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Blogging in response to literature: reading, writing, and thinking through the digital medium

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**BLOGGING IN RESPONSE TO LITERATURE: READING,
WRITING, AND THINKING THROUGH THE DIGITAL MEDIUM**

by
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Thesis Chair: Marjorie E. Madden, Ph.D.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, David A. Steller, whose moral support, love, and guidance have been immeasurable throughout the completion of my graduate studies and the writing of this manuscript. I would also like to thank my brother, sister, nieces, nephews, and cousins for their patience, love, and understanding for the past two years. This thesis is also dedicated to the memory of my beloved parents, Patricia M. Hargis and Harry W. Hargis, III, who passed away before I began this program, but who would be infinitely proud of my accomplishments in graduate school. It is their teaching, love, and guidance that made me value education and want to take this journey.

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Abstract

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2014
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The purpose of this research inquiry was to investigate what happens when eighth grade students participate in an online classroom blog in response to literature assigned for their English class. The study was conducted in an eighth grade classroom and involved 37 students. The qualitative research paradigm was followed and data collected included student surveys, blog writing samples, classroom writing samples, and observational field notes. Blog posts were analyzed to ascertain their impact on students' levels of thinking through writing. Blogging habits and topics were examined to determine impact of blogging on student interest in reading and writing and quality of student writing in response to literature. Findings indicate that students developed voice, expanded depth of thinking about literature, and attended to the trait of ideas through blog writing; blogging provided a medium for expression of students' interests; blogging presented an outlet and audience for student writing of short stories and poetry; blogging altered teacher pedagogy to accept a wider definition of text and student analysis of text such as movies and music; and blogging reinforced the need for direct, explicit instruction of reading and writing strategies in the language arts classroom.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"Until I feared losing it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing."
--from *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (1960)

Scout Finch, the wide-eyed, innocent protagonist in Harper Lee's (1960) novel *To Kill a Mockingbird,* expresses my philosophy of reading when I was a child. I also never gave it much thought because it was something I loved to do, and my own naiveté led me to believe that everyone else must love to read as well. Was it not just like breathing, an involuntary action? My view of reading changed when I began my teaching career and worked with second grade students. I began to see how difficult it could be for those to whom it did not come naturally or were below grade level in their skills. All the greater was the reward when I helped them mature into proficient readers and watched their building excitement as they moved from reading picture books to chapter books. Their faces glowed with pure joy as they were mesmerized by the spell of reading; they soaked up every word. They would sit enraptured at the end of the day, book bags packed and ready for dismissal, but disappointed nonetheless when the bell rang and interrupted our shared reading of *James and the Giant Peach* (Dahl, 1996). While reading was difficult for some, it was loved by all, and we grew together as a community of readers.

When I transitioned in my teaching career from second grade to middle school and high school in 2001, I was troubled by the fact that some adolescents abhorred reading; many even wore their distaste for it as a badge of honor, something they bragged about unabashedly with their friends and brazenly within earshot of their teachers. Gone was the enthusiasm I relished that invigorated my teaching. I would hear students scoff,

making comments such as, "I haven't read an entire book all the way through since fifth grade," and my heart would sink to my shoes. My second graders had been so excited about learning to read, had voracious appetites for books, and loved to show off their skills to parents, teachers, and siblings. For many of my older students, reading was drudgery. As the sole seventh, eighth, and ninth grade English teacher in a small one-school district where students span from preschool to ninth grade, I have the same students three years in a row. The benefit of this is that I begin each year with knowledge of their strengths, weaknesses, and interests; the drawback is that they hear the same teacher voice with regard to their literacy practices. We are not always the right cogs in the educational machine to facilitate student learning. Sometimes, try as I might, I could not connect with certain students. It may have just been time for them to move on and hear a different perspective, but this was not an option. The bright side of this situation for me as an educator is that it consistently challenges me to find new ways to reach the unreachable, to stretch, to grow, and to expand my repertoire of strategies and approaches.

Over the years as I adjusted to working with older readers, I tried myriad activities to make reading more appealing. Two years ago I began to explore the possibilities that technology offered to engage students in activities in response to literature and provoke deeper levels of thinking. I noticed something fascinating happening when students participated in a simple online blog. Those who rarely spoke up in whole or small group discussions were suddenly participating in the conversation, contributing deep thoughts and making connections across texts and even with pop culture and movies. Sweet, shy, insecure Valerie who was always eager to please but

could never gather the courage to speak more than two sentences during class discussion was suddenly writing paragraphs about *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1945) and *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare, 1591). Her thoughts were sophisticated and introspective. Alexa, the self-proclaimed "word nerd," suddenly had a new outlet for expressing her vast vocabulary and an audience to listen to her concerns about social issues. While marvelous things were happening, logistical constraints precluded me from sustaining these activities to study their lasting impact on learning. With new Web 2.0 tools and equipment our school has acquired through a grant, I recently returned to my exploration of how such technology can impact my English classroom.

In addition to having increased accessibility to technology, I have also broadened my understanding of the role that authentic reading and writing activities have upon student engagement in literature. I have been greatly influenced by Kelly Gallagher's (2009) book *Readicide,* which discusses how schools are destroying the reading experience for students by using artificial and overloaded curriculum units to "teach" books. I have also been inspired by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey's (2011) book *Teaching Students to Read Like Detectives,* which provides a framework for engaging students critically with texts and teaching them strategies to comprehend them at more complex levels. These works have motivated me to approach reading as an activity that can promote deep thinking as students hold conversations and make connections across texts, in the 21st century's expanded sense of that word. Building upon my observations of student blogging and my research, I wish to explore what kinds of connections with and responses to text students will have when they share their thoughts through a public, collaborative online forum.

Story of the Question

My interest in exploring blogging as an engaging and meaningful forum for thinking and writing was rekindled recently by casual conversations with my students and observations of conversations they have with their friends. Students have been bubbling with excitement over fanfiction, a popular literary genre that Thomas (2011) defines as "stories produced by fans based on plot lines and characters from either a single source text or else a 'canon' of works; these fan-created narratives often take the pre-existing storyworld in a new, sometimes bizarre, direction" (p. 1). These conversations provoked me to think about the way students are engaging in literacy and the methods I can utilize to connect these practices to school reading and writing. The fanfiction world is a thriving Internet community where my students read, post, and comment on others' work. Can I replicate such a vibrant online community through blogging? Based on my observations of students' levels of interest in traditional literacy activities, their conversations about their personal interests, and my past experiences with student blogging, I have chosen to focus on the impact blogging can have in an English language arts classroom. I would like to study specifically what happens when eighth grade students participate in blogging activities in the language arts classroom in response to literature.

Through my graduate coursework, I have explored the realm of adolescent literacy, particularly theories of motivation and engagement. I have also been intrigued by research in new literacies, and my expanding knowledge base has altered my perspective of the ability of traditional reading and writing practices to engage students. I have noticed that while some of my eighth grade students remain reluctant readers, others

are manifesting a renewed interest in books. Many of my students talk at great length about books and are excited when a new edition of a book in their favorite series is released. I see students participating in literacy activities in their "outside school" lives, and I want to find ways to capitalize upon this excitement to promote deeper thinking about literature in the classroom.

Since students are using technology to facilitate their recreational reading and writing practices, this presents an avenue to extend this engagement to the classroom. I witness students writing on their Notes application on their iPhones, composing, reading, and responding to fanfiction in online communities, and using Tumblr, Flicker, and Instagram to publish photos; these are all forms of communication within the genre of new literacies. Students have queried as to whether or not they can bring their personal iPads, tablets, or laptop computers to school to use for reading instead of traditional paper books. As it stands now, this would be in violation of our school policy prohibiting the use of electronic devices in school, a policy whose efficacy and relevancy in light of current trends in education I am beginning to question. If students are to improve their reading and writing skills, they need to not only become motivated readers and writers but also view themselves as readers and writers.

Having observed the literacy activities in which my students engage and conversed with them about these activities, which all represent a means of communication and socialization with peers, I chose to explore the use of weblogs as a technological tool for creating a community of engaged and motivated readers and writers in my eighth grade classroom.

Purpose Statement

As students move through middle school and transition into high school, they tend to trade quiet, independent activities such as reading for pleasure for more social activities. Since adolescents select friends with similar interests, students who do not enjoy reading tend to surround themselves with friends who do not like to read. This situation is compounded by the fact that many students do not perceive the value of classroom literacy activities. As Faulkner (2005) states, "The public literacies valued by teachers, schools, and systems tend to be representative of a narrow representation of what it means to be literate, and these are often linked to student alienation and disengagement during the middle years of schooling (Cormack, 1996; Cumming, 1996)" (p. 109). In the study *Writing, Technology, and Teens* (Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, & Macgill, 2008), The Pew Internet & American Life Project and National Commission on Writing used telephone surveys and focus groups to investigate teenagers' writing habits and thoughts about writing. They wanted to discern the "role and impact of technological writing on both in-school and out-of-school writing" (p. i). They examined the paradox that while these students may be disengaged from school literacy activities, they are engaged in literacy activities in their personal lives. Further complicating matters is the fact that teenagers do not value these personal writing activities as real writing. Study findings (Lenhart, et al., 2008) indicate that "85% of teens ages 12-17 engage at least occasionally in some form of electronic personal communication, (but) 60% of teens do not think of these electronic texts as 'writing'" (p. ii). Findings from the Pew study with regard to blogging have auspicious implications for this study:

> "Teen bloggers in particular engage in a wide range of writing outside of school.
> Bloggers are significantly more likely than non-bloggers to do short writing,

journal writing, creative writing, write music or lyrics and write letters or notes to their friends (p. 34)."

If blogging is a pleasurable activity in which many adolescents engage, then it seems plausible that it could be used to improve interest in school writing activities and, in turn, provide a teaching tool for modeling effective writing skills. The research question I plan to investigate is: What happens when eighth grade students participate in blogging activities in the language arts classroom in response to literature?

Since blogging is a medium that is situated on the Internet, infinite possibilities exist for connecting blogs to reading activities and using them for deeper investigation of text. As more students rely on electronic means of reading via e-books, e-readers, and tablets, the process of reading has altered and requires new skills commensurate with this process. In their position statement, *New Literacies and 21ˢᵗ Century Technologies*, the International Reading Association (2009) addresses the plethora of information available on the Internet that may be written from a variety of political, religious, or ideological stances, cautioning that

> "…we must assist students to become critical consumers and informed creators of information in these new online contexts (Alvermann, 2008; Fabos, 2004; Stevens & Bean, 2007) by providing instruction in how to critically evaluate the relevancy, accuracy, reliability, and perspective of information created for a range of purposes and audiences" (We must pay particular attention section, para. 1).

Blogging in response to online text and linking online text to blogs fosters students' capacity to be critical readers and evaluators of information. Critical literacy is an important component of adolescent literacy instruction in all subject areas that blogging could address.

With an increasing divide between traditional school literacy practices and students' personal literacy practices, teachers are charged with the responsibility of incorporating authentic purposes for reading and writing in the classroom. Blogging holds potential for allowing students to collaborate and communicate with peers in their classes, around the corner, or around the world. Teachers may remain reluctant to utilize blogs because of their personal reservations about their difficulty to create, navigate, or monitor. There are both risks and rewards to blogging, and teaching pedagogies often cement into the monolith that stands in the way of progress with Web 2.0 tools. New pedagogies can chip away at this monolith and pave the way for new learning pathways. At the forefront of research of new literacies, Knobel and Lankshear (2006) indicate that traditional writing pedagogy "individuates" powerful writing, yet "much of the power in powerful writing may lie in affiliation with some larger collective" (p. 87). Blogging can allow for students to reach such a wider audience while practicing their writing craft and honing their voice. However, Knobel and Lankshear (2006) caution that school blogs can become uninspired dumping grounds lacking the authenticity of purpose and student voice they should initiate, stating, "Missing in the vast majority of school blogs are the lively wit of blogger posts found elsewhere and the written comments they often attract from readers" (p. 88). The problem inherent in this observation is the stifling effects of taking a voluntary activity and transforming it into a teacher-mandated activity. Without careful nurturing, an open-mindedness toward pedagogy, and a teacher-as-facilitator stance, even forward thinking teachers risk taking the fun out of blogging for their students.

The risk appears to be worth the reward, however. The research of Hagood (2012) conducted as she worked with reticent teachers to incorporate new literacies in the middle school classroom offers encouragement. Hagood (2012) writes, "…the concern of being left behind wasn't what spurred these teachers on. They were compelled by the rewards of teacher and student engagement, learning, and the changing relationships that they experienced" (p. 14). The traditional view of the teacher as the "sage on the stage" who requires, assigns, models, and mandates is not the proper model for the blogosphere. Teachers must be willing to participate in blogging and, while modeling and establishing parameters, also allow powerful writing to emerge, shine, and be celebrated by students and for students. As Knobel and Lankshear (2006) explain,

> "Weblogging is a local practice that can have global reach. Equally, it is a global writing practice that has local reach. This allows individuals who have the interest and wherewithal to do so to access and participate in affinity spaces where expertise, stimulation, and point of view come free. Within such contexts, possibilities for acquiring the capacity to write effectively and powerfully are greatly enhanced by comparison with enduring the kinds of models schools typically make available" (p. 92).

While blogging should not take the place of traditional classroom discussion, it has the potential to extend conversations to these affinity spaces that adolescents inhabit in their free time. What wondrous things could happen if students began to discuss classroom literature in these affinity spaces and begin to connect the author's craft and broad literacy themes to their personal lives?

Statement of Research Problem and Question

Adolescents require authentic audiences and purposes for writing. If they do not understand the purpose of an activity or cannot relate to its value in their lives, they can quickly lose interest. They are also social creatures who experience increased brain

activity that demands novel ways to be satiated; blogging activities can fulfill this need. Educators can also use blogs to teach students how to respond respectfully and introspectively to others' thoughts and synthesize their thinking with new insight gained from reading others' posts. In this regard they are developing collaborative skills necessary for success in the 21st century workplace and addressing the Common Core Content Standards for college and career readiness in their emphasis on close analysis of text and written response using textual evidence. The question I will address in this study is as follows: What happens when eighth grade students blog in response to literature in the language arts classroom? In investigating this question, I will systematically collect data and analyze it for revelations about that will illuminate how the practice of blogging informs student thinking and writing about literature.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter two provides a review of literature regarding the use of blogs in education as a medium for student writing and extension of conversations about text. It outlines the history of blogging and its pedagogical underpinnings, addresses the benefits of blogging, and presents advice from educators who have experienced success blogging with their students. Chapter three presents the design and context of the study, focusing on the climate of the town, school, and classroom within which the study was conducted. It also outlines the procedure of the study and describes the data that was collected. Chapter four provides a review and analysis of the data and presents findings of the study based on triangulation of the data sources. Chapter five delineates the overall findings of the study in the form of conclusions drawn from the data analysis, reviews the

implication of blogging for literacy education, and provides suggestions for further

research surrounding the use of blogs in the language arts classroom.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

"Margie even wrote about it that night in her diary. On the page headed May 17, 2157, she wrote, 'Today Tommy found a real book!' It was a very old book. Margie's grandfather once said that when he was little boy, his grandfather told him that there was a time when all stories were printed on paper. They turned the pages, which were yellow and crinkly, and it was awfully funny to read words that stood still instead of moving the way they were supposed to—on a screen, you know." ---from "The Fun They Had" by Isaac Asimov (1951)

Isaac Asimov's vision of futuristic reading in his short story "The Fun They Had," set in 2157, is real and familiar for the student of 2014. While traditional printed and bound books are not yet mysterious relics of antiquity, the ways in which students read and gather information is rapidly evolving. Students absorb and create knowledge in their everyday lives outside the classroom in ways unimaginable before recent technological innovations and sometimes currently unknown to their teachers. Research in neuroscience has only recently begun to explore the ways in which the brains of today's youth are becoming wired differently as a result of Web 2.0 tools. Educational blogging pioneer Will Richardson (2010) cites the research of William D. Winn, director of the Learning Center at the University of Washington, who has discovered that children who have grown up using technology "think differently from us. They develop hypertext minds. They leap around. It's as though their cognitive structures were parallel, not sequential (Prensky, 2001)" (p. 8). The challenge for educators is not only to keep up but also to adapt instructional practices to meet these new learning modalities.

In the field of literacy, where the concept of text has been stretched beyond traditional boundaries of books and short stories, the impact of technology such as Wikis,

blogs, podcasts, and e-books is being felt with full force but is not always countered with appropriate understanding. Attempts to adapt traditional literacy practices to digital tools fall flat because they do not embrace the nuances and possibilities of new literacies. Taking a traditional classroom book discussion and reassigning it in an online format such as a blog performs a disservice to both activities. Blogs can be more appropriately utilized to enhance and extend conversations about books beyond the classroom. While many students already interact with their peers on the Internet, research shows that they may be less likely to "participate in civic, global, or political activities online" (Mills, 2010). The teacher's role as facilitator is to guide students in using blogs to flatten classroom walls and connect with an online community. This has the added benefit of increasing students' social awareness and self-concept as readers and writers whose voices impact and influence others.

This chapter provides the theoretical background of blogging as a literacy practice. It also illuminates the work of pioneers at the forefront of the blogging movement and provides practical insight into how blogs can be implemented in the contemporary classroom. It describes the benefits of blogging in terms of their impact on reading comprehension, writing, critical literacy, and writer identity, and it provides cautionary advice for how to optimize the benefits of blogging in the aforementioned areas.

History of Blogging

A blog in its original incarnation was defined as a list of webpages that a websurfer found interesting (Barger, 1997). Recent generations of blogs have

transformed into personal journals and online spaces where individuals can interact and comment on the thoughts of others as well as local and global events. As defined by Handsfield, Dean, and Cielocha (2009), blogs are "interactive and personally composed Web 2.0 spaces in which entries typically appear in reverse chronological order (Davies & Merchant, 2008)" (p. 45). Blogs can be used by institutions to post news and information, by news organizations to inform readers and provide a forum for commentary, or by individuals who wish to share their personal insights and receive feedback from others or engage in discourse with other likeminded individuals.

In terms of their theoretical underpinnings, blogs are situated in the realm of paradigm cases of new literacy practice (Knobel and Lankshear, 2007). Unlike traditional classroom literacy practices, new literacy practices involve both new "technical stuff" and "ethos stuff" (Knobel and Lankshear, 2007). Viewing literacy and technology through the lens of sociocultural theory, Lankshear and Knobel (2013) explain, "New literacies are more 'participatory,' 'collaborative,' and 'distributed' in nature than conventional literacies" (p. 9). Both the process of interacting within a blogging community and the blogs themselves demonstrate this construct. Teachers who adopt the ethos of new literacies and incorporate them into their instructional repertoire rather than merely taking old literacy practices and digitizing them build bridges between students and content. Incremental changes such as incorporating multimodal texts or giving students options for demonstrating learning through collaborative, multimodal presentations such as blogs is a significant step toward transforming teacher ethos.

Conceptualizing blogging in the contemporary classroom illuminates the link between students' school literacy activities and those in which they engage in their

personal lives. As student interests begin to change during middle school, there is an urgent need to engage adolescents in the learning process, give them the tools to grapple with increasingly complex texts as they transition from learning to read to reading to learn, and transform educator ethos toward respect for and understanding of the literacies in which their students are engaged. The International Reading Association's (IRA, 2012) position statement, *Adolescent Literacy*, addresses the need for change in content area methodology for adolescent instruction: "…as texts become increasingly complex, multimodal, and necessary for discipline-specific learning, middle and high school students must adapt by using more advanced, specific strategies for deeper understanding and composing (Moje, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008)" (p. 4). Motivation and engagement are the heart of reading success since "motivational processes are the foundation for coordinating cognitive goals and strategies in reading" (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000). Research supports the importance of motivation in reading achievement (Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, & Afflerbach, 1995). Motivated readers are more engaged, and engaged readers learn more effectively. Blogs can provide this missing link for adolescent learners by incorporating familiar literacy practices that stimulate and engage them. The IRA (2012) notes that, "While adolescents are engaging in these new literacies with ever increasing frequency, neither they nor their teachers typically view this kind of participation as reading and writing" (p. 7). Teachers who remain digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001) are unfamiliar with the elements of social collaboration in which new literacies are situated. Lack of familiarity can breed lack of appreciation as teachers fail to look beyond the "technical stuff" to the new "ethos stuff" (Lankshear and Knobel, 2011). A shift in teacher pedagogy toward appreciation for blogging as a meaning-

making process is necessary to engage learners in knowledge construction in the classroom.

In addition to having roots in theories of motivation and engagement, blogging also has roots in sociocultural theory, which posits reading and writing as social events where language gains meaning from its context and is developed through social interaction. James Gee (2012) suggests, "Language makes no sense outside of Discourses" (p. 3), defining Discourses as "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities by specific groups" (p. 3). Problems for adolescent learners arise when there is tension between primary and secondary Discourses (Gee, 2012). Culturally responsive (Gay, 2000) teachers who take an accepting stance toward students' primary Discourses can mitigate the tensions that impede learning and foster greater engagement in school activities.

Teachers who respect these new literacies through which students are forming their identities also engage them in critical literacy to help them process the vast amount of information inundating them via the Internet and social media. Teaching students to evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources creates independent thinkers. This is the critical literacy that Freire (2000) promotes when he speaks of the transformative possibilities of education: "Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom" (p. 34). Blogging permits equitable sharing of information to achieve Freire's (2000) vision of education as liberating rather than oppressive. Texts today are readily available and

malleable through the Internet; sharing of information and thought is instantaneous and far-reaching through formats such as Google Docs, Twitter, blogs, and Wikis. Information is in the hands of young people, and they need the tools to process, analyze, and disseminate it responsibly so they can begin to "read the world through the word" (Freire, 2000). By virtue of their design and the process for interacting within a blogging community, blogs nurture critical thinking skills and connect students globally.

The critical thinking skills inherent in blogging are not learned by accident; explicit, purposeful instruction from teachers who act as both facilitators and participants is essential to their efficient use. In this regard, the practice of blogging is linked to a social constructivist approach to learning. According to Vygotsky (1978), "human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (p. 88). Students need adult guidance in the use of blogs to reinvent the literacy practices they will engage in by themselves for "social, recreational, and civic engagement" (Mills, 2010, p. 37). A common ground can be reached between the more informal literacies of students and the more formal literacies of adulthood (Mills, 2010), and both can be enhanced through scaffolding learning in the presence of a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978). This moves learning beyond transmission of knowledge as students actively construct knowledge through productive learning experiences (Mills, 2006) that move them "beyond the known to the new" (Mills, 2010, p. 44). In reflecting upon his own blogging practices, Richardson (2010) echoes the sentiments of Vygotsky (1978) when he writes, "we write not just to communicate but to connect with others who can potentially teach us more" (p. 28).

Blogs also present the possibility for students to engage collaboratively in

inquiry-based learning in the spirit of educational pioneer, John Dewey. According to Dewey (1933), reflective thinking is the better type of thinking and results in true learning. Dewey formulated five phases of reflective thought into a process for inquiry-based learning that dovetail with the new literacies of Web 2.0 technology. These phases begin with an approach to learning from an area of interest, then move to stimulation of thought from the development of a problem or question about the area of interest, acquisition of knowledge on the part of the student to properly address the problem and organize possible solutions, and ultimately testing hypotheses for validity. The teacher's role in this process becomes that of facilitator of learning. In a blogging community, teachers positioned as participants in the construction of knowledge can utilize blogs to provide students with structured affinity spaces (Gee, 2005) for "exploration, experimentation, and play" (Losh & Jenkins, 2012, p. 18). Project-based learning rooted in inquiry has been supported by the research of Boling, Castek, Zawilinski, Barton, and Nierlich (2008). They discovered that "…teaching students strategies such as identifying problems, locating online resources, critically evaluating information, and sharing ideas…are essential new literacies for using the Internet for literacy learning (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004)" (p. 506). The blogging environment is richly suited to Dewey's process of reflective thought, which Chen (2005) cautions must be explicitly taught if it is to be used purposefully for learning: "My concern lies with what these digital natives may be losing in the process, namely the opportunity and the skills to effectively reflect on their learning experiences for the purpose of turning those experiences into meaningful and reusable knowledge" (p. 1). When appropriately introduced and scaffolded, blogs can provide time and space (Blood, 2013) for reflective

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thought and problem solving.

Blogging Today: The Pioneers

Blogging has come a long way since its original inception as a list of websites published on the Internet. The potential for blogs in content area classrooms is touted by educators such as Will Richardson (2010): "Could blogging be the needle that sews together what is now a lot of learning in isolation with no real connection among the disciplines?" (p. 26) As a teacher educator at the forefront of the blogging movement, Richardson (2010) speaks of their ease of use, accessibility, and ability to reach a wide audience. He also addresses the symbiotic relationship between reading and writing, stating that bloggers who write in response to reading, "learn to read critically, because as they read, they look for important ideas to write about" (p. 30). Not only does Richardson (2010) spread the word about the merits of blogging, but he also offers step-by-step guidelines to novice teacher-bloggers and advice about the best blog-hosting websites at his own weblog at www.weblogg-ed.com. His chapter titled "Weblogs: Pedagogy and Practice" in *Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms* (2010) provides examples of exemplar "edublogs" and delineates the benefits of blogs in their ability to serve as online filing cabinets and portfolios for students. With many forward-thinking teachers using technology to switch to paperless classrooms, blogs may herald the retirement of traditional student notebooks in favor of e-notebooks and begin the transformation of classrooms from isolated brick-and-mortar structures to connected learning environments with virtually transparent walls.

The successful impact of blogging on student literacy has been demonstrated by

other pioneers of the movement such as Vicki Davis and Julie Lindsay, cofounders of the

Flat Classroom Project (2006) and authors of *Flattening Classrooms and Engaging*

Minds: Move to Global Collaboration One Step at a Time (2012). The Flat Classroom

Project brings students together internationally to connect, communicate, research, and

collaborate. The students create a multimedia piece that they outsource to their

collaborators in other countries for their input and contribution. In an interview with Al

Juliani (2013) on the blog EducationIsMyLife.com, Davis and Lindsay discuss how the

flat classroom movement mirrors "real world" workplace collaboration and helps

students develop the "techno-personal" (Davis, 2013) skills they will need to be

successful in the future, skills that will help them develop "global competency, learning

about the world and with the world" (Lindsay, 2013). Blogs are technological tools that

students can use to facilitate development of this global competency and are especially

beneficial during the communication phase of flattening classrooms. Teachers that wish

to provide such connected learning to prepare their students for 21st century learning need

to be adaptable, less "me-centric" and more globally centric (Davis, 2013). Davis (2013)

indicates that teachers must also take small steps and trust their passion in knowing that

they are doing the right thing for their students. This will help ease the fear of technology

that prevents some teachers from utilizing it.

Another blogging project receiving international attention and growing

exponentially is QuadBlogging ™ (Mitchell, 2009). In this form of blogging, four

schools blog with one another for a four-week period, each school agreeing to focus on

one specific school's blog, reading and responding to posts, for one of those four weeks.

Mitchell (2009) introduced blogging at Heathfield Primary School in England in an effort

to motivate reluctant writers in his Year 6 class. Not only did blogging begin engaging these reluctant writers, but it also had a measurable impact on the quality of student writing. Standardized test scores for writing improved an average of 6.6 points per child, equating to two years' progress in twelve months (Parkin, 2011). QuadBlogging ™ grew out of Mitchell's (2009) desire to expand the audience for his students' writing. An unintentional but positive byproduct of Mitchell's (2009) project resulted when students used their creative freedom to develop personal blogs apart from the class blog. This gave them a sense of ownership of their work as they created their own content for their blogs. Reflecting upon the success of QuadBlogging ™, Mitchell (2009) notes, "These developments, which occurred over only a few days have demonstrated to me that by keeping an open mind, being flexible and listening to the pupil voice, you can evolve the tools you have available to enable even deeper learning to occur" (Parkin, 2011). Author and educational consultant Pie Corbett (2013) has also praised QuadBlogging ™ for its ability to build community and provide a real audience for student writers that focuses them on their purpose for writing. In a post on YouTube.com, Corbett (2013) exclaims, "In terms of young children developing as writers this is the most interesting development in the last twenty years."

Benefits of Blogging

While the work of blogging pioneers such as Richardson (2010), Davis and Lindsay (2006), and Mitchell (2009) lays the groundwork for teachers wishing to incorporate blogs into their classrooms, other teacher researchers have also discovered the benefits of blogging. What follows is a summary of research delineating the positive impact blogging can have on reading comprehension, writing, critical literacy, and

identity formation.

Improving reading comprehension. Zawilinski (2009) examined the benefits of blogging by observing the work of a classroom teacher who incorporated a blog into her literacy curriculum. She discovered that while blogs help students develop online communication skills, they also improve online reading comprehension since "writing is intrinsically integrated with the reading comprehension process (Castek et al., 2007; Leu et al., 2007)" (p. 652). Zawilinski discusses how "these essential new literacies of online reading comprehension emphasize higher order thinking skills like analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Anderson, 2005; Bloom, 1956; Coiro & Dobler, 2007) and can be practiced through blogging" (p. 652). Blogs can also "bridge the ever-widening gap between out-of-school literacies and in-school literacies (Alvermann, Huddleston, & Hagood, 2004; Hinchman et al., 2003)" (p. 652) and broaden the audience for student writing.

Zawilinski (2009) developed a framework for Higher Order Thinking (HOT) through blogging that consists of the following four recursive steps: bolster background knowledge about the reading selection; prime the pump by allowing students to clarify confusions, share first impressions, summarize initial learning, and make connections to themselves or other texts; continue the conversation summarizing and synthesizing across multiple textual units; and make multiplicity explicit by inviting students to read, think, and comment on the classroom blog. This process mirrors the pre reading, during reading, and after reading strategies utilized in effective language arts instruction. Zawilinski's (2009) Synthesis Scaffold is a teacher Think Aloud template that provides the necessary modeling students need for learning how to use textual evidence to support

their responses to classmates' blog posts. The HOT framework assists teachers in providing explicit strategy instruction students need to communicate effectively and respectfully in a blogging forum.

While this framework can provide the model for explicit teaching of blog communications, reading comprehension can also grow through connections students make in their blogs with other texts and other experiences. Blogs can reproduce and extend the active reading strategies that literacy instructors teach explicitly within their traditional classrooms. Wolsey (2004) cites the research of Bean, Valerio, and Senior (1999) as they elaborate on what Cairney (1996) named *intertextuality,* which involves readers gleaning understanding from connections they make across texts, personal experiences, and memories. The Internet is virtually a limitless world of text that students can access at their fingertips to expand the connections that deepen levels of understanding and break down walls of subject-specific content classrooms.

Improving writing. In a qualitative research study of the effects of blogging on the writing and literacy development of fifth grade students, McGrail and Davis (2011) conducted student interviews, recorded observations, had informal conversations with students about blogging, facilitated group discussions of what was learned from blogging, and examined content of student and class blogs themselves. The researchers set parameters for responsible blogging and expected their students to adhere to the following: accepting the challenge of blogging and striving to do their best, understanding the conventions of public writing, giving credit to others' words by linking and quoting, respecting others by developing the ability to write responsibly, understanding the power of communication with a larger audience, developing their own

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unique voice and not being afraid to take risks, celebrating their own and their peers'
successes, and recognizing the contributions of their readers. Like Zawilinski (2009), the
researchers scaffolded "student blogger writing development (Dorn & Soffos, 2001;
Vygotsky, 1978)" by "discussing and celebrating" strong blogging pieces, evidencing the
need to explicitly provide students with the tools they need to use technology efficiently
and responsibly. Through their study, they discovered that blogging improved the
writers' sense of audience, created a sense of community and belonging that empowered
and motivated the students, and "helped…students see writing as an authentic and
empowering activity" (p. 428) as they took ownership of the writing process and writer's
craft and developed their writing voice. McGrail and Davis (2011) also discovered that
the collaboration required by teachers in the blogging community required a shift from "a
traditional pedagogy to a participatory pedagogy (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma,
Robinson, & Weigel, 2006)" (p. 432). This equalization of authority between teacher and
student for the mutual creation of meaning can empower students to improve their self-
concept as writers.

The research of Lacina and Griffith (2012) into the work of a technology
coordinator at an elementary school further supports the positive influence of blogging on
student writing skills. They discovered the need to model blog writing just as traditional
formats of writing are modeled. Students also need to be taught etiquette and safety for
online communication. They found that having students practice responses to student
writing on paper eased the transition to computer blogging. Key to any successful
classroom writing is the creation of a community of writers (Lacina & Block, 2012). The
results of this study supported the findings of Lenhart (2008) that awareness of audience

leads to better writing, and that blogging can provide an authentic practice for the

development of writing skills. While awareness of audience is important, blogging can

also paradoxically protect the more reticent writer by creating a sense of anonymity, a

wall of separation that allows for both reader and creator to be more objective (Dobler,

2011; Richardson, 2010). While students still need to be mindful of audience, the

physical environment of composing on a computer can provide a sense of security that a

classroom discussion wherein students must face the immediate reactions of their peers

does not.

   Promoting critical consumption of text. As a manifestation of Web 2.0 tools,

blogs position students in the unique role as both authors and critical readers of student-

produced texts (Handsfield, Dean, & Cielocha, 2009). Students learn to become more

aware of and informed about sources of information and read for bias rather than taking

text at face value. Meaning is formed as text is understood in terms of its "affordances for

achieving particular purposes in different social contexts" (p. 41). Meaning is

continuously reshaped as students read and respond to text, engaging in the cycle of

reading and then "reflecting, criticizing, questioning, reacting" (Downes, 2004, p. 24). As

students explore the multimodal potential of blogs, they make critical decisions about

what links, audio files, videos, and images are appropriate to associate with their blog.

Individual student blogs created within a classroom blog afford the opportunity for

students to design widgets and embed content. The use of hyperlinks creates a reading

path unique to the individual learner as she navigates other members' blogs, making

decisions along the way that shape the learning process. Blood (2002) discusses the

analysis and synthesis skills required by bloggers who must make critical decisions about

what information to include in the content of their blogs:

> "Webloggers committed to providing their readers with the best available links may find themselves reading and comparing two or three versions of a news story…the weblogger will see how differently the same information may be framed and how the inclusion or exclusion of additional material can change the reader's impression of the facts" (p. 30).

Students who critically analyze text to make such decisions are engaging in critical literacy and developing lifelong skills that will make them savvy consumers and producers of text with an eye toward identifying bias and careful consideration of sources of media content.

As participators in the construction of content, students who comment upon the text of others, whether that texts consists of others' posts or other Internet content, play a constitutive role in text making (Davies & Merchant, 2006). This forges independence and autonomy in meaning-making processes that requires critical thought. Richardson (2010) refers to this as "connective writing", a genre that "forces those who do it to read carefully and critically, that demands clarity and cogency in its construction, that is done for a wide audience, and that links to the sources of the ideas expressed" (p. 28). It globalizes the classroom, breaking boundaries between self and other and offering limitless possibilities to hear and contemplate the message of voices that students may not otherwise have occasion to hear.

Creating a writing identity. Research of writing through blogging has revealed that it is instrumental in identity formation since it is closely tied with self-presentation and impression formation (Davies & Merchant, 2006). Identity is shaped as bloggers make decisions within the discourse of blogging about how they wish to show themselves to the blogging community and the world at large through the Internet. This awareness of

audience is linked to the affective aspects of onscreen writing (Davies and Merchant, 2006) as "a plural narrative begins to develop, and our perception of an actual or imagined audience prompts us to think about what we wish to show" (p. 178). Students maintain constant awareness of audience, which can consequently enhance their appreciation for the power and longevity of online communication; content published on the Internet can always be tracked back to its author, and student writers need to be aware of this as it can have grave implications for future employment opportunities.

In a study of five students who served as co-investigators, documenting their patterns of website usage, Web-based resources, and digital literacy skills, Alvermann, Marshall, McLean, Huddleston, Joaquin, and Bishop (2012) discovered that adolescents' Web-based literacies are not as distinctly different from their school literacies as is often assumed. These students wished to debunk the trend towards thinking that they are wasting time on the Internet and prove they are engaged in worthwhile activities through their social networking. These students were found to formulate their identities through such activities as shopping, remixing music, and posting on Facebook. They were found to be developing important critical thinking and life skills they will need for "their futures as citizens, workers, and overall contributing members of society" (p. 192). While these activities go beyond the realm of blogging, they still demonstrate the potential for the types of literacies and web sources that can be embedded within student blogs.

Another study that examined the nature of student literary responses communicated via weblog took into consideration students' "socially situated identities" (West, 2008, p. 589) as students responded to classroom texts. West (2008) constructed her study with the intention of enabling students to create online identities through

blogging. She examined student blog posts looking for situated meanings, social languages, discourse models, and situated identities. West (2008) discovered that students conformed to the informal language of "Web-literate communicators" (p. 596) in their blogs, but maintained their identities as "serious literature students" (p. 596) as they "integrated the social language of formal literary analysis with their enactments of digital social language" (p. 596). This bodes well for students' ability to adapt their socially situated identities as they navigate the world of new literacies and connect them to their online learning. West (2008) concluded from her study that students are able to pull from other discourses as they create a "hybrid" discourse unique to the practice of blogging about literature. She also discovered that the engagement of students with their blogs provided them with a sense of freedom to create their identities while experimenting with their classroom texts in a novel way as they "talked back" to characters and experienced traditional texts in new ways.

In researching how teachers use blogs for classroom instruction across the United States, Felix (2007) bolsters the concept that blogging can improve the sense of community amongst student writers. Felix (2007) conducted a qualitative, holistic multiple case study using virtual ethnography. The study focused on the perceptions of teachers who use blogging as an instructional practice, and data was collected by means of surveys and interviews. The findings identified four communication patterns perceived by teachers to result from blogging: increased peer interaction, increased teacher/student interaction, positive student attitudes about learning, and increased idea sharing among students and teachers. Additionally, the survey results indicated that blogging promotes a "culture of collaboration because of the very nature of asynchronous or synchronous

communication" (p. 211). Blogging is easily adapted to any class and can allow writers time to think and reflect upon material and the posts of others before responding themselves. This is a characteristic that is unique to blogging; in traditional classroom settings, students may not be given adequate "think time" to process information and respond to discussion in a thoughtful manner. The nature of blogging affords students the opportunity to voice their opinions and thoughts in their own time without the physical classroom constructs that may stifle reticent participants (Richardson, 2003; Boling, Castek, Zawilinski, Barton, & Nierlich, 2008). It positions teachers as participants and co-learners (Felix, 2007), creating a more democratic class structure. In a blogging community, all voices are heard, feedback is more immediate, and identities may be shaped in ways not imaginable without the use of this forum.

Plan accordingly to maximize potential. While blogging has positive implications for engaging students in reading and writing, for improving depth of comprehension of text and content of writing, and helping students formulate both online social identities and classroom literary identities, teachers cannot expect instantaneous positive results from blogging without proper planning. It is irresponsible to assume that since students use technology in their daily lives that teachers can assign work for them on the computer and they will automatically know how to do it and where to find the answers.

In a longitudinal study of two and a half years to explore the effectiveness of integrating blogs into content area literacy classroom for preservice teachers, Hungerford-Kresser, Wiggins, & Amaro-Jiménez (2011) examined quantitative results and discovered that "the blogs statistically had no measurable impact on students'

perceptions of the course or content literacy" (p. 326). However, examination of data gathered from the blogs themselves, focus group transcripts, and reflective memos through the lens of sociocultural theories illustrated the creation of "communities of practice" (CoP) allowing for "co-construction of knowledge between experts/novices and novices/novices (Lave, 1996; Rogoff & Lave, 1984)" (p. 327). The authors cite research (Johnson, 2010; Yang, 2009) suggesting that integrating blogs in the classroom "requires new skills and strategies that prepare students to access and contribute information to a world-wide knowledge base" (p. 328). While the preservice teachers involved in this study came to view blogging as "just another thing to do" (p. 330), the researchers gained valuable information for future blogging practice. They discovered that the teacher needs to play a stronger role in guiding the discussion through the blogs, students need more specific topics and prompts to direct their discussion, blog groups should be smaller, and thoughtful responses in a variety of formats should be modeled. Students should also be encouraged to respond with multimedia such as podcasts, pictures, and wikis rather than text alone. These lessons provide cautionary advice for teachers' endeavors with blogging. The research of Zawilinski (2009) supports the findings of Hungerford-Kresser, Wiggins, & Amaro-Jiménez (2011) by grounding the effectiveness of blogging in the belief that students need direct instruction in using technological tools to ensure their "effective and efficient" use. Losh and Jenkins (2012) discuss the challenges facing public education in attempting to meet the needs of students who thrive in a "participatory culture" of "interest-driven and friendship-driven networks" (p. 18). While these networks provide fertile ground for learning, students need guidance to maximize their potential. Losh and Jenkins (2012) caution against the common institutional practice

of blocking students' access to questionable Internet sites. Instead, more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978) referred to as "infomediaries" (Losh & Jenkins, 2012) can mentor students in making sound decisions for themselves as they formalize more informal online experiences.

Conclusion

After reviewing the literature of current blogging practices for educational purposes and the impact blogging can have on student literacy skills, common themes begin to emerge. Blogging need not function as an additional activity, something else a teacher has to do; when properly introduced and modeled for students, it can be incorporated seamlessly into content area classrooms to improve student literacy skills and provide an extension of thinking about classroom content. Blogging has been discovered to have a direct positive impact on student reading comprehension as it gives students time and space to engage in reflective thinking about text (Downes, 2004; Blood, 2013). According to Davies and Merchant (2006), it particularly supports online reading comprehension as students create their own unique reading path and make decisions about "the level of attention and depth of reading allotted to a text" (p. 186). Blogging can improve writing as students gain increased awareness of writing for an authentic audience (McGrail & Davis, 2011; Lacina & Block, 2012; Lenhart, 2008) and begin to form identities as writers (Alvermann et al., 2012; West, 2008) as they make decisions about how they wish to present themselves to a wider global audience through blogging forums. Blogging promotes critical literacy (Freire, 2000) since students must become savvy consumers of text as they read, analyze, and synthesize information through a recursive process and respond thoughtfully through their blog posts (Downes,

2004; Handsfield, Dean, & Cielocha, 2009). Blogs can motivate and engage adolescent

readers and writers since they build bridges between primary and secondary Discourses

(Gee, 2012) and allow teachers to participate in the meaning-making process as they

connect new literacy practices with in-school literacy practices (Lankshear and Knobel,

2011). Utilizing new literacies such as blogs, however, is not merely a matter of taking

students to a computer lab and assigning prompts for them to respond to in their blogs.

As Reingold (2006) advises,

> "This population is both self guided and in need of guidance, and although a
> willingness to learn new media by point-and-click exploration might come
> naturally to today's student cohort, there's nothing innate about knowing how to
> apply their skills" (para. 5).

Research (Hungerford-Kresser, Wiggins, & Amaro-Jiménez, 2011; Zawilinksi, 2009;

Losh & Jenkins, 2012) cautions that appropriate blogging and online etiquette

(netiquette) should be explicitly taught and modeled for best results. Otherwise students

are not growing in connecting informal discourses of online communications with more

formal classroom discourses.

More research in the field of blogging and its impact on student learning is both

timely and necessary, especially as technologies continue to evolve. According to Moje

(2002), "The future of adolescent and secondary literacy research is in research that

examines the connections between everyday discourses of adolescents and the academic

discourses they navigate each day" (p. 211). This study aspires to further inform the

research base for blogging and explore ways blogging can improve student motivation for

and engagement in reading, deepen and extend comprehension of literature, and improve

writing as students make connections within and across texts. The next chapter will

examine the design of the research study and describe the collection and analysis of data.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

Research Paradigm

Teacher research begins when an educator wonders why a lesson was not successful, why students behave in a certain manner, or why certain conditions permeate the climate of their classroom. With a nod to John Dewey (1929), it begins with inquiry and doubt, and with a wink at Paulo Freire (1970), it gains momentum with questioning the status quo to enact change within teachers' spheres of operation. According to Kincheloe (2003), teacher researchers challenge the "oppressive culture created by positivistic standards" (p. 18). Knowledgeable teachers will not stand idly by and accept top-down edicts (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) that determine the learning outcomes in their classrooms without questioning their validity and utility. The value of teacher research is uniquely personal, as "Every teacher has wonderings worth pursuing. Teacher research is one way to pursue those wonderings in a thoughtful, systematic, and collaborative way" (Shagoury & Power, p. 9). While teacher research is "systematic and intentional inquiry conducted by teachers about their own classroom or school" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), it is also flexible enough to fit the ebb and flow of the classroom situation and adaptable to new discoveries as they arise; it is changeable and alive, not stodgy and confined to the realm of research labs or controlled environments. It lives and breathes as its own entity, enlivened by the pulse of inquiry and desire to know. Teacher research is conducted not to arrive at a specific answer but to shape questions that can further inform practice and bring about discoveries to improve practice. As described by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009), "The unique feature of the questions that

prompt practitioners' inquiry is that they emanate from neither theory nor practice alone but from critical reflection on the intersections of the two" (p. 42). Teacher researchers are perpetually engaged in this question-posing process as they reflect both outward and inward for answers; however, the knowing often lies in the questioning.

In order to be viewed as the qualified professionals they are, teachers draw upon their own body of knowledge that commands the same respect as research in the fields of law and medicine (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Teachers who conduct research in their classrooms help build and learn from this body of knowledge. According to Lankshear and Knobel (2004), "Teacher research is seen as an important means by which teachers can develop their capacity for making the kinds of sound autonomous professional judgments and decisions appropriate to their status as professionals" (p. 5). Teacher research begins locally, as it is "centrally concerned with how people experience, understand, interpret and participate in their social and cultural worlds" (Lankshear & Knobel, p. 68), but it informs the entire teaching profession as others in similar situations draw upon it to gain insight into their own practices. As cited in Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009), Shulman (1999, 2000) "suggests that to become useful and credible to others, the scholarship of teaching must be accessible—transformed, essentially, into community property—which makes possible both peer scrutiny and generativity" (p.45). Hence while teacher research is unique to the classroom in which it is conducted, like scientific research it commands respect for its ability to be extrapolated to other similar conditions and situations.

Since teacher inquiry is as unique as the teachers conducting it and the community of learners in which it is situated, the subjective nature of qualitative research

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impacts the data collected. According to Lankshear and Knobel (2004), the researcher herself is considered a data collection instrument "on account of the researcher's values, assumptions, beliefs, and knowledge about a topic" (p. 74). The teacher simultaneously participates in the research process and brings to it her own philosophy and biases. Hence "Research designs should be seen as broad types, not as ready-made, painting-by-number blueprints" (Lankshear & Knobel, p. 30). There is no one-size-fits-all model of teacher research, but the qualitative paradigm by nature is best suited to the needs of practitioner inquiry.

As outlined above, teacher research is defined by the following qualities: it is local, systematic and intentional, flexible, involves a continuous cycle of questioning and reflection, and is subjective in terms of the philosophy and biases the teacher researcher brings to the process. In light of these qualities, the design of this study is well suited to the protocol of teacher research. The research question, "What happens when eighth grade students blog in response to literature in the language arts classroom?" began with observations I had made of student blogging across the years. Taking an inquiry stance, I wondered what possibilities blogging held for improving depth of thinking about literature, engaging students in reading and writing, and improving voice and content of student writing. The study is uniquely local because it is situated in my classroom where I have established a climate of literacy suitable to my teaching style and designed to meet the needs of my students. My research plan is systematic and intentional, but flexible enough to change as I make discoveries across the duration of the study. Although I hope that these discoveries will lead to new learning that will inform my practice, I also realize that engagement in the questioning process will lead to reflection and refinement of my

philosophy that may continue the cycle of questioning. As a participant in the community of bloggers alongside my students, my research is subjective as I view data through the lens of a participant-observer.

Teacher research dovetails with the qualitative research paradigm. While quantitative research is objective and removes the researcher from the process, qualitative research presupposes the involvement of the researcher in the process. According to Hatch (2002), "Qualitative research seeks to understand the world from the perspective of those living in it" (p. 7). As the teacher interacts with her students, she gains insight through daily personal observations. Qualitative research also invites exploration of broad, general questions unlike quantitative research that begins with a hypothesis to be tested and proved or disproved. As described by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), "You are not putting together a puzzle, whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts" (p. 29). Given this view, qualitative research entails inductive analysis of text such as field notes, interviews, records, files, and researcher journals (Browne & Madden, 2014) to identify patterns and move from the specific to the general as data is analyzed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As these patterns are established, the biases and assumptions of the researcher are valued. Since they color the lens through which the data is viewed, they also provide the most relevant and authentic knowledge to paint a complete picture of the learners and the impact instructional decisions have upon them.

For the purposes of this research study, the qualitative research paradigm is the best fit. My inquiry began with a broad question that had the capability to be modified over the course of the research plan. My involvement in blogging alongside my students

positioned me as a collaborator in the learning process, and my responses to my student's blog posts shaped and directed the outcome of the research findings. The findings of the study were localized since the subjects are students in my classes, but it is my hope that my findings have validity for other teachers working with similar grade levels and subjects interested in replicating the activities used in this study. The data collected is unique to the qualitative paradigm and consists of responses to student surveys and interviews, student blog posts, classroom artifacts such as writing selections, and my observations recorded in my research journal.

Procedure of Study

Before I began collecting data, I took the overall pulse of the students with regard to their self-concept as readers and their view of the value of reading using surveys. I used the surveys to identify and compare their purposes for reading (academic versus recreational) and their preferences for medium of reading (print versus digital). I further explored underlying themes in motivation for and engagement in reading by conducting individualized conversational interviews. While blogging provides an outlet for student writing, one of my purposes was to investigate how students responded in their blogs to both assigned classroom literature and independently selected text. Gaining a sense of their interests in and preferences for reading before and after the study helped me determine if blogging had any impact on motivation for and engagement in literacy activities.

After I evaluated the climate of the class in regards to reading interests and habits, I introduced them to the blogging world through explicit instruction. I showed them our

class blog and taught them the language used to reference a blog and its components. I

modeled how to navigate the class blog and create their individual, personalized student

blogs. As I conducted these lessons, I recorded students' feedback regarding their

knowledge of blogging and other means of Internet communication. Once students

became familiarized with the structure and landscape of the class blog, I entered into a

discussion of etiquette for online communication, which I refered to as *netiquette*. I

referenced Elizabeth Dobler's (2011) "Blogging Dos and Don'ts" excerpted from *Blogs*

as Learning Tools. As a classroom community of bloggers, we discussed Internet safety

and the ethics of communicating via the Internet using videos from Linda Yollis's wiki,

http://educational-blogging.wikispaces.com. After our discussion, we turned their

knowledge about proper blogging protocol into a student contract, which all students

signed as evidence of their commitment to abiding by the guidelines created by the class.

My motivation was for the students to take ownership of their blogs and feel autonomy

over their writing.

After I modeled the elements and purposes of blogs and began to establish our

class blogging community, I then delineated my expectations for student responses to

classmates' posts. As their English teacher, I modeled how to engage in collegial

discussions about literature so students understood how to provide specific feedback and

extend conversations. I used the synthesis scaffold from Zawilinski's (2009) HOT

Blogging framework to model how students should think across text for deeper

understanding. According to Zawilinski (2009), "these responses show students how

diverse perspectives can further deepen and enrich one's own thinking" (p. 658).

Upon establishing the background for the purposes and methods of our classroom

blogging and outlining my expectations for students' blog posts, I began week one of the research process by introducing the class's assigned text, *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953) by posting an anticipation guide on the class blog. Students posted responses to the guide, which outlined the characteristics of a dystopian society. As more students posted across the week, they were instructed to select two classmates' posts to which they had to respond in a specific and thoughtful manner. Students expanded their knowledge of dystopian worlds represented in works of science fiction by reading and discussing two short stories, "The Fun They Had" (Asimov, 1951) and "All Summer in a Day" (Bradbury, 1954). My purpose was to expose students to a variety of works within a similar genre to increase their ability to synthesize across multiple texts.

During the second week of the research study, students began reading *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953) and engaged in whole-group classroom discussion. Since this is a challenging text with some abstract concepts, classroom discussion allowed me to clarify their confusions and hear student interpretations of elements such as theme, characterization, and the impact of setting on the plot. The students referenced their Think Aloud reading strategies of questioning, visualizing, connecting, and predicting during the discussion. This whole-group discussion laid the foundation for the type of conversations students should engage in when discussing literature. I then assigned the next portion of the novel for them to read independently and instructed them to complete reading strategies in preparation for blogging about the novel. My purpose in doing so was not to replicate whole-group classroom discussion but to extend the discussion beyond the classroom walls and to provide a forum in which all voices may be heard. The students used the school Chrome books to log into the class blog at Kidblog.org

(http://kidblog.org/MrsStellers8thGradeEnglish-2/) and post their questions,

visualizations, connections, and predictions for *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953).

In the third week of the research study, students returned to the class blog. They

followed the synthesis scaffold procedure from the HOT blogging framework

(Zawilinski, 2009) in order to practice recognizing how their classmates' comments are

the same or different from their own. They copied and pasted their own post and two of

their classmates' posts into a word document, and then highlighted ideas that were the

same as theirs in green and ideas that were different in red. They were instructed to think

about new ideas they gleaned from the text based on their findings from their classmates'

posts. I first modeled this procedure to ensure that the students understood my

expectations. They then extended the conversation with their classmates by using this

synthesis of ideas to post responses to two of their classmates' posts. In this manner,

students learned to write for an audience other than their teacher and began to prompt one

another with questions other than those that I had posted. My purpose in doing so was to

prompt them to carry on the discussion themselves without waiting for prompts from me.

During the fourth week of the study, students began to develop and personalize

their own blog pages within the classroom blog. They were encouraged to add links to

relevant texts, pictures, and media from other sites that connected to our class reading and

discussion of *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953). As they continued their reading and

discussions of the book in class, I encouraged them to connect to relevant elements of

popular culture such as television shows, songs, movies, commercials, or products that

they thought were emblematic of the dystopian world Ray Bradbury created and vilified

in the novel. Students followed up their weekly discussion by posting ideas on their

personal blogs about their relationship to media and the impact they believe it has on

their personal lives. I instructed them to view videos of interviews with Ray Bradbury at

the website, *Ray Bradbury: At Home with Ray*

(http://www.raybradbury.com/at_home_clips.html). They were each permitted to select a

particular video interview to watch and then post feedback about for their classmates in a

virtual jigsaw-style activity. They then were instructed to respond to a classmate's posted

video interview. In this manner, students were extending their understanding of Ray

Bradbury, the author, and his motivation for writing.

During the final week of the research study, I again administered the survey given

at the beginning as a means of tracking any changes in purposes for reading (academic

versus recreational) and preferences for medium of reading (print versus digital) after the

study. This allowed me to determine if blogging about literature had any impact on

students' reading interests. Students continued to blog in response to *Fahrenheit 451*

(Bradbury, 1953), but they were also encouraged to blog about their favorite books in the

interest of expanding the conversation to literature beyond that assigned in class. Students

continued the conversation about books by responding to the posts of two classmates and

making suggestions for books they enjoyed based on the interests and comments that they

read.

Data Sources

The sources of data used for this study are commensurate with those of the

qualitative research paradigm. It is important to develop a written record of data from

multiple sources during the study to corroborate findings, look for trends across the

findings, and maintain a systematic and intentional construct (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). The data sources included student surveys, conversational interviews, blog posts, written work, and teacher observations recorded in a research journal.

At the beginning of the study, students completed the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher et al., 2007) Reading Survey to evaluate their self-concept as a reader and their view of the value of reading. I then administered the Survey of Adolescent Reading Attitudes (SARA) (Conradi, Jang, Bryant, Craft, & McKenna, 2013) to measure students' attitudes towards academic versus recreational reading and attitudes towards mediums of reading, print versus digital. At the end of the study, I again administered the surveys to reflect upon any changes in student attitudes toward reading.

I administered the Conversational Interview portion of the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher et al., 2007) to selected students to explore the types of reading activities and interests students have outside of school, their self-concept as readers, the influence of friends and families on reading, their use of multiliteracies, the impact of teachers on their reading habits, and the role choice plays in their reading activities.

I read students' blog posts on the class blog and examined the individual blogs students created looking specifically at the types of multimedia and links they use to connect with their reading. I used the Higher Order Thinking (HOT) Blogging framework (Zawilinski, 2009) to help students improve the synthesis process: posts should include summary of other students' thoughts, posts should include new thinking, posts should be well organized and focused, posts should reflect inferential thinking that moves beyond simple recall.

In addition to gathering information from students' blogs, I also read and assessed traditional student pen-and-paper writing used as formative assessments of books and short stories assigned in class. I observed students' reading strategies of connecting, responding, questioning, and visualizing as completed for weekly discussions in response to assigned text. I kept a teacher research journal to document discoveries and recorded observations of conversations students had during blogging activities and whole group book discussions. I monitored and record student reading behaviors in study hall to see if students were reading for more extended periods, choosing to read without being prompted, or self-selecting books for independent reading.

Data Analysis

The aforementioned data was triangulated to discover trends and themes in students' blogging practices and response to literature therein. I analyzed students' responses to the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) and created a graphical representation of their attitudes about their self-concept as reader and value of reading prior to the blogging activities and after the blogging activities to identify any impact of the activities from the study. I analyzed answers to student conversational interviews from the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) and identified patterns and themes that emerged from their answers. I read students' blog posts and analyzed them using Odell's (1999) Categories and Definitions for Assessing Thinking in Writing. I also looked at the structure and content of students' writing and analyzed it using the Six Traits of Writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. I used the Grades 3-12 rubric found at the Education Northwest website, http://educationnorthwest.org/traits/traits-rubrics. I read over my observations of student conversations and behaviors recorded in my research

journal and coded for patterns in their responses to text to compare and contrasted with their blogged responses. I read my reflections about student contributions to class discussions and compared them with student written and blogged responses to text.

Context

      Community. This study was conducted in the eighth grade English Language Arts classrooms at Oaklyn Public School. The close-knit Borough of Oaklyn is a small suburban community of 4,038 residents. Its area of 0.694 square miles is nestled inside the borders of Haddon Township, Audubon, and Collingswood and eighteen minutes outside of Philadelphia. The median household income in Oaklyn is $55, 690 and the median age is 39.4 years. Demographically the community consists of 89.1% white, 5.4% Hispanic, and 2.2% black residents. Oaklyn School District consists of one school, Oaklyn Public School, with an enrollment of 469 students that serves grades Pre-K-9. The district sends its tenth-grade students to Collingswood High School and receives thirty-two students in grades 3-8 from the borough of Hi-Nella. The school offers a half-day Pre-K program, a full-day Kindergarten, Gifted and Talented, ESL, and Basic Skills programs as well as an instrumental music program. Extra-curricular sports activities such as field hockey, soccer, baseball, and basketball are available to students through the shared-services agreement with the neighboring school district of Collingswood. The Oaklyn Municipal Alliance Youth Services Commission (OMAYSC) and Oaklyn Education Association offer many activities to the students of Oaklyn Public School such as assemblies and community events.

      School. The demographics of the student population at Oaklyn Public School mirror those of the community, with 83.4% white, 6.1% Hispanic, 5.5% black, and 5.0%

Asian. 20% of the district's students receive free or reduced lunch and five students are homeless. Within the past five years, there has been an influx of students from Myanmar (formerly Burma) that has increased the ELL population to 5.3% and expanded the district's ELL program and need for in-class literacy support of these students. 16.9% of students have Individualized Education Programs while thirty-one students are in specialized classes. 5.3% of the student population is considered Limited English Proficient. The average attendance rate is 94.9%. Student Achievement is reflected in scores from the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) as follows: in grade three, 30% are proficient in language arts and 51% in math; in grade four, 42% are proficient in language arts and 77% in math; in grade five, 56% are proficient in language arts and 71% in math; in grade six, 51% are proficient in language arts and 68% in math; in grade seven, 61% are proficient in language arts and 59% in math; in grade eighth, 75% are proficient in language arts and 78% in math.

The staff of Oaklyn Public School consists of 43 highly qualified teachers, one part-time school psychologist, one Child Study Team coordinator, one social worker, one guidance counselor, one speech therapist, and one school nurse. 95% of the school staff are white and .05% are Hispanic. 72% of staff members have a BA/BS degree, 25.5% have a MA/MS degree, and 2.1% have a PhD/EdD degree. The median number of years of teaching experience for staff members is nine years and there is a turnover rate of 0%. The administration consists of one building Principal and a Superintendent who also shares administrative duties with Collingswood Public Schools.

Classroom. The eighth grade English Language Arts class in which this study was conducted consists of two sections, an Academic level class designated 8A and an

Enriched level designated 8E. The classes are divided by their ability levels in math since there are two junior high math teachers; all but one of the students in 8E take Algebra and the students in 8A take Pre-Algebra. There is only one junior high English teacher, so there is a broad range of ability levels within both sections of the eighth grade. While the math teachers determine who belongs in which section based on their report card grades from the previous school year and their New Jersey ASK 7 scores, students can be moved to the Enriched section by parental request. This has created the unique situation of a larger Enriched than Academic section. The 8E class is comprised of twenty-three students including nineteen Caucasians, one African American, one Hispanic, and two Asians. Sixteen students are female and seven are male. The 8A class is comprised of fifteen students including, all Caucasians. Six students are female and nine are male.

By virtue of their awareness of the labels "Enriched" and "Academic," there is an implicit sense among the students of the expectations placed upon them by their parents and teachers. Generally speaking the 8E students are more motivated to complete homework, make honor roll, and compete with one another for grades. These students are also more likely to read for pleasure and will self-select books when given the opportunity. The 8A students are not as motivated by grades nor are they as likely, with the exception of four students, to read for pleasure in their free time.

In the 8A class, three students have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). One female who is classified as Other Health Impaired due to her diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, receives assistance from an in-class support special education teacher two times a week. A male student also qualifies for in-class support for his Specific Learning Disability and receives speech and language services from the

speech therapist. A second male student is also classified for his Specific Learning Disability and qualifies for pull-out instruction, but school scheduling restrictions require him to remain in class, and he also receives services from the in-class support teacher. In the 8E class, there is one female student who has an IEP for her Autism Spectrum Disorder. However, due to her success last year in seventh grade, her parents requested that she be placed in the enriched class for eighth grade. She is one-third of a set of triplets, and both her brother and sister are in this class as well.

Students in both classes are polite and behave appropriately for their grade level. Discipline issues are rare, but there have been some instances of bullying via social media that were instigated by a female student in the 8A class. She is not seated near the student whom she was accused of bothering, and there have been no issues that have spilled over into the classroom or disrupted the learning community. The school guidance counselor is aware of the situation, checks in on the students' behavior, and meets with students on an as-needed basis. Students have access to desktop personal computers in the computer lab, and two carts of fifty Chrome books were introduced this year for teachers who wish to sign them out for use with their class. All students have usernames and passwords to log into their Chrome book e-mail accounts for sharing of documents and access to the Internet. These Chrome books are an asset to incorporate the technology of a blog into the English classroom.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Introduction

Chapter four provides an analysis of the research findings as they relate to my exploration of the question, "What happens when eighth grade students blog in response to literature in the language arts classroom?" As I revisited the data collected from student surveys and interviews, blog posts, and field notes of observations and musings recorded in my teacher research journal, I identified four emerging themes. Triangulation of the research data confirms these themes as follows: digital thinking is different thinking, blogging promotes social expression about literature and beyond literature, blogging does not directly motivate reluctant readers to engage in assigned texts, and blogging improves thinking in writing.

Reflecting Upon the Methodology

As delineated in chapter three, this study was conducted over a four week period during which students read and responded to a variety of text through the medium of a classroom blog. I began the study by conducting a survey of students' views of themselves as readers and their perception of the value of reading using the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher et al., 2007). This helped me take the "literacy temperature" of my students. I subsequently used the results to investigate what motivates and influences reading habits and interests by administering the conversational interview portion of the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) to participants who scored on the lower end in terms of self-concept and value of reading. My purpose in doing so was to gain information about reading habits and influences outside the classroom and evaluate

any discrepancies between their academic and recreational reading practices that blogging activities could address. In addition to the AMRP (Pitcher, et al., 2007), I also administered the Survey of Adolescent Reading Attitudes (SARA) (Conradi, Jang, Bryant, Craft, & McKenna, 2013) to measure students' attitudes towards academic reading, recreational reading, print reading, and digital reading. As we began blogging activities in earnest, I recorded observations of students' behavior, questions, and comments about the blogging activities in my research journal to fill in the finer details that completed the picture of the class as readers and writers. Evaluation of the students' blog posts on our class blog, their responses to classmates' posts, and the nature of the individual student blogs also provided me with ample material for inductive analysis of the progress of the study.

Measuring Student Motivation to Read and Attitudes Toward Reading

Students completed the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) by responding to such statements as "People who read a lot are…" and selecting from answers such as "very interesting, interesting, not very interesting, boring" to indicate their view of the value of reading. Self-concept as a reader was measured by students' responses to statements such as "I worry about what other kids think about my reading…" by selecting from the answer choices "every day, almost every day, once in a while, never." Survey results of the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) revealed that overall the participants scored slightly higher in their self-concept as readers than in their perceived value of reading. Results were recorded as percentages with the class average for self-concept measuring 74% and the class average for value of reading measuring 72%. As the creators of the survey indicated in their research, "Because we know that young people reject literacy tasks that

are lacking in purpose and interest, we need to become more aware of students' personal uses of literacy and what is important to them" (Pitcher et al., p. 395). These results provided baseline data for the beginning of the study to gage the students' view of themselves as readers and their view of the value of reading, as this would impact their motivation for engaging in classroom activities related to reading. It is even more valuable when individual student results are examined alongside their blogging behaviors, as recorded in my teacher research journal, and the content of the blogs themselves. Such comparisons will be detailed later in this chapter.

In completing the SARA (Conradi et al., 2013), students responded to eighteen questions about recreational reading, academic reading, and their use of print and digital mediums for both purposes. They answered such questions as "How do you feel about reading news online for class?" and "How do you feel about getting a book or a magazine for a present?" by answering on a scale from six to one where six represented "Very Good" and one represented "Very Bad." Scores were then broken down into subsets to represent attitude toward academic reading of print materials, academic reading in digital settings, recreational reading of print materials, and recreational reading in digital settings. Class average scores prior to the study were 4.9 for reading of academic print materials, 5.6 for reading in the academic digital medium, 4.5 for recreational reading of print materials, and 3.7 for recreational reading in the digital medium. These results illustrate students' preference for academic digital activities such as reading to do web-based research, conducting a topical image search, and following links related to a topic. I found this somewhat surprising considering my students often verbalize their preferences for recreational digital activities such as reading Facebook posts, texting, and

sending e-mail to a friend over academic activities. This finding boded well for blogging as a pleasurable and motivational activity students could use for academic purposes that was situated within the digital medium. Of course, individualized student responses to the survey are more telling and reveal more specific propensities, particularly when compared with my observations and student blogging practices. These will be investigated later in the chapter.

Transitioning to the Blogosphere

Having established a baseline for student interest in academic digital activities and noting their self-concept as readers and view of the value of reading, I then introduced the class to the concept of blogging in response to literature. My observations during the first week of research revealed that students require scaffolding and guided instruction both before and during blogging activities relating to literature. While students were familiar with social media such as Facebook, the construct of the blog was new to most of them. I began by explicitly teaching terms unique to blogging such as *post, dashboard, blogroll,* and *widget*. Angie asked during this initial lesson, "Is this like Tumblr?" but then later wrote in one of her blog posts in response to Edgar Allan Poe's biography, "So according to the article about Poe's life, he lived in Philidelphia (spellcheck?) around 1838. Is that what we are supposed to do? Were we supposed to make a post thing about it? I'm so confused, this is so much harder than Tumblr." Her confusion indicated the necessity of modeling blogging protocol and abandoning preconceived notions that since students are digital natives (Prensky, 2001) they must know everything there is to know about Web 2.0 tools. This was not the case for my students.

During initial blogging to familiarize students with the nature of Kidblog.org, the hosting platform for our blog, there was much excitement, many questions, trial and error, and moments of discovery. Charles exclaimed before our first session using the school Chromebooks for blogging, "I'm excited to use the Chromebooks. I'm more used to typing when I'm writing." This statement is corroborated by his score of 6, the highest possible, for his attitude toward recreational digital activities and his score of 5.4 for academic digital activities. Charles exemplifies this generation's preference for thinking through the digital medium, which made me begin to shift my attention toward the difference between the way students write to extend their thinking through the digital medium and the way students write using traditional pen-and-paper methods. This will be examined as a separate theme later in this chapter. Some students were confused about the difference between a new post and a response to an existing post. The first assigned post contained a link to a web page about Edgar Allan Poe's life and works. Students were instructed to click on the link, read Poe's biography, and return to the post to answer the question, "What is Poe's connection to our local area?" Some students had difficulty navigating back and forth between the blog and the webpage, while others didn't read the posted question and were not sure what to do once they read Poe's biography. I recorded an observation in my research journal that Noah had the most difficulty because he didn't want to take the time to read the entire article, yet he also scored 5.6 in his attitude toward academic digital activities. This demonstrates that an interest in and a propensity for the digital medium does not preclude direct instruction in online reading techniques such as skimming and scanning. Student behaviors indicated they needed such assistance when reading informational material online.

Some of the students were very interested in selecting avatars and choosing themes to personalize their individual blogs. I gave them the freedom to do so since these blogs were to become an extension of their personality, and it would inform my research to examine how the students chose to represent themselves to the blogging community. A small group of girls, Tallulah, Christina, and Jeannie spent more time taking selfies to post as their avatars using the Chromebook cameras than they did in writing their initial blog posts. I made some allowances for this. I realized that the novelty of the Chromebooks, which the school had just acquired over the summer, generated excitement about their many purposes; excitement about learning is an important motivator.

After the first week's introduction to the blogs, their specific vocabulary and construct, and an initial reading and posting activity, instruction during the second week focused on the discussion of etiquette for writing online, which we termed "netiquette," and modeling of exemplar blog posts from former students. Our discussion of online safety revealed that the students were savvy in their awareness. The discussion culminated in a list of blogging rules for each class that the students signed as contracts. The students decided that violation of any of these rules could result in the termination of Chromebook or blogging privileges at the discretion of the teacher as a member of their blogging community. The language and tone of the class rules is worth noting. The 8A class, deemed academic level, worded their rules in the form of positive statements, noting things they would do to be successful bloggers. The 8E class, deemed enriched or "honors" level, used restrictive wording, beginning most of their rules with "do not" and mentioning repercussions for plagiarism, an area of academic research and writing that the other class did not address. These rules are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

Our Class Rules for Blogging
1. We will be respectful towards others in our blog posts.
2. We will stay on topic when replying to the class blog posts.
3. We will use appropriate language and avoid texting lingo and slang. We will make all efforts to use complete sentences, proper punctuation, and capital letters.
4. We will bring positive energy to the blog through our positive comments.
5. We will not make unnecessary blog posts.
6. We will not criticize or bully others in our posts, even if we don't agree with them. We can agree to disagree respectfully.
7. We will not give out private or personal information about others or ourselves.
8. We will not stray off topic in our responses. We will be responsible bloggers.

Figure 1. 8A Class Rules for Blogging Contract

Our Class Rules for Blogging
1. Do not plagiarize sources. Always give credit where credit is due. If you are guilty of plagiarism, your privileges will be taken away until you post in your own words.
2. Do not use foul language on the class blog or on your own personal blog.
3. Keep blog posts on topic. Keep them relevant.
4. Do not post explicit pictures or comments.
5. Try your best to post using correct spelling, complete sentences, and answer the posted question fully and to the best of your ability.
6. Do not bully online or elsewhere.
7. Adhere to school rules online.
8. Do not give out yours or others' personal information.

Figure 2. 8E Class Rules for Blogging Contract

Both classes recognized the need to adhere to proper grammar and syntax when writing

on their blogs. Each class created these rules as a whole group for the good of the whole

group. This seemed to indicate the beginning of a writing community whose members

would post thoughtfully and respectfully in response to others.

After creating and signing their class blogging contracts, the students were given

the opportunity to respond on paper to a variety of exemplar posts from former eighth

grade students who blogged about their assigned class novel, *The Pigman* (Zindel, 1968).

The conversation that ensued the examination of the blog posts challenged the students to raise the bar for their own writing. Christina commented on the amount of detail in these posts, and I noted in my research journal that her eyes were wide with awe as she spoke about the samples. Charles commented on the varying length of the blogs, noticing that some said little but still made a valuable contribution to the discussion. One of the exemplar posts belonged to Alexa, whose sister Patricia is a current eighth grade student. She grinned proudly as she realized that this was her sister's writing, for many students commented on her rich use of vocabulary. Dalia commented, "Alexa analyzed John and Lorraine's relationship in *The Pigman* like a scientist would." I complimented her astute observation and told the students that this is exactly the type of analytical thinking I would like them to develop as they post their thoughts and respond to the thoughts of others.

Students spent the remainder of the second week discussing their assigned novel *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953) in both whole and small groups. I posted a variety of questions on the class blog and students responded to them as a means of extending the conversation about the book. Students also read two short contemporaneous science-fiction stories, "All Summer in a Day" (Bradbury, 1953) and "The Fun They Had" (Asimov, 1951). They shared their thoughts about the similarities and differences between the two stories in light of their foreshadowing of twenty-first century society. This provided more fodder for conversation about Bradbury's uncanny ability to presage today's technological gadgetry such as flat-screen televisions, wireless Bluetooth headsets, and earbud headphones. Students used the Chromebooks to watch videos of

interviews with Ray Bradbury and gain insight into his purposes for writing, and they

posted their thoughts and responded to others' thoughts on the class blog.

To provide the students with a framework for using higher order thinking skills in

their blogs and guide them in developing the ability to synthesize across texts, I

introduced them to Zawilinski's (2009) HOT blogging framework. As described in

chapter three, this enabled students to practice recognizing how their classmates'

comments were similar to or different from their own and extend discussions of literature

beyond the classroom walls into a digital forum. I noted in my teacher research journal

entry for November 11, 2014,

> "Today's synthesis lesson went very well. This was a complex framework and
> involved much deep thinking about the short story, 'All Summer in a Day'
> (Bradbury, 1954). However, the students were very engaged as I modeled the
> strategy and framework on the SmartBoard using selected student examples. A
> hush fell over the room as they listened attentively. I wonder sometimes when I
> think I am challenging the students too much if I am not challenging them
> enough. As difficult a lesson as this was, they seemed to absorb it like sponges. I
> noticed that Patricia and Malik were particularly tickled that I had selected their
> posted responses to my blog question, 'What message do you think Ray Bradbury
> is trying to relay about human nature in this story?' After I modeled the activity,
> the students went diligently to work. There were some technological glitches
> along the way. I had shared the synthesis scaffold template with the students
> through Google Docs, but some had difficulty accessing it and had to write their
> synthesis by hand. While this became a more tedious proposition, they did not
> falter in their dedication to completing the assignment. I circulated throughout the
> room providing guidance and support for what posts students should select to
> synthesize with their own. I am very proud of the dedication and the level of
> thinking I am observing in their scaffolds."

Hannisah's synthesis scaffold can be found in Appendix A. Her depth of thinking is

evident in the amount of detail she included in her synthesis. For example, when

synthesizing her thinking about the story "All Summer in a Day" (Bradbury, 1953) with

her classmates' thinking, she wrote,

"My classmate's comments are similar to mine because, Hannah mentioned that in the story the other children had locked Margot up in a closet when they had finally got the chance to see the sun in seven years. In addition to, both of my classmates Patricia and Jayne also in similarity mentioned that Margot came from Earth and had experienced the sun, making the other children jealous. Also in similar, we all mentioned that the theme of this story was that humans are jealous, cruel, and are raised to be who they are. The differences between my classmates and mine is that, Hannah had mentioned that humans are cruel but also full of curiosity because in the story, the children were curious about the sun and Earth, but they had no feelings toward Margot as if she never existed. Jayne had said that, 'People are all raised differently and this reflects on their behavior towards their elders, peers, and other people', that however someone is raised they are influenced by it. She had also said that the characters, William was outgoing and Margot was a shy quiet child. I now believe that this story is more about how human nature is more of jealousy, curiosity, cruelty, and will judge anyone on their appearance. We humans have a complex system of feelings toward one another. In the story, it had explained that the children had lived on Venus and it influenced their lives because of the rain everyday, and hearing the word 'sun' would spark curiosity in their minds of how the sun is. But since humans crave to have what they do not have, it tends to lead to jealousy and cruelty because for example, Margot had got to see the sun on Earth before but the other children didn't, the others had gotten frustrated that they couldn't see the warm sun too. And so they never had thought of her as a person who got something the rest wanted too. The children locked her in a closet when they had finally go the chance to see the sun in seven years of rain. Sometimes we want something so bad, that we tend to turn into animals and lose sight of who we are."

The completion of these scaffolds took more than one class period since the activity involved a great deal of thinking and writing. The second day consisted of shortened periods due to an early dismissal schedule. I noted in my teacher research journal for November 12, 2014,

"The students were very excited to use the Chromebooks today. They chatted eagerly as they were distributed, finished the scaffolds, and then shared them with me via Google Docs. I could hear a pin drop as the students were then given time to work on their individual blogs. They relish this less restrictive time to post at will and respond to others' posts. Something very interesting happens when I step back and allow them to have freedom through the blogs. Julie asked if there were a way to see one another's posts immediately, so I removed the restriction as blog administrator that I preview their posts before they become public. I am learning to trust them to blog responsibly. I wonder if the immediacy of student response to their blogs is a factor in their writing? There is faster turnaround time between writing and receiving feedback in the blogging world, and this seems to motivate

some to write more and crave that feedback. When the bell rang to signal the end of the period, Charles lamented, 'Oh man, we should just stay here and blog instead of going to math.' What a wondrous thing!"

While the synthesis scaffold was too ponderous an activity to complete for every blog post, it did further cement the foundation for the types of interactions students should have as they engage in collegial discussions about literature. It established an awareness of mutual respect for the thoughts of others, and I observed that students synthesized their thinking with classmates with whom they may have not normally interacted. The blogging made thinking visible. As students read posts, they exercised critical literacy skills by making decisions about which ones were worthy of response and noticed which ones were not. Julie commented on the dearth of deep analysis in some of her classmates' posts when she said, "I don't understand how we comment on some of these when the person just writes something like, 'It's cold.'" This was of particular interest in light of her previous request that I remove the restriction of previewing posts before they were made public; this corroborated her desire to use the blog as an authentic venue for discussion wherein she could receive and supply more immediate feedback. She was also very engaged in starting blog posts on a variety of topics of interest to her classmates. In one of her initial posts not related to our classroom reading, Julie began a blog titled "TV." In her post she wrote, "I know everyone has a favorite show, so what is your favorite TV show? Also, why is it your favorite? Do you like the characters or the plot? What is your favorite thing about it?" It is interesting to note that even though this post is about television and not books, Julie used the same language about characters and plot that we use in class to formulate her question. I began to rethink my dismissal of this question as nonacademic in light of the view that students look at television and movies

as forms of text. I explore this idea later in this chapter in my analysis of Elijah's interest in movies.

During the final week of the study, as we wrapped up our class reading of *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953), I gave the students more time and freedom to post topics of their own interest, reply to others' posts, and develop their blogging voices. It became apparent that this freedom gave many an outlet for writing, and certain students became quite prolific in their posting both during and after school hours. Other students' posts became minimal and dwindled to nothing of great import. Such propensities will be examined in the following sections in my exploration of emerging themes as I expand upon the research question, "What happens when eighth grade students blog in response to literature in the language arts classroom?"

Emerging Themes and Discoveries

Digital thinking is different thinking. After reading and making observations about students' blog posts, I used Odell's (1999) Categories and Definitions for Assessing Thinking in Writing. While Odell (1999) acknowledges that thinking is a complex process and "no finished text can reflect all the thinking processes that went into creating that text" (p. 7), his research findings also indicate that "the process of writing and the process of interpreting literature are both meaning-making activities," and "a written interpretation of a literary text can reflect meaning-making strategies that are as important for students' reading as they are for their writing" (p. 16). Based on his research, Odell developed six categories of thinking strategies that can be used to evaluate student thinking in writing. The six categories are listed in summary form in Figure 3 and are included in their entirety in Appendix A.

1. **Dissonance**: Students point out or overlook problems, ambiguities, ironies, questions, uncertainties, or conflicts
2. **Selecting**: Students include or exclude observations, facts, personal experiences, feelings, and memories
3. **Encoding/Representing**: Students use different kinds of language to articulate ideas, feelings, perceptions, and memories
4. **Drawing on prior knowledge**: Students explicitly refer to things they already know in order to understand something new
5. **Seeing relationships**: Students mention cause-effect relationships, time, if…then, similarity, and differences in their writing
6. **Considering different perspectives**: Students consider ways in which other people might perceive, interpret, or respond to a given idea, fact, or experience

Figure 3. Odell's (1999) Categories and Definitions for Assessing Thinking in Writing

Since this set of categories has a sound research foundation, I selected it as my lens for viewing and coding the patterns and trends of thinking in students' blogs. Using a coding method that has been tried and tested allows me to make decisions that I feel are based in sound methodology. Across the four weeks of the study, my coding indicated that there were fourteen instances of students using different kinds of language to articulate ideas, feelings and, perceptions, and memories (encoding/representing), fourteen instances of students including personal observations or personal experiences and feelings (selecting), eleven instances of students pointing out or overlooking problems, ambiguities, and uncertainties (dissonance), and ten instances of students referring to the known to understand the unknown (drawing on prior knowledge). There were more limited instances of seeing relationships (six) or considering different perspectives in their writing (nine). These levels of thinking, while not categorized hierarchically, illuminate the myriad approaches students take to interpret text in their blog writing. A closer examination of the codes revealed another interesting pattern. Noah, who scored 52% on the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) for value of reading, lower than the class average, mainly used the strategy of selecting in his blog writing whereby he would focus solely on the

events that happened in the text when responding. This pattern was also seen in the writing and thinking of Ron and Ally, who scored 50% and 60% respectively for value of reading on the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) survey. While this pattern emerged with some students, it was not consistent across all samples. Kourtney scored a very low 40% on the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) for value of reading, yet she exhibited an array of thinking in her writing, particularly the ability to use metaphors to take a fresh look at a subject. In her response to a posted question about Ray Bradbury's (1953) "All Summer in a Day" she wrote,

> "Honestly, in my opinion he is trying to say be who you are. Like what you like. Love what you crave. Hope for things you believe in. The main character craved the sun. She craved the enormous star. All she wanted was to see the sun, the fact that they locked her in a closet while they soaked up the beautiful sun, it was just heartbreaking. All she needed was the sun even if it came out 3 minutes a day. As the rain stopped, her heart dropped, the sun came up, she knew it (but she) just couldn't see it. As she got up out of the closet she had realized that rain came back and she had missed 'All Summer in a Day.'"

This writing sample exhibits an improvement in her thinking from her pen-and-paper writing in response to text. Kourtney enjoys creative writing during Writer's Workshop, but she spends very little time reading for enjoyment or using her Study Hall period to keep up with assigned reading for class. Blogging provides her with an outlet for using her creativity to respond to literature.

Another reluctant reader, Cory, who scored a 40% for his value of reading and initially would only read books he was able to select himself, wrote on his blog in response to a post about thoughts on *Fahreneheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953), "It's okay. In my opinion this book isn't really my favorite, and I don't really like to read much unless I find the book entertaining. But I guess blogging about it makes me understand it a bit

more and the whole purpose of it comes out a bit more easier by reading what people say about it." In a metacognitive manner, Cory is admitting that blogging provides him with a medium for "seeing" the thinking of others and working through his own issues with the book to come through with enhanced understanding. My aforementioned reluctant readers, Kourtney and Noah, also corroborate the positive impact blogging can have. When asked about the difference between having a whole class discussion of the book and blogging about the book, Noah replied, "The blog gives me time to reflect and think about what I want to say." While he has not evidenced the same variety of thinking in his writing as other students on the blog, he is at least considering the possibilities that the blog can provide him in giving him time to process his thoughts. I investigate the difference between his pen-and-paper writing at the beginning of the study and his final assessment on *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953) at the end of the study in the upcoming section, *Impact of Blogging on Student Writing*. Kourtney added to this conversation when she commented, "Thinking online is different because you have more sources you can use to understand the book." The multimodality that the blog provides as it is situated in the affinity space of the Internet opens doors to students such as Kourtney, Noah, and even Cory who may otherwise continue to lose interest in reading if they did not have this scaffolding. Another participant, Catherine, wrote, "I think blogging about Fahrenheit 451 can help others and myself understand the book better. If there is part of the book that is confusing by blogging about it you might find your answer. If you don't, then you can ask someone on the class blog or make your own blog." Blogging thus also allows students to read others' thoughts to inform their own when the regular classroom setting inhibits them or time constraints prohibit them from doing so.

Blogging as a means of social expression. According to Losh and Jenkins (2012),

> *"Each time a teacher tells students that what they care about the most, what makes them curious and passionate outside of school, does not belong in the classroom, that teacher also delivers another message: What teachers care about and what is mandated by educational standards have little or nothing to do with learners' activities once the school bell rings"* (p. 19).

For middle school students, their interest in learning is directly related to the degree of choice they have in school activities. Across the course of the research, students with higher scores for self-concept and value of reading on the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) blogged more about literature or posted their own literature when provided the freedom to do so, while other students used their blogs to express thoughts and concerns about school issues or societal issues important to them. When less restricted, students expanded their use of the blog beyond responding to the classroom texts to stretch their thinking and seek feedback from others.

A telling case in this regard is that of avid reader, Hannisah. She scored a 92% on the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) for self-concept and a 98% for value of reading, and I have observed her sitting through a noisy junior high pep really with her head in a book, tuning out the whole world. On the SARA (Conradi et al., 2013), she scored a high of 5.6 out of 6 for Academic Digital reading and a low of 3.2 for Recreational Digital reading. The only question on the survey for which she indicated an attitude of "Very Bad" was, "How do you feel about using social media like Facebook or Twitter in your free time?" However, she was one of the first students to begin posting on the blog after school hours. She posted poems and stories of great length and depth and asked her classmates for feedback. While she had a low estimation of the value of social media such as

Facebook and Twitter, she did value the medium of blogging as a way to connect her interest in writing to a wider audience and seek feedback from her peers.

Another student who used the blog for deeper levels of thinking about issues of importance to her was Patricia. While she posted thoughtful replies to my blog questions about *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953) and engaged in classroom discussions about the book, she also used the blog as an opportunity to think and communicate her thinking. She posted such topics as "Is YouTube the New T.V.?" and "What If," a post about the importance of asking questions and maintaining curiosity about learning. She wrote, "Without questions we would be limited in knowledge, and without our original minds we would be left without the creativity that makes us different from every other species on earth." The blog seemed to stimulate her intellectual curiosity and give her an outlet for starting a conversation with her peers or at least motivate them to think as well.

Students with scores on the lower end of the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) for self concept and value of reading did not take it upon themselves to blog about intellectual pursuits but demonstrated interests in social issues. Kourtney provides one such example. She posted short but effective blog posts about elder abuse and appreciation for those who serve in the military. While I explored her levels of thinking in her blog posts in the previous section, here my attention is focused on how she used the blog when she was not required to respond to a particular post. Noah also used the blog to begin conversations with classmates by posting such questions as "What is your favorite sport? Where are you going for Thanksgiving and what is your favorite tradition? Why is there so much drama in Oaklyn?" While these conversation starters did not generate the level of thinking through writing that I witnessed in students' responses to blog posts about

literature, they are a means of communicating thoughts and feelings on a level that is important to the individual students and can help them sort through problems. For example, Quinton posted the question, "Why can't we wear hoodies in school?" which sparked an honest dialogue about the pros and cons of the school dress code. This could have been a topic I presented to the students when we practice argumentative writing in class, but when given the time and freedom to explore topics on their own, they engaged in their own discussion. This hearkens me back to the introductory quote for this section: When students are told what should be important to them, they quickly lose interest and can become disengaged. When they are allowed to discuss topics of importance to them through the medium of the blog, they did so in a thoughtful, collegial manner.

Blogging and student motivation to read.

Preaching to the choir. For students who were already motivated readers and writers, blogging was another avenue for them to explore their love of literacy. Hannisah, whose high scores for her self concept, view of reading, and attitude toward reading were discussed earlier in this chapter, used the blog to post about books and respond in great detail to my posts about *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953); her detailed synthesis scaffold presented in Appendix A provides evidence of this. She already loved reading and writing, so blogging for her allowed her to expand her writing to yet another medium. As an example of a student who was already motivated, she was excited about blogging and eagerly sought feedback from her peers in her blog posts. Angie, who had high scores on the SARA (Conradi et al., 2013) for Academic Print reading (5.4), Academic Digital (5), and Recreational Print (6), but a low score of one for Recreational Digital reading, used the blog to broadcast her love of books. She started a virtual campaign for reading on her

blog, "Angie's List of Amazing Books to Read," where she chronicled a list of her favorite books, a summary of each, and her opinion of the books. She also inserted herself into any discussion other students had about books to make recommendations, responding to Cory's inquiry about short, interesting books by writing, "I do have several amazing books I'd suggest, but alas, you do not wish to read long books." Thus the study revealed that students who began with high reading survey scores and attitudes toward academic print reading enjoyed the opportunity to discuss their love of books and share some of their own writing through the blog. They did not need the blog to convince them to read, but they used it as an outlet to discuss books and share writing pieces.

    Sermonizing from the pulpit. While students already motivated to read and write utilized the blog to spread their gospel to other students, other students maintained an ambivalence toward reading; they would do it if required for class, but otherwise they would not pick up a book for recreational purposes. It is worthwhile to explore what impact blogging had on this group and what they chose to blog about. Cory admittedly did not enjoy reading, as I have referenced previously in his blog post and survey scores. However, he did reach out to other students through the blog to seek their opinions about books he might enjoy. He saw that blogging could provide an outlet to inform his understanding of difficult books. I have observed Clay reading *That was Then, This is Now* (Hinton, 1971) every day now in Study Hall ever since I responded to his blog post with a link to the description of the book. He took it upon himself to click on the link, read about the book, and go down to the school library to check out the book. When I asked him if he is still enjoying the book, he replied, "Yeah, it's really good." Cory's self-concept as reader also improved slightly from 65% at the beginning of the study to

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70% at the end of the study, corroborating the fact that he could possibly improve his view of himself of a reader if not his view of the value of reading.

Stephan scored a 65% for self-concept and 68% for value of reading on the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) administered at the beginning of the study and at the end of the study; both scores were lower than the class averages of 74% and 72% respectively as indicated in Graph 1. While these survey results remained consistent, his scores on the SARA (Conradi et al., 2013) for attitude toward Academic Print reading improved from 3.4 to 4, and his attitude toward Academic Digital reading improved from 3.8 to 4.2. While these increases are slight, they are significant in light of the fact that his AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) survey results were consistent from before the study to after the study. My observations recorded in my research journal corroborate this change. I recorded on November 24,

> "Stephan has really showed improved tenacity with this reading. I know it is difficult for him, but I admire the fact that he constantly asks questions about *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953). Could blogging be a form of communication that has revealed to him the value of reaching out to others for help in understanding?"

Stephan's improved attitude towards both medium of academic reading could be viewed as evidence of the positive impact of blogging on students' attitudes towards the type of reading they are required to do for school.

Converting the nonbelievers. While blogging does seem to have a positive impact on a select group of students who do not value reading but may be persuaded to see its value, it does not seem to be a venue for increasing motivation of extremely reluctant readers. My focus for this construct is Elijah, a student with whom I have had to speak repeatedly as his Study Hall teacher to direct his attention to his reading. Study Hall is an

academic class in our school, and students are required to use the period to complete homework, study, or read a book. Elijah will draw pictures every day instead of reading, and I have had many conversations with him to try to convince him of the value of reading. Low quiz and test scores are not enough to change his poor attitude. He scored a 65% for self-concept and 55% for value of reading on the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) administered prior to the study. In his answers to the conversational interview portion of the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007), Elijah indicated that he never reads at home, and the last narrative text he read for either recreational or academic purposes was *Christine* (King, 1983). He read this midyear last school year. His motivation for reading the book was the fact that he liked the movie. Elijah said that he is much more interested in listening to music and watching movies in his free time. He rarely reads any informational text, either, and relies on Facebook for his sources of information. To his recollection, there has never been anyone who has ever made him excited about or interested in reading. Elijah is the prime example of a reluctant, perhaps even resistant reader. I noticed that he used the blog to post about movies that piqued his interest. In classroom discussions about *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953), Elijah was able to contribute by making connections with what other people said about the text and his vast knowledge of movies, not from reading the book himself. In one discussion he said, "Clarisse reminds me of the main character in the movie, *The Boy in the Plastic Bubble*, you know, the John Travolta movie about the boy with the immune disorder? Both of them are outcasts because they don't fit in." Our subsequent discussion about this movie prompted him to post a link to it on his blog to try and convince other students to watch. Elijah even posted one evening outside of school about the movie, *Monster House*. This was unusual for him, for up until

this point he had not participated in the blog after school hours. He wrote,

> "Who remembers the movie monster house from 2005 well it's on. so when I was watching it.it reminded me of how much of a little dork I was when I used to play with light sabers , tag and jam barbie girl when i used to tell every one that it was dumb .than after i was done doing that me and my Little pals from when I used to live on Newton avenue would share a two leader of rasp berry soda that drink was the bomb. yeah those were the good old glory days."

Elijah's use of the blog to post about his interest in movies gave me pause to reconsider my definition of text. While he still needs to develop skills to deal with complex written text, he is able to understand elements of plot and characterization through movies. His blogging about these elements shows his ability to make connections in his thinking. Blogging did not improve his motivation to read, but it did provide him with an outlet for expression of his thinking; he has been reaching out to his peers through the medium of blogging.

Impact of blogging on student writing. In the previous section of this chapter, Digital thinking is different thinking, I explored the levels of thinking through writing in students' posts using Odell's (1999) Categories and Definitions for Assessing Thinking in Writing. It is also worthwhile for me, as an English teacher, to explore the impact of blogging on student writing through the lens of the Six Traits of Writing, ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions, since these are the constructs I use to teach writing. I have noted through observations recorded in my research journal that are supported by evidence of the blog posts themselves that blogging appears to improve ideas, word choice, and voice in writing. While the strongest writers such as Patricia and Hannisah go into great detail whether they write on paper or on the blog, I observed a change in the writing of students who were more reluctant to

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add details on paper. Coincidentally, these students are also two of my reluctant readers.

Noah and Cory, whose writing I analyzed using Odell's (1999) Catetories and Definitions

for Assessing Thinking in Writing, solely focused on events that happened in the story

when responding to questions about *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953) on paper. On

Cory's final assessment for the book, he exhibited a propensity to encode, using different

kinds of language to articulate ideas, and see cause and effect relationships. For example,

he wrote,

> "Bradbury had predictions of many things that could drift books out of our
> society. For sure, we still do see many televisions in todays high tech world,
> but many people still do like the older-ish live style, by reading books.
> Bradbury had thought that the technology we have today would take over
> the use for books, as it did in Fahrenheit 451, and for some families, indeed it
> does. Some families you could find today may not have a single book in the
> house, but you may find a TV in every room you may look in. Some in the
> kitchen, the relaxing room, and maybe all the bedrooms. Of course once in a
> while its okay to be stuck on TV, but if you get lost in the world of it, as
> Mildred did, you'll realize it was a big mistake to be staring at that big, wide
> screen all day. You may need your eyes one day, and the TV sure isn't the
> doctor to help your eyes."

Expressions such as "drift books out of our society" and "the TV sure isn't the doctor

to help your eyes" demonstrate a developing voice in Cory's writing that wasn't

evident earlier in his writing. The expansion of ideas to include more aspects of

Odell's (1999) thinking and the word choice that impact Cory's voice show that

blogging can indeed help students explore different levels of thinking as they

present themselves to an audience of their peers.

Noah's pen-and-paper writing during the early stages of the study was

similar to Cory's in that it only exhibited elements of Odell's (1999) selecting. In his

final assessment for *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953), Nick began to show

dissonance and draw on prior knowledge. He wrote,

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"In the story Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury mainly talks about what he thinks our future technology would soon be like in the future. Another thing he talks about is the world he created, what im trying to say is that Ray writes the story to tell his main perspective on what future technology will be. I can relate to this because when I was young i would also predict what the future would be like. For example I would predict that there would be awesome robot servants that would do anything for you… I dont think Ray Bradbury should of feared that books would get replace by internet because whats the worse that could happen, you could just read books on computers or on any other device. I know that I would not have been scared of books replacing the internet because i would like to read stories on the internet more than a book. Something else I should add is that our technology is to high priced in the present.The Apple companys devices cost so much money. I also do think that people are on technology to much. Dont get me wrong, I love my phone and video games but not to the point were im on it all the time. In the story, it seems that mildred and clarisse are on the technology a good amount of time. Another thing is that when mildred says "You are peculier yourself, Mr. Montag.Sometimes I even forget you are a fireman. Now,may I make you angry again?" I thought that sounded very mysterious and wierd but had some kind of meaning.

The density of Noah's ideas and the logical progression in his organization of them show a writer developing his ideas and voice.

Conversely, these same writing samples and others from the blog show little evidence of improvement in organization, sentence fluency, or conventions. If anything, students are more inclined to type lower case "i" for the pronoun "I" on the blog than in their pen-and-paper writing. They also neglect the conventions of proper spacing and comma use. I had anticipated this, which is why it became a focus of discussion when the class developed their rules for blogging. They agreed that they would try to adhere to proper grammar and writing, but it seems that attending to ideas and voice came at the expense of these other traits. My observations recorded in my research journal offer some insight into this phenomenon. I wrote on November 4, "Students are used to using the 'Caps Lock' key on a regular computer keyboard when they type, but the Chromebook

only has a 'Shift' key. This seems to be causing them some difficulty." The students

themselves commented on their difficulty with typing. I noted in my journal on

November 15,

> "Hanah told me today that she is used to Microsoft Word that autocorrects her
> lower case 'i's,' and she apologized for her lack of proper capitalization. That
> explains some of the issues I am seeing with student writing. Maybe a typing
> program could help with this?"

Charles corroborated this observation with his comment on November 14. He
commented,

> "I'm sorry about the lower case 'i's.' I am used to autocorrect, so I will go back
> and fix them when I have finished all of my ideas. It just takes so much time to do
> it because I have to hold down the shift key."

The decline in attention to conventions on the blog could be attributable to the difficulty

students have with typing and could possibly be resolved with more time spent on a

typing program. This does not explain the students' lack of attention to sentence fluency

and organization. However, since I noted that students seem to "think" differently when

writing on the blog, it could be that their attention is focused on getting all of their

thoughts out and not on their sentence structure. Blogging certainly does not substitute

for explicit writing instruction in regard to the traits of sentence fluency, mechanics, and

organization.

What blogging cannot do. Through this study, I noted a positive impact on

motivation for reading for some students, while for others it allowed them to develop

voice in their writing and establish an audience for their areas of interest. Blogging

cannot take the place of sound instructional practices in the language arts classroom, but

it can enhance the practices already in place. Students still need direct instruction in the

Six Traits of writing with ample teacher modeling, conferencing, and editing. While

blogging makes editing very easy, the immediacy of writing and responding on the blog does not lend itself to the process of revision. Students are eager to type, click "submit," and wait to hear from their peers. Blogging can help students with poor handwriting and spelling skills, but students still need to practice the elements of good writing.

This research study also reinforced the need for regular classroom discussion about text in both whole and small groups. Teachers need to make visible their thinking while reading by modeling the Think Aloud process, and students need to practice it through guided instruction and the give-and-take of oral discussion. Kourtney commented on this in response to my post on November 10, "What do you think of blogging? How do you think blogging about *Fahrenheit 451* can help you understand the book better?" She posted, "I think blogging is a waste of time but then again it isn't. We can easily have talks about the books we read in class. The blog just turns thoughts into written pieces, that's all. I mean don't get me wrong, I love using the laptops, but we can easily have regular talks." Blogging is helpful in extending the conversation beyond the school day and in providing students with time and space to reflect, but it should never replace traditional reading and writing instruction or the experience of classroom discussion.

Blogging does not instantly create a community of writers and thinkers by virtue of its position as an affinity space on the Internet. Students will not automatically have conversations about text; the teacher must facilitate conversations by demonstrating the proper protocol for doing so. As the study began, students were posting responses to my blog questions, and the conversation ended there. I needed to give them time to go back, read the comments of their classmates, and post replies to those comments. I modified the

principle of the synthesis scaffold by creating three simple steps the students could follow as they responded to posts. I wrote these steps on an anchor chart, and they remained visible throughout the tenure of the blogging activities. They instructed the students to be specific when responding to others' posts by telling them exactly what they liked or disliked, agreed with or disagreed with. I reminded the students to also add their own thinking by asking a thought-provoking question to continue the conversation. This construct should be followed in traditional book discussions as well, so it was useful to practice in verbal discussions so that students learned how to transfer it to their thinking online. Blogging holds great potential as a form of extended conversation about books where students have time to reflect and think deeply. However, if they are not taught how to respond to their peers' posts, I witnessed that they would merely post their own thoughts and move on. Blogging runs the risk of becoming a monologue rather than a dialogue without teacher facilitation of and participation in the conversation.

At the end of the study, survey results indicated that blogging as a classroom activity in response to literature only slightly impacted students' reading motivation. As on the survey administered at the beginning of the study, results were again recorded as percentages with the class average for self-concept measuring 75% compared to 74% on the initial survey and the class average for value of reading measuring 74% compared to 72% on the initial survey. While these were slight gains, it seems evident given analysis of other data such as teacher field notes, student conversations, and blog posts that blogging alone is not a direct motivator for reluctant readers. It does appear to enhance their understanding and provide them with an outlet for discussion of difficult text, but intangibles such as teacher excitement about reading, peer interest in and

recommendations of books, and student autonomy in selection of books provide greater motivating factors.

Post-study survey results measuring attitudes towards academic print, academic digital, recreational print, and recreational digital reading also indicate consistency across the term of the study. Class average scores remained consistent at 4.9 for reading of academic print materials, 5.6 for reading in the academic digital medium, 4.5 for recreational reading of print materials, and dropped slightly from 3.7 to 3.2 for recreational reading in the digital medium. Students maintained a preference for academic digital activities throughout the course of the study.

Teacher researchers learn to listen and let go. An ancillary, unexpected result of the research study was the opportunity to experience my own growth as a teacher researcher. Although I have always found value in deep and honest reflection upon my teaching practices, this was my first foray into official teacher research. Since I take my responsibility for adherence to curriculum very seriously, I always have rigid, in-depth plans in place. This is not to say that I do not allow for the ebb and flow of the classroom environment, but I tend to plan a great deal and anticipate the outcome of my plans. The research process, however, taught me there is value in the unexpected. I learned how to remove myself from the lesson, take a step back, and watch and listen as students also explored what blogging could do for them and where the journey could take them. While my research plan followed a predetermined course, I made more allowances for freedom in the blogosphere than I initially intended. This enriched the experience for me as I witnessed the students' expressions of their personal interests and creativity. It also enabled me to step outside my comfort zone and accept broader definitions of what it

means for a student to be literate. I can often become frustrated when students resist traditional school reading, but I learned that literacy has a broader definition than I have accepted over the years.

While my role as facilitator put me "in charge" of the blogging activities, I was also a participant. In the latter role, I learned to resist the urge to control and dictate everything that the students blogged about. I had grand visions of students engaging in excited discourses about *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953), and while that did happen in some instances, it did not happen in all. Blogging about the book did not make all students want to read it. I learned to accept that in spite of my careful planning and hours of research, the study had a mind and life of its own. It became a viable part of my instructional day, and I learned to let go, listen to my students, and allow the research to lead me. I learned that asking students about blogging and how it helped them as readers and writers did not take away from my expertise, but it added to my expertise. Including them in my research findings by listening to their thoughts and suggestions informed my study. My father always used to tell me, "Learn by teaching," and those words have never rung so true. I learned as much about myself through this study as I did about my students, their needs, and their literacy practices.

Chapter five summarizes the findings of the study and presents conclusions that can be drawn from them. It delineates the impact blogging has on students' thinking as expressed through their writing and their development of writing identities, their motivation for and engagement in reading, and their ability to read critically. Chapter five discusses what blogging can not do while presenting the limitations of the study and implications for the field of literacy research.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, Limitations and Implications for the Field

Introduction

As the research study came to an end, I had time and space to step back and reflect upon my discoveries resulting from exploring the question, "What happens when eighth grade students blog in response to literature in the language arts classroom?" At the onset of the study, I had several sub-questions that generated excitement and anticipation about the possibilities blogging held for student learning. Would blogging motivate students to read more and expand their reading repertoire as they gained validation from their peers for their posts? Would blogging promote deeper levels of thinking as students explored more connections across texts online? Would students who were reluctant to participate in class discussions find and develop their writing voices through blogging? I found the answers to many of these questions, while others remain areas for future investigation. This chapter summarizes the research findings, identifies the limitations of the study, and explores how this study complements the broader base of research about blogging. It also explores the implications for literacy education with a particular focus on the incorporation of technologies such as blogging into the language arts classroom.

Summary of the Findings

Even after a relatively short period of four weeks, I discovered that blogging in response to literature benefitted my eighth grade students in multiple ways. Student thinking in the digital realm is different thinking, heightened by a more complex interaction with text. Blogging promotes social expression about literature and beyond

literature, and opens the doors for other forms of text to gain acceptance in the classroom. While blogging does not directly motivate resistant readers to engage in assigned texts, as choice reigns supreme in this regard, it can inspire reluctant readers to consider blogging as a means to understand difficult text. Blogging also improves attention to the writing traits of ideas, word choice, and voice in writing.

My first discovery upon reading students' blog posts was that students were not merely supplying ideas from the text in response to the questions, but they were expressing uncertainties and surprises, using a different kind of language to articulate their thoughts, and using the known to try and understand the new (Odell, 1999). This demonstrated an improvement from traditional pen-and-paper methods of responding to text. While students would often quickly turn in written assignments to move on to the next thing, writing on the class blog seemed to provide them with a heightened sense of the value of time and reflection. Students' comments about blogging supported this as they expressed their feelings that they had a world of resources at their fingertips that could enhance their learning and understanding. They could watch videos or look up words to add to their written replies, or they could think through their fingertips rather than face the awkward silence of expectant classmates and teachers when they just could not find the exact words to verbalize their thoughts. Blogging gave them the opportunity to think through the complexities of text and unravel what they wanted to say.

Another unexpected benefit of blogging unfolded when teacher restrictions were loosened and students had freedom to use the blog for personal expression. While blogging rules were still in place for the good of the group, students were given freedom within these boundaries to blog about issues of importance to them or pose questions they

did not normally have the chance to ask during the traditional 42-minute class period. This freedom helped poets and writers find audiences amongst their peers, seek feedback from those in another class with whom they may not have normally interacted, and allowed reluctant readers to redefine for their teacher what text meant to them. In some instances students' definition of text was not the long-accepted traditional definition, thus opening a portal into a world of possibility where deep thoughts still existed and connections between the blog and the individual were valued and considered.

For reluctant readers who may not agree with their teacher about what constitutes a good book or story, the blog afforded them a virtual space to understand text through the thoughts and musings of others. While spoken words are undoubtedly powerful, the written word as it exists in a blog can be revisited, reconstituted as a student reacts to it, and reconsidered. Blogging promotes conversation that echoes beyond the classroom walls, and for students who take a little longer to formulate an opinion or thought, they could always return to the blog when they had the chance to gather their thoughts and contribute to the conversation. While not all students took advantage of the opportunity to do this, those who did explored avenues not initially considered.

Finally, while blogging became an avenue of thinking through writing, students had the opportunity to develop their voice through more careful selection of words. As fingers flew across keyboards, the conventions of punctuation and capitalization may have been sacrificed, but it was small price to pay for the density of ideas that materialized. Students commented on how they preferred digital thinking, the actual construct of committing their thoughts to written form via Chromebook. If they wanted to change a word or phrase, they merely hit "delete." While revising on a computer is much

easier in theory, it was not always practiced in the writing teacher's sense of revising and editing. The possibility of instant, synchronous or asynchronous feedback awaited, and that made writing more exciting for many. Students spoke regularly about looking forward to what others had to say about their work as they sought validation and acceptance from an audience whose opinions mattered to them.

Conclusions of the Study

Blogging improves reading comprehension and promotes critical literacy.
After the study, I had to time to revisit the current research surrounding the topic of blogging in education and consider how my data analysis reflected the themes delineated in the review of literature. As discussed in chapter two, blogging has been discovered to have a direct positive impact on student reading comprehension as it gives students time and space to engage in reflective thinking about text (Downes, 2004; Blood, 2013). According to Davies and Merchant (2006), it particularly supports online reading comprehension as students create their own unique reading path and make decisions about "the level of attention and depth of reading allotted to a text" (p. 186). My students engaged in a wider variety of thought processes through their blog writing, expressing dissonance, using different language to articulate their feelings, seeing cause and effect relationships, and noting similarities and differences across texts. Students also engaged in critical literacy as they read the thoughts of others online and synthesized them with their own in a manner of thinking across texts. As students constructed their synthesis scaffolds, they built layers of meaning by adding their thoughts to those of others. As they watched interviews with Ray Bradbury and selected which interview topics to write

about in their blogs, they created a unique reading path for themselves and their classmates to follow.

Blogging develops writer identity. McGrail and Davis (2011) discovered through their research that blogging improved the writers' sense of audience, created a sense of community and belonging that empowered and motivated the students, and "helped…students see writing as an authentic and empowering activity" (p. 428) as they took ownership of the writing process and writer's craft and developed their writing voice. I found this reflected in my own students' writing as they expanded their inclusion of ideas and developed unique writing voices not initially demonstrated before the study or in traditional pen-and-paper assignments. Students sought immediate feedback from their peers on the classroom blog. Additionally, they personalized their individual blogs to reflect their areas of interest. Some students chose to use the blog as a forum for publishing poetry and short stories, while others touted interesting books, movies, or causes of social importance to them. Students more reticent to participate in class discussion for fear of judgment by their peers, those few self-described "outcasts," sought affirmation for their unique areas of interest in music and obscure movies. When freed from the constraints of more orthodox writing assignments, students felt comfortable developing and experimenting with their blogging voices and personae as is evidenced by their personal blog pages that were as unique as fingerprints.

Blogging does not replace traditional methods of direct instruction. As I noted in chapter two, the research of Zawilinski (2009) supports the findings of Hungerford-Kresser, Wiggins, & Amaro-Jiménez (2011) by grounding the effectiveness of blogging in the belief that students need direct instruction in using technological tools to ensure

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their "effective and efficient" use. Blogging as a classroom activity is only successful when activities are carefully planned and coordinated with other literacy activities. As I learned through my study, optimal impact of blogging in response to literature will only be realized when it enhances, not replaces, traditional classroom activities. Students still require direct instruction and modeling of the Six Traits of writing, reading comprehension strategies such as connecting, visualizing, and questioning text, and proper protocol for participating in a writing community that is situated on the Internet and the Web 2.0 skills that entails.

Limitations of the Study

Having had a taste of the research process and the rich rewards it offers has inspired me to continue blogging with my students and expand these activities to other grade levels I teach. In doing so, I would make some changes based upon my newfound knowledge. Although my study was successful in many ways, there were limitations that possibly restricted other opportunities for growth. In working with two eighth grade classes of a wide range of abilities, there were many blogging conversations taking place at once. The large number of blog responses limited the amount of time students could spend interacting with all of their classmates online. Often students would post a single thought and move on to look at others' posts with limited response to those posts. This stifled the conversational nature of the blog that could have been utilized to develop students' synthesis skills and engage them in higher levels of thinking.

In addition to having limited time devoted to dialogue as opposed to monologue, the participants in this study did not have the opportunity to interact with an audience beyond their classroom. Although several other classroom teachers were contacted and

expressed interest in participating in the blog, their own time and curriculum constraints as well as limited access to technology precluded them from doing so. Parents were contacted and invited to join in the conversation, but there were only a few responses. Some parents went on the blog to view what their children were posting, but they did not choose to join the conversation. The opportunity to widen the audience to other classrooms or other schools may have expanded the scope of student writing growth in direct proportion to the size of their audience.

Lastly, since the blog was set up as means for students to communicate about their assigned text, *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953), those students not motivated to read the book may have felt more reticent to post. Although the study was predicated upon the notion of what could happen when students blog in response to literature, the limitation of beginning with an assigned text may have tinged the hue of the study. While students also read and responded to short stories and videos, and they were given freedom to post on a variety of other topics, current research supports the element of choice in reading as integral to motivation and engagement. Some students may have been more motivated to post their thinking if they were more engaged in the reading.

Implications for the Field

Researchers in the field of adolescent literacy need to keep their collective finger on the pulse of their subjects. Involving adolescents in their learning goals by asking them questions about their areas of interest gives them a sense of empowerment and autonomy over their learning. Through this study, I learned to follow the lead of my students as I gained such insight. When I took a step back and let the students lead the

conversation is when I learned the most about them and what kindles their interest in text. I also learned to accept a broader definition of what constitutes text.

Teacher researchers interested in conducting blogging studies in their own classrooms may want to consider devising a system whereby a small sampling of students' blog pages are read and posted to each week. While all students would still be participating, this would provide them with more time to develop meaningful dialogues with one another through the blog. Groups could rotate so that within a given time frame all students visit all blogs and all voices are heard. This would create a greater sense of community and help avoid the sense of ostracism felt when a blog post goes unnoticed and unread. Focusing on a select group of students' blogs at a time, a form of internal "mini- QuadBlogging ™" (Mitchell, 2009), may enhance the blog's capability to promote conversation.

Researchers may want to consider what happens when students blog in response to literature of their own choosing. While I constructed my study around short stories and a novel that I felt were interrelated thematically and lent themselves to deeper levels of thinking about text, I found that choice played an important role in the development of blogging voice. Investigating what happens when students blog in response to self-selected text bears implications for researchers interested in the role that choice plays in student levels of thinking on their blogs. This would also situate the teacher properly as participant in the blogging community as she listens and responds to the interests of her students and uses that conversation to inform instructional decisions about literature-related activities. Adolescents have strong opinions and feel empowered when these opinions are given weight in instructional decisions.

As I witnessed some students beginning to blog during their free time outside of the classroom, I began to consider what blogging could do to enhance learning outside of the classroom. Much learning takes place for students when they leave the brick-and-mortar confines of the physical school building and are metaphorically "freed" to explore and learn about their own areas of interest. Teacher researchers in all disciplines may want to consider using a blog as a space and venue where students can learn and post their findings about discipline-related concepts. In this regard, blogging can facilitate the Flipped Classroom model developed by Bergmann and Sams (2007), whereby traditional classroom lectures and learning take place outside the classroom and classroom time is devoted to traditional "homework" and problem solving within the teacher-as-facilitator construct.

Blogging in this research study maintained an aura of excitement and discovery because it was incorporated into the classroom experimentally at first; students maintained their levels of engagement in direct proportion to the novelty of the blog and the use of the Chromebooks. Making blog posts a mandatory or regular part of the literacy curriculum through the language arts classroom has implications for the field of literacy because it would provide findings about the long-term impact of blogging on student comprehension and writing skills. Teacher researchers could explore whether blogging loses its luster as it becomes ritualized or whether the different kind of thinking and writing students do through the digital medium is sustained across the academic year. Teacher researchers could also explore the long-term impact on student engagement and motivation of taking an outside-school practice such as communicating online and bringing it into the classroom. They could then determine if institutionalizing a

recreational digital activity causes disengagement as the taboo becomes the norm, and students move on to newer activities to formulate their individual, nonacademic identities.

Final Thoughts

In summary, through this research study I discovered that when eighth grade students blog in response to literature there is an identifiable positive impact on reading, writing, and thinking. Blogging increases the variety of approaches students take to thinking about text as expressed through their writing. By taking different paths to text and using information found on the Internet to enhance understanding of text, students become critical readers. Blogging improves the amount of and quality of ideas, word choice, and student voice in writing when compared to traditional classroom writing. Blogging also enables students to develop identities through their blogs as they use them as a means of personal expression and develop autonomy through their blogging voices. Blogging does not nor should not replace traditional reading and writing instruction, but it can enhance such activities by providing students with time and space to develop and express their thoughts.

At the end of the day, when surveys have been tallied, data has been analyzed, and discoveries have been reflected upon, the most important finding of all is how the research process has transformed me as a teacher. I have learned to remove myself by stepping back and loosening the reigns that not only direct my students but also sometimes restrict their direction. By letting my students lead me, I have found that they can make sound decisions that improve their literacy skills. Giving them some freedom does not mean that they will blog with reckless abandon and lose sight of what is

important to their education. After poring through reams of research, my biggest

discovery is that the most important factor in students' education is their teacher. The

decisions I make are important ones and must be entered into with careful thought and

planning, but that does not mean that I should not value the insight and input of my

students. While I am the educational expert in the room, they are the experts on

themselves. Together we can plot a course for their learning growth that combines the

best of both worlds.

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Odell's (1999) Categories and Definitions for Assessing Thinking in Writing

1. Dissonance:
Students point out or overlook problems, ambiguities, ironies, questions, uncertainties, or conflicts
    a. Students point out things that surprise or puzzle them.
    b. They pose questions.
    c. They indicate that they are confused, uncertain, or ambivalent about something they have experienced.
    d. They comment on ways in which two strongly held beliefs (ideas, values) are inconsistent with their words.
    e. They notice ways in which people's actions seem inconsistent with their words.
    f. They mention ways in which something conflicts with what they had expected or would have preferred.

2. Selecting:
Students include or exclude observations, "facts" personal experiences, feelings, and Memories
    a. When students respond to literature or write personal experiences narratives, they focus solely on the events that happened, or they include information about people's thoughts, feelings, and motivations.
    b. Whey they describe, they look for details that will "show, not tell."
    c. When they try to write persuasively or informatively, they include the kind of information that is likely to be appropriate given the knowledge, needs, of values of their intended readers.

3. Encoding/Representing:
Students use different kinds of languages to articulate their ideas, feelings, perceptions, and memories.
    a. When students discuss personal events, they use relatively abstract, generalized terms.
    b. When students discuss personal events, they use language that reflects the personal significance of those events.
    c. When students try to think through complicated issues, they use highly emotional language that might limit their ability to see the complexity of the situation.
    d. Students come up with metaphors that let them take a fresh look at the subject they are considering.
    e. They choose words whose connotations are appropriate for their subject matter, audience, and purpose.

4. Drawing on prior knowledge:
Students explicitly refer to things they already know in order to understand something new.
    a. When students read a complicated piece of literature, they comment on how this piece relates to other texts they have read or movies they have seen.
    b. When they encounter a difficult problem, they use what they know from comparable problems or from prior schoolwork in order to solve it.

c. When they are introduced to new concepts in their courses, they consider ways in which those concepts apply to their personal experience or ways in which they are not compatible with what they have learned previously.

5. Seeing relationships:
Students mention cause-effect relationships, time, if…then, similarity, and differences in their writing.
   a. Students note when and why things happen.
   b. They create hypothetical scenarios, speculating about how one thing might cause or lead up to another.
   c. They make distinctions, noticing ways in which something is different from something else.
   d. They classify or note similarities.
   e. They comment on how things change.
   f. They notice ways in which a person or object fills into his/her/its physical surroundings.

6. Considering different perspectives:
Students consider ways in which other people might perceive, interpret or respond to a given idea, fact, or experience.
   a. Students consider good news as well as bad, pro as well as con.
   b. They adopt another's perspective, trying to imagine how a character might respond to a particular situation.
   c. They think of different conclusions that might be drawn from a particular set of data.
   d. They put themselves in their reader's place, trying to understand the knowledge, values, or needs with which the reader approaches their writing.
   e. When they disagree, they consider ways in which that person's views might possibly make sense.

Appendix B

Hannisah's Writing

Synthesis Scaffold

My thoughts: Hannisah	Comments from: Hannah	Comments from: Patricia	Comments from: Jayne
I think what Ray Bradbury is trying to relay about human nature in the story is that humans have jealousy, greediness and bitterness. For instance, when the children argued that Margot had never saw and remembered the sun even when she came from Earth when she was four in Ohio. She feels that she was cast out because she apparently made a crime for not living on Venus for her entire life, while the other children did. For example, -But Margot remembered. "It's like a penny," she said once, eyes closed. "It's like a fire," she said, "in the stove," "You're lying, you don't remember!"cried the children.- She had always refused what the others said about her but she felt true to herself. Even the	Ray Bradbury may be trying to show how cruel we can be to other people and not think of how it may effect them. They locked a girl in a closet where she missed her only chance to see the sun for 7 years. No one in the entire class even thought twice about it. They didn't put themselves in her shoes, wondering how it might feel to miss out on their first and only time to see the sun in seven years. Just because this person was a little different they automatically assumed she was weird and not like them. No one thinks about what its like to be her. Human nature is becoming less of a caring and helpful	The message Ray Bradbury is trying to relay is told through the theme. It is human nature to crave something we don't have. Though it is known that when someone has something you don't you get jealous and envious. In this case the children are stuck on Venus in a never ending rain.The children were only three when the rain started so they never experience the rain. Yet the girl used to live on earth, and so she saw the sun. She experienced the warm rays of light. She has something that the other children don't. Making the other children	People are all raised differently and this reflects on their behavior towards their elders, peers, and other people. To be specific in the story, William seems to be a bit of a hand full kind of child who is very outgoing. On the other hand Margot is a quiet child who is very well behaved. Now,making a connection from the story to todays struggles, Children tend to judge on the outward appearance which is what William is doing in the story. Im guessing he doesn't approve of Margot because she isnt from the same place as him.He doesn't realize that she also has feelings as well. However

children forced her physically into a closet because of their mixed feelings of jealousy, bitterness and greediness. But right after they found the warmth of the sun coming out for even a few moments, they felt a bit remorse for Margot and got her out of the closet.	nature, and more of a cruel thoughtless vengeful nature. There was also a happier nature is this story: curiosity. The human nature is very curious and we don't like accepting that there is no answer, or that we'll never figure something out. They curiosity helped us discover Venus now, and in the story then found out enough to live there! Then, the kids became very curious about the sun and earth.	jealous of her	they are only nine years old, he could just be acjealous of the ft that Margot remembers what the sun looks like, and no one else does. I think Ray Bradbury is portraying the old saying " Dont judge a book by its cover ".

Ask yourself: how are my classmate's comments the same or different from mine? In the chart above, highlight ideas that are the same as yours in green. Highlight ideas that are new or different in red.

Categorize these similarities and differences by Characters, Setting, Plot, Problem/Solution, or Themes:

My classmate's comments are similar to mine because, Hannah mentioned that in the story the other children had locked Margot up in a closet when they had finally got the chance to see the sun in seven years. In addition to, both of my classmates Patricia and Jayne also in similarity mentioned that Margot came from Earth and had experienced the sun, making the other children jealous. Also in similar, we all mentioned that the theme of this story was that humans are jealous, cruel, and are raised to be who they are. The differences between my classmates and mine is that, Hannah had mentioned that humans are cruel but also full of curiosity because in the story, the children were curious about the sun and Earth, but they had no feelings toward Margot as if she never existed. Jayne had said that, "People are all raised differently and this reflects on their behavior towards their elders, peers, and other people", that however someone is raised they are influenced by it. She had also said that the characters, William was outgoing and Margot was a shy quiet child.

Now, take a few minutes to THINK about any NEW ideas you have about the text. You might choose to think about your classmates' comments, and share your thinking about their ideas.

I now believe that this story is more about how human nature is more of jealousy, curiosity, cruelty, and will judge anyone on their appearance. We humans have a complex system of feelings toward one another. In the story, it had explained that the children had lived on Venus and it influenced their lives because of the rain everyday, and hearing the word "sun" would spark curiosity in their minds of how the sun is. But since humans crave to have what they do not have, it tends to lead to jealousy and cruelty because for example, Margot had got to see the sun on Earth before but the other children didn't, the others had gotten frustrated that they couldn't see the warm sun too. And so they never had thought of her as a person who got something the rest wanted too. The children locked her in a closet when they had finally go the chance to see the sun in seven years of rain. Sometimes we want something so bad, that we tend to turn into animals and lose sight of who we are.

Finally, combine your writing from the two boxes and paste it below. Voila! You have synthesized across multiple texts!

My classmate's comments are similar to mine because, Hannah mentioned that in the story the other children had locked Margot up in a closet when they had finally got the chance to see the sun in seven years. In addition to, both of my classmates Patricia and Jayne also in similarity mentioned that Margot came from Earth and had experienced the sun, making the other children jealous. Also in similar, we all mentioned that the theme of this story was that humans are jealous, cruel, and are raised to be who they are. The differences between my classmates and mine is that, Hannah had mentioned that humans are cruel but also full of curiosity because in the story, the children were curious about the sun and Earth, but they had no feelings toward Margot as if she never existed. Jayne had said that, "People are all raised differently and this reflects on their behavior towards their elders, peers, and other people", that however someone is raised they are influenced by it. She had also said that the characters, William was outgoing and Margot was a shy quiet child.
I now believe that this story is more about how human nature is more of jealousy, curiosity, cruelty, and will judge anyone on their appearance. We humans have a complex system of feelings toward one another. In the story, it had explained that the children had lived on Venus and it influenced their lives because of the rain everyday, and hearing the word "sun" would spark curiosity in their minds of how the sun is. But since humans crave to have what they do not have, it tends to lead to jealousy and cruelty because for example, Margot had got to see the sun on Earth before but the other children didn't, the others had gotten frustrated that they couldn't see the warm sun too. And so they never had thought of her as a person who got something the rest wanted too. The children locked her in a closet when they had finally go the chance to see the sun in seven years of rain. Sometimes we want something so bad, that we tend to turn into animals and lose sight of who we are.

Hannisah

October 28, 2014 at 9:59 AM

I think what Ray Bradbury is trying to relay about human nature in the story is that humans have jealousy, greediness and bitterness. For instance, when the children argued that Margot had never saw and remembered the sun even when she came from Earth when she was four in Ohio. She feels that she was cast out because she apparently made a crime for not living on Venus for her entire life, while the other children did. For example, -But Margot remembered. "It's like a penny," she said once, eyes closed. "It's like a fire," she said, "in the stove,"

"You're lying, you don't remember!"cried the children.- She had always refused what the others said about her but she felt true to herself. Even the children forced her physically into a closet because of their mixed feelings of jealousy, bitterness and greediness. But right after they found the warmth of the sun coming out for even a few moments, they felt a bit remorse for Margot and got her out of the closet.

The Girl in the Shadow.

Categories: Blog November 25, 2014 @ 5:36 PM 3 Comments

-Flashback- "No one knows me, even when they say so. Even my best friends don't know who I am. I show a happy face on the outside and deep down within, anger, sadness, and hatred boil and churn and resides there. They can't and will never understand what's it like to be me. I'm always quiet and never draw attention. I'm like a lost puppy following around my friends while they're my masters. In their world I probably don't even exist.They probably just put up with me and allow me to tag along. I'm also shy so I rarely talk to anyone and listen in. Even if I do try to talk, I always regret saying it. So I limit myself to only talk when I'm being asked to or told to do something. Even if I walk away from my friends they probably won't even notice I'm gone. Everyone always praises me in saying I'm amazing at my talents or do something good in school. But after that, I'm by myself in my world of mixed emotions. So why did I even consider having friends in the first place? So many questions. I'm actually not even sure why I did. I probably walked into the group of friends without even knowing I did. I prefer to be alone without anyone because I just can't talk about anything, I'm boring. When I try being upbeat, I get blocked out because someone else takes the stage. I consider being lucky when I have that little chance to be the star, but as soon as it's over, I'm back to being alone where no one understands me. Everyone tells me I'm nice and I'm the best at everything I do. Well is there anything else to say? No there's not. As I said I have a boring life, but a lot happens at home that you don't know about. I don't even hang out with my friends, or have a normal life. When I was born into this world, my Dad tried to kill me but my loving mother saved my precious life by pleading and begging down on her hands and knees after I was born. So he lefter our side and just took off, without saying bye to me or acknowledging my existence. I understand why. My mother said to

never mention him in the house or anywhere, but I am still grateful for him because without him, I wouldn't be here. Later in life we had a rough time in life because my mom had to dropout of college to raise my brother and I. My wish is that she could go back and finish college, but with us here, she can't. Everyone has a childhood right? Well when I was raised I never even had one or thought of one. Since I had a rough childhood, I grew up being shy and stone hard. That probably explains why I can barely smile when something good happened. It's just so hard to be happy when you have the most terrible life in the world or even the universe. Ha! I guess I win that award. At least we finished school but it wasn't the best first year. In second grade I was rough and followed boys. I hung out with the dumbest boys that became jerks. The only reason I did was because I liked them, and when you're a second grader, you don't know anything about love. So I was stupid then, if you interpret it. I was a very bad girl, I stole things in class and threw punches and kicked boys because I thought it would impress them. But no, it obviously didn't work. It made my reputation even worse. I was also the worst at making friends. So it probably adds to the reason why I hung out with boys. But one boy sparked a wonderful sensation which coursed through my veins and flowed through my body unexpectedly warming me up. I didn't know what that was called but it was the feeling of happiness to me."

The Land Of Magic…

Categories: Blog November 24, 2014 @ 6:34 PM 9 Comments

Ever wondered of a world where fairies fly?

The magic of their fluttering wings taking off to the sky.

Glowing lights paint the darkness of the land.

All this magic, seems so grand.

In this world though, you can die.

Witches, ogres, monsters never say bye.

Armiess of elves, dwarves, wizards give you a hand.

But sometimes overpowered, can be your last stand.

You can't shed a tear, you can't cry.

Fighting monsters, give it a try.

Being in this world, can prove to be a curse.

But fighting for a life is just even worse.

One life lost, means one lost forever.

Once in this world, you can't get out…ever.

Enjoy this world while it will last.

Your life shall be left, in the dusk of the past.

Which story did you guys liked the best?
Categories: Blog November 26, 2014 @ 3:53 PM 2 Comments   I have written many short stories and I plan on writing more, but I wanted to expand more on some of my short stories I wrote. And so I wanted your votes on which you think was the best, most interesting, and also the one you liked the most to those who read my stories. If you haven't read anyone or missed some you can go on my blog page and read them there.

Appendix C

Student Blog Posts and Replies

Kourtney's Blog Posts

Kourtney
November 4, 2014 at 11:13 AM
Responding to question "How is Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* misunderstood?
Well, just by reading the 9th paragraph i see that the book is really misunderstood. I thought that the book was about a fireman who burns books. Its more than that, its to show that television is destroying time. Books give a show. More people turn to physical pictures instead of mentally pictures. You can see everything you see in a book in the television.

(No Title)
Categories: Blog December 2, 2014 @ 11:24 AM 1 Comment

If you knew what love felt like you would automatically think I wasn't so crazy about it. If you knew what it was like growing up in a society where sitting inside all day on a device that breaks connection from you and the world is okay. And if you only knew how it feels to be lost in a world where all your parents can say is "good luck". Live a day in my shoes and you'd be dead by 2:00. No one understands what i go through and what I've seen that most people would look at as improper. We're all soaking up the stars forgetting about the moon. No one could think what i think. No one can know what I know. And no one can live the way I do. Live with your eyes open. Look beside you, see who is around you. Don't act oblivious to what things surround you. Soak up the excitement. Experience love, absorb it.

Don't Send Elders to Nursing Homes
If your going to work to help the elder, help them not hurt them.

Only
1 in 14
cases of elder abuse *ever* comes to the attention of authorities.

most elder abuse goes unreported or unnoticed.

Cory's Blog Posts and Replies

Cory
October 28, 2014 at 11:12 AM
I think Ray Bradbury is trying to relay that the nature in Venus is much different from the nature on Earth. In Venus he describes the planets environment as rainy and not to sunny. He describes the rain as tsunamis of rain water on Venus, and he states the sun is not seen on Venus to often.

Cory
November 4, 2014 at 11:07 AM
Ray Bradbury states that "Fahrenheit 451″ is about how television destroys the interest in reading. I don't really agree because I don't have a big interest in reading, and TV has some good interesting shows.

Books?
Categories: Blog November 25, 2014 @ 11:08 AM 2 Comments

Does anyone have good books to read not to long but not super short?

Angie
November 25, 2014 at 11:12 AM
I do have several amazing books I'd suggest, but alas, you do not wish to read long books. 🙁

Quinton's Blog Post and Replies

WHY DO YOU THINK WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO WEAR HOODS IN SCHOOL
10 Comments

i think there is no problem with wearing hoods in class. what if our heads are cold and we want to wear them. i think that were not allowed to were them because we might hide cheats to a test or something in them. what do you think
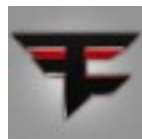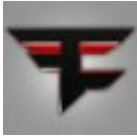

Cory *December 2, 2014 at 11:11 AM*
It is disrespectful

Quinton *December 2, 2014 at 11:15 AM*

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No because people where hats all the time inside of school

Cory *December 2, 2014 at 11:18 AM* no they don't

Mrs. Steller *December 2, 2014 at 9:27 PM* That's right, Clay. There are certain ways you should conduct yourself in public settings such as an institution of learning. Head coverings worn indoors, except for religious purposes, are considered disrespectful. In addition, there really is no need for them. Our school is warm enough, thank goodness!

the_better_athlete *December 2, 2014 at 11:13 AM*
So some psycho masked murder doesn't enter the building because he would blend in.

Quinton *December 2, 2014 at 11:16 AM*
good point

Stephan *December 2, 2014 at 11:14 AM* I think we are allowed to wear hoods..it's not like we are going to were them all year round like on the Park test in the Spring we wouldn't be wearing a sweatshirt with a hood on it. I also think we aren't allowed because they could distract the person sitting behind you. Plus it is a great way of cheating. 🙂

Quinton *December 2, 2014 at 11:17 AM* Some people do where hoods in spring but they most likely wouldnt.

Aly *December 2, 2014 at 11:19 AM*
To show respect. Many different people have many different opinions.

Mrs. Steller *December 2, 2014 at 9:28 PM* Exactly, Alyssa. This is a forum where we can agree to disagree respectfully. It's one of our blogging rules!

Noah's Blog Posts

Favorite Sports,why?
Categories: Blog November 18, 2014 @ 11:27 AM 7 Comments

Where are you going for thanksgiving, and whats your favorite tradition?
Categories: Blog November 25, 2014 @ 11:04 AM 10 Comments

Why is there so much drama in Oaklyn?

October 28, 2014 at 11:18 AM
The message that Ray Bradbury is trying to relay about human nature in "All Summer in a Day" is that,its not always going to be the same.He uses big dialogue in his story. Ray also says it rains every day, thousands upon thousands of days compounded.I like the way he words that.

Patricia's Blog Posts

October 28, 2014 at 9:53 AM
The message Ray Bradbury is trying to relay is told through the theme. It is human nature to crave something we don't have. Though it is known that when someone has something you don't you get jealous and envious. In this case the children are stuck on Venus in a never ending rain.The children were only three when the rain started so they never experience the rain. Yet the girl used to live on earth, and so she saw the sun. She experienced the warm rays of light. She has something that the other children don't. Making the other children jealous of her.

Is Youtube The New T.V.
Categories: Blog November 19, 2014 @ 4:21 PM 10 Comments

Ask yourself a question right now. How many hours out of a day do you go on your electronics, and out of those hours how many hours do you spend on your cable t.v. (this is not counting programs such as Netflix and hulu). Americans spend less time on television and more time on digital devices. In 2013 an average of Americans spent five hours and nine minutes on digital devices while we spent only four hours and thirty one minutes watching t.v.. Each year we increase these times by about twenty minutes. This

past year 316,000 people cancelled there cable. Now this is where you have to think. If your online and your bored the first place you'd go would be YouTube because it is a website dedicated to making videos. YouTube is like television only better. With YouTube you have "real people" who have raw talent. They live a normal life except they post videos on the internet. They are able to connect with you threw the videos and threw the comment section. And you can find pretty much any type of videos from comedy to cooking classes to video games! YouTube is a community of people and its growing bigger every year sooner or later it might be replacing your cable.

What If?
Blog December 1, 2014 @ 8:43 PM 10 Comments
The most important thing to do in life is to ask questions. If you don't you will never learn about any thing, and your mind will be limited. As a child I would ask billions of questions, and I still do. I ask questions even if I no the answer because I want to learn more and I want to see new views. When I can't ask questions I research it (which I love to do). Yet sometimes I'm left with no one to ask and nothing to research with. When that happens I am left with my infinite boundless mind. The mind is vast and it is filled with so many imaginative thoughts. When I am left with my mind I ask myself "what if ". This a question that leads to endless possibilities. One thought could be "what if I shrunk to the size of a thimble" or "what if the sun vanished". It's these questions that give us a new perspective of life. Without questions we would be limited in knowledge, and without our original minds we would be left without the creativity that makes us different from every other species on earth.

Angie's Blog about Books

ANGIE'S LIST OF AMAZING BOOKS TO READ!

* Opinions listed are opinions of Angie and are not meant to offend others*

1. Maleficent

This is pretty much the book version of the Disney movie that stars my firstname-sharing buddy Angelina Jolie, however the book is indeed much better than the movie. The movie focuses more on making (really amazing) special effects instead of telling the story of Maleficent as it is in the book. The book using amazing details to help you visualize all of the settings from the castle to the magical place in which Maleficent resides (I've forgotten the name of the place).

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2. Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children

This book is one of my favorite books I've ever read (special thanks to my stepmom for picking it out as a present for me) and I would recomend it to anyone who can read. The story starts out following the main protagonist Jacob Portland as he tries to pass the time on another hot summer day at his boring job at Smart Aid. Just when it seems that this day is going to be as boring as all other days have been in the past summers, he gets a call from his grandfather, who is frantically asking where the key to his gun safe is. Jacob decides to go an visit his grandfather to see if everything is alright and is alarmed when he finds his grandfather's house trashed. Following the footprints through the woods, Jacob discovers his grandfather lying face down in the grass, his stomach cut open and bleeding out to death. Jacob's grandfather dies in his arms, whispering cryptic words that don't seem to make any sense at all to Jacob, and just as Jacob is about to take his grandfather back to the house to call the cops he hears a strange noise coming from the bushes. He takes the flashlight from his grandfather's hands and sees a hideous monster that soon disappears into the woods. With the help of his pychiatrist, Jacob embarks on an adventure and he soon discovers that his grandfather's fairy tales might just be true.

3. Hollow City, the sequel to Miss Peregrine's Peculiar Children (Note: Read Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children first or you will be hopelessly lost while reading this)

I won't reveal much about the story because well *Riversong voice* spoilers, but I will reveal that this book helps readers get to know the peculiar children better. We get to see what they're like and how they react to dangerous situations.

 4. The Pandora series

I'm not sure most of you have read this series, but it is a tremendously amazing series (another shoutout to my stepmom for getting this book for me too, maybe you're not so evil after all). It follows the adventures of Pandora, Alcie, Iole and Homer on their quest to recapture the deadly evils (and the lesser evils) that have escaped thanks to Pandora. The thing that I really loved about this series was that it was a page turner (I stayed up the entire night reading book six, 'Pandora Gets Greedy') and I simply could not put the books down.

 This is all for now, but i will be sure to further my list in the future. Feel free to comment some stories you would suggest I add to the list.

11/10/14

5. The Lord of Opium

I realize most of you weren't fans of the book we had to read last year 'House of the Scorpion' and that most of you cringed at the thought of having to read the sequel, but the

sequel is so much more amazing than you realize. It starts of exactly were HOS left off, El Patron is dead and Matt finds himself as the new ruler of Opium. With his new found power of Opium, Matt tries to change it for the better, only to realize that its not as easy as it seems.

6. The Percy Jackson series

*Deepest apologies viewers if my review isn't worded well, I have not read this series since fourth grade but I am contemplating rereading it during my 'Re-Read-a-thon'

I'm sure many of you are very familiar with the Percy Jackson movies and have yet to realize that *gasp* there is a whole book series! This series was my companion throughout my first year here in Oaklyn during fourth grade and it does not disappoint. The series follows Percy Jackson and his quests at a magical camp called Camp Halfblood, a place where young demigods go to hide from the unseen monsters that lurk in the shadows.

7. The Heroes of Olympus series

Although I'm still not quite finished book four, I must say that this series does not disappoint. It's pretty much a continuation of the Percy Jackson following the journeys of some old and some new halfbloods on their quest to defeat Gaia (spellcheck?). Read this series now before it gets made into a movie, or read the graphic novel version of the first book that has recently come out and is available in stores now!

8. The Program
*This books deals with the topics of depression and suicide and is to be avoided if those topics make you uneasy/uncomfortable.

The Program (Not the book, a fictional program in the book), famous worldwide for curing thousands of people of depression and seemingly erasing it from the world is being praised by people all over. The suicide rate is going down and less and less teens are getting depression. Once a teen is discovered to have depression, they are taken away from their families for six long weeks of who-knows-what and are returned later without a trace of depression or any suicidal thoughts gone. The Program seems to be a gift sent from the heavens, but no one knows what dark secrets lay within.
This is all for now, but i will be sure to further my list in the future. Feel free to comment some stories you would suggest I add to the list.

Students' *Fahrenheit 451* Essays

Noah

In the story Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury mainly talks about what he thinks our future technology would soon be like in the future. Another thing he talks about is the world he created, what im trying to say is that Ray writes the story to tell his main perspective on what future technology will be. I can relate to this because when I was young i would also predict what the future would be like. For example I would predict that there would be awesome robot servants that would do anything for you

First, Ray Bradbury talks about walls that have big flat screen TVs. Witch we sort of have today. Ear buds are also another thing,also known as the seashell he talks about. We have had ear buds for a while now. They have been a great invention to listen to music. Bradbury has so many awesome things that he thought of wich is in present day future. I dont think Ray Bradbury should of feared that books would get replace by internet because whats the worse that could happen, you could just read books on computers or on any other device. I know that I would not have been scared of books replacing the internet because i would like to read stories on the internet more than a book. Something else I should add is that our technology is to high priced in the present.The Apple companys devices cost so much money. I also do think that people are on technology to much. Dont get me wrong, I love my phone and video games but not to the point were im on it all the time. In the story, it seems that mildred and clarisse are on the technology a good amount of time. Another thing is that when mildred says "You are peculier yourself, Mr. Montag.Sometimes I even forget you are a fireman. Now,may I make you angry again?" I thought that sounded very mysterious and wierd but had some kind of meaning. Books are things that grab you and pull you in and also lasts longer than a movie. A movie grabs your attention with a trailer.

Ill be honest, I didnt really dig the book because I dont like that kind of genre. But it definitely helped me out with reading and my English skills. It was a little interesting, I thought it was cool that he said all of these inventions that actually got invented and we use today.

Cory

In the book Fahrenheit 451, the television by far takes over the use of books. In the book, reading books is not allowed where Guy Montag, the main character, lives. Even though Montag may have sneaked a few books into his house here and there, while taking the others away by brutally spitting flame at them, his wife Mildred strongly dislikes the use of books, and prefers Montag just watches the TV, and spends time with the "family". (The "family" are the people who Mildred is watching on TV.)Montag very much disagrees and does not like watching TV, and tries to convert Mildred into a book reader, but after he has tried to do that, things don't turn as planned. Of course, Mildred disagrees and figures that the TV is a better thing to do than take some time and view a

few words once in a while. As Mildred and her friends were watching the television Montag recited a few lines from one of the books he had read, and of course Mildred and her friends felt sick of him. Another thing in the book that seems to bring books drifting away in the society is the "seashells" that Montag always sees in Mildred's ears. The seashell radio tunes out whatever else is going on and these seashells are taking away the use of books for Mildred as well.

Bradbury had predictions of many things that could drift books out of our society. For sure, we still do see many televisions in todays high tech world, but many people still do like the older-ish live style, by reading books. Bradbury had thought that the technology we have today would take over the use for books, as it did in Fahrenheit 451, and for some families, indeed it does. Some families you could find today may not have a single book in the house, but you may find a TV in every room you may look in. Some in the kitchen, the relaxing room, and maybe all the bedrooms. Of course once in a while its okay to be stuck on TV, but if you get lost in the world of it, as Mildred did, you'll realize it was a big mistake to be staring at that big, wide screen all day. You may need your eyes one day, and the TV sure isn't the doctor to help your eyes. Bradbury also thought that books were different from TV. I agree. To Bradbury, books and TV are different in various different ways. The TV doesn't contain all the detail due to shorter length, as for the book may take you up to a week to finish, but the detail can be amazingly different. I also agree with that difference in books and TV. I am not the biggest fan of books, but I have to say some books are so much more better than the TV show or movie.

As we know, it seems to be TV is used much more than reading of books. I honestly do not think books are valued as much as they used to be. Ever since the TV was invented, I am sure books soon started to fade away in popularity. I don't see many people reading books today, but more of people watching a lot of TV. In conclusion, I believe that TV has taken over uses of books. Books have lost a lot of uses in today's world. Some people may still read a lot, but they're not as valued as before. People get hooked onto TV which can change their whole appearance. You will start to lose eyesight, and soon you'll be hooked onto it so badly you'll be saying, "the families here!" just like Mildred when her shows come on. So as we see the world today, Bradbury predicted the inventions today would cancel many uses of books. We still do see those inventions, and I don't think we ever won't see them again. TV and books are completely different, for which I believe, and Bradbury was right about today.

Elijah

451, Test Questions   12/4/14

Bradbury he said that his book
 is about "Television replacing
Books" in soercety. And I'd say that
his prediction was true every
where I look I see computers,
tablets, and eell phones. And Right
now I'm they only one using
pencial and paper for this test.
 But Back to my poiant. And
I do think books aren't as
Valued as they use to because
9 times out of 10 I'd itter see
a laptop or tablet something
portable. Also the People in the
Fahrent 451 society are bassicly
Braindead and don't really think
for themselves. And I mean pretty
much tell you what happiness
looks like. Happiness looks like
a family that wants to be eachother
and pretty much treasure what
they get in life and it shouldn't

iint really matter if you have money of all kinds of fancey stuff that you don't really need. And the characters that I'd say are the most unhappy is Montag, clarisse, and mildred. Why did I pick these characters Because montag basicly has a warrent for reading books, and Mildred is a Mental basket case who thinks the people in the televisons that surround her in one room and she didn't rember that she trif to committe suicide. And clarisse pretty much got picked on because she was different. And so she became someone she isn't. Also I see some simmilaritys between today's. And our society seems more peace worthy yet theirs some kinks and dents, that we have to fix like what's happining out in Missouri. And like I said I do. Se some simmilaritys between our society and their society like with the technology and all that relevant stuff.

And I can absolutly say that
family dynamics have really
changed. like how family members
socialize with eachother barely.
And the "way families function
around eachother like how
the parents barely disaplen
their kids It's really diapointing.
beeause "nows against the law to
hit your kid I mean it's not fun
but it teaches you. It's really
negative I'm really with against
hitting your kid. And the family
affects each of the Character
(Montag, Clarrise, and Mildred) by
not agreeing with eachother and
by pretending that eachother
doesen't exsist.

Appendix E

Writing Samples at Beginning of Study

Cory

I think the significance of the title "The
Siege of ___ ___", ___ ___ ___ ___ ___,
world. People ___ ___ need ___ ___ ___ ___ ___,
poor. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___.
In the book, it said, "Once as a child he
had something a yellow dune by the sea
in the middle of the ___ and not summer day,
___ ___ ___ ___ said, because some
___ ___ said, "For he ___ ___ ___ ___
a dime!'" I believe it shows how
people have been lying about things
he ___ ___, such as books being
a bad thing in life.

Noah

The second part of Farenheit 451 is titled, The Sieve and the Sand. This is significant because in the story on pg. 78 it says: "Once as a child he had sat upon a yellow dune by the sea in the middle of the blue and hot summer day, trying to fill a sieve with the sand, because some cruel cousin had said "fill this sieve and you'll get a dime". The subway reminded him when he was younger sieving the sand with the cream tile and numerals.