come to their own notion of what knowledge is meaningful for them as an individual and as a member of society.

Research Questions

1. What happens in a classroom where the four components of critical literacy: disrupting the common place, interrogating multiple perspectives, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action to promote social justice are incorporated into reading prescribed texts?
2. How does a teacher negotiate between a prescribed curriculum while using a critical literacy approach to teaching?

Delimitations

This study is delimited the 4th grade students in one teacher's specific class in a school district in Northern Virginia.

Limitations

This study is limited to nineteen 4th grade elementary students and one teacher in this one specific county. This does limit the generalizations to this particular teacher and group of students however the benefits are priceless. This study creates a systematic approach to examining a teacher's practices which not only creates invaluable insight into personal and professional leaning but will add to the knowledge base of teaching and learning which in turn, can trigger additional research (Samaras & Freese, 2006).

Assumptions

It can be assumed for the purposes of this study, that this teacher recorded her data honestly, reflectively, and charted the progress of her students over a three-month time span. Additionally, all names have been kept anonymous and pseudonyms have been used.

Methodology

This study is a multiple case study where two case studies took place and then a cross case analysis of the two was done through a teacher narrative. One case study focused on documenting and describing the teacher's experiences in implementing a critical literacy approach in her classroom while staying with-in the confines of her mandated curriculum materials. The second case study focused on the students' responses and academic growth in a critical literacy environment. The third case study drew from both case studies to find relational and corresponding data that tie together the research questions.

A case study design attempts to

Gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. For this study, "the interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation (Merriam, 1998, p.19).

Additionally, the more case studies included in a study and the more variation across the cases, the more persuasive an interpretation is (Merriam, 1998).

Purposeful sampling was used, as the intent of this study was not to generalize but to understand and discover the students and teacher in this one particular class. The

researcher's 4th grade class will participate in this study for the duration of three months. There are nineteen 4th graders who range from nine to ten years old and represent Caucasian, Asian, and Hispanic backgrounds.

Initially this study began with documenting the teacher's direct instruction and modeling of several different practices that fall with-in a critical literacy approach. These included questioning, reading and interrogating multiple view points, juxtaposition of texts, creating an environment to promote a critical stance, and problem posing. After students were led through guided practice of the four dimensions of critical literacy, then their opportunities for independent application and reflection were documented.

Additionally, the teacher in this study, which is also the researcher, embraced in a self study mode of research. Samaras (2002), defines self-study as teachers' systematic and critical examination of their actions and their context as a path to develop a more consciously driven mode of professional activity. This involves a careful analysis of texts read, the self as a text, the experiences a teacher had, people they have encountered, and ideas they have believed (Samaras & Freese, 2006).

All data was kept anonymous, locked in a secure cabinet and handled in an ethical manner. Internal validity was established through the triangulation of the case studies, observations, student work and the teacher's narratives. Additionally, long term observation were incorporated. This entailed gathering data over a long period of time in order to increase the validity of the findings (Merriam, 1998). Finally, the researcher's bias have been stated upfront to clarify the researcher's assumptions, world views, and theoretical orientation (Merriam, 1998).

External validity or the extent to which the findings of this study can be applied to other studies or situations has not been focused on. It is not the intent of this study to have findings that are generalizable but to learn what is specific to this study. However, it is the hope of this study for information to be generated that will add to the knowledge base on critical literacy in an elementary setting and help foster and support future research in this area. This study provided data that was rich, thick description and provided enough narration so that readers and other researchers can establish how closely their situation matches this research where findings can be compared and supported (Merriam, 1998).

Once all the data was collected, an inductive analysis took place. This process involved “simultaneous coding of raw data and the construction of categories that captured relevant characteristics of the document’s content” (Merriam, 1998, p. 160). In essence, this process involved continuous modification as each case is examined and tested against the previous one.

Definitions

Conscientization- “The process by which human beings participate critically in a transforming act” (Roberts, p. 146).

Critical Literacy- (Comber as cited in Vasquez, 1998)) Critical literacies include practicing the use of language in powerful ways to get things done in the world, to enhance everyday life in schools and communities, and to question practices of privilege and injustice (p. 2). It is also “about imagining thoughtful ways of thinking about reconstructing and redesigning texts and images to convey different, more socially just and equitable messages that have real-life effects in the world” (p.2)

Vasquez & Wong-Kam (2003) define *critical literacy* as “Language which is used to exercise power, to enhance everyday life in schools and communities, and to question practices of privilege and injustice” (p. 1). Nussbaum (2002) describes the goals of *critical literacy* to “Apply critical thinking to achieve deeper understanding of existing social conditions and power relations” (p. 488).

Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy- The four dimensions of critical literacy include: disrupting the common place, interrogating multiple perspectives, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action to promote social justice.

Four Resources Model- The Four Resources Model includes:

- 1) Coding practices: Developing resources as a code breaker
- 2) Text-meaning practices: Developing resources as a text participant

3) Pragmatic practices: Developing resources as a text user

4) Critical practices: Developing resources as text analyst and critic (p. 454)

Praxis- Freire (1970) defines praxis as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 51).

Self-study- Samaras (2002), defines self-study as teachers’ systematic and critical examination of their actions and their context as a path to develop a more consciously driven mode of professional activity. This involves a careful analysis of texts read, the self as a text, the experiences a teacher had, people they have encountered, and ideas they have believed (Samaras & Freese, 2006).

Voice- Giroux (1990) refers to voice as, The ways in which students produce meaning through the various subject positions that are available to them in the wider society. In effect, voice is organized through the cultural resources and codes that anchor and organize experience and subjectivity (p. 91).

Zone of Proximal Development- Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) defines the zone of proximal development as the “Actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.”

Summary

Overall, this study was initiated from a need to rethink how instruction can better address students becoming critical readers. The purpose of this self- study was to explore how implementing a critical literacy instructional approach can achieve such a goal. However, this study also documented one teacher's challenges and successes as she seesawed her way between what she believed to be a meaningful and reflective approach to reading and what “others” had deemed and meaningful and necessary.

Chapter Two

Critical literacy draws from Discourse Theory, Critical Linguistics and Post-Structuralism to employ a critical approach toward literacy, the relationship between language and power, and social and political concerns. This chapter begins with the foundational theories: discourse theory, critical linguistics, and post-structuralism, that critical literacy stems from. Then it moves to six theorists that support the foundational theories behind critical literacy. Finally, this chapter ends with some current theorists that have used critical literacy in everyday lives and classrooms.

Critical literacy can be drawn from several different theoretical frameworks, however three have had significant impacts in shaping and defining what critical literacy is. *Discourse Theory*, *Critical Linguistics*, and *Post-Structuralism* have all had a significant impact on literacy. Luke and Walton (1994) remark,

Although critical literacy does not stand for a unitary approach, it marks out a coalition of educational interests committed to engaging with the possibilities that the technologies of writing and other modes of inscription offer for social change, cultural diversity, economic equity, and political enfranchisement. (p. 1).

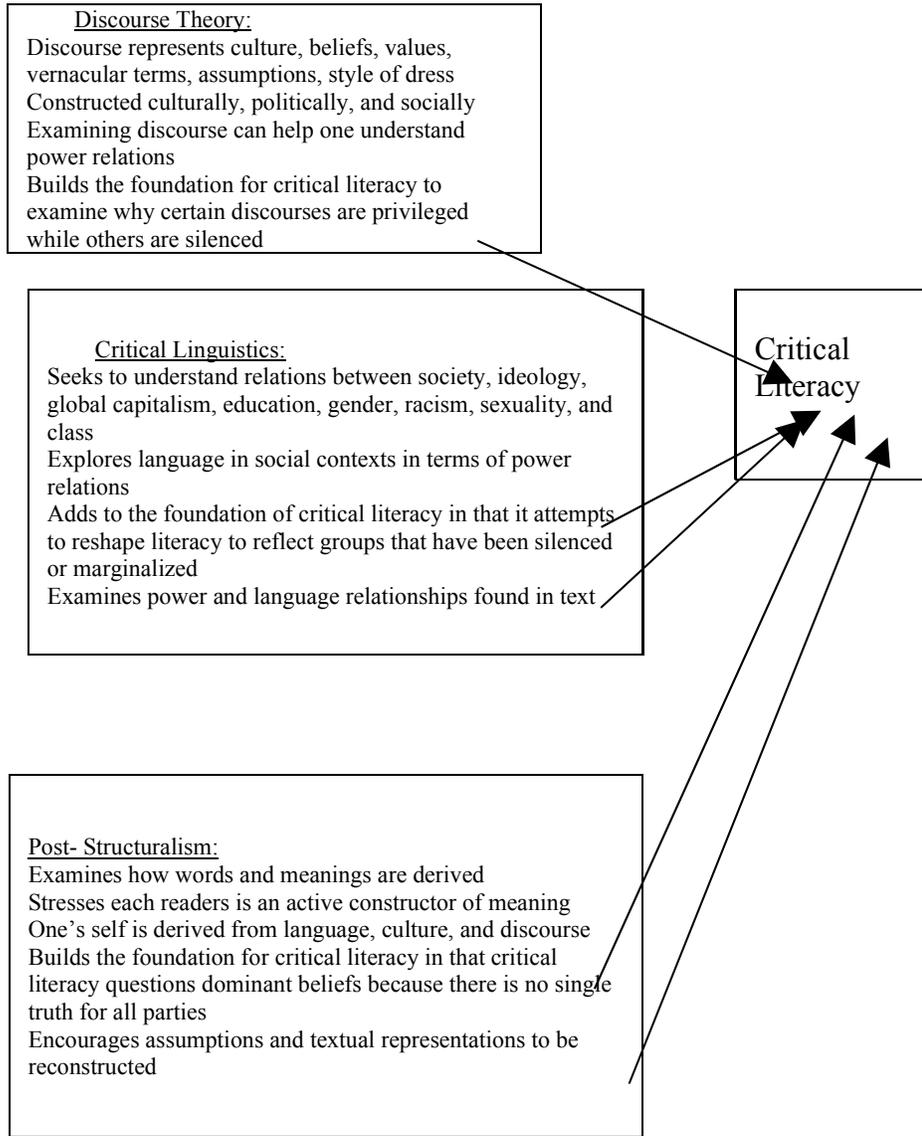
It is first important to define what critical literacy is so that connections can be made to each theoretical framework. Vasquez & Wong-Kam (2003) define *critical literacy* as “Language which is used to exercise power, to enhance everyday life in schools and communities, and to question practices of privilege and injustice” (p. 1).

Nussbaum (2002) describes the goals of *critical literacy* to “Apply critical thinking to

achieve deeper understanding of existing social conditions and power relations” (p. 488). Through a critical literacy approach one can develop a deeper understanding of social, cultural, and political relationships as well as develop the ability to engage in critical discourse in which problematic social and political power structures are analyzed. Ideally, students should be able to examine how authors may have empowered certain view points while silencing others; develop the ability to “challenge the injustices and inequalities of the status quo” (Ciardiello 2003, p.235); distinguish that the world is full of disparate discourses; incorporate multiple voices into his or her learning; identify how the text is trying to position someone; and recognize any hidden motives or assumptions in the text.

As this chapter examines *Discourse Theory*, *Critical Linguistics*, and *Post-Structuralism* the following graphic representation may be helpful in looking at how they parallel each other and what is unique to each theory.

Figure B:



Discourse Theory

Discourse plays a central role in critical literacy. Many schools in western society privilege certain discourses while marginalizing others. “Discourse” can be referred to as *discourse* (lower case d) or *Discourse* (upper case D). Gee (1992, 1999) describes

Discourse to represent how each socio-culturally defined group has their own style or styles of discourse. This particular *Discourse* represents the culture, beliefs, values, vernacular terms, assumptions, and style of dress. Meanwhile, *discourse* encompasses the actual language bits that make up the linguistic elements of language. This *discourse* is more closely related to formal academic language or school literacy. Each of these discourses is political and social which can have an effect on the student trying to negotiate between them (Rogers 2002). The first theoretical framework, Discourse Theory, will focus on the construction and implications involved with both *discourse* and *Discourse*.

As I mentioned before, discourse is constructed culturally, politically, and socially. Critical literacy helps foster dialogic conversations and writing that connect to both the *Discourse* (cultural discourse) and *discourse* (school discourse). This notion is supported through discourse theory. Through careful examination of disparate discourses, one can begin to understand relations of power. Howarth, Norval, & Stavrakakis (2000) elucidate that “Discourse theory assumes that all objects and actions are meaningful and that their meaning is conferred by historically specific systems of rules” (p. 2). Meaning depends on the arrangement of discourses that form one’s identity and importance. Each discourse is constructed politically and socially which then institutes a system of relationships between different objects and practices (Howarth, Norval, & Stavrakakis). Laclau and Mouffe as (cited in Howarth, Norval, & Stavrakakis) explain the complexities of discourse theory.

The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/ idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that currently exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of ‘natural phenomena’ or ‘expressions of the wrath of God’ depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. (p. 3).

The analysis of the construction of meaning helps build the foundation for critical literacy. This is evident in discourse theory and the scrutiny of discourse. Howarth, Norval, & Stavrakakis (2000), define discourse as “Systems of meaningful practices that form the identities of subjects and objects” (p. 3). Discourses are intrinsically political which Howarth, Norval, & Stavrakakis assert involves the formations of antagonisms which create insiders and outsiders. These antagonisms also involve exploitations of power which tend to exclude certain possibilities or individuals. Additionally, discourse theory examines the way social practices methodically form the identities of subjects and objects.

Discourse theory has helped construct several aspects of critical literacy. The notion that some discourses are privileged while others are silenced can be cautiously examined to create a space for other discourses to prevail. Considering reasons why certain subjects and objects have become insiders or outsiders can help disrupt current hegemonic practices as well as help probe into political and cultural relationships and the impact on the construction of meaning. Furthermore, critical literacy can help bring

together both *Discourse* and *discourse*. Another avenue discourse can be examined is through critical applied linguistics.

Critical Linguistics

Critical applied linguistics has influenced critical literacy in that it aims to reshape literacy education in the interests of marginalized groups of learners, who on the basis of gender, cultural and socioeconomic background have been excluded from access to the discourses and texts of dominant economies and cultures (Luke, 1997, p. 143).

Pennycook (2001), discusses critical applied linguistics in that it tries to

Find ways of mapping micro and macro relations, ways of understanding a relation between concepts of society, ideology, global capitalism, colonialism, education, gender, racism, sexuality, class, and classroom utterances, translations, conversations, genres, second language acquisition, media texts (p. 5).

She then further elaborates that for critical applied linguistics, connections between global and social relations need to be looked at from a critical approach. Pennycook additionally states that, “Critical applied linguistics is concerned not merely with relating language contents to social contents but rather does so from a point of view that views social relations as problematic” (p. 6). Furthermore,

A central element of critical applied linguistics, therefore, is a way of exploring language in social contexts that goes beyond mere correlations between language

and society and instead raises more critical questions to do with access, power, disparity, desire, difference, and resistance. (p. 6).

This stance toward society involves constant skepticism, habitual questioning of societal norms, gender, class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, identity, politics, ideology, and discourse (Pennycook).

From this overview of critical linguistics, one can clearly see the underlying principles that critical literacy draws upon. Critical literacy extracts insight from critical linguistics regarding relationships of gender, race, sexuality, and socio-economic class and their connections to both global and political structures. Critical literacy analyzes the same relationships critical linguistics question and applies the relationships to textual representations found in society. Relations such as language and power found in text and how certain perspectives and voices are empowered or marginalized. Often text represents only one race, gender, sexuality, and socio-economic class: white, heterosexual, middle class males. This representation is quite problematic in a society as diverse as America. Acknowledgment and attention needs to be given to other races, genders, and sexual preferences in respect to curricular concerns. Currently only particular perspectives have influence over what literacy practices are imposed and what political and ideological messages are imbedded in text. For example, why are only certain stories represented in classroom anthologies and who decides which stories make it in? How do these particular stories represent characters, values, gender roles and norms? Do they represent all values, societal norms and values or only certain ones? Critical literacy under the critical linguistic framework makes a legitimate argument for

the inclusion of other perspectives and social/ cultural relationships making text a more equitable representation of all parties, not just certain ones.

Post-structural Theory

One last theoretical framework is post-structuralism. When examining critical literacy from a post-structuralist theoretical framework emphasis can be placed on looking at the discursive construction of reality across different contexts. When trying to explain the nature of post-structuralism, Crotty 1998, writes, “That the meaning of words derives from their relationship to one another and not from any postulated relationship to non-linguistic reality” (p.203). In short, there is no unified voice when it comes to language. Instead each individual or group of individuals have had an impact on the construction of meaning and relationship. As Foucault explains language is situated within societal relationships of power (as cited in Crotty, 1998). Post-structuralism calls for readers to be an active constructor of meaning as opposed to a passive reader easily persuaded by a dominant power (Crotty).

Pennycook (2001) stated that one of the crucial concerns post-structuralists advocate for is “Making the cultural and ideological, or rather discursive, as not merely a secondary by-product of material relations, or even as relatively autonomous, but as the primary” (p. 106). This repositions notions of reality or the individual in the larger context of society shaped by social and cultural institutes (Pennycook). In turn, this places language, culture, and discourse as fundamental categories under which meaning for the world and our sense of self is constructed (Pennycook). From this particular

perspective, post-structuralism begins to question how these different constructs are generated and sustained (gender roles and cultural attitudes), and what are the discourses that create binaries such as native speaker and nonnative speaker and first language-second language (Pennycook).

In regards to literature and critical literacy, post-structuralism examines relationships between human beings, the world, and the practice of making and reproducing meaning (Belsey, 2002). Post-structuralism suggests that meaning is produced by the symbolizing systems we learn, for example, knowing the difference between pixies and gnomes (Belsey). Post-structuralism has yielded critical literacy to question hegemonic beliefs, assumptions and textual representations and encourage the co-construction of meaning through varied forms of social, cultural, and historical relations. Meaning can differ from one individual to another and therefore one cannot adhere to notion that there is one truth for all parties involved.

Foundational Theorists

Discourse Theory

Several theorists have attempted to illuminate how each of these theories has impacted critical literacy and the construction of meaning. Both Rebecca Rogers (2002 a, 2002 b, 2004) and Henry Giroux (1990) examine discourse from the cultural, social, and political influences that have impacted meaning. Giroux positions himself with the notion that language and discourse is dictated by dominant ideologies and values. Giroux also

believes that curriculum is the result of reproduction or a “discourse of despair” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman, 2002), meaning curriculum was, in essence, reproducing the ideologies of the ruling class. This is problematic and must be resisted. These perceptions lead Giroux to become an advocate for challenging textual authority and rethinking curricular practices. Rogers’ position toward critical literacy stems from Fairclough’s (1989) three-tiered framework of overlapping orders of discourse: local, institutional, and societal. This framework is concerned with power relationships that have been influenced by language processes (local), context (institutional), and social relations positioning subjects and creating meaning. Fairclough’s three-tiered framework will be discussed in further detail later in this paper. Rogers parallels Giroux in that she also examines the construction of discourse both socially and politically, in which certain relationships are created and identities are formed that correspond to dominant ideologies and are marginalized by dominant ideologies. This too is problematic as certain discourses are penalized and silenced for their deviation or disruption of hegemonic beliefs.

Critical Linguistics

Two prominent theorists that work from the critical linguistic framework are Paulo Freire and Allan Luke. Both theorists believe in the importance of educational practices that raise one’s consciousness of social relations and power struggles. Luke and Freire believe that text lacks neutrality and is in the position to privilege certain voices if one does not question textual authority. Luke (1990) developed a Four Resources Model to guide instructional practices that promotes code breaking of language, understanding

ideas embedded in text, using text as a medium for change, and learning how to critically examine power structures. Additionally, Freire (1970) believes that only through praxis, dialogic conversations, and humanization can one truly learn to read the world and overcome oppression.

Post-Structuralism

Lastly, there are Michael Foucault (1969) and Elizabeth Marshall (2004) for post-structuralism. Foucault's key position relates to the formation of discourse. He argues that certain discourses reproduce prevailing authority structures in which certain prevailing notions are maintained while others are abandoned. Marshall postulates that dominant and accepted cultural norms guide and prevail as the model for what is valued in society. Accepted norms surface in literature and can govern certain stereotypes and gender roles. For Marshall, this is problematic and often misrepresents society as a whole. She positions her self within a critical stance toward literature and the need to carefully reexamine what ideological norms are represented in literature and what norms or values are silenced. Marshall analyzes the way Anglo-Americans have systematically edited out rapacious characters or actions in different variants of fairy tales to align with prevailing and accepted cultural norms. To further examine each of these theorists, this paper will examine each of their stances in detail.

Henry Giroux-Discourse Theory Theorist

Discourse theorists believe in the discursive nature that guides social practices and objects. Giroux (1990) place discourse as a central ingredient for the construction of power and meaning. Giroux (1990) remarks that,

discourse is not only entangled in relations of power but central to the production of complex and often contradictory forms of subjectivity, that is, the subject positions from which one's sense of self, identity, and subjectivity is constructed. Implicit in this view is the postmodernist notion that subjectivity is not coherent, unitary rational source of self- knowledge, but historical and social construction temporarily formed across a shifting range of multiple and often contradictory discourses. (p. 84-85).

One could interpret this to mean discourse is dynamic and subject to societal values and beliefs, changing what is deemed acceptable and valuable. Often the select ones who determine the dominant discourse are not representative of society as a whole or as Giroux stated, discourse is governed by ideologies of those who are in control.

Giroux (1990) strongly challenges the notion that discourse should be determined by those who are in control. Giroux states,

By challenging the commonsense assumptions that are inscribed in the dominant ideology of discourse and power, it becomes possible for teachers of English to reconstruct their own theoretical frameworks by adding new categories of analysis and by rethinking what the actual purpose of their teaching might be. (p. 85).

Giroux also writes,

Understanding literacy as part of a broader struggle between dominant and subordinate discourses has critical implications for the ways in which educators produce and “read” curriculum, engage the notion of student experience, and redefine critically their own role as engaged, public intellectuals. (p. 86).

Furthermore,

Teachers can draw upon the cultural resources that students bring to the class in order to understand the categories they use to construct meaning and locate themselves in history. By analyzing texts in light of their diverse readings and by interrogating such readings so as to allow students to bring their own experiences to bear on such engagements, teachers of English can better understand the histories and communities of meaning that give their students a sense of voice and multi-layered identity. (Giroux, 1990, p. 98).

Both teachers and students can shape and define meaning together and as individuals, instead of passively postulating to text authority.

When one challenges textual authority he or she rejects the traditional notion of the student representing the passive consumer and the teacher or text dispensing knowledge. The response then lies in teaching students to become critical readers. The reading process then becomes a medium for students to recognize social relations that position texts and knowledge and help them to formulate a voice in relation to a particular text (Giroux, 1990). The media as well as personal experiences help develop ones concept of voice. Both self and social representations moderate and manufacture wider structures of meaning, experience, and history (Giroux).

Giroux (1990) refers to voice as,

The ways in which students produce meaning through the various subject positions that are available to them in the wider society. In effect, voice is organized through the cultural resources and codes that anchor and organize experience and subjectivity (p. 91).

Students often have multiple voices, varying from context to context depending on the prevalence of contradictory discourses in their lives. When students have the critical skills to recognize how history, experience, and society all influence their different voices, they will be less likely to be manipulated. Giroux also writes that,

To speak of voice is to address the wider issue of how people become either subjects who are agents in the process of making history or how they function as subjects oppressed and exploited within the various discursive and institutional boundaries that produce dominant and subordinate cultures in any given society. (p.92).

Giroux (1990) argues that teachers need to rethink the way traditional literacy education has been approached and provide students with an understanding of how knowledge and power come together in the reading and writing of texts. Identifying practices that silence some voices and privilege others is critical. One important question Giroux poses is, “How do power and authority articulate between the wider society and the classroom so as to create the conditions at work in constructing particular discourses in the reading of particular texts” (p. 96)? Teaching students to disrupt the text provides

opportunities for students to analyze the plurality of meaning in text, challenge, and question and identify cultural codes.

Rebecca Rogers-Discourse Theory Theorist

Rebecca Rogers uses Discourse Theory and the method of Discourse Analysis in several of her studies. In one of her studies, Rogers (2004) is able to critically examine 15 African American adult students who are in an Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program. Rogers focuses on the relationship between literate subjectivities and various literate contexts. As stated earlier, Howarth, Norval, & Stavrakakis (2000) explain that meaning depends on the arrangement of discourses that form its identity and importance. Each discourse is constructed politically and socially which then institutes a system of relationships between different objects and practices. Rogers analyzed each of these discourses in their different contexts with respect to the historical influence that defined their identity.

Rogers (2004) defined subjectivities in her study to “represent the multiple, fluid, and unstable relationships that make up a person” (p. 276). Her findings indicate that almost all of her subjects had negative identity formations regarding their previous experiences in school but described their roles in their community as literate, competent and productive despite their lack of education and perceived literacy. This finding also supports Giroux’s notion that identity is socially and culturally formed. Each participant had a particular historical influence that transformed their identity. Often their negative identity had been influenced by the dominant educational discourse that was disconnected from their cultural discourse. Rogers was able to extract from her data, that

each of her participants' discourses shifted from domain to domain creating a somewhat "storied self" of how they define themselves depending on the context (Rogers, 2004).

Another study Rogers (2002 a) conducted incorporated Gee (1996, 1999) to identify her constructs of primary and secondary discourses. Rogers (2002 a) stated that individuals learn his or her primary discourse in their immediate environment of the home and community. When one learns his or her primary discourse there are cultural influences, beliefs, and assumptions that are embedded into the primary discourse. Rogers (2002 a) then uses Gee (1996) to elucidate that "acquisition generally occurs in the primary discourse and learning occurs in the secondary discourse" (p.252). Rogers describes this to mean children's whose home (primary discourse) is parallel to that of the school (secondary discourse) will have less difficulty transitioning between the two discourses. Rogers resists the binary opposition of the two discourses and instead assumes the conflict between the discourses influences the individual to view both discourses dually. That is how one can perceive him or herself as a literate person at home but having limited literacy at school.

Rogers (2002 a) abstracted from her data that her participant, June, did not consider herself a literate person and through her experiences in school she positioned herself in relation to others through a discourse of deficits. Rogers, furthermore stated that June believed reading is a skill that is measured by an external and dominant authority (the school). These beliefs and assumptions influenced June's decisions about schooling for her children. The school must know what is best. This is analogous to what critical linguists believe as well. This is reminiscent of Pennycook's (2001) notion that

both micro and macro relations as well as relationships between society and culture impact language and discourse.

Rogers (2002 b), also, engaged in a critical literacy book club with some adolescents students who worked together to locate power and oppression in terms of race and gender. As referenced earlier, discourse plays a major role in power relations. Rogers (2002 b) framed her work within Fairclough's (1989) three-tiered framework of overlapping orders of discourse: local, institutional, and societal. The local level centers attention on turn taking between students or teacher and students, use of grammar, pronoun use, who chooses the text and other micro linguistic aspects (Rogers). Rogers also explained that institutional order of discourse concerns itself with "ways in which institutions are contextualized through patterns of consumptions, productions, and distribution" (p. 776). Lastly, the societal domain focuses on the binary relationships such as freedom and oppression and literacy and illiteracy as well as identity development through discourse.

Rogers (2002 b) was able to determine the relationship between local, institutional, and societal discourses is interactive and interdependent on each realm. Rogers remarked, "The usefulness of locating critical literacy in specific networks of practice- local, institutional, and societal- offers the possibility of locating and critiquing the process of learning how to be critical" (p. 784). One example of this is illustrated below when two of her students are able to disrupt the dominant reading of privilege in their discussions of violence.

As we read the book *Oh Freedom!* By King, Osbourne, & Brooks (1997), a series of interviews conducted by adolescents with people who took part in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the adolescents employed their emerging critical readings of multiple texts- including their own lives- to make connections between texts that had read. Situating her response in the present day, Takisha stated that African Americans often had few opportunities because “mostly white people own mostly everything”. Taz expanded on this, drawing from a historical context and included himself in his analysis with the use of the pronoun “we”. He stated, “white people could do stuff when we was slaves and we couldn’t do anything. They had raggedy stuff for the black people and they all had the other stuff for the whites”. Taz then made a connection to *Amistad*, a movie he had just seen. Taz and Takisha open up a moment of resistance as they critically read the social and political world around them. Taz made an intertextual connection between the book they were reading and *Amistad*. He stated he could not watch it because of the way they were treating black people. In this discussion for the first time, the adolescents locate oppression in an institution as well as pull from examples of their everyday lives.

Overall, both Rogers and Giroux believe in the interconnections of discourse, identity construction, and power relationships. Depending on what cultural experiences one has had and what ideological notions are franchised impact how one negotiates through different discourses in society. The more one’s discourse matches hegemonic

believes the less one may feel oppressed, marginalized, or disenfranchised in certain contexts.

Allan Luke- Critical Linguistics Theorist

Allan Luke is a very important theorist who falls under the critical linguistics umbrella. Both notable theorists are concerned with instruction and rethinking how literacy practices are implemented. Disrupting common practice and critically learning to read the world guide both Freire and Luke in the research and theory.

One of Luke's (1995) major positions is that,

There are no universal "skills" of reading. Reading is a social practice, comprised of interpretive rules and events constructed and learned in institutions like schools and churches, families and work places. Implicit in ways of teaching reading are social theories- models of the social order, social power, and social change; models of the institutional everyday life; models of worker/ employee relations; and ultimately models of how literate worker and citizen should look and be. Simply put, reading instruction has always described and prescribed forms of life: of how Dick, Jane, and Spot should be and act as citizens and readers, and indeed of how migrants and workers, women and men, should be and act as citizens and readers. (p. 97).

This notion led Luke to question literacy practices and instruction in schools. Luke further argues that reading instruction historically over time has fallen short of recognizing that reading is always connected to the formation of moral values, identities, political ideologies, and beliefs. In turn, this has a direct impact on the construction and

distribution of textual practices, authority, and power. Literacy instruction is not a neutral transmission of ideas but a political and ideological platform.

In his historical scrutiny of literacy instruction, Luke (1995) notes that traditionally, reading has been used in literate cultures to form or shape socially accepted norms, values, and identities. Along with this, reading has set the stage for sanctioning certain topics and materials and composed the connection between the reader and the text; a connection that cannot be considered reflexive but rather authoritative. Luke then argues for a new approach to literacy instruction that reflects the new times of society, cultural, and norms.

Luke (2000) remarks in one of his pivotal pieces that,

The economies and traditionally cultures of New Times rely upon discourses and texts- retro and nouveau, of fiscal and face to face- as principal modes of work , consumption, leisure, and everyday exchange. Discourses and texts are forms of capital for exchange in these economies. Who gets access to them, who can manipulate them and construct them, who can critique, refute, second guess them are the key educational issues of the next century. (p. 449).

Luke (2000) draws upon the linguistic theory of Halliday (1994) who argued that lexical (vocabulary, words, or morphemes of a language) and grammatical operations of text can be logically attributed to ideological, social, and textual relations. Luke's approach to critical literacy is to create a classroom environment in which students and teachers work together to:

See how the worlds of text work to construct their worlds, their cultures, and their identities in powerful, often overtly ideological ways and use texts as social tools in ways that allow for a reconstruction of these same worlds. (p. 453).

From this notion and Freebody & Luke, (1997) created the Four Resources Model. Luke (2000) argues that there are four social practices essential for critical literacy. The Four Resources Model includes:

- 1) Coding practices: Developing resources as a code breaker
- 2) Text-meaning practices: Developing resources as a text participant
- 3) Pragmatic practices: Developing resources as a text user
- 4) Critical practices: Developing resources as text analyst and critic (p. 454)

Code practices involve learning how to crack the text, learning how it works, and identifying patterns and rules. Code practices can include students with a variety of readiness levels and cultural experiences. Students bring a multitude of cultural, community and linguistic experiences to school in which some students have had more exposure to academic culture than others. During this model, some students may need more explicit instruction than others (Luke, 2000).

Text meaning practices incorporates learning how ideas relate to the text, what cultural influences are present in the text, and what cultural meanings can be extracted or constructed from the text. Schema needs to be taken into consideration during this practice as well as cultural, communal, and gendered ideological development. Often instruction needs to consist of teaching students how to make situated meanings (Gee, 1996, Luke 2000) where distinct discourses are applied by the readers to fabricate

meaning. Most importantly, it is important to understand that meaning is constructed socially and from particular ideologies and discourses which greatly impacts the coding structures for students.

Pragmatic practices involves learning how to use text, what to do with the text in present day, what others can do with the text, and identifying one's opinion about the text. Students need exposure to different genres of text during pragmatic practices. Literary reading is only one aspect of literacy practice, so teaching students to read everyday text such as media, news, film and so on can help students evaluate power relations, grammar and lexicon usage, and form opinions. It is important to note that Luke (2000) stresses that these four models are not hierarchical in nature and classroom instruction can address different aspects of each of these models concurrently.

Finally, Luke (2000) illustrates critical practice as discovering what kind of person, what interests and values the text represents or silences, whose interests does the text represent, what positions and voices are privileged and whose are absent. In this practice, students are asked to second guess the conditions of text production and text function. Also, students can examine what historical context might have contributed to the construction of the text. Luke remarks it is his hope of this the Four Resource Model approach that

successful programs might make one just literate enough to get in real trouble.

That is, one could master the code, learn to make meaning, learn how to read contexts just enough to be ideologically deceived in a text-based culture and economy that attempts to define and position us at every turn. (p. 455).

Paulo Freire- Critical Linguistics Theorist

The next theorist I have placed under the Critical linguistics umbrella is Paulo Freire. Freire (1970) developed literacy programs in Brazil in which his practices focused on learning to read the world. Freire argued that current literacy practices were a form of banking education or a mode of transmitting knowledge from teacher to student. Freire asserted the need for a liberatory education in one of his best known book, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Some of Freire's most notable positions are the banking concept, problem posing education, and dialectical thinking. Freire was also concerned about the lack of humanization or dehumanization.

Freire adopts a dialectical approach toward understanding the world (Roberts, 2000). Thinking dialectically involves searching for contradictions in social reality (Roberts) which in turn delves deeper below the surface to analyze problematic ideologies and norms. Thinking dialectically seeks to understand social phenomena as part of the whole rather than in isolation. For Freire, this means constantly questioning and challenging current practices and assumptions.

As noted earlier, Freire (1970) speaks about humanization or the need to become more fully human. According to Freire, one way to become more fully human is to engage in authentic praxis, dialogue with others in a critically conscience way (Roberts, 2000). Freire (1970) defines praxis as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 51). Humans have the capability to purposely and intentionally transform the world. Freire remarks that in order for humans to have true authentic

praxis, action and reflection must accompany each other. Freire (1970) states that in “dialectical thought, world and action are intimately interdependent. But action is human only when it is not merely an occupation but also a preoccupation, that is, when it is not dichotomized from reflection” (p. 53).

Humanization can be accompanied by dehumanization. When one prevents someone else from engaging in praxis, one has dehumanized him or her (Roberts, 2000). Additionally, when one dehumanizes someone, they themselves have become dehumanized. In other words,

To deny someone else’s humanization is also to deny one’s own, for Freire, humanization is a dialogical process. Those who dehumanize others practice a profound form of anti-dialogue, and thus cannot be engaged in the task of becoming more fully human. (Roberts, p. 45).

Moving to Freire’s (1970) concept of banking and problem-posing education, he begins with the elucidation of this concept. The teacher begins as the narrator of information, who then directs the students memorizing the narration. This in turn, turns the students into “containers” to be filled by the teacher. “Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor” (p. 72). Freire suggests that the banking system promotes oppressive notions of:

- 1) the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing
- 2) the teacher thinks and the students are thought about
- 3) teacher talks and students listen
- 4) teacher chooses and enforces and students comply

5) the teacher is the subject while the students are the object (p. 73)

In sum, the banking approach will never allow students to critically read the world.

According to Freire and others who believe in a liberatory education, the banking system must be rejected and replaced with a problem posing education.

Problem-posing education eliminates the previous notion of “teacher of the students” or “students of the teacher” (Freire, 1970) and instead create an environment where, “the teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow” (p. 80). This fosters students to become critical co-investigators (Freire) engaged in dialogue with the teachers. When posed with problems, students in problem-posing education will relate themselves in and with the world, which then challenges their desire to learn and comprehend critically (Freire).

In problem posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as reality in process, in transformation” (Freire, p. 83).

This all ties into Freire’s concept of literacy instruction. Freire began his work with Brazilian adults who were considered illiterate. He began engaging his students in a critical reflection of their social conditions. Freire’s literacy work in Brazil involved three connected stages (Roberts, 2000):

- 1) investigation of social situations of the adult illiterates and the preparation of materials and agendas
- 2) introduction to the concept of culture through the analysis of a series of pictorial representations of Brazilian life
- 3) use of a small number of “generative” words for assisting in the process of reading and writing

Freire’s first stage of preparation consisted of five phases. During phase one, the adult literacy students researched different vocabulary words used by the people they worked with (Roberts, 2000). It was important that the literacy students generate the vocabulary lists themselves to ensure centrality to their daily lives. Once this was done, a list of “generative” words was selected. Words were considered generative if they were filled with existential meaning (Roberts) or based on experiences, everyday reality, or concerns of their daily lives. Also words were selected based on their phonemic richness (Roberts). Phase three, or codifications, involved pictorial depictions of the generative words selected in the previous phase. Often, the pictures would summarize aspects of the students’ daily lives. This then led to the last two phases where clarification of agendas (style, methods, and content of the program) and discovery cards were created (Roberts). Discovery cards consisted of generative words broken down into phonemic families.

The next stage of Freire’s literacy work incorporated a notion of culture. This phase cultivated literacy groups to explore ideas about nature, culture, work, and human relationships (Roberts, 2000). During this phase, Freire and his coordinators had to motivate and encourage their students to turn their oppressive situation into something

more humanizing. Through the use of pictures the concept of culture was introduced. Each picture had specific intention to inspire dialogue and the exchange of ideas. The last of Freire's stages was referred to as syllabic combinations. Unlike the first two stages in which the goal was to learn how to read the world, the last stage focused on how to read and write in the traditional sense.

Roberts (2000) does a nice job describing Freire's position on literacy when he stated,

Becoming, and being, critically literate in a Freirean sense implies the development of a particular orientation toward the world. Reading texts critically, from a Freirean point of view, necessitates, and is only possible through, a critical reading of a given context. Word and world become dynamically intertwined in Freirean critical literacy. Critical reading involves a constant interplay between text and context. (p. 94).

Michael Foucault- Post- Structuralism Theorists

Foucault exemplifies a theorist who examines the relationships between humans, the world, and the production of meaning, also known as post-structuralism. Much of Foucault's work focused on analyzing the effects of culture (Belsey, 2002). Some of Foucault's work has deconstructed the way society accepts, rejects, and penalizes particular norms. Foucault also argues that all relations are in some ways relations of power (Belsey). For example, parents and teachers socialize children in a particular way

and exams define what knowledge is important. Therefore, norms are culturally constructed and the extent to which they exert regulation is a form of power.

Another area Foucault centers his work on is in the area of discourse. Some may argue that Foucault would be better situated under Discourse Theory, but due to the collection of his work and his central tie back to culture and the production of meaning, here he is placed under the post-structuralism framework. Post-structuralism does put a heavy emphasis on discourse as does Foucault. According to Foucault (as cited in Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman 1995), discourse is a discursive practice in which the objects we speak of are socially constructed and mediated. Furthermore discourse is linked to power which ultimately shapes ideological practices.

Foucault then created his own Foucauldian discourse analysis (Howarth & Torfing, 2005) in which he explores how specific discourses replicate and alter relations of power and associations of meaning. Foucauldian discourse analysis spotlights two aspects of discursive practices: language games and strategic games (Howarth & Torfing). Language games refers to statements and constructions of meaning. Strategic games allude to the ways “construction of meaning produce, reproduce, sustain, or subvert relations of social and political power” (p. 257).

Elizabeth Marshall- Post- Structuralism Theorists

Marshall's (2004) notion is that the concept of *girlhood* in children's literature is influenced by the cultural norms and expectations of the particular time the story is written. She argues that gender differences reside in the language rather than in the referent (girl/ female). Marshall uses a post-structural literary theory to analyze the story

Little Red Riding Hood. She argues that children's literature is an extension of cultural norms that try to control and define children's bodies in terms of gender and sexuality. Marshall critically analyzed four variants of *Little Red Riding Hood* in relation to changing cultural norms that govern accepted behaviors in society.

Historically, female characters in children's literature have been marginalized and portrayed in stereotypical ways. Males are the dominate, active characters, where females are passive and dependent. Marshall (2004) explains that further examinations of gender roles in children's literature that portray female characters as strong and active typically lack these privileged characteristics and must work for or acquire these traits through some kind of lesson. Current feminist post-structural theory research shifts the focus from a static or stable gender role to one that questions the dynamic and ever changing role gender identities have depending on cultural discourse and practices (Marshall). This paradigm is concerned with how social views and historical perspectives of women vary. Another interesting notion Marshall points out is that historically, female characters in children's literature have been primarily represented by white, Western, middle class, heterosexual notions of femininity.

Marshall (2004) writes that in the 18th and 19th century, the middle and upper class developed a new genre of literature focusing on children. This genre was to be used as an instrument to teach children about religious and moral growth. Stories were developed for all children to teach obedience, good temper, and proper behavior (Marshall, 2004). This then led to text focusing attention on one gender or the other to impose specific behaviors. Text would center female character roles to represent what

discourses were associated with femininity concepts of the time. Marshall used this theory to investigate four variants of Little Red Riding Hood.

One of the first tales of *Little Red Riding Hood*, Red Riding was portrayed as a sexual being, who finds herself in bed with the wolf because of her inability to control her sexuality, but then uses her sexuality as a source of power to escape the wolf. Her behavior suggests she is responsible for what happens to her; she deserved the advances of the wolf. Later, in 1819, another version of *Little Red's Cap* surfaces in Grimms' *Children and Household Tales*. Grimm changed the discourse around Little Red to fit the privatization of what a girl is. In this version, a mother is added to the story, warning her daughter, to never to stray from the path. Of course, Little Red disregards her mother's words of caution and is eaten by the wolf. A strong and heroic man then rescues her. Her rescue indicates the possibility of rehabilitation for her unruly behavior (Marshall, 2004). Grimm's tale avoids explicit textual references to nudity and sexuality, and focuses on her straying from the path symbolizing the norm and need to learn obedience. She symbolizes sexual innocence as opposed to an immoral sexual being. Marshall continues her analysis but ultimately concludes that cultural norms and historical situations impact one's notion of femininity.

Summary

Overall, each theorist has contributed to the knowledge base behind critical literacy and has set the platform for current critical literacy theorists to begin their research and writing. Some of the current theorists who have contributed greatly to

critical literacy are Kumashiro, Shannon, Giroux, Vasquez & Wong- Kam, Freebody, and Carmen Luke. Each of these current theorists help add to our definition of critical literacy and how it can be used in the classroom.

Current Critical Literacy Theorists

To begin with, one may wonder, why should critical literacy be valued as an important ingredient when teaching? Well, some researchers such as Kumashiro (2001), Shannon (1995), and Giroux (1990), argue that schools often teach and represent information to the students in oppressive ways. Shannon writes that “[U.S.] schools in general and literacy programs in particular are often organized to promote a specific set of values- normal American values” (p.15). Often students are socialized to deposit the information that is taught and not question what perspectives are privileged and what voices are silenced. Apol (1998) writes that such practices condition students to search for the “correct” answer and interpretation of a text predetermined by the teacher or curriculum. This can promote students to privilege institutional beliefs and silence their own. A mode of reading that “locates readers only within the text is disabling, and leaves readers susceptible to gross forms of intellectual manipulation” (Stephens, 1992, p.4).

Vasquez & Wong-Kam (2003) define *critical literacy* as “Language which is used to exercise power, to enhance everyday life in schools and communities, and to

question practices of privilege and injustice” (p. 1). As mentioned before, Nussbaum (2002) describes the goals of *critical literacy* to

Apply critical thinking to achieve deeper understanding of existing social conditions and power relations” (p. 488). Through a deeper understanding and the ability to engage in critical discourse students can problematize social and political power structures. Students will be able to examine how authors may have empowered certain viewpoints while silencing others, develop the ability to “challenge the injustices and inequalities of the status quo” (Ciardiello 2003, p.235).

Students can distinguish how the world is full of disparate discourses, incorporate multiple voices into his or her learning, identify how the text is trying to position someone and recognize any hidden motives or assumptions in the text. “By developing critical perspectives toward texts, students can transfer these skills to the larger society, thereby “reading” their world through a critical stance that leads to empowerment” (McDaniel, 2004.p 473). Shannon (1995) further illuminated this when he wrote,

Critical perspectives push the definition of literacy beyond traditional decoding or encoding of words in order to reproduce the meaning of text or society until it becomes a means for understanding one’s own history and culture, to recognize connections between one’s life, and the social structure, to believe that change in one’s life and the lives of others and society are possible as well as desirable, and to act on this new knowledge in order to foster equal and just participation in all the decisions that affect and control our lives (p.83).

All of these theorists have had significant impact on our understanding of what critical literacy is and why it is so important for current educators to understand and make use of this knowledge base. However, it is helpful to hear how critical literacy can be used in the everyday classroom and how other educators have begun this transformation. In examining how critical literacy can be used in the classroom, one can look at it from four aspects: disrupting the common place, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on socio-political issues and taking action. All though each of these can parallel one another, this chapter has attempted to separate them to make it easier to understand how each can be used in practice.

Critical Literacy in Practice

Disrupting the Common Place:

Greene (1978) refers to this as *de-mystification*. Greene poses that both educators and students need to critically self-reflect on the information learned and interrogate it for a surface reality or what particular perspective others have defined for us. This skill is not only important for non-fiction text , but also for fictional literature. Often characters represent particular dominate ideologies and can implicitly try to impose certain socialization practices on the reader. Developing awareness to any manipulations and imposed views helps develop ones “*wide-awakeness*” (Greene 1978) to the real social reality. For example, Weintraub (2001) mentions information about World War I (as referenced in Ciardiello 2003) and how question finding can help uncover hidden uncertainties. He writes,

In December 1914, the soldiers of the opposing British and German armies surprisingly stopped fighting (without the permission of their officers) on Christmas Eve. They sang carols together, exchanged gifts, played soccer, and then began fighting again a few days later (p. 229). This information is conflicting to what most people believe happens during a war. Little information has been heard about events such as this. Question finding can help students generate questions such as “Why did the opposing armies suddenly stop fighting, begin celebrating a holiday together, and then resume combat (p.229)?

Jennings & O’Keefe (2002) identify these questions as “*probing questions*” because they help discover the deeper meaning of things that are often taken for granted. Inquiry moves from factual meaning to an inquiry that questions power, influence, and authenticity.

Flint, Van Sluys, & Lewison (2003) write about how some schools have a “one size fits all” curriculum with little space for the students to develop critical questioning of practices of injustices and privilege. Using literature, students and educators can open up a space for critical questioning. Luke (2000) elaborates that through questioning students can develop the ability to challenge injustices and inequalities, question the status quo of why things are the way they are, question whose voice has not been heard, who benefits from this reading, is this text trying to position me, and what are the authors’ motives?

Foss (2002) designed a critical literacy program for her student of privilege using the metaphor “peeling the onion” (p.394). Foss incorporated literature in her class that was both enjoyable and critical, but also establish a place where students would expand

his or her notion of what life is about. Foss comments that “ As texts and readers embody multiple layers, we work to peel away the various levels of meaning of books while recognizing and exploring the ways in which a single person approaches a text from different identities based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexuality, and religion” (p. 394). Giroux (1990) explains this to be the struggle between textual authority and one’s sense of self, identity, and subjectivity. The struggle between whose knowledge is legitimated can negotiated through organized conversation in which students feel safe to dialogue with each and can risk revealing his or her analysis. Foss indicates her passion for using critical literacy with students of privilege because most of her students have not experienced a disenfranchisement because of race and have in fact inherited positions of privilege. For many students, they may have only a partial view of what reality is and need to be challenged to look critically at what voices have been marginalized. A critical literacy curriculum such as this has immense potential for improved literacy.

Literacy and language do not only surface in literature but in the media and technology. Today, teachers need to be aware of other cultural influence that impact students’ construction of meaning. Much of today’s world is viewed through the lens of the media. Television, music videos, advertisements and movies engulf students’ lives each day. Text is not limited to textbooks and literature. It is found on television, the internet, and in the pop culture that many of today’s youth experience day to day. Television and movies often depict women and men in a way that is congruent with the mainstream cultural norms of the time. During the late fifties and early sixties, shows like

Leave it to Beaver portrayed women in a passive role, who had dinner ready by 5, laundry done, house cleaned, and children cared for, while the man went to work and provided for the family. This is parallel to the dominant notion of gender roles during that time. All though times have changed and television does not depict gender roles like *Leave it to Beaver*, television often privileges certain notions of what beauty is and isn't.

Carmen Luke (2000) sets forth the notion that students need to be critically aware of the media which is now an expanded form of literacy. Luke describes the objective of media studies is to “focus on the critical deconstruction of media texts such as print and imagery in popular magazines, TV programs and advertising, movies, billboards, and related forms of media representations” (p.425). This deconstruction illuminates both how the text and culture may take shape from the media. Shannon (2002) illustrates an example of how critical literacy can be used with the media. His daughter, who is a fifteen year old sophomore at an alternative high school, partook in a project in which she deconstructed the commercial illusions of the idealized female body. Through this process, his daughter was able to open up the idea that not all female teenage bodies need to be a certain way and posit the notion to other students in her school who saw her project to think critically and dialogue about the media's implications. Luke (2000) offers some critical questions to help foster student's critical analysis of the media. Questions such as, “In oral cultures, who has access to knowledge and therefore social power? How do mnemonic devices function to preserve a society's knowledge? Is transmission of information in oral verses print culture more authentic and unmediated? How did the printing press change the organization of and control over power?” (p. 429). Stimulating

and nurturing a critical deconstruction of the media can assist students to become more critically aware the disparate representations in society.

Critical literacy in technology is also imperative. Times have begun to change and classrooms are becoming more and more virtual. Students are using the internet and other computer sources to assist in learning, research and aesthetic experiences. Luke (2000) writes about an email he received in which the person comments, “ I think the biggest challenge will be that teachers will have to continually upgrade their IT skills, and [they] will have to be willing to change the content and format of their lessons to incorporate new technologies” (p. 426). There is no doubt that many students are becoming computer literate and seem to find a connection to what is being taught when technology is included. Teachers who incorporate technology into his or her curriculum can enhance the student’s learning and critical thinking by using a critical approach to computer literacy (Luke). Luke suggests that when using Web-based information students need to be directed to ask such questions as,

Whose interests are being served, through what means, and toward what ends?
Can we trust this information and why? How does this site (or CD) reveal a gender, class, cultural, or ageist bias? What semiotic features are employed to construct a particular information environment? Are there particular software or Web site genres? (p.426). How are traditional narrative forms re-represented onscreen, or how are they reworked and hybridized with new net lingo? Has cybertextuality already changed our language use? (p. 427).

Luke discusses the need for teachers to move beyond the simple operational skills of computer technology to a place in which students comprehend and reflect on social and cultural changes that have developed because of technology. For example, a computing discourse has emerged that's is filled with

acronyms such as FTP, www, http, HTML, and CD that have taken on the function of verbs and nouns; new words emerge [emoticon, hypertext, e-mail, autobot]; and old words are imbued with new meanings [boot, browse, button, flame]... *Click* and *scroll* has replaced *turn the page*, *bookmark* means to put an electronic marker where there is no book" (p. 431).

Literacy is becoming broader and incorporating new genres, but the critical element of questioning still needs to resonate with educators and students.

People are confronted with and negotiate through several different types of literacies every day. Each type of literacy has it's own cultural and social influences and represent and misrepresent human life differently. Critical literacy helps both students and teachers recognize how the world is viewed differently depending on who is telling the story. Students expand their skills to evaluate society and critique issues of power, class, gender, oppression, culture, and democracy. Curriculum in schools can be very political in nature in which only one view or set of expectations imposes on the student's culture and experiences. Educators who use critical literacy not only help create a democratic classroom in which all the students are empowered to speak, become active participants, and critically think but learn to question sanctions imposed on them about the right "set" of knowledge.

The media as well as personal experiences help develop ones concept of voice. Both self and social representations moderate and manufacture wider structures of meaning, experience, and history (Giroux, 1990). Earlier, this paper discussed what Giroux refers to as voice,

The ways in which students produce meaning through the various subject positions that are available to them in the wider society. In effect, voice is organized through the cultural resources and codes that anchor and organize experience and subjectivity (p. 91).

Students often have several voices that fluctuate from situation to situation. When students have the critical skills to recognize how history, experience, and society all influence their different voices, he or she will be less likely to be manipulated from the dominant voices prevalent in text and societal norms.

Interrogating Multiple Perspectives:

One way educators can implement critical literacy in their classroom is incorporating the use of multiple perspectives. This can be done through questioning. Ciardiello (2003) defines question finding as, “An inquiry strategy in which a discrepant event is presented by the teacher to inspire curiosity and wonder in the student” (p. 229). The purpose of question finding is to challenge the student’s prior notion of information and generate questions to resolve any discrepancies that may arise. When children are taught to embrace new information critically, he or she will probe for any hidden questions or alternative view points.

These questions take reading beyond the scope of surface comprehension and vocabulary acquisition to a level of critical reasoning where students can interrogate, and manipulate text and discourse. Students will develop the ability to recognize conflicting texts by juxtaposing inconsistent sources of information and delve deeper into an authentic representation (Ciardiello 2003). In speaking about a group of students who had been immersed in a critical literacy program, Comber (2001) writes, “In terms of critical inquiry, my students attempted to build a countertext that told a different story from that of the dominate perspective” (p. 236 as referenced in Ciardiello). Not only can critical literacy be used to help students identify oppression and privilege, but also it can help students of privilege challenge their own identities and familiarities.

Exploring different viewpoints of characters, historical accounts, or even real life situations can be done through juxtapositioning texts or reading alternative texts, and substituting characters (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004).

Juxtapositioning involves examining two contrasting texts which helps develop student understanding that each individual can perceive a situation differently and that perception is often a result of one’s cultural and ideological position. Substituting characters involves writing an alternative story or text that connects to students’ everyday lives. For example, how would a modern day Cinderella respond to a prince who is African America, Asian or even a character who is not a heroine but meek and poor? How would her position of power change? Writing can not only be a way to improve ones vocabulary, lexical and grammatical understandings but a way to empower different voices, perspectives, and ideologies.

This brings up the notion of how to focus on sociopolitical issues and how to take action to change current dominant beliefs. This can be done through exposing the hidden curriculum present in many academic institutions in western society.

Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues and Taking Action:

“Today no serious curriculum scholar would advance the argument that schools in general and curriculum in particular are politically neutral” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2002, p.244). In addition, curriculum in many cases may implicitly impose particular ideologies, norms, and hidden agendas. This is often referred to as the *hidden curriculum*. McLaren (1994), wrote “The hidden curriculum deals with the tacit ways in which knowledge and behavior get constructed, outside the usual course materials and formally scheduled lessons. It is a part of the bureaucratic and managerial “press” of the school- the combined forces by which students are introduced to comply with the dominant ideologies and social practices related to authority, behavior and morality” (p. 191). This is often emblemized in the literature the students are exposed to. Marshall (2004) analyzed four variants of the popular children’s fairy tale of Little Red Riding Hood. These four variants depict how particular cultural norms and dominate ideologies try to standardize female notions of gender and sexuality. These particular variants represented females as obedient, good-tempered, passive, and sexual beings who need to be taught a lesson so they would not abuse their sexuality or stray off the “path” (Marshall, 2004). The hidden curriculum in these four versions of Little Red Riding Hood implies particular behavior and gender expectations for females.

Often the hidden curriculum will coercively attempt to reproduce dominate ideologies. Pinar et al.(2002) refers to this as the *reproduction theory*. This alludes to the notion that schools are set up to reproduce in the students what the superstructures of society see as fit, accepted and productive. Bowles & Gintis (1976) illuminated this when they wrote; “The structure of social relations in education not only inures the student to the discipline of the workplace, but develops the types of personal demeanor, modes of self-presentation, self-image, and social class identification which are the crucial ingredients of job adequacy. Specifically, the social relationships of education- the relationships between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, and students and students, and students and their work-replicate the hierarchical divisions in labor. Hierarchical relations are reflected in the vertical authority lines from administrators to teachers to students. Alienated labor is reflected in the student’s lack of control over his or her education, the alienation of the student from the curriculum content, and the motivation of school work through a system of grades and other external rewards rather than the students integration with the process (learning) or the outcome (knowledge) of the educational “production process” (p. 131).

The hierarchical structure in which the dominant social class determines what knowledge, what curriculum, and what social practice is acceptable is problematic. For me, and others, a need for a critical stance toward education is vital. Critical pedagogy can be a way for teachers and students to work toward a more democratic curriculum and way of thinking. It is important to define what I mean as *critical pedagogy*. Simon (1988) cited in Goodman(1992) defined critical pedagogy as a process that “helps teachers and

students to understand why things are the way they are and how they got to be that way; to critically appropriate forms of knowledge that exist outside of their immediate experience; to take risks and struggle with on-going relations of power from within a life-affirming moral culture; and to envisage versions of a world which is “not yet” in order to be able to alter the grounds upon which life is lived (p. 2). To me, this helps delineate how schools can be the medium for teachers and students to empower their own beliefs, experiences, and ideologies, challenge dominant beliefs and social structures, and come to their own notion of what knowledge is meaningful for them as an individual and as a member of society.

People are confronted with and negotiate through several different types of literacies every day. Each type of literacy has its own cultural and social influences, represent, and misrepresent human life differently. Critical literacy helps both students and teachers recognize how the world is viewed differently depending on who is telling the story. Students expand his or her skills to evaluate society and analyze issues of power, class, gender, oppression, culture, and democracy. Wolk (2003) does a nice job explaining the intention of critical literacy when he wrote, “The purpose of critical literacy is not to tell students what to think but to empower them with multiple perspectives and questioning habits of mind and encourage them to think and take action on their decisions through inquiry, dialogue, activism, and their daily decisions about how to live so they may help a better world” (p. 102). Curriculum in schools can be very political in nature in which only one view or set of expectations imposes on the student’s culture and experiences. Educators who use critical literacy not only help create a

democratic classroom in which all the students are empowered to speak, become active participants, and critically think but learn to question sanctions imposed on them about the right “set” of knowledge.

Literacy also becomes more relevant to the students, connecting to their personal lives and having an influence on other aspects of the student’s life. Critical literacy helps develop a style of learning and understanding that extends beyond reading literature and connects to other content areas, problems in life, and social and political issues which ultimately help the student gain access and power in society and education.

Summary

Throughout this chapter three theoretical frameworks have been discussed: Discourse theory, Critical Linguistics, and Post-Structuralism. Each of these theoretical frameworks have had a significant impact on critical literacy. Additionally, six foundational theorists have been discussed that support each of these theoretical frameworks. Finally, this chapter discussed some current theorists who have applied critical literacy in classrooms or educational settings. Critical literacy can have a considerable impact for children. It can help them understand how powerful language is, how language influences everyone's lives and how certain voices have historically dominated our textbooks in school. Through critical literacy, children can begin to uncover the inequitable representation and begin to create new space for other voices that have been traditionally silenced.

Chapter Three

As stated before, the purpose of this study is to document students who have become critically literate as well as document what the teacher goes through in her systematic implementation of critical literacy while using prescribed materials.

This study is meant to be qualitative in nature with multiple case studies. Specifically, this study examined one teacher's systematic approach in incorporating critical literacy into her teaching practices as well as the students' responses to these curricular decisions. One case study focused on documenting and describing the teacher's experiences in implementing a critical literacy approach in her classroom while staying with-in the confines of her mandated curriculum materials. The second case study focused on the students' responses as well as academic and social growth in a critical literacy environment. The third case study is a cross case analysis of the two. The third case study drew from both case studies to find relational and corresponding data that tied together the research questions. A case study design attempts to,

Gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. For this study, "the interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation (Merriam, 1998, p.19).

Purposeful sampling has been used, as the intent of this study is not to generalize but to understand and discover the students and the teacher in this one particular class.

Initially this study began with direct instruction and modeling of several different practices that fall with-in a critical literacy approach. These included questioning, reading and interrogating multiple view points, juxtaposition of texts, creating an environment to

promote a critical stance, and problem posing. After students were led through guided practice of the four dimensions of critical literacy, then opportunities were given for independent application and reflection.

Additionally, the teacher in this study embraced a self study mode of research. Samaras (2002), defines self-study as teachers' systematic and critical examination of their actions and their context as a path to develop a more consciously driven mode of professional activity. This involves a careful analysis of texts read, the self as a text, the experiences a teacher had, people they have encountered, and ideas they have believed (Samaras & Freese, 2006).

The origin of self study comes from four growing educational developments. Each of these methods has had a significant impact on self-studies becoming a more accepted methodology in research. These include the growing prominence of naturalistic inquiry methods, the rise of the Reconceptualist movement in curriculum studies, increased involvement of international scholars in teacher education research, and the re-emergence of action research (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001).

The first influence, the growing eminence of naturalistic inquiry, has helped stress the importance of subject/object relations. In fact, Mooney (1957) wrote long ago,

Research is a personal venture which, quite aside from its social benefits, is worth doing for its direct contribution to one's own self-realization. It can be taken as a way of meeting life with the maximum of stops open to get out of experience its most poignant significance, its most full-throated song (p. 155).

In essence, who a researcher is, is fundamental to what the researcher does.

The second influence, the Reconceptualist movement in curriculum studies, with William Pinar (1975, 1980, 1981) at the helm, believed that one always teaches the self. Pinar embraced self-exploration through a method he referred to as “currere” searching for the roots of his self-understanding which led to his understanding of education (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). Pinar and other academic leaders helped legitimize the practice of self-study as a valid form of research. Additionally, international researchers in teacher education have added to the foundation of self-studies. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) among the many others, helped heighten awareness for the importance of a teacher’s story in her development and understanding of practice (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). Clandinin & Connelly remark that,

Experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it (p. 18).

Each of these theorists' contributions help validate and expose others to a new way of analyzing one’s own practices which in turn has open new pathways for current research.

Finally, the last influence contributing to the growing prominence of self-study comes from the re-emergence of action research. Several models of practice make researcher/ practitioner roles distinctive with set guidelines and expectations. This has helped make this form of research more standardized and accepted. In fact, Bullough & Pinnegar (2001), offer thirteen guidelines to help establish a quality autobiographical form of study. They pose the questions- what is self study and how can we tell whether a

study is a good one? To help answer these questions, Bullough & Pinnegar offer the following,

When biography and history are joined, when the issue confronted by the self is shown to have relationship to and bearing on the context and ethos of a time, then self-study moves to research. It is the balance between the way in which private experience can provide insight and solution for public issues and troubles and the way in which public theory can provide insight and solution for private trial that forms the nexus of self-study and simultaneously presents the central challenge to those who would work in this emerging area (p. 15).

To help guide this precious balance between one's self and one's practice Bullough & Pinnegar, (2001) give the following guidelines.

The first nine guidelines deal with autobiographical self-study forms and the last four deal with correspondence, e-mail, and recorded conversations. Since my study will not contain any correspondence, e-mail or recorded conversation, those guidelines will not be discussed.

Figure C:

Guideline 1	Autobiographical self-studies should ring true and enable connection.	Readers can recognize and connect to the writing. The reader's experience sheds light on one's self that connects in some way to others.
Guideline 2	Self-studies should promote insight and interpretation.	Researcher reveals a pattern of experience that allows for reinterpretation for both the researcher and reader's lives. This should be portrayed in an engaging genuine way.
Guideline 3	Autobiographical self-study research must engage history forthrightly and the author must take an honest stand.	A successful personal essay should have a pleasurable literary style, be an example of formal shapeliness, provide intellectual sustenance, and be honest. Author should

		examine his or her own prejudices in a truthful way.
Guideline 4	Biographical and autobiographical self- studies in teacher education are about problems and issues that make someone an educator.	When reading a self-study, it should answer a question and usually tells a story of becoming a teacher educator.
Guideline 5	Authentic voice is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the scholarly standing of a biographical self-study.	The narratives are teacher stories but the researcher must analyze the content to determine certain answers to the deeper truth of his subject.
Guideline 6	The autobiographical self-study researcher has an ineluctable obligation to seek to improve the learning situation not only for the self but for the other.	The reader should be able to ask- “If we didn’t know this person, would we care, would we read on? The balance between research and confession should not be lost.
Guideline 7	Powerful autobiographical self-studies portray character development and include dramatic action: Something genuine is at stake in the story.	A story should reveal events in chronological order and reveal each event’s dramatic, thematic, and emotional significance.
Guideline 8	Quality autobiographical self-studies attend carefully to persons in context or setting.	The character(s) in the narrative, scene, situation, and action invite reader connection. Scene and situation carry rich history that should not be taken for granted and make an important contribution to the story. Without attention to the context, the reader may struggle to make connections and conclusions.
Guideline 9	Quality autobiographical self-studies offer fresh perspectives on established truths.	Many narratives offer a heroic story of some sort. Readers can connect to this and through the story the reader feels that some quest has been victorious in a new and fresh way.

Allan Feldman (2003), additionally offers some insight on creating validity within a self-study. Validity is essential in a self-study in that the intent of a self study is to focus on ourselves. Thus, it can be difficult to be confident in the accuracy of what is seen, reflected on or interpreted (Feldman). Taking this into account, one can demonstrate how

they constructed the representations to convince the reader of their validity. Feldman offers the following ways to demonstrate validity.

1. Provide clear and detailed description of how data was collected and make explicit what counts as data.
2. Provide clear and detailed descriptions of how data was constructed and how representations were created. Inform the reader how the data was transformed.
3. Extend triangulation beyond multiple sources of data to include explorations of multiple ways to represent the same self-study. It is important to show why one representation has been chosen over another.
4. Provide evidence of the value of the changes in ways of being a teacher educator.

Overall, self-study is a new and emerging form of research that is still in its early stages.

Taking careful consideration to ensure quality and validity can help make certain research such as this is taken seriously and can make substantial contributions to the vast educational research that already exists.

Research Questions

1. What happens in a classroom where the four components of critical literacy: disrupting the common place, interrogating multiple perspectives, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action to promote social justice are incorporated into reading prescribed texts?
2. How does a teacher negotiate between a prescribed curriculum while using a critical literacy approach to teaching?

The first question delves in to the four components of critical literacy derived from Flint, Stuys & Lewison (2002). These four components: Disrupting the common place, interrogating multiple perspectives, focusing on socio-political issues, and taking action to promote social justice will help guide the classroom instruction. Each of these components will be looked at through the eyes of a social learning theorists.

As stated in chapter one, the social learning theory focuses on the social context and how that context plays a heavy role in how, what, and when learning occurs. Socially, learners construct meaning to participate in the world, develop social consciousness, and make connections (Hirle, 1996). Communication also plays a key role in this. Through interactions and discourse, people create and construct meaning together.

The second question deals with my journey using critical literacy with the anthology required by my county. This question looks at how I grew as a teacher, what difficulties I may encounter, how my experiences have impacted my curricular decisions, and how my students react to learning how to be critically literate with preselected stories. This is important, as my students will have several stories and texts already selected for them to read throughout life and need these skills to look at every text critically.

It is the hypothesis of this study that most fourth grade students in this northern Virginia suburb do not practice or even understand what critical literacy is. Therefore,

this study will help children move from decoding text to using the text to read the world for social, economical, historical and political influences imbedded in text. An additional hypothesis will be that of the four techniques associated with critical literacy, interrogating multiple perspectives will prove to be the most effective and show the most growth. Also, when looking at the different teaching strategies adapted from Vasquez that are associated with critical literacy, students will respond equally to all the strategies and all will show the students' growth in some way. Finally, the last hypothesis of this study will show that I will be able to negotiate through a prescribed curriculum while using a critical literacy approach through reflection, social learning and construction of meaning, and praxis.

Research Context:

This study will take place in a northern Virginia public school system. This school system is very diverse and represents 127 nations and has 105 different languages spoken. This northern Virginia public school system is comprised of:

White	47%
Hispanic	27.2%
African American	13.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	10.9%
American Indian/ Alaskan	0.1%

Unspecified 1.0%

Students with Subsidized meals 33.8%

The elementary school in particular that this study is going to take place is not as diverse as the entire school system, but does have some diversity. The break down is depicted below.

Asian/ Pacific Islander 5.5%

Black 4.0%

Hispanic 5.7%

White 82.4%

Unspecified 2.5%

This school was selected because this is the site where the researcher/teacher works.

Participants:

Participating in this study will be seventeen fourth grade students between the ages of nine and ten and their teacher, a white female, age 33. The students are heterogeneously grouped and are all on or basically on grade level. The students' demographic backgrounds are comprised mostly of Caucasian- 13 students, Asian- 2 students, Hispanic- 1 student, and African American- 1 students. The students are

grouped based on their Standards of Learning (SOL) score in Reading from the previous year and their fall Degrees Of Reading Power (DRP) score. Each of these assessments will be discussed in detail.

The Virginia Standards of Learning Assessments (SOL) are given in third through fifth grades at the elementary level. The SOL is a standards based criterion referenced test. This means that the students are compared to set criteria, in this case the established state standards. Criterion referenced is different from norm-referenced assessments in that criterion compare the students to a set of criteria as opposed to comparing students to that of other students in a norm-referenced test. In the SOL, there are three levels of performance: Did not pass, Pass Proficient and Pass Advanced. A reading SOL is given in all three grades. For the purposes of this study, the third grade reading SOL will be discussed as the participants have not taken the fourth grade SOL yet. Each SOL tests a certain number of state standards which are grouped into reporting categories. For example, the third grade SOL has two main reporting categories: Using word analysis strategies and information resources and Demonstrate comprehension of printed materials. Each SOL contains 8 questions from the first reporting category and 27 questions from the second category. Within these two reporting categories, a number of Standards of Learning are assessed from both second and third grade. Use the chart below to see the break down.

Figure D:

Reporting Category	SOL
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Use word analysis strategies and information resources	<p>2.6 The student will use language structure to expand vocabulary when reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. use knowledge of prefixes and suffixes b. use knowledge of contractions and singular possessives c. use knowledge of simple abbreviations d. Use knowledge of antonyms and synonyms
Use word analysis strategies and information resources	<p>2.9 The student will demonstrate comprehension of information in reference materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. use a table of contents b. use pictures and charts c. use dictionaries and indices
Use word analysis strategies and information resources	<p>3.3 The student will apply word analysis skills when reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. use knowledge of homophones c. decode regular multisyllabic words
Use word analysis strategies and information resources	<p>3.4 The student will use strategies to read a variety of print resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. use dictionary, glossary, thesaurus, encyclopedia, and other reference books, including online reference materials
Demonstrate comprehension of printed materials	<p>2.7 The student will read fiction and non-fiction, using a variety of strategies independently</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. preview the selection by using pictures, diagrams, titles, and headings
Demonstrate comprehension of printed materials	<p>2.8 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of fiction and nonfiction</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. describe characters, setting, and important events in fiction and poetry b. identify the problem, solution, and main idea
Demonstrate comprehension of printed materials	<p>3.4 The student will use strategies to read a variety of fiction and non-fiction materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. preview and use text formats b. set a purpose for reading
Demonstrate comprehension of printed materials	<p>3.5 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of fiction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. set a purpose for reading b. make, confirm, or revise predictions c. compare and contrast settings, characters, and events d. ask and answer questions e. draw conclusions about character and plot f. organize information and events logically g. summarize major points found in fiction materials h. Understand basic plots of fairy tales, myths. Folktales, legends, and fables
Demonstrate comprehension of printed materials	<p>3.6 The student will continue to read and demonstrate comprehension of nonfiction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. ask and answer questions about what is read b. draw conclusions c. organize information and events logically d. summarize major points found in nonfiction materials e. identify the characteristics of

	biographies and autobiographies
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In addition to using the third grade reading SOL to group the students, the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessment is used. According to the Degrees of Reading Interpretation Guide (2003),

The DRP measures how well students understand the messages within text. The DRP tests determine how well a student reads under “real life” conditions in and out of school. Because people usually do not have specific questions in mind when they read a selection for the first time, DRP tests focus on determining how well students process or construct meaning from paragraphs as they read through a selection. The DRP tests measure how well students understand the meaning of what they read. DRP scores are reported in terms of DRP units. Text difficulty is also reported in DRP units. A student who receives an Independent DRP score of 55 should be able to read *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, which has a DRP value of 55, without any help. We report three DRP scores on the school reports. The different scores are noted by showing their respective “P” values. The lower the “P” value the more difficult the material. The Independent score (P=.90) is the score at which the student can read, without help, text at a certain level. The Instructional score (P=.75) is the score at which the student can read a text at a certain level with about 75% comprehension. It is recommended this score be used in the classroom for instructional purposes. The Frustration score (P=.50) is the score at which

the student cannot read the text at a certain level without significant help and the text is likely to be beyond the student’s capability at that time. (p. 1-2)

Below is a chart taken from the Degrees of Reading Interpretation guide (2003) to highlight the DRP score needed to move to the next reading level. For this study, students are expected to achieve a score of 42 or higher for the fourth grade.

Figure E:

Grade	Fall DRP Score Needed to Achieve Level 2	Fall DRP Score Needed to Achieve Level 3	DRP Score Needed to Pass FCAT Reading
3	26	32	
4	35	41	
5	41	48	
6	43	54	
7	50	60	
8	55	68	
9	66	77	
10	68	81	72

The next chart summarizes each of the student participants’ SOL and DRP score. (pseudonyms have been used for all participants) The SOL score can be broken down in to three categories: Fail- 399 and below, Pass Proficient- 400-499 and Pass Advanced- 500-600.

Figure F:

Participant	SOL Score	DRP Score- Instructional (75% accuracy)
Mark	600	65
Andrea	600	70
Liz	525	70+
Mina	600	76

Pierre	486	76
Sandy	525	70
Susan	554	58
Sebastian	552	70
Johnny	486	52
Jimmy	525	46
Billy	402	42
Veronica	471	43
Kerry	600	62
Dugan	471	50
Harlow	600	46
Fiona	554	52
Callie	471	45
Andrew	554	70

From this chart, you can see that all of the students received a passing score on the third grade reading SOL. Of those scores, 6 out of 17 were a pass proficient score, 11 out of 17 received a pass advanced score. For the DRP scores, this particular county considers an instructional score between 45- 49 to be proficient and 50 and above to be advanced. A score of 41 or below is considered below grade level and the student is given remediation. From the results, there were two students who did not meet the cut off score of 45. The rest of the students fall with in or beyond grade level cut off scores.

Finally, the teacher is also a participant in this study as well as the researcher. I have provided a brief narrative to give some insight into me as a participant, however much of the first case study focuses on my educational experiences as a student and a teacher as well as my current experiences in my classroom.

Personal Experiences:

I have been teaching in this particular school district for nine years. Of those nine years, six of them were at a title one school where the majority of students were on free and reduced lunch and were mostly African American and Hispanic. It was not unusual to have several students in my class that did not speak English or who spoke very little English. After my six years there, I moved to a school that was completely opposite and is where I am currently teaching. At this school, most of my students are Caucasian and I do not have any students who do not speak English. I will talk about both of my experiences at the two schools as well as my undergraduate experience where I first decided to become a teacher.

Undergraduate and Graduate College

When I first decided to become a teacher, I was in a very shall I say “sheltered” environment. I went to school in a small upstate New York college that had an undergraduate population of about 2000. Most of the students that attended my college were white, middle class, and from a small town somewhere in New York. At the time, this was great as I too was from a small town in upstate New York and was not ready for the “big city” life. With that being said, most of my professors were white and my student teaching experience was in a small, white upstate New York Town. The biggest change for me was that this school happened to be very rural and not suburban. Therefore I did not find it strange or even think to question what materials we were using, or what strategies I was taught to use. For one thing I didn’t know enough about learning or teaching to question any practices and that was similar to how I learned and I went to

great schools-right? The one thing I did learn was that students with learning disabilities seemed to be prevalent in all grades and I knew I needed some more training in that area. So I decided to get my masters in Special Education at another small, white, upstate New York college.

I went on to get my masters where several things happened for me. One, I started to substitute teach in the city of Rochester where the majority of students were not white and were not from middle class backgrounds. This was a huge eye opener for me. At first I was scared and perplexed as to why they misbehaved so much and why they resented me coming into their classroom. Was it because I was a substitute teacher or was it because I was young, female, white or a combination of several? This began my initial questioning of my own self and my teaching. As I finished graduate school I decided I needed a change from my continuous small upstate New York experiences and decided to move down to the DC area.

Teaching Experiences:

I was lucky to have found a job right away in the district I now teach in. I got a job teaching special education to third and fourth graders. I did this for two years and then was switched to a general education third grade class. For four more years I continued to teach at that school going from third grade, to fourth to fifth grade. This particular school was mostly minority, poor, and had little parental support. For me, this was very challenging and I began to get the answers to some of my earlier questions. Why did these students seem to resent me so much? Well it was a combination of a few factors. For one thing, I am white and from a much different background than many of

them. This did cause some tension and I'm sure in some ways they resented being taught by someone who in their eyes could not relate to their experiences. Another thing I found was that culturally, these students responded and acted differently to certain situations and activities than I would have. For example, some students came from cultures that did not look at the adult eye to eye, or did not treat women the way Americans do. Learning about differences in cultures helped me to understand different perspectives and change my own expectations on how things "should be".

As I began to reflect on my experiences there I began to change some of my expectations and my approaches to teaching. My last year at this particular school, I started my doctoral work and began to learn about critical literacy. Then I was transferred to another school. This school was entirely different and just like the school I went to as a child. This school, where I am currently, is mostly white and upper middle class.

Racially, there are very few differences between myself and my students however, that does not mean I am an insider. I can not begin to assume I know what my students are thinking, feeling, or have experienced without taking the time to examine and dialogue with them in a critical way. One thing I know for sure is that I don't want these students to grow up thinking, like I did until I was almost 22 years old. I am not assuming that they are experiencing what I experienced at their age, but I want to make sure they have the skills to approach text and life in a critical way.

Basically, these experiences have helped to shape and change me into the person I am now. My experiences have also helped me to better understand myself but without

further reflection on myself, my teaching practices and my students' experiences and thoughts, my teaching may not truly evolve and transform to the level I feel that it should.

Data Collection:

Most of the data in this study is comprised of observation notes, student work samples, lesson plans, a research journal and teacher narratives. In order for observation to be used as a research tool, Merriam (1998) states that it must serve a formulated research purpose, is deliberately planned, recorded systematically, and is checked for validity and reliability. Observations are also triangulated with other data to substantiate the findings. The observations have been triangulated with the student work samples and the teacher narratives.

My role in this study has been one of a participant observer, that is, my role as an observer has been disclosed to the class but has been subordinate to that of a participant, Merriam (1998). It may be difficult to act as both a researcher and one of the participants, but, the way I recorded my observations is the key to unlocking precious data. It is essential that I record or even sketch notes down after each observation, even if that means recording the observation into a tape recorder to be transcribed later. This has allowed me to then elaborate on the details later that day without forgetting important events. This has also allowed for a first hand account of the participants being studied.

Next, this study used student work samples gathered throughout the duration of the study. These include writing samples, written responses to questions, journal entries, and text that has been rewritten. Each of these has been dated and analyzed continuously

over a period of time. Analysis focused on the students ability to analyze text as both a reader and a writer. This was done through a rubric/ check list I created. This rubric draws from McLaughlin & DeVoogd's (2004) *Critical Literacy- Enhancing Students' Comprehension of Text*. It includes:

Naming

- When a particular perspective is not represented, the reader can name the silenced voice. This then creates opportunities for dialogue, reflection, transformation and action.

Positioning and Repositioning

- Positioning involves placing readers in contexts that force them to think about themselves in certain ways. For example challenging gender roles. Can the student imagine an alternative situation in which the roles are different?

Power

- Power is often represented in text between people or characters. In looking at the social context, whether real world or text, can a student identify the power struggles? Who has been privileged and who has been marginalized? This includes looking at how the author's power roles have influenced the text in terms of what is represented and not represented.

Praxis

- Praxis refers to the dialectical approach for reflecting. Does the student's reflection, whether oral or written include evidence of change, alternative perspectives, and shifts in thought, action or transformation? If so, what specifically was said or written?

Problematizing

- In order to analyze a situation, context or a character's action, one must be able to problematize or question. Does the student pose questions as he or she reads and discusses? If so, what types of questions are being generated?

Reading the World

- Reading the world entails looking behind, around, through, and beyond the information presented in the text. For example does the reader understand author's purpose?

Identity

- Identity is a process of construction in which perspective, context, and culture play a role. Can the reader identify what perspective, context or cultural influence impacted a certain role or behavior?

Seeing Beyond the Text

- Seeing beyond the text means to see the situation from the character's perspective who is not well represented in the story. Can the student disrupt the text?

Social Justice/Action

- Can the student identify what they feel is fair or not and look for alternative ways to act that would promote fairness?

Checklist:

Type of work sample or activity:

Figure G:

Critical Literacy Trait	Is evident	Example for work or discussion	Is not evident
1. Naming			
2. Positioning and repositioning			
3. Power			
4. Praxis			
5. Problematizing			
6. Reading the World			
7. Identity			
8. Seeing Beyond the text			
9. Social Justice/ action			

Additionally, I have kept track of my lesson plans in my research journal. I have examined my lessons in terms of activities used with the students, how I decided on which activities to use and why, and what role the students had in my decision making. Vasquez (2003) strategies for teaching critical literacy to elementary students and Flint, Sluys, & Lewison (2002, 2003) four dimensions of critical literacy instruction have helped guide my analysis of my own teaching. The last form of data that has been collected will be that of a personal narrative.

Merriam (1998) supports the use of personal documents in that, “Personal documents are a reliable source of data concerning a person’s attitudes, beliefs, and view

of the world” (p.116). This is important as part of this case study focuses on me as the teacher and my experiences negotiating between using a critical literacy approach and using preset materials that I would not normally use. My attitudes and beliefs have played a key role in how I teach and model for my students to become critically literate and have been documented so that further analysis could be done to uncover the impacts my beliefs and attitudes have had on the study. In order to analyze this I have use Bullough & Pinnegar's (2001) nine guidelines for establishing quality in autobiographical narratives and Feldman's (2003) four suggestions for increasing the validity of one’s narrative.

Data Analysis:

All data was kept anonymous and locked in a secure cabinet. As data was collected, an inductive analysis took place. This process involved “simultaneous coding of raw data and the construction of categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document’s content” (Merriam, 1998, p. 160). In essence, this process involved continuous modification as each case was examined and tested against the previous one. Robinson (1951) as cited in Merriam (1998) suggests five steps in the inductive analysis.

1. Begin your study with a tentative hypothesis or explanation of the phenomenon under study
2. Purposefully select an instance of the phenomenon to see if the hypothesis fits the case
3. If it does not fit the hypothesis , reformulate the hypothesis- if it fits, select additional cases to test against the hypothesis
4. Continue to purposefully find cases that do not fit the hypothesis

5. Continue this process until the reformulation covers all cases studied or until there are not any more negative cases to be found

As stated before, data needs to be analyzed simultaneously and should be an ongoing process. Coding data is a system for managing large amounts of data. “Coding is nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of data” (Merriam, 1998, p. 164).

In this case, my shorthand designation has been identifying themes such as disrupting the common place, interrogating multiple perspectives, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action to promote social justice. Any other themes that emerged have also been coded and triangulated. It is important to note that

devising categories is largely an intuitive process, but it is also systematic and informed by the study’s purpose, the investigator’s orientation and knowledge, and the meanings made explicit by the participants themselves (Merriam, 1998, p. 179).

Merriam (1998) offers five guiding principles to determine the efficacy of the categories derived. First, categories should reflect the purpose of the research. In essence, categories are answers to your research questions. Second, categories should be exhaustive. All important data should be able to be placed into a category or subcategory. Third, categories should be mutually exclusive or a particular piece of data should only be placed into one category. Fourth, categories should be sensitizing or the name of the category should fit exactly what the data actually represents. Finally, categories should be conceptually congruent. This means that the same level of abstraction should be applied

to all categories. For example, Merriam states that if one were to categorize grocery store items, produce and canned goods represent the same conceptual level but produce and fruit do not in that fruit is a type of produce. Fruit should be a subcategory. Once all the categories are created and data coded, then theories can begin to be generated.

Instruments:

The participants in this study used an anthology by Harcourt (2008) called Story Town. Story Town is a new language arts and reading program this district has adopted. It is designed for grades kindergarten through sixth grade. Harcourt was founded in New York City in 1919. This study focused on the fourth grade section which contains both fiction and non-fiction stories. Specifically, this study utilized stories from the first two themes which have been discussed in further detail later.

Eleven authors worked on Story Town. It is important to know who worked on this anthology as critical literacy points out that one's experiences, culture, race, and gender have an impact on what stories they choose or what text they write. Therefore, it is important to identify who the authors are, as that may impact what stories are included in this anthology.

Figure H:

Author	Background	Area (s) of Expertise
Isabel L. Beck-Senior Author	Professor of Education and Senior Scientist at the Learning Research and Development Center at the	Reading Comprehension Vocabulary

	University of Pittsburgh	Beginning Reading Phonics
Roger C. Farr-Senior Author	Chancellor's Professor Emeritus of Education and Former Director for the Center for Innovation in Assessment-Indiana University-Bloomington	Instructional Assessment Reading Strategies Reading in the Content Areas
Dorothy S. Strickland-Senior Author	Samuel DeWitt Proctor Professor of Education and the State of New Jersey Professor of Reading-Rutgers University, The State University of New Jersey	Early Literacy Elementary Reading and Language Arts Writing Intervention
Alma Flor Ada-author	Professor Emerita-University of San Francisco	Literacy Biliteracy Multicultural children's Literature Home-School Interaction First and Second Language Acquisition
Roxanne F. Hudson-author	Assistant Professor, Area of Special Education-University of Washington	Reading Fluency Learning Disabilities Interventions
Margaret G. McKeown-author	Senior Scientist at the Learning Research and Development Center-University of Pittsburgh	Vocabulary Reading Comprehension
Robin C. Scarcella-author	Professor, Director of Academic English and ESL-University of California-Irvine	English as a Second Language
Julie Washington	Professor, College of Letters and Sciences- University of Wisconsin	Cultural Dialect

		Language Assessment Specific Language Impairment and Academic Performance Early Childhood Language Early Literacy of African American Children
F. Isabel Campoy-Consultant	President, Transformative Educational Services	English as a Second Language Applied Linguistics Writing in the Curriculum Family Involvement
David A. Monte	Professor Emeritus Department of Reading and Language Arts-Central Connecticut State University	Reading Comprehension Alternative Assessment Flexible Grouping
Tyrone C. Howard	Associate Professor Urban Schooling, University of California, Los Angeles	Multicultural Education The Social and Political Context of Schools Urban Education

As mentioned before, this study used stories from the first two themes from this anthology. Theme one focused on *Facing Challenges*. Theme two centered around *Getting the Job Done*. Each of these themes contained five main stories that were read, discussed, and analyzed by the participants in this study.

Theme One: Facing Challenges

Figure I:

Story	Author	Genre	Focus Skill
The Hot and Cold Summer	Johanna Hurwitz	Realistic Fiction	Character's Traits and Motivations
Mighty Jackie: The Strike-Out Queen	Marissa Moss	Biography	Character's Traits and Motivations
Danitra Brown Leaves Town	Nikki Grimes	Narrative Poetry	Compare and Contrast
Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain	Katrina Saltonstall Currier	Historical Fiction	Compare and Contrast
Pedro Puts on a Play	Illustrated by Marc Burckhardt	Reader's Theater- Realistic Fiction	Theme Review

Theme Two: Getting The Job Done

Figure J:

Story	Author	Genre	Focus Skill
On the Banks of Plum Creek	Laura Ingalls Wilder	Historical Fiction	Conflict and Resolution
Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World	Mildred Pitts Walter	Realistic Fiction	Conflict and Resolution
Three Little Cyberpigs	Jane Tesh	Play-Ficton	Author's Purpose and Perspective
Weaving a California Tradition	Linda Yamane	Expository Nonfiction	Author's Purpose and Perspective
Emerald's Eggs	Illustrated by Shino Arihara	Reader's Theater- Informational	Theme Review

		Narrative	
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Each story provided *Robust Vocabulary* for the students to focus on, accompanying worksheets to support vocabulary and comprehension, a focus skill such as conflict/resolution and a brief biography on the author.

Conclusion:

Once again the purpose of this study is to successfully incorporate a critical literacy approach in a fourth grade classroom that has to use a set of mandated curriculum materials. Through the use of Flint, Sluys, & Lewison (2002, 2003) four dimensions of critical literacy instruction a systematic instructional approach can be accomplished. The four dimensions of critical literacy include: disrupting the common place, interrogating multiple perspectives, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action to promote social justice. Additionally this study pulled from Vasquez's (2003) instructional strategies to help teach and model Flint, Sluys, & Lewison's four dimensions of critical literacy. These included Read alouds, Small group discussion, Whole group discussion, Re-writing text, Making connections to their everyday life, and Questioning. Finally this study uncovered what experiences, challenges and successes a teacher can have rethinking her instructional approach to balance a meaningful learning environment where her students are learning to be critical readers and staying within the confines of what her school expects of her.

Chapter Four

Critical literacy practices include an awareness of how, why, and in whose interests particular texts might work. To teach critical literacy thus encourages the development of alternative reading positions and practices for questioning and critiquing texts and their affiliated social formations and cultural assumptions (p. 218 Luke & Freebody, 1997)

Introduction

This study began with the initial need for a teacher to rethink her instruction to better address the needs' of her students, incorporate a critical literacy approach in her language arts instruction and utilize reading materials that were predetermined by her school district. In short, the purpose of this study is to rethink how instruction can better address students becoming critical readers. This is imperative in today's society as NCLB currently mandates all public schools meet certain proficiency standards each year known as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Many of the proficiency standards are determined through high-stakes testing in mathematics and reading. One way to help teachers meet the reading mandates for their students can be done using a critical literacy approach. This approach not only helps students focus on basic reading skills but it can also help strengthen their ability to read critically, become a text participant, and a text analyst.

This study focused on seventeen fourth grade students. Students spent nine weeks reading, discussing, and analyzing stories in the Harcourt anthology *Story Town* (2008). Data sources for this study are comprised from teacher observations, student journals and

work samples and teacher narratives. All data was analyzed using an inductive analysis which involves concurrently coding raw data to construct categories. Additionally to help establish validity with the self study methodology in my data collection and analysis I used Bullough & Pinnegar's (2001) nine guidelines to help balance one's self and one's practice. I also used Feldman's (2003) four guidelines to demonstrate validity in s self study. Below is an explanation of how Feldman's four guidelines are utilized.

Feldman's (2003) first guideline is to provide clear and detailed descriptions of how data was collected and state what counts as data. All data was collected over a three month period, kept locked in a cupboard or kept on my personal computer that is password protected. All student names were changed and kept anonymous. Four main types of data were used: Student work samples, student journal entries, teacher observations and a teacher narrative. All four sources were triangulated to ensure validity and to make sure all findings were consistent in each source.

Feldman's (2003) second guideline is to provide clear and detailed descriptions of how data was constructed and how data was transformed. Data was constructed over time and was open ended. All student work was open ended and in response to a discussion, texts read or a strategy introduced. As students learned to respond critically their work evolved and become more student driven where each child chose how to respond to the text. This could include a written response or an oral response that focused on one or more of the strategies they were introduced to such as power struggles, positioning and repositioning one's self into a character's role, or identifying author's purpose. The teacher's narrative began as a daily journal of what happened in class and slowly became

her way of reflecting on why she made certain instructional choices, why she had certain expectations or assumption, how her past has influenced her teaching and how she reexamined her ways of thinking.

Feldman's (2003) third guideline is to extend triangulation beyond multiple sources of data to show why one representation has been chosen over another. This study is qualitative in nature and therefore certain forms of data are privileged over other forms such as journals and observations. Two forms of data: Student journals and the teacher's narrative are the primary sources of data because this study is both a study on how students respond to a critical literacy approach and how the teacher embarks on a self study. In order to analyze “how” students respond to a critical literacy approach one needs to look at their work, responses, and actions. This can best be done through their journals. Their journals included written responses, pictures, alternative rewrites of texts to give silenced characters voices, and questions they came up with. As for the teacher's narrative, this form of data is privileged over other forms of data because it was a way for the teacher to look back and recall what she felt, experienced, thoughts she had and reflections she made. As I remarked before Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that,

Experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it (p. 18).

A main source of data in a self study is a narrative. As I analyzed my narrative I cross checked it with Bullough & Pinnegar's (2001) 9 guidelines for analyzing self studies.

Finally, Feldman's (2003) fourth guideline is to discuss the value of the changes the teacher educator experienced. The revelations I encountered in this study are elaborated in detail in chapter five however I will briefly state them here. From this study I experienced four “revelations” to speak of. First, from this study I was able to learn that whenever I felt frustration in how my students were responding to certain questions I was able use that as a marker that I needed to reflect on why. Secondly, I was able to identify several sources of why I felt frustrated with my instruction or with my students' work. Third I was able to examine how my own experiences with school or in my personal life impacted my instruction. Finally I was able to come up what knowledge meant for me as a researcher and a teacher. These four revelations are important and add value to this study as it shows how a self study helps promotes insight into one's teaching, offers an authentic voice for other teachers to connect to and build from when embarking in their own self study of their teaching practices and highlights problems and issues that might arise for someone else doing a self study.

This chapter will begin with a detailed explanation of the first two case studies.

Case Study 1 and 2:

This section will illuminate how the students responded to critical literacy and what I experienced as the teacher. With-in each story I have included my personal reflection on the story and what I was able to determine about myself as a teacher, person, woman and reader.

Over the course of nine weeks this study set out to encourage and develop alternative reading positions of seventeen fourth grade students. These students ranged from below grade level reading abilities to above grade level reading abilities, students with Individualized Education Programs and students from a variety of different cultures. Additionally this study will document one teacher’s journey using critical literacy in her classroom while trying to stay with-in the prescribed set of teaching materials. To summarize each of these students again, I have included a brief summary of where each student is academically and some demographic information. All names used in this study are pseudonyms.

Table 1

Student	Race	DRP level	3 rd Grade Reading SOL Scores	Has an IEP	Reading Level
Mark	Caucasian	62	600	Yes	On
Andrea	Caucasian	70	600	No	On
Liz	Caucasian	71+	525	No	Above
Mina	Asian	76	600	No	Above
Pierre	Caucasian	76	486	No	On
Sandy	Caucasian	70	525	No	On
Susan	Caucasian	58	554	No	Above
Johnny	Caucasian	52	486	No	Below
Jimmy	Caucasian	46	525	No	Below

Student	Race	DRP level	3 rd Grade Reading SOL Scores	Has an IEP	Reading Level
Billy	Caucasian	42	402	Yes	Below
Veronica	Hispanic	43	471	No	On
Kerry	Caucasian	62	600	No	Above
Dugan	Caucasian	50	471	No	Below
Harlow	Caucasian	46	600	No	On
Fiona	Asian	52	554	No	On
Callie	African American	45	471	No	Below
Andrew	Caucasian	70	554	No	On

Research Questions

1. What happens in a classroom where the four components of critical literacy: disrupting the common place, interrogating multiple perspectives, focusing on socio-political issues, and taking action to promote social justice are incorporated into reading prescribed texts?
2. How does a teacher negotiate between a prescribed curriculum while using a critical literacy approach to teaching?

To begin, I decided to use the Three Little Pigs story and the True Story of the Three Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka. I thought this would be a good way to introduce my students to what an alternative perspective is. I decided to begin with this because no matter what the reading ability is of a student I felt he or she would be able to recognize how the same story has been told from two different perspectives.

After we read the story we spent some time comparing and contrasting the two stories. Then the students were able to make connections to recess about different perspectives and how they can impact a story. One student commented:

The other day at recess I (Fiona) was playing with Kerry and Harlow. We were running around playing “Sting” (a game of tag). Then Mark joined in and started chasing us and ruined the whole game. So Kerry and I started throwing twigs at him so he would stop playing with us. Then Mrs. Smith (the recess monitor) told us we needed to sit out for 5 minutes. We were so mad because we didn’t do anything?

While we were sitting out, Mrs. Brimley (principal) came out and asked us why we were sitting out and we told her. But then Mark said he wasn’t chasing us, he just wanted to play with us and thought we wanted him to play because we were chasing him.

I then asked Fiona if she thought each of them had a different perspective on what happened? She responded, Yes, we thought he was trying to ruin our game and he thought he was playing with us. Weird—laughing.

After that, several of the students began to share stories from their own experiences that showed examples of two different perspectives for the same event. I decided this was a good point to give them some questions to think about and respond to in their reading journal.

Why do you think someone wrote another version of the Three Little Pigs?

Do you think it is important to hear another side of the story?

Which version of the Three Little Pigs do you believe? Why?

The responses were varied for questions one and two. Some seemed to really understand the concept of alternative perspectives and why it is important to hear another version of the story but a few students who I thought understood and even gave examples during our conversations were not able to tell me when it came time to write down their response.

Table 2

Student	Question 1	Question 2
Jimmy	I think they did so people would have something else to like.	Yes, because there is a big collection of books.
Veronica	I think someone wrote another	I think it is important to hear another side of the story because you'll know how the other

Student	Question 1	Question 2
	<p>version of the <u>Three Little Pigs</u> because they want you to hear another character's perspective.</p>	<p>character feels.</p>
Sandy	<p>I think someone wrote another version of the <u>Three Little Pigs</u> because everybody has only heard of the normal one.</p>	<p>Yes, I do think that it is important to hear another side because what if the other story wasn't true!</p>
Harlow	<p>I think someone wrote another version of the <u>Three Little Pigs</u> because some people want to hear more about the book.</p>	<p>Yes, I do think it is important because I love this story and am happy to hear more of it.</p>
Kerry	<p>I think someone wrote another version of the <u>Three</u></p>	<p>I think it is important to hear another side of the story so you can compare the two stories and chose which one is correct.</p>

Student	Question 1	Question 2
	<p><u>Little Pigs</u> because they wanted to try writing the story from another perspective and to make people interested in the book.</p>	
Mark	<p>I think that someone wrote it because he wanted to make people think about it.</p>	<p>I think that it is important to hear another side of the story because then you can determine what is true.</p>
Mina	<p>I think someone wrote another version of the <u>Three Little Pigs</u> because the author wanted to make it more interesting and make some more money from more books</p>	<p>I think it is important to hear another side of the story because it may help you decide which person or thing to believe. The other perspective might change your mind.</p>

Student	Question 1	Question 2
	being sold.	
Andrea	I think the author wrote another version because they wanted to show a story from the wolf and to make the story funnier.	It is not that important unless you want to have fun.
Pierre	I think someone wrote another version of the <u>Three Little Pigs</u> because it is a mystery of why the wolf did this.	I think it is important because the main character in the story might be lying.
Johnny	I think they wrote a second story because I think they wanted a way to tell people the other side.	Yes, I do like hearing the other side so you might hear the truth and you might not have ever known it.
Billy	To see if it is correct.	Yes because you can see if it is correct or not.

Student	Question 1	Question 2
Andrew	I think someone wrote another version because they were curious to know what happened when the wolf tells his story. I would be curious too if I read that story and wondered what the wolf's side was.	I think it is very important to hear both sides. If you are trying to find the truth and you only hear one side, how can you know if that is the truth or not?
Liz	I think someone else wrote another version of the <u>Three Little Pigs</u> because the wolf was always taking the blame for something he may not have done.	I think it is important to hear another side of the story because one side may have lied or exaggerated and made up a few things so you should always hear at least two sides of a story.
Callie	Probably they wanted to tell the	When you hear two sides they you can decide if he is innocent or guilty.

Student	Question 1	Question 2
	<p>story because you can see if the wolf is innocent.</p>	
Dugan	<p>I think he or she wrote another version of the <u>Three Little Pigs</u> because he or she would think it was funny.</p>	<p>I think it is important because the pigs might be wrong about the wolf.</p>
Susan	<p>I think someone wrote another version because it is interesting to hear another side of the story and it's cool to read a behind the scenes story.</p>	<p>I think it is important to hear another side of the story because you can't just hear one side of the story and say, "Oh I believe this side of the story, I don't need to read the other story".</p>
Fiona	<p>The author wanted to show the wolf's perspective because the wolf has a right to have a story. Also readers might want</p>	<p>Yes it is important because you have to hear all sides before you can make any decisions.</p>

Student	Question 1	Question 2
	<p>to hear about what the wolf was trying to do instead of blowing down houses and eating other pigs.</p>	

Dugan, Billy, Jimmy, Harlow and Andrea did not really seem to understand why hearing an alternative perspective could be important as a reader. They tended to say writing another perspective was for humor more than to hear another side of the story. So what did this mean for me and my teaching? I knew that some students would need my assistance for a while. I also thought about my own personal struggles in this study and how it was hard for me to always see someone else's perspective even as an adult. It takes time and practice doing this in order to truly be reflective all of the time.

I truly did not have any preconceived set of assumptions about these two stories but I did have the expectation that my students would see the connection of how hearing multiple perspectives on the same story can help build or change your belief system. After all, this is why I chose these two stories to start off with and not the anthology.

From this initial response I could see that Jimmy, Harlow, Andrea, Billy and Dugan needed some help understanding why it is important to hear alternative perspectives. I decided to have them discuss with me the last time their parents had them

do something that they thought was unfair. Dugan began with a story about how he had to let his little sister play with his legos and he didn't like that because they were his and his sister had her own toys. I had him think about why his parents might have asked him to do that and he said because she always gets to do whatever she wants to do. I pushed him harder to think about why that might be the case. He thought for a while and then Harlow offered a suggestion. I think your parents do that because they share everything with you like the house, money, food and stuff and you need to know how to share with people you love and that means your sister. Your parents want you to know how to share so when you are a parent you share with your kids.

This response blew me away. How could Harlow at nine years old be so introspective? Dugan seemed surprised too and agreed with her that was probably why and he was glad his parents shared with him so he would try harder to share with his sister.

Then I followed up with another response question for the entire class. How can you help create an alternative interpretations of stories you have read? This was a precursor to teaching them about opening space up for silenced voices and positioning and repositioning themselves into stories. I also thought I could use this as my baseline of where they were in terms of critical literacy before I systematically taught them about it. I wanted to see what they would say.

Table 3

Student	Question 1
Jimmy	I can help create that by telling a version that is switched or not

Student	Question 1
	heard yet.
Veronica	I could make other people understand there is another side to the story.
Sandy	I could think about it and create it.
Harlow	I can read another story and talk about it.
Kerry	I could give both sides of the story.
Mark	I could show another perspective.
Mina	I can create alternative perspectives by learning more about the characters and reading more.
Andrea	I can give the other character words and things to say.
Pierre	I could say both sides.
Johnny	You can always write another story which tells the second side.
Billy	I could make the bad guy a good guy.
Andrew	I could write the bad guy's or the "silenced" person's side of the story.
Liz	I could change perspectives and make the "bad guy" the "good guy".
Callie	I can write the other side by interviewing the other character.
Dugan	I can see how one character sees it and then how the other character sees it.
Susan	I can help by hearing another version or side of the story.
Fiona	I could write the other side of the story.

Two things emerged for me as I read through these responses. One was that I constantly wanted to correct all of their mechanical mistakes. This was a struggle for me as to whether I focus on the content of their answers or the conventions of their writing. I had to really think about what the purpose of my lesson. Was it to have them make the connection as to why hearing alternate perspectives was beneficial or to write coherent mechanically correct responses or both? After some time, I decided it was both but not right now. Now, I wanted them to get their thoughts down and later I would revisit these responses for the mechanical errors. As a teacher, I sometimes feel like I have to do everything all at once. I constantly feel worried that if I let something go, I am not teaching my students correctly. This is a hard feeling to let go. I really had to let the mechanical errors go and have faith that everything has its time and place.

The other thing that emerged was that I needed to think about what I was doing with my students from another perspective, the perspective of my county. Here I was in my own way having my own internal tantrum about my school's decision to use certain materials and wanting all the teachers to use them. I initially felt this was to simply control us and why did I, a veteran teacher of nine years, need to use preset materials when I was perfectly capable to make sound decisions about my own materials? If I was going to be true to my own teaching I needed to be reflective too. So why would a county make this decision, easy. The same way a parent makes a decision about their children. You do what's best for the entire family, not one member. My school system needed to make a decision for all the members: students, teachers, and staff members. Using one set of materials helps establish routines for students as they move up through the grades, or if

they change schools. It helps students of all abilities and provides resources for students who are struggling. It helps administrators know what to look for in the teacher's language arts instruction, it helps new inexperienced teachers have a foundation to begin with and it helps experienced teachers “rethink” their instruction. Okay, maybe the last one might not have been the intention of the school system but this alternative viewpoint began to help me understand a wider picture. I felt good, both my students and I are starting to realize there is always another side to something.

After this, I realized I needed to break my class into two smaller groups. I could see that about half of the students were responding to the questions in a way that showed me they understood and were able to think about this concept in a meaningful way. But I had a handful of students who were going to need some extra support and guidance. Plus I knew several of these students were struggling readers and writers and would need support in the actual writing aspect to these activities and decoding text. I also needed to use two different stories because once I met with one group the other group would hear the conversation and they wouldn't have a chance to come up with their own thoughts. I decided to use the guided reading books that came with the series.

Below is a list of books I used for each group.

Table 4

Group:	Story Number	Book
Group 1	1	<u>Laugh a Minute</u>
Group 2	1	<u>Hot and Cold Summer</u>
Group 1	2	<u>Mighty Jackie: The Strike Out Queen,</u>
Group 2	2	<u>Bart Starr: Star of the Ice Bowl</u>
Both Groups	3	<u>Danita Brown Leaves Town</u>

Both Groups	4	<u>Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain: An Angel Island Story</u>
Group 1	5	<u>In Country My Own</u>
Group 2	5	<u>Two Brothers from Italy</u>
Both Groups	6	<u>Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World</u>
Both Groups	7	<u>Weaving a California Tradition</u>

The first two books were Hot and Cold Summer by Johanna Hurwitz, which was hard to use and Laugh a Minute by Ted Sola which worked well.

Group 1 consisted of: Andrea, Liz, Mina, Pierre, Sandy, Susan, Kerry, Fiona, and Andrew who were all able to read on or slightly above grade level and did not struggle with writing. Group 2 consisted of: Johnny, Jimmy, Billy, Veronica, Dugan, Harlow, and Callie who all read at or slightly below grade level and somewhat to significantly struggled with writing.

Group 2: The Hot and Cold Summer by Johanna Hurwitz

This story is about two boys who are friends when a girl named Boliva moves into their neighborhood. The boys make a pact not to speak to her but then one of the boys goes away to summer camp and the other boy befriends Boliva. When the other boy comes back, he eventually accepts Boliva after they have a pizza eating contest and she is able to eat as much as them. The illustrations lead us to believe that the girl is Caucasian, one boy is African American and the other boy is Caucasian but nothing is ever explicitly stated. It was my hope that this group after our discussion would be able to create voices

for each of the characters and pick up on gender roles and how boys and girls can create initial judgments on whether they can be friends or not. Below is the question I gave the students to respond to.

Response question: In the story we just read, gender played a role in how one of the boys initially responded to Bolivia. What if Bolivia wasn't a girl and was a boy. How do you think this story would have been different?

Table 5

Student	Response
Jimmy	I think they would like a new boy. I think that because they might not like girls and boys like to have a no girls allowed club.
Veronica	I don't think it would have mattered if Bolivia was a boy because Rory wouldn't like anybody coming into town to come into his relationship with Derek. Rory and Derek had been friends for along time and he didn't want to lose his friend to anyone.
Harlow	I don't think the story would have changed because I think Rory didn't want anyone else to be Derek's friend.
Johnny	I think the story would defiantly change. The reason I think it would be different is because boys like to make friends with boys

Student	Response
	not girls and they would just be friends and not have any problems.
Billy	The story would change because to Rory gender does matter and he would have been happy if Boliva was a boy.
Callie	I think if Boliva was Bolivio- it wouldn't have changed because Rory and Derek are best buds forever and Rory would have probably not liked somebody he doesn't know coming into his friendship.
Mark	I think Rory would have responded better if it was a boy because mostly boys respond better if it is a boy. Boys typically like to do the same stuff and girls don't.

I was very surprised by these results. The girls seemed to have focused on a different aspect of the story than the boys. They were convinced that gender did not have any effect on the way Rory would have reacted if Bolivia were a boy instead of a girl. They seemed to focus on the nature of their friendship. The fact that Rory and Derek's friendship was singular and anyone, no matter what gender who might have come between that friendship would have been a threat to Rory. I thought this was fascinating as I had not even picked up on that. When I initially sat down and read this story I struggled with what I could even do with this story in terms of critical literacy and finally

decided that gender played such a big role in the story so that is what I would focus on. I had anticipated that all of my students would agree that if Boliva was a boy that Rory would have liked him and there wouldn't have been a conflict. I was wrong. The boys on the other hand had responded exactly the way I had expected and felt Rory would have been happy to play with a boy instead. The girls' responses helped both the boys and myself create a broader understanding of this story.

Another surprising result happened as we read this story together. As we read this story, the girls were able to identify that this story didn't include what Boliva was feeling inside. The girls wanted to give Boliva a "voice" and speak for her. They spent a lot of time commenting on what they thought Bolivia was feeling. The boys listened to the girls and at times agreed with them but often took what the girls were saying and assimilated it onto themselves which helped them make new connections to the story. For example at one point when Bolivia told Rory and Derek they could never eat an entire pizza and they both said they could Boliva then challenged them to see if they could do it. Veronica made the comment,

I think Bolivia is doing that because she is annoyed at how greedy and unfair the boys are and wants to teach them a lesson. I would be so annoyed too if I were playing with Derek and Rory and all they wanted to do was show off and act like they could do anything ridiculous and girls aren't as good. I hate people like that.

Then Johnny followed up with a memory of when he was playing with a neighbor and the boy just wanted to brag about all of Pokemon cards he had and how he felt annoyed and

didn't want to play with him. Veronica had been able to provide a voice for Boliva and without even knowing it, her comments helped Johnny make an additional connection to the story he wouldn't have picked up on by himself. This is a great example of the Social Learning Theory.

I had expected that the girls and boys would pick up on gender relationships and I assumed they both would agree that if Bolivia was a boy this story would be very different. I had assumed that boys and girls at the age of nine would be very superficial and only focus on the girl/boy power struggle in this story. Identifying this before I analyzed the data helped me to see how regardless of what each student focused on in the story, it was meaningful for them and in return helped open all of our eyes to new meanings. I think this helped me focus on how each student thought the story would or would not be different if Bolivia was a boy and report on that only, not what I wanted them to pick up on. Then I switched to work with my first group.

Group 1: Laugh A Minute by Ted Sola

This story is about a girl named Allison who loves to joke around. Allison has a habit of laughing too much and at inappropriate times. For example if someone falls or drops their books she will laugh and make jokes about it. Allison's family and friends get very annoyed with her but she doesn't realize what she is doing to other people until it happened to her and she learned her lesson.

This story worked well with giving silenced characters a voice. The students were very upset with Allison and were eager to speak on the other characters behalf to let Allison know just how she was acting. In fact, all of the students in this group had

experienced a situation in which something had happened to them and someone laughed at them. I think this story really connected with them and made them very passionate about helping silenced characters have a voice.

For this story I had the students pick one of the silenced voices and write an internal dialogue for them.

Table 6

Student	Silenced Character	Internal dialogue
Andrea	Katy	Allison, you're mean and I'm never going to talk to you again. You need to say you're sorry. Nobody is going to like you because you are mean!
Liz	Katy	Shut up! It hurts you know. You really don't understand it though do you? You're not even listening to me!!! You are the worst friend ever and should go to juvie. You should get laughed at when something like this happens to you.
Mina	Katy	Ugg- thanks a lot Allison! I

Student	Silenced Character	Internal dialogue
		hate you!!! Ouch my knee hurts. Just wait until I tell my mom and get even with you.
Pierre	Katy	You're mean! I hate you Allison. Ouch that hurts. She doesn't even know she's hurting other peoples' feelings.
Sandy	Katy	Why does Allison always joke about stuff that isn't funny? Hey Allison, that WASN'T funny so stop laughing and being so mean!
Susan	Katy	Ughh! I wish Allison would just BE QUIET and stop making mean and annoying jokes about everyone! Argghh! Allison it's mean to joke like that about other people. It hurts our feelings.
Kerry	Katy	I hate Allison. She's never serious. Ouch you know!

Student	Silenced Character	Internal dialogue
		Allison, people don't like it when you make fun of them.
Fiona	Katy	You don't always have to laugh Allison, especially at your friend. Just be quiet. I'll get you back for this. You will regret it!! You are not my friend because you make fun of people and I don't like you.
Andrew	Katy	Shut up!!! You are so annoying and I wish you would just shut up!!! Wait until you fall and I laugh at you!!!

When I read this story I immediately felt connected to it, as I think everyone has known someone in their life that emulates Allison or at least that was an assumption I had. Therefore I assumed the students would really connect with this story but I had to be upfront with myself that if they didn't I couldn't let myself feel disappointed in their responses. I had to accept their reactions and responses as genuine and meaningful to them and remember what is meaningful to me is based on my experiences and what is

meaningful to some one else is based on their experiences which can be completely different than mine. My objective with this book was for the students to identify whose voice was missing without my prompting and then write an internal dialogue for that person. With me not telling them whose voice was silenced and letting them figure it out on their own would help keep the data and my analysis as objective as possible.

The entire group picked the character Katy. In the story Katy falls, her backpack goes flying and she scrapes her knee. Allison laughs and says, “Nine! The judges give you a nine out of ten for terrific style.” This made the students very angry and really wanted Katy to stand up for herself and let Allison know how mean she was being. I think all of the students were able to connect to Katy and what she went through and picked her because they have all been laughed at before. This is an example of students being able to position themselves into the context of the text. They were then able to reposition themselves and Katy into a different situation where she stands up for herself. All of the students felt empowered to give a voice to Katy and I think in some ways this was their way of giving themselves a voice for a time in their lives when they didn't have one.

Overall for both groups giving silenced characters a voice helped them to connect to the story more and relate to the characters.

Second Story:

Group 1: The story was Mighty Jackie: The Strike out Queen by Marissa Moss.

Mighty Jackie is about the first female, Jackie Mitchell, to pitch in minor league baseball. I knew this story would be great to point out gender power struggles and

marginalized voices. Ultimately Jackie was told she could no longer play baseball for that team because baseball was “too strenuous for a woman”. This story inspired dialogue on gender inequality and even inspired the students to do some extra research and write a letter on behalf of the WNBA, our first attempt at taking social action.

We started off by responding to a few questions which led us to generate a class letter to the President of the NBA, Dan Reed.

The first questions they responded to were:

- Yesterday we read a story about Jackie Mitchell. She was the first woman to pitch in minor league baseball. What challenges did she face? Do you think a women today would face the same challenges?
- How do you think Jackie felt after she struck out several legendary baseball players such as Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and Tony Lazzari and then was told she no longer could play on the team because baseball was “too strenuous for a woman”?

Table 7

Student	Q1	Q2
Susan	Jackie had to go up against the best players. She was nervous and was made fun of. I think a woman today would face those same challenges because there are	I think Jackie was really upset and angry because she had worked so hard just to get kicked off. That was really unfair!

Student	Q1	Q2
	<p>still very few women who play baseball today and they would have to face men like Lou Gehrig and mean fans.</p>	
Fiona	<p>She had to face major baseball players who didn't like her, she had to practice until it was dark and cold and until her arm ached and her fingers were calloused and her eyes were blurred. A woman today could face the same challenges because it would truly be hard for most women because everyone thinks professional sports are for men.</p>	<p>I think Jackie felt pretty sad because she had worked so hard to play and she just did it herself but now she has to quit she feels she just worked for nothing. Jackie didn't think it was too strenuous for a woman because she could do it and they didn't even give her a fair chance.</p>
Liz	<p>The challenges Jackie faced were that she was a woman, she was teased, she had to practice so hard so she could become better than everyone</p>	<p>I think Jackie felt sad, offended, upset, angry, and annoyed. I mean, she struck out Babe Ruth! Lou Gehrig! And Tony Lazzari!! 3</p>

Student	Q1	Q2
	<p>else and she had to pitch to the best players in the league. I do think a woman today would face similar changes but now we have teams that are separate so she wouldn't have to go up against men but she could still get made fun of and have to practice really really hard.</p>	<p>legendary baseball batters! I think they were all chicken and know a girl was better!</p>
Andrew	<p>Jackie had to practice hard and was made fun of. I sort of think a woman today would have those same challenges but men have to practice hard too and they get made fun of too.</p>	<p>I think Jackie felt mad and disappointed because she worked so hard and all her work just got turned down.</p>
Pierre	<p>Jackie had to practice really hard and was made fun of which made her nervous to pitch against Lou Gehrig</p>	<p>I think that Jackie felt very sad and insulted.</p>

Student	Q1	Q2
	<p>and Babe Ruth. I think women today would not face those same challenges except you would have to practice really hard because everybody does who becomes a professional basketball player.</p>	
Andrea	<p>Jackie had to practice really hard and try to ignore all the people who made fun of her or said she wasn't good enough.</p>	<p>I think a woman today would face those same challenges because she would have to face really good players and she might get made fun of because some people get jealous of you when you are good at something and make fun of you so you don't do as well.</p>
Mina	<p>The challenges Jackie Mitchell were: to actually get into the baseball career, to strike out Babe Ruth, Lou</p>	<p>After Jackie was told she couldn't play baseball anymore she probably wanted to die. She worked</p>

Student	Q1	Q2
	<p>Gehrig and Tony Lazzari and to ignore those who thought baseball was not a sport for girls. No, I do not think that a woman today would face the same challenges because Babe Ruth, Tony Lazzari and Lou Gehrig are dead. And the fact that women play baseball now.</p>	<p>all of her life to play baseball but now she can't!!!</p>
Sandy	<p>Jackie had to face getting teased and still believing in herself when hardly anyone else did. I think some woman might face this but mostly everything is equal now, except maybe in football?</p>	<p>I think she felt mad and sad but she knew she could strike out the best players and she could always remember that.</p>
Kerry	<p>She faced being laughed at because people thought she could not pitch. I think a</p>	<p>I think Jackie was mad and sad at the same time because she was told she couldn't</p>

Student	Q1	Q2
	<p>woman would face the same challenges because there aren't that many pro women sports on TV and I know they don't make that much money.</p>	<p>play anymore even though she had proved herself.</p>

In reading over the students' responses I was able to see they were all able to problematize the fact that she had worked so hard at becoming a pitcher and then was told she could no longer play because she was woman. This led us to a discussion of power roles and who had the power. The students quickly identified the male baseball players, the media, and fans having the power and made unfair decisions about Jackie. They all felt she should have been judged on her abilities and not her gender. I was very happy the students were able to recognize these struggles. However, I was frustrated that some members of the group thought a woman today would not have similar challenges.

This was my first story during this study that I realized my own experiences and assumptions may be driving my expectations for my students. I realized this one day as I was reading over their responses and feeling disappointed in the fact that some of them did not think a woman today would face the same or similar challenges. I was finally able to reflect on my own experiences as a grown adult and a woman and realized growing up with a working mom who struggled to make her way up the ladder had really impacted my reaction to this story. I was able to reflect that because I was a woman with over

thirty years behind me and knew about the struggles women can have in the work force I had a different perspective than my nine year old students. I also thought that if I share some of my experiences with them and help them hear other women's voices that their belief systems might change.

When I was in middle school my parents divorced and I watched my mother enter back into the business world and struggle to make her way to the top. I watched her work twice as hard as her boss and I have repeatedly met women who make significantly less than their husbands and work equally as hard. Oh, right, that's me. So, was I frustrated at my own situation or in their responses? I had to confront this. I am frustrated with my own experiences and not their responses. How would a nine year know about unequal pay? I think this is extremely important as a teacher to identify your own biases and experiences because they will directly affect your instruction and expectations for the students. It can be very hard to separate out your own feelings and thoughts and not try and impose them onto your students. This is something we as humans do all the time in several contexts. You take the day off to be with your kids and they have a temper tantrum and suddenly your day does not turn out the way you hoped. It didn't go the way you wanted and now you're disappointed. Or it's your anniversary and you have this ideal notion of what your evening should be like and it turns out to be completely different. I think we have all experienced this, the tricky part is trying to identify these predetermined expectations and why they are there. This is truly hard.

I had assumed the students would somehow just know historically how women have fought to be treated equal and I realize now I had designed one of my response

questions around that notion. It wasn't until after I read their responses and felt disappointed in how they responded that I was able to identify this. This was my first major revelation about my teaching and made me really start to reflect on how powerful one's experiences have on one's teaching whether one knows it or not. Every teacher has set of expectations for their students on what they want them to do or achieve and this is heavily based on their experiences. You ask a student to write about their favorite holiday, well you're assuming they celebrate holidays and enjoy them. Now granted most of us do celebrate holidays and do enjoy them but there are a few who don't. I'm not saying all assumptions are detrimental, in fact quite the contrary. As educator we take the time to get know our students as much as possible and try our best to create an environment in which our assumptions help guide our instruction. If we know they haven't had experiences with racism we expose them to legendary leaders such as Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks. However, you might be choosing certain civil rights activist over others because of what or who you think are important and leave out others such as Aung San Suu Kyi or César Chávez just to name two. Identifying this upfront can help you as an educator create a more diverse representation of what racism has looked like for several cultures and therefore providing your students with multiple perspectives.

I did, however, make the decision to have them do a little research on some women sports players today and to see what they would find. I felt strongly that it was up to me to create a voice for women in professional sports who work equally as hard as professional men and don't get paid equally. We began with women basketball players. We found out that the WNBA has not matched the pay scale of the NBA. As of the

agreement in 2003, WNBA players who had up to three years experience were capped at \$42,000. By comparison, \$ 385,000 was the minimum salary of an NBA rookie while WNBA rookies earned \$30,000 a year. Then we researched more and found out that the maximum salary for a WNBA player in 2007 was \$100,000.00 while the maximum salary of a NBA player was \$22,000,000.00.

The students were shocked when they found this out. Even the boys felt that the women should get paid as much as the men. That afternoon I heard several of the students talking about this with other students in the hall. I had to admit I was very pleased that they were so passionate about this and I knew they were ready to take this to the next level. Our first opportunity to take social action arose. After discussing what some realistic options could be for us to do to help give the women basketball players a voice we decided to write a letter to the president of the NBA- Dan Reed. We have not received any response yet.

Although this did not bring about any change, the students felt empowered to voice their concern and make their voices heard. I suddenly found myself inspired by my students' conviction and decided to emulate their own social actions. I wrote a letter to my condominium association about our rising condominium fees. I wanted my voice to be heard and even if it didn't change the outcome, I needed to have my voice heard. You would have thought a bunch of nine year olds would inspire me? I thought it was supposed to be the other way around. After this, it was time to work with my other reading group.

Group 2: I used the guided reading book *Bart Starr: Star of the Ice Bowl* by John C. Bertolotti.

Bart Star was more difficult to use. There were no power struggles to focus on and it was not the type of story where you could point out whose voices were missing as this was a biography type story. This story focused on Bart Starr, a quarterback for the Green Bay Packers in 1967. This was his story about some difficult decisions he had to make during a particular game in order to win it. I had the students position themselves into the story and try and remember a time they had to make some very important decisions. I also focused this lesson on reading fluency and generating metacognitive questions as they read to help them monitor their comprehension as this group still needed help with this. Each student was able to position them self into Bart's role and remember a time when they made some tough decisions. The chart below summarizes our small group conversation when each student shared a time when they had to make a difficult decision.

Table 8

Jimmy	Last year during PE, I saw Peter sticking gum on the rock wall. I knew I needed to tell Mr. Rogers but I knew Peter would get back at me if I told on him. I didn't know what to do? I went back to PE later because I left my sweatshirt there and I decided to tell Mr. Rogers. He said he would talk to Peter without letting him know it was me. I don't think Peter ever knew but I'm glad he doesn't go here any more.
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Harlow	Last week I had a riding lesson at 5:00 and then basketball at 6:00 but riding wasn't going to be over until 7:00 so my mom told me I had to decide which one to go to. That was really hard because if I didn't go to basketball I couldn't play in the game on Saturday but I really loved riding and I loved my horse. I decided to go to basketball but now I wish I had gone riding because we didn't even win our game.
Johnny	I had a decision like Bart Starr. I was playing a football game at recess and I had to decide whether to go for the touch down or not. I thought I could make it so I went for it but then Jimmy tackled me. (Jimmy laughed and said he remembered that)
Dugan	At Christmas time my nana gave me a gift card to Toys R Us and mom took me there so I could get something. That was so hard because there were so many toys to choose from. It was for \$50.00. I decided to choose between a new X-Box game or a new megaland lego set. My mom asked me which one I would play with more? So I decided to get the legos because I can play with legos all the time but my mom only lets me play my videos games for one hour.
Mark	I had to decide which book to get at the book fair. My mom said I could only get one and there were so many. I decided to get the first Warriors book because everyone likes it.
Callie	This year for my birthday my mom said I could go to Ultrazone (a place you play Lazar Tag at). She said I could only bring 3 friends because it was so expensive. That was really hard because all my friends had

	invited me to their birthday and I didn't want anyone to get mad at me. Then I asked Julie for help and at recess we put everyone name in a cup and I pulled out names. No one was mad.
Billy	Every Saturday my brothers and I get to take turns deciding where to go for dinner. This one Saturday it was my turn and I had to decide where to go. It was really hard because there are so many cool places to eat. Then I decided on Joe's pizza because you can eat tons of food.
Veronica	I think the hardest decision I had to make was when I got Ferige (her dog). We went to this house and all the puppies were so cute and I couldn't decided. But then Fergie peed on me and my mom said that must mean he wanted to come home with us, so I picked him.

After two weeks of smaller groups, I decided the two needed to be paired back up. They needed to hear other class members thinking, thoughts, and connections. Group 2 needed a lot of scaffolding and modeling in order to make connections and analyze the text on their own and I thought hearing from other class members would help. I really wanted them to delve deeper into the stories and uncover what was hidden.

Third Story: Danita Brown Leaves Town by Nikki Grimes.

This story was about two African American girls who are friends. Summer is here. Danita goes away to her aunt's in the country for the summer while Zuri stays home in the city. Zuri has a hard time with her leaving and feels abandoned at first. But then

Danitra writes her a letter and they begin writing letters back and forth talking about their experiences over the summer.

Again this story was hard to work with at first. I had to really think about how I could embed critical literacy into this story. I decided to focus on having the students identify whose voice was telling the story, what power struggles each of the girls faced and trying to have my “white students” compare and contrast their summer experiences with the characters. This was very difficult and almost all of my students only reached some basic comparisons or contrasts. In addition to this I decided this would be a good time to begin modeling how to question text.

I have defined literal questions as questions that ask about a specific detail in the story and can be answered with a right or wrong answer directly from the text. Examples of literal questions can be where does this story take place, what happened after ..., who are the main characters etc.. I wonder questions are open ended questions, there is no right or wrong answer and help the student connect and position themselves into the text. Critical questions help challenge the text. They include challenging certain actions a character made, question power struggles, and gender stereotypes. Then I gave the students an opportunity to generate some of their own questions.

I began with the following questions.

Table 9

Literal	I wonder...	Critical
What does Zuri	I wonder if Zuri now wants	Why do kids treat each other

Literal	I wonder...	Critical
experience when she gets the letter?	to travel because Danitra got to travel.	badly sometimes?
What are 6 rhyming words in this story?	I wonder if Danitra will act differently when she gets back from the country.	Does Nina think she is being used because Zuri only noticed her when Danitra was away?
What does Zuri do for the Fourth of July?	I wonder if Zuri is jealous because she is not going anywhere for summer?	Who has more power during a dare- the person getting dared or the person giving the dare?
How does Danitra feel after her family reunion?	I wonder if Zuri regrets the way she treated Danitra before she left.	Why does J.T. snicker and say, "What makes you think a puny girl like you can help us win?"
	I wonder if Nina ever noticed Zuri before.	

Then I gave the students a chance to generate their own questions.

Table 10

Literal	I wonder..	Critical
What did Zuri eat on the fourth of July?	I wonder why Zuri gets scared when she opened Danitra's letter.	
Where does the dare	How does Danitra feel	

take place?	when Zuri talked so meanly to her before she went away?	
Where does the family reunion take place?	Is Zuri trying to make Danitra wish that she was back home?	
What does Danitra plant?	I wonder if Zuri feels bad because she doesn't have a family reunion.	
	Zuri says she has better things to do when summer starts. Why doesn't she do those things instead of being gloomy?	
	Why does Danitra do the first part of the dare and not the second and then why do the kids still think she is cool?	
	I wonder why the country kids think Danitra is cool?	
	I wonder if Danitra was exaggerating about man eating wasps and dragon flies and if Zuri believed	

	her?	
	How does Zuri feel when she has to bat?	

I was very pleased with their first attempt at generating questions and their level of interaction with the text. Although none of the students were able to generate critical question, most of them were I wonder questions which tells me they were really thinking about the story and trying to put themselves into the story. I decided to let them pick one of the questions we had all generated and respond to it.

Table 11

Student	Question and response
Jimmy	I wonder if Danitra will act differently when she gets back from the country. I think Danitra will not act differently because they are best friends and best friends are always happy to see each other.
Veronica	Who has more power- the person getting the dare or the person doing the dare? I think the person getting the dare has more power. They have the power to stop the dare or ignore it.
Sandy	Why does JT snicker at her and say mean things? I think he said that because he thinks girls can't be like boys and hit hard and also because she is puny. Ha- he was wrong because she hits hard.
Harlow	Why does Zuri talk so badly to Danitra? I think she was jealous and was hurt she was leaving. Sometimes when I'm upset I say things to my mom and then I say sorry because I don't really mean them.
Kerry	I wonder if Danitra will act differently when she gets back from the country. I think she will act differently because she has been gone

	for so long and learned so many new things. That happens to me when I am gone for a long time.
Mina	I wonder if Zuri regrets treating Danitra in that particular way. I think she does because friends always forgive each other but her conscience would start kicking in and she knows she lied to Danitra when she said she had better things to do.
Andrea	I wonder why the country kids think Danitra is cool. I think they think she is cool because she doesn't do the dare but she can climb trees even though she is from the city. They feel like she is like them even though she doesn't live there.
Pierre	I wonder if Zuri ever noticed Nina before. No I don't think so or she would have said hello. She was too busy playing with Danitra but I think Nina saw them and felt sad they didn't ask her to play.
Johnny	I wonder why the country kids think Danitra is so cool. I think they think she is so cool because she is from the city, dresses better and knows how to stand up for herself. Also kids in the country don't have as many things to do so she was exciting for them.
Billy	I wonder if the girl is jealous that she is not going anywhere for the summer. I think she is because I would be if all my friends were going some where fun and I had to stay home.
Andrew	I wonder if Danitra will act differently when she gets back. I think Danitra will act the same when she gets back. I think she will act like she is relieved to see her friend and invite Zuri over to see pictures of her summer and they will be best friends.
Dugan	Why do other kids treat other kids badly? I think other kids treat other kids badly because they're trying to show off and think other

	people will think they're cool.
Susan	I wonder if Nina has ever noticed Zuri before. I think Nina has always noticed Zuri and she has always wanted to play with her because Zuri likes things that Nina likes, like handball.
Fiona	Who has more power during a dare- the person getting dared or the person doing the dare? I think the person getting dared has more power because she can choose to stop the dare or do the dare. The person giving the dare doesn't have control of the person getting dared because they don't know what they are going to decide to do.

The students' responses show their growing ability to position themselves into the character's position. Harlow was able to identify with Zuri, Kerry was able to think of what she would have been like if she was Danitra, and Mina and Andrea were able to use experiences from their own lives to relate back to the characters.

Following this activity I had the students respond to the following questions in their journal:

1. Whose voice is telling the story?
2. If Zuri and Danitra came to class, what questions would you ask them?
3. Both girls experienced a power struggle. Describe what it was and how you would have reacted in the same situation.
4. Danitra and Zuri had very different summers. Compare and contrast how their summers may be similar or different than how you spend your summer.

All of the students were able to identify whose voice was telling the story, and what the power struggles were. However their comparisons were very brief and not what I had hoped for at all. I was feeling really frustrated and needed to think about my next lesson. Identifying privileged voices and marginalized voices was a skill they had mastered, identifying power struggles they could all do but reading the world or seeing beyond the text was still inconstant. I really wanted the students to see the world through the characters' eyes. When I gave them the assignment of asking Zuri and Danitra questions I wanted them to really think about those characters and what would they have liked to know about them. For example picking up on the cultural differences of what Zuri experienced during summer break, her block party, city life, and Fourth of July. For example, picking up on how they celebrate Fourth of July, my students could have asked her what she does for birthdays, or other holidays. I knew this was very different from their summer break but they did not seem to pick up on how different it was. Also the quality of their responses was really something I felt was lacking.

I needed to take a step back and learn from my previous lesson. I knew I needed to do some self-reflecting whenever I felt this frustrated. I needed to rethink my assumptions and expectations. Was I expecting too much too soon? Why was I so disappointed? How did I know their summer break was so different? Did I honestly know each student that well and everything about what all seventeen of my students did over their vacation? No!! I was using my own experiences as a child and positioning my own experiences onto my students which was driving my expectations and ultimately leading to my disappointment. I grew up in upstate NY where summer break for me was going to

camp, swimming at the pool and taking family trips. It was not going to the country to visit an aunt or staying in the city having block parties on concrete with dancing. So for me, my experiences were different but I needed to stop assuming that was true for my students. If I continued to have preset expectations on what they should write I would continue to be disappointed and not be able to truly analyze their work. This is something I am continuing to struggle with. I decided to move on to the fourth story as a whole class again.

Fourth Story:

Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain: An Angel Island Story by Katrina Saltonstall Currier.

This story is about a boy named Kai who leaves China so he can come live with his father in America. While he is on his way, he has to stay on Angel Island and wait to be interrogated in order to determine if he is a real son of an American resident.

This story was filled with power struggles, silenced voices and powerful questions that could be generated. I began with a whole group reading but instead of waiting until the end of the story to generate questions like the last story, I thought it would be more meaningful and productive to have the students generate and discuss questions throughout the story.

As we read the story the students came up with the following questions. I call these questions probing questions. Jennings & O'Keefe (2002) identify questions as "*probing questions*" because they help discover the deeper meaning of things that are

often taken for granted. Inquiry moves from factual meaning to an inquiry that questions power, influence, and authenticity.

Table 12

Students	Questions	Type of Inquiry
Jimmy	Why was the old man writing a sad poem?	Probing for deeper meaning
Veronica	<p>I wonder why Kai's father didn't just bring him to the United States?</p> <p>What kinds of questions will the guards ask him and why does Kai have to answer questions?</p> <p>Why is Kai trapped?</p> <p>Is there a secret the old man is keeping from Kai?</p>	<p>Probing for deeper meaning</p> <p>Power relations</p> <p>Power relations</p>
Sandy	<p>When would Kai get to go home?</p> <p>Why did the interrogators say Kai was wrong when he was right?</p> <p>Why were the interrogators</p>	<p>Power relations</p> <p>Power relations</p> <p>Power relations</p>

	<p>smiling and laughing at him?</p> <p>Why did they keep serving them soggy rice and overcooked vegetables?</p> <p>I wonder why Kai's father moved to San Francisco without him?</p>	<p>Power relations</p> <p>Probing for deeper meaning</p>
Harlow	<p>Is Young hiding something?</p>	<p>Probing for deeper meaning</p>
Mark	<p>Why are they caging them in?</p> <p>Why does the USA have more power?</p>	<p>Power relations</p>
Mina	<p>Why did it take the interrogators a whole four days to decide if Kai was telling the truth?</p>	<p>Power relations</p>
Andrea	<p>Why was the white woman the first white woman Kai had ever seen?</p> <p>What will happen to Young?</p> <p>Why didn't Young say</p>	<p>Probing for deeper meaning</p> <p>Probing for deeper meaning</p> <p>Probing for deeper meaning</p>

	<p>goodbye?</p> <p>Why is this called Angel Island when they (guards) are not nice?</p>	Power relations
Jimmy	<p>Would they treat whites the same?</p> <p>Why are Chinese men being sent back to China?</p>	<p>Power relations</p> <p>Probing for deeper meaning</p>
Andrew	<p>Why was the island called Angel Island when it was so bad?</p> <p>Why did they cook the food bad?</p>	<p>Power relations</p> <p>Power relations</p>
Callie	<p>Why is there a “white” man asking the questions and not a Chinese man?</p>	Power relations

I was so pleased with these responses. The students were interacting with the text, thinking about roles of power, positioning and repositioning themselves and problematizing. After we read and generated these questions we spent some time discussing some of them, sharing our thoughts and debating possible explanations.

Then I gave the students some independent work to complete in their journal. I asked them:

1. What did you find important in this story?

2. What surprised you in this story?
3. Re-write some of the most important questions you had.
4. Respond to one of the questions in a very thoughtful way.
5. What connections does this story create for you?

I adapted these questions from Vivian Vasquez (2003). I have summarized the data for question 1.

Table 13

Student	Question 1
Jimmy	I found the interrogation important and the fact that Kai saw his father again. The interrogation is important because I think family matters most and the interrogation helped him see his father again.
Andrew	I found that the Chinese immigrants were not treated fairly important. Chinese people have as much of a right to be treated the same way as Americans. Chinese are people too not dolls that you can beat up on and feed stale bread to. I think the rice should have been cooked right and Angel Island should live up to its name.
Fiona	I found the way they interrogated the boy important. Here is a 12 year old boy all alone and they treated him like a criminal and asked him so many questions he almost couldn't pass the test.
Susan	I found that it is important to make sure that other countries are keeping kids safe and that you should never keep poor kids locked up on an island for so long because they wouldn't do anything wrong to the country, they're just kids. Also if a country chooses to lock up anyone from another country,

	they should give them something better to eat than soggy rice and overcooked vegetables and there should be more activities if those people are going to be “prisoners” for so long.
Andrea	I think the interrogation is the most important thing in the story because it was what allowed or didn't allow immigrants to come into the country and Kai just passed and was treated horrible and he was only 12 years old.
Liz	I thought it was important that Kai was able to make friends with Young because that's what helped him get through his whole ordeal and the fact that Chinese kids were interrogated by the Americans like they were criminals.
Pierre	What I thought was important is that the Chinese were treated badly and that they ate bad food. I also thought that when Kai met his father that was important. I think that when the old man wrote the poem was also important because it shows how people felt.
Mina	The thing that I found important in this story was that Kai was an immigrant. That was important because there is quite a large difference between immigrant kids and local kids. Another important thing in this story was that Kai was not treated well- soggy rice and over cooked vegetables for every meal is bad and lights out by 9:00 is early. This was important because kids shouldn't be treated that way. Especially innocent 12 year olds like Kai who just wanted to be reunited with his father. The people who run the place treat people like they are at a brat camp which is really unfair to the people trying to get to San Francisco.
Sandy	I found the fact that Asian immigration was hard, to be important because it was a very harsh and tough time. Also because Kai was very brave through

	his whole experience was important because it tells us to be brave in tough times too.
Kerry	I thought the interrogation was the most important thing in this story because if Kai didn't do it he wouldn't get to see his father. But the interrogation was unfair and the white men treated him like he was wrong to want to join his father instead of helping him trying to find his father.
Veronica	I think the interrogation page was important because if Kai failed he had to go back.
Callie	I think that Kai was alone coming to America and that he was mistreated was important and wrong.
Billy	I found that family is important in this story because even though Kai had a tough time he didn't let it get him down and his special bond with his dad was still there. No one was able to take that away from Kai even with everything they put him through.
Mark	What I found very important was that Kai didn't have much power because he went to an interrogation to answer questions even though he didn't do anything wrong. He was treated like a criminal even though he was innocent.
Johnny	I thought the way Kai was interrogated was important and we never find out what happened to Young. Why did the author not tell us?
Harlow	I think several things are important like Kai is alone on a ship when he is only 12 years old. That would never happen now! Also, he met Young who was special to him and he had to answer weird questions just to see his father. Do immigrants have to do that now?
Dugan	I think it's important that the author tell us this story so we know what Kai went through and have a new perspective.

From the students' responses for question number one- what did you find important in this story, almost all of the students felt that the interrogation and how the Chinese immigrants were treated was the most important aspect of this story. The students are really starting to show how they are able to critically read the text and identify forms of injustice. Even my students who are struggling readers and writers are able to use critical literacy to analyze a story and respond to it.

For question 2- what did you find surprising, all of my students were surprised that immigrants and especially children were interrogated so harshly, were upset about the types of questions that were asked and felt the questions were designed to make it difficult for anyone to enter our country. Additionally some students were also surprised that a young boy would travel alone to a new country and wanted to know where his mother was. We had a lot of unanswered questions from this story. Knowing that this anthology is comprised of just partial excerpts from longer complete stories, one student suggested that each student bring in some money so we could order the real book and read it so we could learn more. I thought that was a great idea. We went on Amazon and ordered the entire version of the book by Katrina Saltonstall Currier. After reading the book almost all of our questions were answered except for what happened to Young. We were able to learn about the author, about Kai's mother and his family in China, where he was from in China, why his father had left before him and did not take his family with him, and why Kai took the journey to American alone.

Our small group discussion was providing a zone of proximal development for some kids. Some of the stronger students provided initial ideas and responses that sparked additional connections, responses and critiques from the other students.

After that, I decided to spend some time back in small groups to see what some of the students could do individually now. The first group read, In My Country by Margo Simmons and the second group read Two Brothers from Italy by Mary Allen. Each of the groups were given the same questions similar to the ones they answered for the previous story.

1. What do you think is the most important message in this story? Why?
2. Pick a character from this story. If you were this character, what would you think, feel, and say?
3. What surprised you in this story?
4. Are there any power struggles in this story? If so, explain it.
5. If you had to change something in this story what would it be? Why?

Fifth Story:

Second Group: Two Brothers from Italy by Mary Allen

This story is about two brothers and their mother leaving Italy and coming to America on a cramped ship. On the way their mother gets sick. Once they reached Ellis Island officials took their mother away and questioned the boys. The boys were alone for some time and then reunited with their mother.

Students were still very upset after reading Kai's Journey and now read another story about immigrants treated unjustly. The two questions that really showed the most powerful responses were questions 1 and 4.

Table 14

Student	Q1	Q4
Jimmy	I think the most important message in this story was that immigration was harsh and evil for the Italians and Chinese- maybe all cultures?	America had power over the boys because they were from a different county trying to get in.
Callie	That immigration was so harsh and cruel.	Yes- America verses the immigrants and America was very mean.
Dugan	I think the most important message is that people from different countries should be treated fairly because it is not fair that people from another country be treated mean.	The people from the United States had the power over the people trying to come into the United states and they took advantage of their power.
Billy	The most important message was about people who came to the United States. The trip here was hard and they were treated mean.	The interrogators had the power by letting them go to the USA or not. The immigrants don't have any power because they don't speak English and want to get in.
Mark	Immigration was very harsh and	The power struggle is between the

Student	Q1	Q4
	they were treated unfairly.	interrogators and the immigrants. The interrogators had the power and can decided whether or not to let the mom and her boys in.
Veronica	That people from other countries had a hard time coming to America and were treated cruel.	The power struggle happens when the man asks the boys all these questions and they don't even understand English. That's not fair
Johnny	The story of how immigration was so hard.	The power struggle is when the Americans don't treat the immigrants fairly and they use the fact that they don't know anything to take advantage of them. I don't think they would have done that if they spoke English.

This is my group that struggled the most and this shows how they have been able to analyze this story and respond to it. Jimmy was able to read beyond this story and comment that perhaps all cultures have had to experience this. Dugan was able to identify how America took advantage of these immigrants because they were vulnerable and desperately wanted to be allowed to live here. Billy, Veronica, and Johnny all identified that language and the ability to speak the same language as the country you're in gives you power or can make you powerless. All of the students heard the immigrants' voices

and were able to tell me these stories were written to empower all of the immigrants who went through so many hardships in order to live in America.

First Group: In My Country by Margo Simmons

This story is about a Japanese American family living in Los Angeles during 1941. They were a hard working family who owned a hotel and lived a modest life. Then in 1941 the attack on Pearl Harbor happened and they were suddenly looked at like they were the enemy. Kids were told they couldn't play with them anymore. In 1942 American soldiers forced all Japanese Americans living in California, Oregon, and Washington out of their homes because America feared they would help Japan attack the west coast. They were sent to a camp called Manzanar. There they were searched and interrogated and forced to live there for several years.

This group also reacted very passionately after reading this story and had powerful responses.

Table 15

Student	Q1	Q4
Andrea	All American citizens should be treated fairly regardless of where they are from or who we are at war with. You shouldn't treat	The soldiers had power over the Japanese Americans. Sue's family is powerless over the government because they were forced to leave

Student	Q1	Q4
	people badly even if they are from a certain country.	their home and couldn't leave the camp.
Mina	I think the most important message in this story was that the Americans were being cruel to an innocent girl and many other Japanese families. I think this message was important to the author because the author wanted to remind us of those times (in WWII). The author might have been Japanese or the author wanted readers to feel sorry for what happened to the Japanese.	The Americans had power over the Japanese families- they interrogated them and treated them unfairly!
Susan	I think the most important message is that immigration was a really bad thing in history. I think this because Sue goes through a lot not	One of them is that this family had no choice whether to go to this camp or not. They did not have the power over that. They

Student	Q1	Q4
	<p>because she did a bad thing</p> <p>but because she was Japanese.</p>	<p>couldn't leave the camp anytime they wanted. They would enter the camp, stay there for a long period of time, then they would leave.</p>
Sandy	<p>That World War II was very tragic and harsh for people in America too.</p>	<p>That America mistreated the Japanese Americans just because of their race and the Japanese were helpless!</p>
Kerry	<p>What is was like for any Japanese person living in the US during World War II. Horrible!!!</p>	<p>That the Americans would lock up Japanese people who had lived here for years and not done anything.</p>
Andrew	<p>I think the most important message is that is doesn't matter what kind of person you are, you just need to be treated fairly because it is just like being judged by your skin not your heart.</p>	<p>There is a BIG power struggle. The power struggle is that the government has full control over Japanese Americans. It's free people being trapped up like animals in horrible camps for weeks. The Declaration of Independence states that</p>

Student	Q1	Q4
		<p>all Americans have rights and are FREE people. The Americans were wrong to send the Japanese Americans into camps.</p>
Fiona	<p>That Americans decided to lock up all Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor was bombed because they thought the Japanese Americans were helping them.</p>	<p>The most important struggle was that Sue and her family were locked up because of their race and not because they did something bad. You should only get locked up if you do something bad not because of your race. Her family was powerless and lost all their stuff.</p>
Pierre	<p>I think the most important message is that people from the same country have to be forced from their homes just because they are different! I think that Sue and Joe are Americans first and should</p>	<p>There are many power struggles in this story. One of them is that the government makes them go into a camp just because they were Japanese Americans. They had no choice and</p>

Student	Q1	Q4
	<p>not have been forced out of their homes. My family is from Sweden and if America were at war with Sweden I would be really mad if I had to leave my home because I was Swedish.</p>	<p>couldn't fight back!</p>

This group all identified the power America had over the Japanese Americans and were able to discuss that race was the reason they were so mistreated. Mina was able to identify the author's purpose and how she wanted to empower the Japanese Americans who went through this. Mina was able to recognize this was the author's way of reminding readers of Americans who were mistreated and judged based on their race. Andrew was able to connect how the United States has the Declaration of Independence which established rights for individuals and yet the Japanese American had their rights taken away from them. Finally, Pierre was able to reposition himself into this story with his thought of if America was at war with Sweden and he was locked up because of his ethnic background.

The next few stories I was challenged with an external but very real issue that all teachers face, TESTING. We had a week of Stanford 10 testing, a day for the Degrees of Reading Power test, two days for our school wide writing sample, and one day for our

Word Study assessment. So when I did get to see my students for language arts it was very brief or I didn't have all of my students because they were still testing. This was very frustrating for me however now that I think about it, I think I was only frustrated because I had a personal time constraints for compiling my data and had I not been doing this to collect data I don't think two weeks away from such intense instruction would have bothered me as much.

One story we read was Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World by Mildred Pitts Walter. This story was about an African American boy named Justin who goes on a vacation to his grandfather's house. While he is there he watches his grandfather cook and clean and Justin initially thinks these are chores women should do. After some time, Justin's grandfather teaches him about responsibility and that cooking and cleaning are everyone's responsibility.

Before I started this story I thought this story was going to be hard to use but after some thought I remembered that part of critical literacy is making connections to your own life. There was nothing wrong with reading a story and making connections to it. I think I felt as though I wasn't doing my job if I didn't try and do all of the dimensions of critical literacy for every story. Critical literacy is not about how much you can do but what you actually do whether that is to question, critique, reflect, or act. Sometimes you can provide a voice for someone who has been silenced, sometimes you can identify who has power and how it is used, sometimes text inspires you to take social action and sometimes you make connections to the text in order to position yourself in it. We also had a great discussion on gender roles: how they have change and how they have stayed

the same over time. This book did a good job of challenging those roles and opening up new views for the children.

Finally we read Weaving a California Tradition by Linda Yamine. This story is about a California Indian named Carly Tex and her family carrying on the tradition of basket weaving.

I wanted to see what they could do all on their own with out any help from me. I did not have any expectations or assumptions of what I expected them to do. I was simply going to ask the students to read the story and analyze it critically. I knew they would be able to do at least one of the strategies we have been learning over the past few weeks but I had no idea how well they were going to do. I did help one group with the actual mechanics of reading. We did not discuss the story as we read it which was very hard for me and then I let them respond.

The assignment was to read and then analyze the story in their journals. All of the students were able to show me they could critically read a story and analyze it for author's purpose, whose voice is privileged, what power struggles were present and how the author's experience helped influence her writing. Below is a summary of these four themes that emerged.

Table 16

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
Andrew	I think the author wrote this story	The North Folk and the Dunlap's mono's voice are	One power struggle I found in this story was	The author's experience affects this story

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
	<p>because she wanted to keep tradition of weaving alive and to teach others.</p>	<p>represented.</p>	<p>between the house builders and the weavers. The house builders have power over the weavers because they built houses everywhere and had no regard for the supplies they weavers needed and they built right over the land that has their supplies. I think there should be another solution for this.</p>	<p>by giving me clues to help read in between the lines such as her feelings about laws against setting fires and how she uses very descriptive words and takes the extra mile to explain things in detail. She obviously had experiences weaving baskets and wants people to know why its important.</p>

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
Fiona	I think the author wrote this story because she is a basket weaver and she wants to show me her culture.	The Western Mano groups' voices are in the story.	In the story I saw evidence of a power struggle between the people making the laws of not using fire and the weavers who need to use fires. The weavers can't go against that law or they get in trouble and now because of this law Carly and her family have to find new materials. That could take such a long time	I think the author had some similar experiences. I think when she was a girl she had to change a family tradition because of laws. This is important because the reader wants you to feel her emotions in the story. Then the reader will feel the same emotions.

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
			because they are used to making fires on the redbud to make their baskets and how will they pass on this tradition from long ago if they can't do it anymore.	
Harlow	I think she wrote this story to show how important passing on traditions are. If you don't pass on traditions they will be forgotten and	The author wrote this to give a voice to the California Indians and make sure it was heard.	A power struggle is between the law maker and the Native Americans. Why did they outlaw fires! This prevented the California	In reading about the author I found out she was a California Indians and had to learn how to weave and she was sad that the tradition was starting to die so

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
	then someone's heritage dies.		Indians from using the grass to make their baskets. The fires weren't hurting anyone and I know that even forest fires are good sometimes because it helps re-grow the trees.	she wrote this story to have her tradition come alive again. If she wasn't a weaver she wouldn't have written this story because it wouldn't be important to her.
Dugan	I think the author wrote this story to show us her tradition and so we would know what they are and maybe we	The author's voice is represented and she is a California Indian.	The law makers have power over the Indians and they didn't have any power to stop the fire laws.	I saw some evidence of the author's experience influencing the story. It helped her describe how they make the

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
	would want to become a weaver too.			baskets and showed her emotions. Her experiences make her emotions stronger. This is important because it is important to the author and she knows what she's talking about.
Kerry	I think the author wrote this story because she wants to show her culture or what she does.	Carly's voice is represented because the story tells about the baskets she makes, how she makes them,	I saw a power struggle between Carly's family or tribe and the law of not burning grass or sticks.	The author's experiences influenced this story because she wanted to retell what she did as a child.

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
		how she gathers materials and why she liked making them.	The weaver can not burn the grass or plants to make their baskets. Carly's family didn't have any power because they don't make the laws.	This is important to a reader because you can tell what a person did as a child.
Veronica	I think the author wrote this story to show how important and hard weaving is and people just think it isn't because you buy baskets in the store. I think	The California Indians and their traditions of weaving are represented in the story.	I think one power struggle was between Carly and her family. They made her work so hard for so many hours to make a basket and they never asked her if she	The author's experiences influenced her story because she feels that weaving is an important tradition to pass down and so she wrote this story so everyone

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
	<p>this because the author spends so much time describing how Carly and her family gather and prepare materials for the baskets going step by step.</p>		<p>wanted to. You always have to do what your parents tell you even if you don't want to and that's not fair. Kids should have power too.</p>	<p>would know the tradition and books last forever so everyone will know it forever.</p>
Billy	<p>The author wrote this story because she was scared the tradition of weaving had disappeared so she wanted it to come back.</p>	<p>Carly's voice is represented.</p>	<p>In this story I saw a power struggle between the weavers and them fighting the government about burning the plants to make it easier for them to</p>	<p>The author is a native American, a weaver, a song writer, and a storyteller so this helped her write this story. You write about what you know. My story would</p>

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
			weave.	be about football.
Jimmy	I think the author wrote this story to pass down the tradition. I think that because she says in the book that the family passes down the traditions so it isn't forgotten.	Carly and the Indians voice is represented in the story. The government's voice is missing. I think they would say something different.	Carly and her family had power in the beginning to burn the fires so the plants would re-grow so they could keep making their baskets but then the government took away their power and said no more fires. Then the government had all the power.	The author's experiences influenced the story because she wrote about her traditions of basket weaving.
Johnny	I think the author wrote	The weavers' voices are	There is a power struggle is	The author is a basket weaver,

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
	<p>this story to teach us about weaving cultures and then maybe we could pass it down to our families.</p>	<p>represented.</p>	<p>between Carly's family and the government. In the power struggle the government says that Carly's family can't burn grass.</p>	<p>so weaving traditions are important to her and that is why she wrote this story.</p>
<p>Susan</p>	<p>I think the author wrote this story to tell people that weaving is important and it takes skill to do it. I think this because in the story it says that weaving is a California</p>	<p>The Native American Mono Tribe's voice is represented.</p>	<p>In the story there was a power struggle between the Mono Indians and the government. The government said it was against the law to set fires but that means the</p>	<p>The author wrote about what she has experienced and what she thinks is important because she is a weaver and an Indian.</p>

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
	tradition and that Carly has good skills to weave.		Mono Indians can't get more seeds to spout. That means it will be harder to find sticks to make strings and baskets. This is important to the story because without strings, the Mono tribe can't make baskets which means the tradition can't go on.	
Sandy	I think the author wrote this story	I think the voices that are represented	I noticed a power struggle with the state	When I read about the author I understood

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
	<p>because she wanted to tell that traditions are important. For example she tells all of the details for gathering the stuff for weaving like on page 247 it describes how you have to split, cut, remove, and scrape bark of a sedge root and bracket fern. All that detail shows that this is important to her.</p>	<p>were the Native Americans because in the author's description it says the tradition has gone away so she wanted more Native Americans to keep passing on the traditions.</p>	<p>nature service. It was over lighting fires. I think it is totally unfair because the Manos have to set fires so they have their supplies.</p>	<p>why she wrote this story. This was her story to share with us.</p>

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
Pierre	I think the author wrote this story to tell us that traditions can be very important. I think this because she writes about Carly and how weaving is very important.	Native Americans of California have their voice represented.	In the story, I saw some evidence of a power struggle between the mono people and the house builders. The mono people use the redbuds in a certain place but one day house builders came and built a house and took all the redbuds away. Then the mono people couldn't get their supplies	The author knows how hard it is to weave baskets and needed to tell everyone. It took her a long time to learn. This is important to the reader because we can understand what she is feeling more because she went through this.

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
			they needed.	
Mina	After reading this story, I think the author wrote this story because she wanted to express a basket-weaver's feelings about basket weaving. I think the author really cares about the basket-weaving tradition.	I think the basket weaver's voice is represented in this story. I think this because this story is about basket weavers and how hard they work just to make one basket. To be more specific, when I say basket weaver I mean Native American (California) basket weavers.	There is a power struggle between the basket weavers and the law/United States Forest Service. Basket weavers must burn certain plants in order to make baskets to carry on a tradition that is important to them. These days it's against the law to set fires but the forest service	The author lived like Carly did in the story. This influenced her writing by her detailed knowledge of basket weaving. As a reader, it is important to know because the reader wants to know if the author really knows what she's talking about and now this is an information source.

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
			<p>doesn't care what is important to the Native Americans. Carly's mom and her Aunt Gladys are trying to work with the forest service to solve this problem.</p>	
Liz	<p>I think the author wrote this story to inspire people about weaving, express how hard it is to collect the materials and to</p>	<p>A weaver's voice is represented and what they have to go through.</p>	<p>The power struggle is between the government and how they make laws and don't help the Manos Tribe. They took away the</p>	<p>The author's experiences as a weaver and a Native American have given her a clear vision of what is important to a weaver and why</p>

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
	show how the rewards of making a basket is so pleasing.		Manos' materials and didn't try and help them.	the tradition has to be passed on. This is important to a reader because it lets us know why she wrote this story.
Andrea	The author wrote this story so the weaving tradition wouldn't be forgotten even if baskets don't get weaved anymore.	The California Indians voice is represented.	I think the power struggle is between the Native Americans and the stores. People just buy baskets and don't think about what goes into making them and the Native Americans want people to know	The author's experiences influence her writing because this is what is important to her and she wants it to be important to everyone.

Student	Author's Purpose	Identified Voice	Power Struggles	Author's experiences
			how hard it is to make one basket.	

I had hoped this story would be able to show how my students had become critically literate and would be able to identify one or several aspects of the four dimensions of critical literacy. I consciously did not want to lead my students to any of my conclusions so I asked them to read and analyze the story critically. The word critically was used as that is a word I used repeatedly through out this study and I knew my students would know what that meant. The results here show that all of my student have not only become aware how texts lacks neutrality, but they were able to identify several different power struggles ranging from law makers and Native Americans, to child and parent power struggles to stores/ capitalism and Native American power struggles. They were all able to understand that the author purposely wrote this story to empower Native American Tradition that have been forgotten and that this was important to her because the author was Native American and a basket weaver. Finally, all of my students were able to identify whose voice is represented and one student was even able to have an alternative perspective and state that although this story privileged the Native American's voice it silenced the law maker's voice.

Finally, all of my students have become critically literate and have grown as both readers and writers. They began this study not knowing how to respond to text critically

and by the end, regardless of their reading or writing ability, they were all able to become critically literate and analyze text for marginalized and privileged voices, power relations, develop an understanding of historical and current social conditions, challenged injustice, incorporate multiple viewpoints, and recognize hidden motives. Additionally, I have seen some evidence in which my students have used their critical literacy skills in other areas. In science one student commented on how all of the famous scientists we study in our electricity unit were male. Ben Franklin, Michael Faraday, Thomas Edison, and Samuel Morse. Many students wanted to know why we didn't study about inventions from women. This prompted me to assign a research project for my students to find a woman scientist, past or present. Write a short report and present the information to the class. This was a wonderful teaching moment. One thing my students and I learned is that one of our favorite authors, Beatrix Potter, actually started out as a scientist and discovered lichen, but was not taken seriously because she was a woman. Another area where I saw critical literacy present in other aspects of my students' lives was when Mina read an article about animal abuse and inhuman treatment of cows and chickens raised for slaughter. She inspired several other students to hang posters around the school, wrote persuasive letters for our school magazine on animals rights and Mina even decided to become a vegetarian. Clearly, learning how to be critically literate has helped several of my students look beyond text and take action in their own personal lives.

The next section will specifically address my research questions and provide results. The last chapter in this study will tie together my results with literature that supports and parallels my finding.

Research Questions

1. What happens in a classroom where the four dimensions of critical literacy: disrupting the common place, interrogating multiple perspectives, focusing on socio-political issues, and taking action to promote social justice are incorporated into reading prescribed texts?

Students were able to use all four dimensions of critical literacy in their reading although some dimensions were more prevalent than others in specific texts. To review again what each of these mean I have provided a chart to summarize their key characteristics. These explanations are taken from Flint, Sluys, & Lewison's (2002, 2003) four dimensions of critical literacy.

Table 17

Disrupting the common place	This calls for one to look at the “everyday” from new and multiple lenses in which unspoken modes of awareness are reconsidered and disrupted. This includes problematizing existing ways of thinking, historical influences, and interrogating texts. This can be done through questioning text, popular culture, media, and examining how one can be positioned and constructed
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	through these vessels.
Interrogating Multiple Perspectives	This elicits one to “stand in the shoes of others-to understand experience and texts from our own perspectives and the viewpoints of others and to consider these various perspectives concurrently”(Flint, Stuys, & Lewison, 2002, p. 383). This entails not only reading alternative perspectives, but reflecting on them. Then using the multiple voices to question whose voice is silenced and whose is privileged.
Focusing on Socio-Political Issues	This invites one to analyze how socio-political systems, power relationships, and language are interlaced and inseparable. Analyzing these dominant systems, one attempts to understand, challenge, and question the legitimacy of these structures, opening up space for subordinate groups to participate in society
Taking Action to Promote Social Justice	This entails taking informed action against

	<p>oppression. This can include writing letters, boycotting or something very personal like learning to view something from another perspective.</p>
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The next chart will show how each of these four dimension of critical literacy were present in this study.

Table 18

Disrupting the Common Place	Interrogating Multiple Perspective	Focusing on Socio-Political Issues	Taking Action to Promote Social Justice
<p>In the story, <u>Hot and Cold Summer</u> the students were able to look at the boys' friendship and Boliva, a girl, joining the group from multiple perspectives and share those thoughts with each other. Girls were able to</p>	<p>The girls who read <u>Hot and Cold Summer</u> additionally provided a voice for Boliva when Veronica spoke about how she thought Boliva was annoyed at how the boys were acting. This in turn helped Johnny reflect on a</p>	<p>The students who read the story <u>Jackie Mitchell</u> were able to focus on gender discrimination and how the baseball league silenced women baseball players when they did not allow her to play. This then led us to take some</p>	<p>My students wrote a letter to the president of the NBA asking for equal pay for women basketball players.</p>

Disrupting the Common Place	Interrogating Multiple Perspective	Focusing on Socio-Political Issues	Taking Action to Promote Social Justice
<p>focus on the friendship aspect and how they didn't think anyone coming into their group would have been easy and the boys felt gender was an issue and that a boy would have been accepted more. All of the students disrupted a common place and challenged their existing way of thinking.</p>	<p>time when he was in a similar situation.</p>	<p>social action against marginalized women in the sports industry now.</p>	
	<p>Another example of this was when my first reading group read the story, <u>Laugh a Minute</u>. All of my</p>	<p>The students were also able to focus on socio-political issues when we read, <u>Kai's Journey to Gold</u></p>	

Disrupting the Common Place	Interrogating Multiple Perspective	Focusing on Socio-Political Issues	Taking Action to Promote Social Justice
	<p>students provided a voice for Katy who had fallen and was laughed at by Allison. In some ways I think this could fall under the taking social action category because this was their way of taking action against Allison for her oppressive behavior toward other students.</p>	<p><u>Mountain</u>. Students identified how the government had power over the immigrants, how our own country treated people so cruelly and how immigrants who didn't speak English were powerless.</p>	
<p>When the students read <u>Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain</u> they were able to question our government and</p>	<p><u>Weaving A California Tradition</u> incorporated voices from Native Americans and the</p>	<p>Again, students who read <u>Two Brothers from Italy</u> and <u>In My Country</u> focused on the mistreatment of</p>	

Disrupting the Common Place	Interrogating Multiple Perspective	Focusing on Socio-Political Issues	Taking Action to Promote Social Justice
<p>how it treated immigrants. Additionally, they were able to tell me that this story helps empower immigrants who experienced this form of injustice and challenge beliefs for people who didn't know how hard it was for immigrants to come to America and start a new life.</p>	<p>students were able to reflect on what the California Indians have gone through and are still fighting for.</p>	<p>immigrants, the lack of power they had, the power the United States imposed on these individuals and how these stories help empower their voices now.</p>	
<p>The last story, <u>Weaving A California Tradition</u> students were able to identify how weaving can be</p>		<p><u>Weaving A California Tradition</u> student were able to reflect on how the builders and the nature service had</p>	

Disrupting the Common Place	Interrogating Multiple Perspective	Focusing on Socio- Political Issues	Taking Action to Promote Social Justice
taken for granted and how much work goes into a traditional basket that has been woven. This story help open their eyes to a new tradition, something that was not part of their culture.		power, how the Native Americans were powerless and how now the Native American are taking social action to work with the government to create new laws.	

2. How does a teacher negotiate between a prescribed curriculum while using a critical literacy approach to teaching?

First, as a teacher negotiating between a prescribed curriculum and using a critical literacy approach to teaching one dominant theme was apparent. My own assumptions and expectations. It was very hard for me to let go of what I “thought” should be happening or how I “thought” the students should be responding. On several occasions I found myself frustrated or disappointed in what was happening. It was not until I started to reflect on myself that I was able to determine what I was really frustrated with. In order to analyze my data I needed to first identify what my own assumptions

were about the story or what I thought my students should respond to. This was very difficult and took a lot of reflection on my part to be honest with myself. I then needed to question whether or not this would affect my analysis.

Some other barriers and sources of frustration while trying to negotiate between a critical literacy approach and using a preset of materials surfaced in my instructional decisions on whether to utilize a small group or whole group approach. At times I really struggled with “if” the second group was really understanding what critical literacy was or were they simply parroting what the other class mates were saying. I would decide to use a whole class approach and then worry this wasn't giving the second group enough of a chance to analyze and respond independently and would switch to small group where they would have more opportunities to respond. In the end, I am not able to offer any real decision either way as to which method was best or possibly switching back and forth was the best method to help this group become critically literate but they did. I think the best suggestion I can offer another teacher is to constantly monitor your students and yourself and make changes as often as you need.

Secondly, I constantly struggled with the need to want to focus on too much too soon. As I read over my students' responses I was plagued with wanting to have mini writing conferences with them. I often noted their lack of capitalization, punctuation and spelling especially for words written in the question or in the story. For example, two students in particular would write responses that looked like this.

1. i think she rote the story so she culd expres her tecnolgy smarts

2. i think the alther rote this story to teach us weaving coulchures so we pass it down to our familys

These two responses are crying out to me. For one thing a fourth grader should know to capitalize the word “I” in a sentence, let alone at the beginning of a sentence. Another thing, many of these words were written correctly either in the question or in the story and shouldn't be spelled wrong. Another teaching point is the fact that there isn't any ending punctuation. Also, I knew these boys actually had more to say and when I would talk to them they would tell me so much more but when it came to putting their thoughts down on paper I received minimal responses. Unless I stayed there next to them and prompted them to explain more, they wouldn't. This really plagued me throughout the entire study and does even now when I look at their responses. It was really hard for me to let these mechanical issues go for now and focus on the critical literacy aspect of the study.

In reflecting on why this has been so hard for me, I have had to think about my own experiences as a writer and how these experiences have impacted my teaching. To begin with, I went to a catholic school until I was in ninth grade. Heavy emphasis was placed on perfection at a very early age. Perfect spelling, perfect grammar, perfect handwriting and so forth. Responses such as these would have never been acceptable when I was in school. Also as a teacher you are taught to emphasize these same expectations. Maybe not to the same perfectionists degree as I experienced but this is what teachers do- correct students mistakes, right? In fact, in college I can remember a professor telling me he stopped reading my paper because I had too many errors and used

the passive voice. I needed to rewrite my paper and resubmit it. He didn't read it for content, he was reading it for perfection. So how could I let these errors go? Well it was hard but I did. I knew if I constantly corrected some of my students during this time, it would deter them from really learning to read critically and analyzing stories. Instead I waited for other times in writing or in science where I would point out mechanical errors. I think most teachers feel the need to use every “teachable” moment to its fullest potential but when you take a step back and really think about the purpose of your lesson, you have to think about what you really want your students to accomplish with the task at hand.

Finally the materials themselves presented some obstacles such as Bart Star as I really was not able to use this story for anything except making connections. However, I think overall, I was quite surprised at what my students and I were able to do with the stories. After thinking about critical literacy, even if you just make connections to the characters, you are positioning yourself in that story and ultimately reading for deeper meaning. I had preconceived assumptions that this anthology would be difficult to use with a critical literacy approach and at times it was but several stories were very useful and meaningful. The voice of Chinese and Italian immigrants and Native American traditions were introduced to all of us and helped us hear additional perspectives we were not aware of or had been exposed to. Overall, I would say to anyone who thinks their freedom, creativity, or individualism is stifled when a county mandates a certain set of materials, you're really not. Materials are just materials, it's what you do with them that counts. Critically literacy can be used with any text and can be a very powerful instructional approach for both students and teachers.

This last section examines how the two case studies overlap and summarizes the information in this chapter.

Cross Analysis of Both Case Studies:

When I analyzed both my experiences teaching critical literacy and how the students responded learning critical literacy strategies I found several areas where we overlapped or where we grew. The following are explanations of the themes that emerged for both the students and the teacher and are defined from McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004.

Table 19

Naming	When a particular perspective is not represented, the reader can name the silenced voice. This then creates opportunities for dialogue, reflection, transformation and action.
Positioning and Repositioning	Positioning involves placing readers in contexts that force them to think about themselves in certain ways. For example challenging gender roles. Can the student imagine an alternative situation in which the roles are different?

Power	<p>Power is often represented in text between people or characters. In looking at the social context, whether real world or text, can a student identify the power struggles? Who has been privileged and who has been marginalized? This included looking at how the author's power roles have influenced the text in terms of what is represented and not represented.</p>
Praxis	<p>Praxis refers to the dialectical approach for reflecting. Does the student's reflection, whether oral or written include evidence of change, alternative perspectives, and shifts in thought, action or transformation? If so, what specifically was said or written?</p>
Problematizing	<p>In order to analyze a situation, context or a character's action, one must be able to problematize or question. Does the student pose questions as he or she reads and discusses? If so, what types of questions are being generated?</p>
Reading the World	<p>Reading the world entails looking behind, around, through, and beyond the</p>

	information presented in the text. Does the reader understand author's purpose?
Social Justice/Action	Can the student identify what they feel is fair or not and look for alternative ways to act that would promote fairness?

The next chart will illuminate how the teacher and the students have participated in these critical literacy themes.

Table 20

Critical Literacy Theme	Students	Teacher
Naming	Students were able to name several characters and races that were silenced. Ex: Katy, Bolivia, Asians, Native Americans, Women	This study let me reflect on the voice of my district and think about what their perspective was for wanting teachers to use the same materials across the county.
Positioning/Repositioning	Students we able to position themselves into the following characters: Katy Bart Starr Kai Sue Luigi	I was able to position myself into the role of Jackie Mitchell and was able to reflect on why I had been disappointed in their responses. I was able to take my position as a woman and how my experience with my

	Bolivia	mother had affected the way I reacted to this story.
Power	Students were able to identify power relations in all of the stories we read.	I reflected on personal power relations in my own life including my condominium associations, school districts and my own influence over my students.
Praxis	Students were able to reflect on their own lives such as why parents have children do certain things, why America acted in certain ways toward marginalized groups of people, and why certain characters and authors made particular choices.	I was able to reflect on my personal experience and how those particular experiences impact my teaching. I was also able to reflect on my teaching instruction and where I needed to rethink what my students were doing.
Problemizing	Students were able to problematize how certain individuals were mistreated and identify how those individuals have	I was able to problematize how my expectations for my students were biased and how that affected the way I was responding to my

	experienced forms of injustice.	students.
Reading the World	Several students were able to connect social forms of injustice back to their own lives and how the author's purpose can be heavily connected to their personal experiences.	
Social Justice/ Action	Students were able to identify forms of social injustice and take action in the form of writing letters and providing voices for silenced characters.	I was able to take action in my own life through reflection, writing letters and looking at situations from alternative perspectives.

Summary:

Overall, this chapter has illuminated how successful a critical literacy approach can be used in a fourth grade classroom. Both the students and I grew from this experience, reflected on our past experiences identified and how these experiences have help shape what we find meaningful. I was able to identify certain personal experiences that had influenced what my expectations were for my students and how my personal

experiences had actually biased my expectations. Through personal reflection, I was able to identify these biases and assumptions and re-think my instruction.

The students were able to identify characters who were silenced in the story and provide a voice for them. They were able to connect to the story and form opinions about social injustice and mistreatment. They were able to take social action and even carry over these critical literacy skills into other areas of their learning and lives. This study has shown that all students regardless of reading or writing ability can learn to read critically and that a teacher can rethink her instruction no matter what materials he or she has to use.

Chapter Five

Chapter five concludes this study, summarizes the purpose, methodology, research questions, findings, implications and recommendations for further research.

Purpose

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2002), states that many students in fourth grade do not possess the skills necessary for critical literacy. This indicates that there is a need to rethink how instruction can better address students becoming critical readers.

One way to help students read text critically is through teaching Flint, Stuys, & Lewison's (2002) four dimensions of critical literacy. This study is designed to explore 4th grade students in a northern Virginia public school using critical literacy to increase comprehension and expand on their reader response (McLaughlin & DeVogd (2004). Specifically, this study focused on one teacher's journey to teach her students skills they would need to become critically literate as well as her own journey as an educator embracing critical literacy in her classroom and dealing with the mandates imposed on her from her school district. This study illuminated her own struggles, questions, and challenges as well as describes how her students have responded and utilized critical literacy in their reading and writing.

Research Questions

1. What happens in a classroom where the four components of critical literacy: disrupting the common place, interrogating multiple perspectives, focusing on socio-political issues, and taking action to promote social justice are incorporated into reading prescribed texts?

2. How does a teacher negotiate between a prescribed curriculum while using a critical literacy approach to teaching.

Methodology

This study is a multiple case study where two case studies took place and then a cross case analysis of the two was created. One case study focused on documenting and describing the teacher's experiences in implementing a critical literacy approach in her classroom while staying with-in the confines of her mandated curriculum materials. The second case study focused on the students' responses and academic growth in a critical literacy environment. The third case study drew from both case studies to find relational and corresponding data that tie together the research questions.

Purposeful sampling was used, as the intent of this study is not to generalize but to understand and discover the students and teacher in this one particular class. The researcher's 4th grade class participated in this study for the duration of three months. There are seventeen 4th graders who range from nine to ten years old and represent Caucasian, Asian, and Hispanic backgrounds.

Students were led through guided practice of the four dimensions of critical literacy and then had opportunities for independent application. Additionally, the teacher in this study, who is also the researcher, embraced in a self study. This teacher embarked in a critical examination of her actions and her context as a path to develop a more consciously driven mode teaching. She carefully analyzed texts read, the self as a text, the experiences she had, and ideas she believed (Samaras & Freese, 2006).

Summary of Results

All of the students have become critically literate and grown as both readers and writers. Initially, students did not know how to respond to text critically but by the end of this study all of the students were able to critically read and analyze text for marginalized and privileged voices, power relations, understandings of historical and current social conditions, challenged injustice, incorporate multiple viewpoints, and recognize hidden motives. Students were also able to use all four dimensions of critical literacy in their reading. These included disrupting the common place, interrogating multiple perspectives, focusing on socio-political issues, and taking action to promote social justice. Finally, the teacher was able to negotiate between a prescribed curriculum and use a critical literacy approach to teaching. For the teacher, her personal assumptions and expectations for the students were her biggest challenges. However, with self reflection and critique she was able to identify where her personal experiences were impacting her teaching. In doing this she was able to rethink her instruction and help her students become critically literate.

Significance of Findings

The significance of these findings are two-fold. One they help support current research and two, it will help build a new framework for future teaching practices. This section will begin with connecting the findings to current research and then go into implications for teaching in which I will explain how this study can help foster other teachers to use a critical literacy approach.

The students and the teacher spent nine weeks creating and shaping meaning together as they read and analyzed text together. Both the students and the teacher were able to fluidly move through different levels of understanding. For example, when Veronica commented on what she thought Boliva was feeling that helped Johnny make an additional connection to the story he wouldn't have picked up on by himself. Also, during this time the boys listened to the girls and at times agreed with them and at times voiced their thoughts and helped the girls see alternative perspectives. Another time this same group was able to build off of each others' connections was when they shared about a time they had to make a difficult decision. At first, the group had trouble with this. However, once the first memory was shared a spark lit up for another student who in turn sparked a memory for another student and before we knew it we had shared numerous examples that related to Bart Starr. This is what Dewey (1925/ 1981)) would refer to as the Social Constructivism in which children embark in dialectical conversations that

helps knowledge become socially constructed and mediated through culture, history, schema, and interactions. Dewey (1925, 1981) as cited in Hung (2002) writes that

Discoveries and new horizons of knowledge spring from novel ideas co-authored by individuals and through group negotiations.....Through negotiation, students are usually engaged in explaining their ideas, defending their opinion, and trying to convince others of their thoughts. Through such a process, students can establish shared meanings or intersubjectivity (p. 198).

Students explained their ideas, convinced others of their thoughts and established shared meanings throughout this nine week span.

Another finding that parallels several theorists is the notion of questioning text. The students in this study were able to create probing questions, in that questions are generated to help one discover deeper meanings and questions of power and influence (Jenings & O'Keefe, 2002). Luke (2000) also supports questioning as it can help students develop the ability to challenge injustices and inequalities, question the status quo, identify whose voice is not heard and who benefits from reading this. When children are taught to embrace new information critically, he or she will probe for any hidden questions or alternative view points. In this study students asked critical probing questions as:

- Would a white man treat Kai differently if he was white?
- Why does Kai have to answer questions and get interrogated?
- Why does the USA have so much power?
- Do immigrants have to go through this now?

Each of these questions helped the students question why the United States treated incoming immigrants so poorly and question why the United States would take such extreme action on a 12 year old boy who had not done anything wrong. The students' common place was disrupted and through the questioning and dialectical conversations with each other, students became aware of oppressive social conditions. Often students are socialized to deposit the information that is taught and to not question what perspectives are privileged and what voices are silenced. Apol (1998) writes that such practices condition students to search for the “correct” answer and interpretation of a text that is predetermined by the teacher or curriculum. This can promote students to privilege institutional beliefs and silence their own. Stephens parallels this when he said, a mode of reading that “locates readers only within the text is disabling, and leaves readers susceptible to gross forms of intellectual manipulation” (1992, p.4). The students in this study did not silence their own beliefs and in fact questioned certain practices and reflected on how inhumane they were.

Greene (1978) refers to this as *de-mystification*. Greene poses that both educators and students need to critically self-reflect on the information learned and interrogate it for a surface reality or what particular perspective others have defined for us. Developing an awareness to any manipulations and imposed views helps develop ones “*wide-awakeness*” (Greene 1978) to the real social reality.

Reading different stories and questioning fostered the students awareness of historical socio-political issues. Issues of racism, inhumane treatment and equal rights. Here the students and I were in awe at how immigrants coming into and living in the United States

were treated. The students had the notion that the United States was a place where “other” people who lived in violent and poor nations would come and were welcomed with open arms. The students were able to hear “other” voices who had been marginalized and oppressed in ways the students did not know existed. The students were only aware that African Americans had been oppressed historically and now had a new understanding for other exploited groups.

This helped us identify new and alternative perspectives, identify how the author privileges or empowers certain voices and why. Students developed the ability to “challenge the injustices and inequalities of the status quo” (Ciardiello 2003, p.235). The students distinguished how the world is full of disparate discourses, incorporated multiple voices into his or her learning, identified how the text is trying to position someone and recognize any hidden motives or assumptions in the text. McDaniel, 2004.p 473 supports this when he stated, “By developing critical perspectives toward texts, students can transfer these skills to the larger society, thereby “reading” their world through a critical stance that leads to empowerment”. Shannon (1995) further illuminated this when he wrote, “ Critical perspectives push the definition of literacy beyond traditional decoding or encoding of words in order to reproduce the meaning of text or society until it becomes a means for understanding one’s own history and culture, to recognize connections between one’s life, and the social structure, to believe that change in one’s life and the lives of others and society are possible as well as desirable, and to act on this new knowledge in order to foster equal and just participation in all the decisions that affect and control our lives” (p.83).

One surprising finding was how the actual predetermined set of materials helped build this awakening of such issues. Flint, Sluys, & Lewison (2003) write about how some schools have a “one size fits all” curriculum with little space for the students to develop critical questioning of practices of injustices and privilege. Through the use of literature, students and educators can open up a space for critical questioning. I had not anticipated how the actual anthology helped privilege silenced voices such and immigrants, Native American, and women. I had the notion it was a “one size fits all” collection of stories but I was wrong. This anthology told stories from silenced voices of Chinese immigrants, Italian immigrants, African Americans, women oppressed in sports, and Native Americans and that was just the first two themes. For this study we only went through a third of the the book. This disrupted my common place in that I held the belief that any materials mass produced to be sold to entire states or districts would lack multiple voices and would not be a catalyst for empowering voices left out historically.

Paulo Freire and Allan Luke both believe in the importance of educational practices that raise one’s consciousness of social relations and power struggles. Giroux (1990)states,

By challenging the commonsense assumptions that are inscribed in the dominant ideology of discourse and power, it becomes possible for teachers of English to reconstruct their own theoretical frameworks by adding new categories of analysis and by rethinking what the actual purpose of their teaching might be. (p. 85).

This was accomplished through this study. A teacher was able to reconstruct her teaching and thinking through critical literacy. Additionally the students were able to learn from

and shape new understandings from their questions, conversations, and voices from the texts. Discourse theory embodies the notion that some discourses are privileged while others are silenced can be cautiously examined to create a space for other discourses to prevail. Considering reasons why certain subjects and objects have become insiders or outsiders can help disrupt current hegemonic practices as well as help probe into political and cultural relationships and the impact on the construction of meaning. The students were able to analyze relationships between human beings and the world.

Some examples of this can be seen when:

1. Group two focused on gender relationships between girls and boys in The Hot and Cold Summer
2. In Laugh a Minute the group focused on kids getting laughed at
3. In Mighty Jackie: The Strike out Queen the group focused on a male dominated sport and how a woman was silenced because of her gender
4. Students were able to find real world examples of women today who play basketball and are not treated equal to their male counterparts
5. American mistreatment of immigrants coming into the United States was focused on in Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain and Two Brothers From Italy
6. Japanese Americans getting profiled and mistreated because of their ethnicity was another relationship focused on
7. Finally, relationships of governmental agencies and Native Americans was focused on in Weaving A California Tradition.

Getting to this point took a lot of work and discussion. Social constructionism posits the notion that learning is constructed together and builds off prior knowledge to either confirm or dispute prior belief systems. Not only were students able to expand their notion of what social conditions existed for immigrants they were able to help each other understand different aspects of their lives. Through discussion Fiona, Mark, Kerry, and Harlow were able to hear each others' perspectives on recess and understand that each person had perceived the situation differently. Mark thought the girls wanted him to play with them because they were throwing twigs at him, which he thought was fun. The girls initially thought he was trying to ruin their game and after our discussion each of them had a new understanding. Another example was when Harlow and Dugan were engaged in a discussion on why his parents wanted him to share his toys with his sister. Harlow was able to help Dugan see that perhaps his parents were trying to teach him a greater lesson in life about sharing so that he would be able to share with his children some day. Dugan had not thought of it from his parents' perspective and Harlow helped foster that notion for him. Another example can be seen in the Story Hot and Cold Summer. During our group discussion, the girls were able to help all of us see another perspective to the story that went beyond gender but friendship. The girls were able to share their thoughts that regardless if Boliva was a girl or not, Rory would have felt threatened by anyone coming into their friendship. Overall, there were several instances where our discussions and writing helped all of us socially construct our knowledge, expand and challenge our understandings.

Implications

This section will describe in detail how this study and other studies can help educators create a learning environment in which both the teacher and the students can co-create a critical literacy environment in which both the students and the teacher learn, shape and create meaning together. This study can have relevant implications for educators. As mentioned before, hyper-accountability is not going away, therefore, prompting the need to reexamine how schools can better serve the needs of all students is vital. This includes examining specific understandings of curricular approaches and how they are implemented.

Luke and Freebody (1997) pose the question, “What kinds of readers are and can be produced by contemporary reading materials and the lessons for which they are purpose-built?” (p. 186). This study shows just that. Readers in this study became active constructors of meaning as opposed to passive readers.

Another finding was how my students became active readers as opposed to passive readers. When this study began students simply read what was assigned to them and did not generate any “I wonder or critical” questions, they did not provide voices for characters that had been marginalized and did not position and reposition themselves into the text. All of this suggests that my students have become active strategic readers. My students on several occasions were able to state how the text was influenced by the author's experiences or culture. For example in the story Weaving and California Tradition, the student were all able to identify that Linda Yamine's Native American heritage inspired her to write this story and provide a voice for other Native Americans

whose voice was not heard or forgotten. In the story Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain, In My Own County and Two Brothers from Italy, the students were able to identify the power the author had to influence our understanding of immigration and open our eyes to some untold stories. The students were then able to transfer some of these strategies into their own lives. Mina started an animal rights group at school and was able to recruit several other students who were in other classes. Jimmy was able to identify missing women voice in science class and inspired us to research some women inventors and provide a voice for them in our curriculum. This shows how my students sought out new perspectives and were able to reflect on what they learned and expand on it.

As mentioned before questioning is a large part of critical literacy. The students level of questioning moved from a literal level of questioning to a more complex level. Freire advocated for rich instruction that focused on the students becoming active participants. Learning how to read the world and understand the social relationships that govern textual authority has become a central ingredient in the purpose of this study. This helps delineate how schools can be the medium for teachers and students to empower their own beliefs, experiences, and ideologies, challenge dominant beliefs and social structures, and come to their own notion of what knowledge is meaningful for them as an individual and as a member of society.

Vivian Vasquez' (2003) work and this study can help provide useful tools for other teachers. In her book, Vasquez works with a teacher Lee Heffernan who created a response prompt sheet in which six prompts are given to the students to help them respond. These included:

Why do you think people should or should not read... (name of the story)?

What surprised you in this book?

Write one or two statements from someone whose perspective is represented in this book.

What questions do you have about this story?

Write one or two writing topics from your own life that connect with this story.

Write one or two statements from someone whose perspective is not represented in the book.

I took these prompts and adapted them for my study and came up with:

What did you find important in this story?

What surprised you in this story?

What were some of the most important questions you had?

Respond to one of these questions in a thoughtful way?

What connections did this story create for you?

These prompts were very useful and provided the scaffolding my students needed to begin to respond to text in a critical way. They also helped me to reflect on what my students were picking up on in the story and continue to refine ways in which I could support their reading. I was able to analyze their responses and come up with some additional prompts to help their critiques. I added:

What do you think the most important message is this story is?

Pick a character from this story. If you were this character, what would you think, feel, and say?

If you had to change something about this story what would it be?

Are there any power struggles in this story? If so, explain them.

Each of these prompts help both the students and the teacher to think about text in new ways and help students move from a literal comprehension to higher levels of comprehension. This study showed how critical literacy can increase students awareness of how, why and whose interests are represented in text and how and why teachers make certain instructional choices. I am able to make the conjecture that the students were able to achieve higher order comprehension. Examples of this can be seen in their questions and discussions around the questions. In the beginning students focused on literal questions such as what a character ate for dinner or where a family reunion took place. However, questions soon focused on “I wonder” questions in which students thought beyond the text and started to position themselves in the characters shoes. Ultimately students were able to come up with critical questions such as why certain action took place. For example in the story Kai's Journey, students questioned: Would a white man treat Kai differently if he was white?

Why does Kai have to answer questions and get interrogated?

Why does the USA have so much power?

Do immigrants have to go through this now?

These questions exemplify students becoming active constructor of meaning and moving to a higher-order comprehension level. Not only did students generate these questions but they took time to discuss their thoughts about these questions. Students made connections to 9/11 and how Muslim people are at times treated unjustly now because of what

happened. They were able to connect this to when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and Japanese Americans were mistreated because of their race. They additionally, thought about immigrants today and thought that they do get interrogated like Kai but were able to go beyond the reading and think of reasons why the United states might interrogate immigrants. The students in this study were able to achieve a deeper understanding of existing social conditions and power relations. They were able to engage in a critical discourse where they were able to problematize social and political power structures and examine how the author empowered certain view points and silenced others.

Reading comprehension can be divided into two levels: Literal and Higher-order. *Literal comprehension* entails identifying specific facts and concepts that are explicitly stated (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998; Gray, 1960; Vacca & Vacca, 2002). This is also referred to as “reading the lines” (Gray, 1960) or “text explicit” reading (Pearson & Johnson, 1978). *Higher-order comprehension* encompasses both interpretive or inferential comprehension and critical comprehension. *Inferential* (Gray, 1960) or *Interpretive* (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998; Vacca & Vacca, 2002) *comprehension* is the ability to “read between the lines”. At this level, a reader identifies not only what the author says but also infers what the writer means. Herber (1978) described the difference between literal and interpretive comprehension as: “At the literal level readers identify the important information. At the interpretive level readers perceive the relationships that exist in the information, conceptualizing the ideas formulated by those relationships”(p.45). Readers need to be able to make inferences, recognize relationships, integrate information, and understand pronoun referents, (Vacca & Vacca 2002). This

level is also referred to as “text implicit reading” (Pearson & Johnson, 1978). The other component to higher-order comprehension is *Critical comprehension*. This is when a reader can “read beyond the lines” or can form a new idea and use the ideas from the text to connect to other ideas (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998). At this level a reader can discuss the author’s purpose, point of view, competence, accuracy of the text, and give opinions. Pearson & Johnson (1978) call this level “schema implicit” reading. Through their questioning, critical discourse and problematizing the students in this study reached a critical comprehension.

Benjamin Bloom (1956) supports this level on comprehension in his taxonomy of learning domains, specifically the cognitive domain. The cognitive domain consists of six categories that start off from the simplest to the most complex. These consist of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Knowledge entails recall of information, comprehension includes understanding the meaning, being able to state the problem in one's own words and summarizes. I would classify these two categories under literal comprehension. Students in this study went beyond that to a higher-order comprehension which would include Bloom's (1956) categories of application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Application includes using information in a new context. Analysis includes separating information into categories such as fact or inference. Synthesis involves building new meaning and trying to solve problems. Finally evaluation encompasses making judgments about values and ideas. Students in this study used information in new contexts such as science class, recess, and real world issues of racial profiling. Students

were able to identify the author's purpose and motivation for writing the text and were able to separate voices privileged and voices marginalized. The students attempted to take social action to solve some problems that arose in our reading on women basketball players. Finally, students were able to identify and evaluate forms of injustice and racism. Overall, students reached all of Bloom's cognitive mental skills and achieved higher-order comprehension.

Additionally, this study helped add to Luke's (2000) notion of the four resources model. This model can be used by other teachers who want to implement a critical literacy approach in their classroom. The Four Resources Model includes:

- 1) Coding practices: Developing resources as a code breaker
- 2) Text-meaning practices: Developing resources as a text participant
- 3) Pragmatic practices: Developing resources as a text user
- 4) Critical practices: Developing resources as text analyst and critic (p. 454)

Coding practices involve learning how to crack the text, learning how it works, and identifying patterns and rules. Text meaning practices incorporates learning how ideas relate to the text, what cultural influences are present in the text, and what cultural meanings can be extracted or constructed from the text. Pragmatic practices involves learning how to use text, what to do with the text in present day, what others can do with the text, and identifying one's opinion about the text. Critical practice includes discovering what kind of person, what interests and values the text represents or silences, whose interests does the text represent, what positions and voices are privileged and whose are absent.

This study illustrates how using a critical literacy approach will support students at any reading or writing level which is extremely important for teachers who teach a diverse group of students with a variety of needs. This study utilized both small group and whole group instruction to support individual student needs. At times, assumptions can be made that struggling students need to focus on developing reading skills such as decoding and fluency which is accurate but struggling readers and writers can amalgamate these skills with critical reflections and analysis of text as well. In this study, students such as Johnny, Jimmy, Billy, Dugan, and Callie needed support to become successful code breakers but were simultaneously able to become text participants, text users and text analysts. The students were able to become text participants when they were able to identify the author's purpose and whose perspective was privileged and whose was silenced. Also, they were able to become text participants when they engaged in their own conversations about the story, shared their ideas and connections and became an active participant in the story instead of a passive receivers of information. In becoming text users, the students were able to form different opinions as to what each of them perceived as important, upsetting, or why characters were in certain situations. They were able to identify why the authors included certain voices and how the authors' personal experiences and culture influenced what they wrote and what message he or she was trying to convey. Finally, students were able to become critical analysts of text when they provided voices for characters or cultures that were marginalized, took social action, discussed their notion of what was right or wrong and how their interpretation of historical events had changed or been modified after reading alternative perspectives.

Below are some examples of how they were able to move through some of these practices. Fiona and Vanessa are considered on grade level readers and Johnny, Jimmy, and Dugan are slightly below grade level readers.

Table 21

Student	Text Participant	Text User	Text Analysts
Fiona	In the story Laugh a Minute, Fiona was able to provide a voice for Katy, a girl who was laughed at in the story.	In a classroom discussion on alternative perspectives, Fiona was able to understand how different people have different interpretations of the same event and was able to understand how this impacts our perception of events that happen.	In the story Mighty Jackie, Fiona was able to identify how hard Jackie worked, how she accomplished a huge milestone for that time and then was silenced based on her gender. She went on to evaluate the fairness of this decision based on one's gender and not one's baseball skills.
Veronica	In the story Hot and Cold Summer, Veronica was able to identify that	In the story Bart Starr, Veronica was able to relate to an experience she had	In the story Two Brothers From Italy, Veronica was able to identify the power the United States had over

	Rory was more concerned about someone coming in between his friendship with Derek and it didn't matter whether that person was a girl or a boy. She was able to look past a gender issue and position herself into Rory's perspective.	making a difficult decision similar to that of Bart Starr.	the boys and how unfair the questions were since they didn't even speak English.
Jimmy	In the story Danitra Brown, Jimmy was able to think about Danitra and how she would act when she returned from her vacation. He was able to position	In the story Bart Starr, Jimmy was able to relate a difficult decision he had to make in PE, when he new the consequences could be severe.	In the story Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain, Jimmy was able to question whether or not the guards would have treated a white boy the same and why Chinese men were sent back to their country for answering questions incorrectly according to the

	<p>himself in her role and use her character traits to anticipate her actions.</p>		<p>“white man”.</p>
Dugan	<p>In a small group discussion, Dugan was able to think about a decision his parents made which he initially thought was unfair. After some time reflecting he was able to reposition himself into their perspective and think about another reason why they might have asked him to share.</p>	<p>In the story Weaving a California Tradition, Dugan was able to identify the author's motives for writing this story and state how her experiences were trying to influence the reader in a certain way. He was also able to identify why this is important to know as a reader.</p>	<p>In the story Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain, Dugan was able to analyze that the United States was taking advantage of Kai and abusing their power because he was a boy and did not speak the same language. He was able to further critique those action as unjust.</p>

Although these are just a few examples from this study, it is important to remember that these four practices are not hierarchical but circular in that students can and need to move back and forth between these in order to have meaningful, challenging and appropriate instruction to become critically literate.

One last implication I have for any future educators who may want to incorporate critical literacy into their instructional approach is how important the self reflection aspect of critical literacy is.

Teacher's Self Reflection and My “Revelations”

This study began with me coming to the realization that both my instruction and myself needed to be examined in order to satisfy my own personal need to understand decisions being made from the county I worked for and decisions I was making for my students. I needed to systematically examine why I felt certain ways and how that may or may not be impacting my instruction.

Initially, I began with the materials. Immediately I had a negative reaction to my county's decision to implement certain materials. I was certain that “such” mass produced materials would not provide a meaningful instructional approach for me. Yet, the question I now know is, 'why did I feel that way?' Now that I have had time to reflect, such a notion was absolutely incorrect. Critical literacy and social constructionist views hold the notion that reading takes place with the text and the reader. The text is not a medium for which knowledge is transmitted but a way for the reader and text to embark

on a interaction where the reader reads, reflects, critiques, connects, ponders, and comments on the text and any other implications that come up. So for me to have such a narrow minded thought was premature. However, this realization needed to run its course and come to me through my reflections. So, not only did this study help me to realize that this study exemplifies the very essence of critical literacy, but it additionally helped me come to some other realizations.

Through my self reflections on my teaching practices, I have been able to learn one very important thing. Whenever I felt frustrated or disappointed I needed to truly reflect on why. Why was I frustrated in my students answers, why was I disappointed in my own struggles to ignore mechanical errors in their responses at this time, and why did I resent having to use these materials? It was not until I reflected on my own experiences as a learner that I was able to realize some important things.

I spent several hours agonizing over what to do about some of my students writing weaknesses. It wasn't until I spent a long time reflecting on what my purpose is in this study that I was able to come to the conclusion that I was hyper-focusing on their mechanical errors because that is what I experienced in school, what I have been taught to do as a teacher and in general what teachers do. However, with some reflecting, I was able to discern why I was doing this and how this was not really my intention. For me, certain experiences have helped shape what literacy means. Experiences such as going to a Catholic school, certain teachers and certain classes have all helped shape what I initially felt literacy should be. A good literacy instructional approach should include materials rich in vocabulary, students should be able to respond in thoughtful,

mechanically correct, and coherent ways and this should all happen simultaneously and be drilled often so that perfection is achieved. Well, after reading such theorists as Dewey, Freire, Vygotsky, and Vasquez just to name a few, I began to reshape my beliefs and finally after this study, I was able to fully reshape my initial beliefs and recreate what I felt was important for my literacy instructions.

Additionally, self reflection has helped me understand other sources of frustration in my teaching practices. Growing up, you may not realize how certain experiences really impact your belief systems, experiences such as divorce and then watching your mother struggle to make it to the top in the business world. After all, how would that impact me? I'm not in the business world, teachers are paid equally based on degrees and years of experience not gender. Never would I have thought this would have surfaced in a story about Jackie Mitchell trying to play professional baseball. This very example shows how every experience we as educators have had can impact your instruction in some way.

Another very large impact on my teaching practices comes from graduate school. Two professors in particular had a real impact on me in what I thought literacy instruction should focus on. For these professors, your writing had to be absolutely perfect or it was considered “not worthy” as one professor put it. Also, having experienced one of those professors tell me they stopped reading and decided to go for a drink because I was writing in the passive tense really impacted me. I think now, that one incident made me focus heavily on the mechanics of writing for my students because I did not want them to get to college and have a professor say that to them. It was not until I really took time to analyze my own experiences that I was finally able to put that notion

to rest and let my instruction be guided by critical literacy and know that mechanical aspects of writing can be guided in a more meaningful ways than isolated drills and red pen marks.

Having time to reflect on your reactions, decisions and expectations in your classroom can really open up space for you to have a deeper understanding of what knowledge is. This is very hard to do and any one who embarks on this process should be aware that you will experience your own struggles with what instructional choices you make and the most important thing you can do is take time to reflect on, think about, and critique your own experiences first because more than likely, these are impacting your expectations and decisions.

Finally, I can offer one last reflection. What knowledge have I constructed and what does that mean for my teaching practices in the future. I can not discern a particular point in this study where I suddenly had that “light bulb” effect where I knew change was occurring. For me, change and growth came gradually and it slowly began to unravel for me with each moment of reflection. For me, this whole experience was somewhat like a caterpillar changing into a butterfly. At first I saw myself as a caterpillar. Caterpillars spend the first part of their life eating and preparing for a metamorphosis. Whether they consciously know this metamorphosis is coming or not or it is simply instinct. For me, I spent a long time preparing for a metamorphosis of some sort although I didn't know it was coming. I “ate” and “ate” all the knowledge that was bestowed upon me to become a teacher. However it wasn't until I was able to metamorphose into a critical literacy teacher that I was able to realize that knowledge is not what others give you but what you

do with the knowledge others give you and make it your own. That is, in order for knowledge to be truly knowledge in my opinion and from what I have been able to realize, knowledge is not about facts but what those facts mean for you. What connections to your past do those facts have? What impact do these and will these facts have on your life now and in the future? Finally, what will you do with these facts now that you have encountered them? The construction of knowledge should be ever changing, ever evolving and ever reflective.

I have come to realize that my past has greatly impacted my teaching practices both positively and negatively. I have come to realize that teaching materials are just materials and its what you do as a teacher with them that is important. I have come to realize that its okay not to have perfect students who masters all of the skills you would like them to all at once and that does not mean you are a bad teacher. I have come to the construction of knowledge that teaching is a social practice influenced by all who partake in it, students, teachers, materials, administrators, family members, friends, communities, and cultures. To try and separate all of these components would be futile in one's teaching. Instead, critically examine each component for its impact and help in shaping your knowledge and teaching practices.

As I continue to embark on my teaching journey, having newly metamorphosed into a critical literacy teacher I am able to start a new year with a new set knowledge. If not daily but weekly one must self reflect on their teaching practices. What I have discovered in this study is only the beginning. I have a life time of experiences that have shaped and that will continue to impact my teaching and without continued self reflection

into my choices, actions and decisions I would simply be transmitting knowledge not creating and interacting with knowledge.

As I move forward in my planning, teaching, reflection, and research it is my intention to continue this journey. Next year will be similar to this year. My students will continue to learn to read critically while I continue to reflect on myself as a teacher. Additionally, next year it is my hope to incorporate more opportunities for my students to carry their critical literacy experiences into other areas in their life whether that is personal or academic. I would also like for my students to begin to reflect more how language and text has impacted their understanding before and after reading/ hearing new perspectives. For example this year several of my students took a critical stance in their personal lives when they started an animal rights club or decided to become vegetarians. However, I did not give them time to reflect on why they made these decisions and what led them to make these decisions. I think that reflection on why you make certain choices or take certain stances is important and will definitely be part of any future instructional program I implement.

Recommendations for Further Research

In times of such hyper accountability I would suggest bringing in some quantitative data from a follow up study. One that pre and post test students' comprehension levels before and after a critical literacy program has been implemented. As stated before, NCLB currently mandates all public schools meet certain proficiency

standards each year known as Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP). This is assessed through various modes of high stakes testing. For many districts, quantitative data is the impetus for what instructional choices are made. To reiterate again, Higgins, Miller, & Wegmann (2006) state

High stakes standardized testing can greatly influence the teaching of reading and writing. Many teachers change their literacy curricula in order to train students to take the test (Harmon, 2000), and standardized tests drive the curricula in many states (Falk, 1998). Rather than focusing on meaningful learning experiences, many schools spend a lot of time preparing students to take state assessments by engaging them in test-like activities (p. 310).

If an additional study could be done that incorporates quantitative data to support the use of a critical literacy approach to reading, schools may be more likely to endorse and provide professional development for their teachers to learn critical literacy. This additional study may provide insight into another instructional approach that schools could use to to meet the requirements of NCLB, and rethink text, examine whose voice is missing, and how the text can connect the past to current real-world experiences for the students.

Although this study was not designed to monitor student achievement through the instrument of SOL scores, each of the students in this study were able to pass their fourth grade Reading SOL assessment. Further more, 15 out of the 17 students who participated in this study were able to pass their fourth grade Reading SOL with a passed advanced score. This may offer some insight into the students' ability to analyze texts and

to think critically about the text they read. Although I am not able to fully attribute the students advanced scores to the critical literacy instruction this year, I do suspect that critical literacy may have had some positive impact. Of course, future studies designed to measure improved comprehension scores on the SOL would be necessary to justify/verify a claim of positive impact on the state assessment scores in reading comprehension. Critical literacy can be a better way to meet the mandates of NCLB and deliver an instructional approach that is meaningful, experiential, critical and challenging.

Another recommendation I would offer, is to school districts who may be interested in implementing a critical literacy approach in their schools. In order to do this, school districts would need to offer extensive professional development for their teachers. I would suggest the school district start off small with one school as its focus group. Teachers would need to learn what critical literacy is, how to use it and how it can be advantageous. Also providing opportunities for the teachers to work with an experienced person to model for them how to use the different critical literacy strategies in the classroom and then supporting the teacher as he or she begins to implement critical literacy on their own. Support and reflection with an experienced person is crucial for the implementation of a meaningful critical literacy instructional approach. It is important for both teachers or a school district who may want to use this study as a template for critical literacy instruction that this is not something additional teachers would have to take on but rethinking strategies and methods they already use such as questioning, student response journals, and discussions. Additionally a critical literacy approach for teaching reading and writing incorporates strategies that are applicable for all student

populations including students with disabilities, students who are second language learners, and students who are gifted and talented.

Strategies include modeling, oral discussions, peer learning, scaffolded and differentiated instruction, and whole and small group instruction. For students who are second language learners opportunities to practice language acquisition both oral and written are present, small individualized groups can help both students who have reading disabilities or students who are advanced readers. Learning how to use a critical literacy approach with one's leveled readers already in place for guided reading helps support a student's instructional reading level while fostering a deeper and more critical understanding of the text regardless of one's reading ability.

Summary

Overall, this has been a comprehensive examination of how one teacher has implemented a critical literacy approach and successfully used preset materials prescribed by her school district. This study showed how students were able to read text with a critical eye, critique the messages implied in the author's words, created personal connections, read alternative perspectives, question problematic situations, notions and actions and take action to promote more just representations of society. Both the students and the teacher grew as readers, text users, text participants and text analysts to become

“wide awake” to all subtle and overt influences of texts, authors, school districts, and personal experiences.

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