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LITERATURE CIRCLES: IN CLASS AND ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

by

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A Thesis

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at
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Thesis Chair: Susan Browne, Ed.D.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this manuscript, to my mother MaryLouise Purifico

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation to my friends and family for their support.

Abstract

Jenna Purifico
LITERATURE CIRCLES: IN CLASS AND ONLINE DISCUSSIONS
2014
Susan Browne, Ed.D.
Masters of Arts in Reading Education

In compliance to the new literacy shifts in education, a qualitative study was conducted with the intention to aid improvement in literacy instruction. The course of the study spanned for four weeks in one third grade classroom within the same school building. This study was designed to see what would happen when third graders met to discuss what they read within literature circles not only in the classroom face to face but online as well through a discussion board. Students read leveled, historical fiction novels pertaining to theme of Native Americans. It was concluded that literature circles online and face to face, provided effective forums for student engagement and comprehension with the text.

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Chapter 1

Scope of the Study

"In the volatile, global environment of the 21st *century, being able to communicate successfully is the key to employment, to citizenship, and to a quality life."-Terry Roberts*

The past three years I have taught third graders in a self-contained gifted classroom. There are twenty-three students this year and in order to have been accepted into the program their work had to be reviewed by a committee of teachers and administrators. The program includes Kindergarten to 8th grade and many students were accepted since Kindergarten and have been in the program for some time. There are twelve girls, eleven boys and their reading levels range within third to sixth grade.

In the beginning of each year I set up my classroom for "Reader's Workshop." I begin by conducting mini-lessons on various topics from "what makes a Just Right Book?" to "knowing when to abandon texts." Each mini-lesson is modeled and the students grasp the concept quickly and efficiently by demonstrating what they learned independently. This year the students followed the same behaviors as previous years, and I always feel great with these first couple of lessons until I introduce how to "buzz" within small groups. When students "buzz" they supposedly are discussing their thoughts about what was read and providing group members with effective questions and comments. This lesson I make sure to model several times and provide immediate feedback when students begin to practice. However the same repeated habits begin to show such as the one student playing with his shoe, another asking what is for lunch, and the rule follower yelling at everyone to stop talking and listen. No matter how hard I try to revisit what "buzz" groups should look and

sound like these types of behaviors continue throughout the entire year until I resort back to whole group discussions.

This year however, I was determined not to let these unstructured habits form and to begin the year with a new approach to "buzz groups." Students conducted for this study since the beginning of the year have been collaborative and cohesive in following directions and often voice their love for reading. I knew I had to do try something new that would start the year off successfully. I thought to myself, what instructional strategies work best when students discuss literature? What types of conversations do I want the students to have? What about those students who have insightful thoughts and ideas but are often hidden by others who dominate the conversation?

Based on repetitive behaviors of the past, I decided to implement instructional strategies within the forum of literature circles. I am wondering what type of behaviors would occur not only face to face by online as well. What type of questions and responses would the students say and post online? I am curious to find out the results of the student discussions within this study.

Story of the Question

In knowing I wanted to change the unfortunate yearly outcome of student discussions, I began to wonder what I was going to focus my study on. I always taught a collection of mini-lessons to set up the classroom workshop model for the past eight years. However I wanted to incorporate the same efficient strategies with another model. I talked to a co-worker who also taught third grade and she told me she often uses literature circles to help organize her small group discussions. I learned that this type of process did not work well with all of her students and so I began to wonder with the current shift in new

literacies what could I do differently in my class that meets the needs for all my students. I immediately reflected on my online learning experiences and the constant use of Blackboard. I thought that posting responses onto Blackboard was something promising third graders could do on their own.

However, before committing to the idea of having third graders post responses online I knew I had to test out their ability to do so. I began the first week of school having my students post a mini-biography as a way to introduce themselves to the classroom. Students had to reply to at least two other classmates' posts as homework. I learned quickly that my students were highly motivated to do this activity but did not know the expectation of the type of questions or responses. They started to correct one another's spelling and included several punctuation marks consecutively in a row. I stopped them from posting and gave a few mini-lessons on the expectations of posting on our student discussion board.

I decided to give posting online another chance with a generic question about their favorite type of genre of literature. I wanted to let them know this was a social learning forum and not a recreational area of conversation. They were much better the next time sharing ideas and thoughts that reflected the expectations encouraged in class. I continued to monitor their conversations and deleted only a few inappropriate messages.

Once I knew they were able to handle the responsibility of posting online, I revisited my question and incorporated what type of responses students would write virtually as well as face to face in literature circles. I never implemented this type of learning format and was hesitate to do so, but after reading several articles I concluded that literature circles encourage reflective and critical thinking in a constructive manner. Therefore my research

study includes the combination of literature circles with third graders in two social forums online and face to face in the classroom.

Statement of the Problem

In today's society, professions strive on successful collaboration and synergy amongst all types of business models and organizations. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills-a coalition of American businesses recently released a "Resource and Policy Guide" entitled *21st Century Skills, Education and Competitiveness.*

The guide lists six fundamental 21st century skills including (Roberts and Billings, (2009) :

- Thinking critically and making judgments
- Solving complex, multidisciplinary, open-ended problems
- Communicating and collaborating (p.2)

These conceptual skills require Americans to be skilled when interacting respectfully and competently with one another. Teaching students at a young age how to communicate is imperative as those skills develop into life-long qualities. Roberts and Billings (2009) state, "too many educators fail to see the importance of teaching basic communication skills-speaking and listening-on anything like a consistent basis" (p.1). Speaking and listening well to one another is both difficult and time consuming to teach. Just like learning to read and write, conversations require ongoing practice and should be tied into the ideals of the curriculum. Learning to communicate is essentially learning to think critically which needs to be taught.

"Maieutic Conversation" is an instructional practice that encourages students to speak freely, sharing the responsibility and ownership of the discussion, as opposed to one

speaker taking on the role as the expert (Reznitskaya & Glina, 2013, p.3).Students are in collaborative groups with a focus and clear expectation of equal participation. Expectations include students speaking loud enough to be heard, while making eye contact with the listeners of the group. As a listener they learn to focus with intensity by looking at the person who speaking, asking sufficient questions, and acknowledging insights of others who participate. "Learning to speak and listen well is slow and difficult; it requires constant practice, practice which most students never really had before" (p.6).

Therefore if teachers assimilate to education reforms they will be able to prepare students to question, reflect, and learn from one another in a cohesive manner. Dialogic teaching is another example of how to prepare students for social interaction. According to Reznitskaya & Glina (2013), "Dialogic teaching is a pedagogical approach that involves students in the collaborative construction of meaning and is characterized by shared control over the key aspects of classroom communication" (p.49). Students share responsibility for managing the group discussions by asking questions and making judgments through reflection and reasoning. This type of teaching is different from the traditional format of "closed teacher questions, brief recall answers, and minimal feedback that requires children to report someone else's thinking rather than to think for themselves" (p.49).

Researchers Reznitskaya and Glina (2013) conducted a qualitative study in which twelve classrooms were assigned to teachers who taught the dialogic or traditional approach. The results concluded that those students who were part of the dialogic teaching practice had more responses consisting of lengthy explanations and reasoning while those students who were placed in the traditional classroom "presented more descriptive accounts of specific facts by, for example retelling events from the story" (p.51). However despite

the potential of dialogic teaching, there are numerous studies that continue to document this type of learning missing in classrooms today. For example, in a recent study of more than 200 American classrooms, it was apparent that that dialogic conversations were absent from more than 90% of observed interaction (Nystrand, 2003, p.173). Therefore current research is needed to reflect these types of effective methods in which student inquiry is brought upon through a discussion format where the teacher asks students to clarify their statements and relates student contributions to one another. In comparison to what is more commonly evident today as teachers continue to traditionally ask a series of questions that prompt for recall and basic interpretation of facts from a story.

Statement of the Question

Knowing these gaps in communication with literacy and learning in the classroom, I decided to conduct my research study on student discussions based on what they read. The question I address in this study is as follows: What happens when third grade students participate in face to face and virtual literature circles?

Sub-Questions**:**

- How will the different social forums affect student motivation with the text they are reading?

- Are all the students getting the opportunity to respond and give input, or is it only a few?

- When given the option of choice, what type of responses do students give within their literature group?

Literature circles encompass literacy strategies and skills that promote reflective practices from personal to higher order through interaction with others. Students come

together as a collective group of about five to six students, and make choices on how to interact with the text through an engaged student led discussion format. Students are assigned roles and communicate taking turns sharing insights to what was read.

There is an apparent need for more communication to what students understand and inquire and dialogic and maieutic conversations are encompassed within the framework of literature circles. Which is why I chose to further investigate the type of student responses and conversations that generate from this instructional format of discussion. Collective data will be recorded through student discussion board responses online within a classroom homepage and video-taped conversations in class.

Organization of the Paper

Chapter two provides a literature review of the uses of literature circles in the classroom and online. Chapter three describes the design and context of the study, including my plan of how I construct the literature groups along with information pertaining to the class dynamics. Chapter four reviews and analyzes the data and research and discusses the findings in the study. Chapter five presents the conclusions of this study and implications for teaching and learning as well as further research for the use of creating similar type of discussion formats to promote communication about literacy in the classroom.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Literature circles encourage students to actively invest in their learning through a social collaborative and reflective approach. Sanacore (2013) states, "Research findings suggest that members of literature circles need to engage in reflective practices that help to strike a better balance of personal and critical responses to literature" (p.118). The new literacy shifts with the Common Core Standards expect students to portray analytical skills that prove deep understanding through the synthesis of multiple texts. Literature circles through the social forums of face to face and online are ways educators are preparing students to focus on their critical thinking through engagement. This chapter presents a review of the literature regarding reader responses and literature circles within two social forums of discussion and research on its advantages for reading comprehension and motivation.

Literature Circles

Literature circles encompass literacy strategies and skills that promote reflective practices from personal to critical through interaction with others. Students come together as a collective group of about five to six students, and make choices on how to interact with the text through an engaged student led discussion format. The teacher serves as a facilitator and monitor of these discussions by initially establishing a supportive framework for the students, allowing them to have the ability of choice in their presentation of responses and or text. The framework of the group are in different roles with various functions as a whole in order to "help students deepen their own level of understanding, or create prior knowledge in making connections to the content" (Whittingham, 2013, p. 55).

These roles allow students to examine and analyze assigned text according to Whittingham (2013):

- Discussion Director: This role's function is to create open-ended questions related to the text they read.

- Connector Detector: This role's function is to identify personal connections to the text (text to self, text to text, text to world)

- Word Warrior: This role's function is to identify previously unknown or intriguing vocabulary within the text.

- Passage Picker: This role's function is to identify pertinent passages to review and share with the group. (p. 53)

Reading instruction is scaffold and gradually released through the support of the teacher prior to releasing student independence within the literature circle. Students are taught how to respond to each other and more importantly how to transfer control of the talk to other members of the group. According to King (2001), "Guided discussions can encourage children to be readers, by enabling them to recognize reading as an active desirable social process rather than as a private activity" (p. 32). The presentation of response through "talk" as in a face to face forum allows students to articulate responses to their reading that may have otherwise remained dormant.

King's (2001) article *The Role of Talk Within Literature Circle* draws on the experience of literature through the action research project conducted by Britton (1975) in which graduate students from University of Brighton designed to extend children as readers through introducing literature circles. The research project included video-taped shared reading, individual reflections on the reading process, and anecdotal records on the

students' progress. Students regularly read the same text and met as a small group to discuss their reading with reading journals as a form of support. Students were able to reflect upon, clarify, and challenge one another bringing a joint understanding of meaning through which personal contributions were valued. Students also reread, found textual evidence for their ideas, and listened to one another to help draw conclusions and generate opinions.

Literature circles support the freedom of talk through oral response amongst peers but also allows a development of effective discussion through cross-curricular concepts and subject areas. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) released in 2010 a set of requirements not only for English Language Arts but across all content areas. In doing so, an established shift promotes reading strategies and skills to be taught and applied in various content areas such as Science, Math, Social Studies, and etc. Traditionally according to McCall (2010), "typical social studies teaching has been consistent in which the instruction is teacher-centered with a focus on coverage of the textbook with supplemental teacher lectures" (p.153).

McCall's (2010) study reflects the value of literature circles within Social Studies by selecting trade books with different perspectives on historical or current topics. The trade books chosen portrayed various viewpoints on the historical event between Christopher Columbus and the Taino people, read by pre-service teachers. The teachers made critical connections, questions, and identified important ideas and themes generated from their literature circle's discussions such as similarities and differences amongst cultures. Literature circles through any content area can provide various perspectives and higher order thinking by choosing books on the same topic. In this study, learning circles made Social Studies challenging as the participants were able to "move beyond the surface

meanings or simple events described in the text to question what events happened and people's actions" (p.158).

Reader Responses

Reader responses to literature allows the teacher to understand students' comprehension through their behavior and cognition. According to Mizokawa (2000), "Much of what is addressed in theories of reader response is the cognitive-the declarative and procedural knowledge gained through reading" (p.75). Declarative knowledge is knowing about something whereas procedural is knowing how to deal with that something in the mind. Both forms of knowledge go hand in hand simultaneously during reading comprehension and reader responses present acknowledgement of student thinking. Literature circles directly involve student responses and "encourage the free expression of reader's opinions, even disagreements with one another" (p.76). Through conversation and reflection, students begin to learn how to reflect on their ways of feeling, thinking, and behaving towards what they have read.

Transactional Response Theory incorporates two distinct responses amongst students known as "aesthetic and efferent." According to Rosenblatt's (1978) seminal piece, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem,* "efferent reading response is what remains after the reading-the understanding acquired, whereas an aesthetic stance is a process of selecting ideas, sensations, feelings, and images making a unique and personal connection." Students in Britton's (1975) research action study, replicated these types of responses through talking discussions viewed as an articulate process of reading and discussing in which one child remarked, " When you're on your own you can't speak. You have to rely on yourself for what's happening. When we're in a group it's like we are working on a team" (p.35).

Student discourse in literature circles allows students to learn from each other and take a stance on voicing their perspectives on what was read. According to Gee (2001), "Children will innately develop simulation and imitate perspectives based on peers and adult interaction through conversation" (p. 714). They internalize what they hear and acknowledge and then at a certain age will communicate and take on that perspective as their own. Student dialogue in regards to grammar, portrays the perspective in which they have internalized and it becomes observable within specific situations. These situations are presented as opportunities within literature circles as various perspectives based on diverse material and texts becomes embodied and carried to the home environment. Through reflective practices, students may voice these new ideals to family members as a way of developing a connection between the two discourses of learning.

Virtual Learning Circles

The recent shift of the Common Core Standards (CCSS) establishes a drive towards technology and the implementation of new literacies practices within the classroom. The idea of new literacies focuses on ways in which "meaning-making practices are evolving under contemporary conditions that include but not limited to technological changes associated with the rise and proliferation of digital electronics" (Knobel & Lankshear, 2014, p.97). These social practices require students to bring together skills, knowledge, and technology characterized as more collaborative and participatory when establishing contexts within a social purpose. Participatory cultures are formed with multiple social media types such as podcasts, blogging, posting, and other various written script through digital tools. As educators open doors to these new processes "students begin to seek out

areas of interests and knowledge knowing that their diverse opinions are viewed not by appointed experts but by others like themselves" (p.98).

Online social forums such as discussion boards and chat rooms allow educators and students to collaborate in a supportive way, reflective of the theory's initiative. As social media options expand, educators are learning to structure their teaching practices in order for students to learn in a current manner. Whittingham's (2013) study *Literature Circles: A Perfect Match for Online Instruction* uses literature circles with his online graduate students in order to assess their attitudes in comparison to other online discussion formats. Students read a non-fiction textbook and rotated through various "roles" within their literature circle. Whittingham (2013) chose a chat room as the place for students to lead their discussion and at the end of the class used the online survey tool "Survey Monkey" to rate their experiences. Students resulted in praising the literature circle experience as "it created a sense of community" (p.56). They felt they were able to take ownership in their learning and give individual opinions rather than think of creative ways to duplicate the same response as everyone else.

Virtual literature circles encompass similar benefits in comparison to face to face forums such as increased critical thinking and motivation based on ownership of voice through response in a communal format. However in class, literature classrooms can be a struggle as "group cohesion dissolves when teachers leave the discussion and due to state testing and absences, finding time to meet continues to present a difficult hurdle" (Bowers-Campbell, 2011, p.558). Given these limitations of face to face literature circles, many researchers are examining alternative literacy practices such as online threaded discussions. Threaded discussions promote energetic interactions between students and collaborative

learning as mentioned in Bowers's (2011) qualitative research study titled, *Take It Out of Class: Exploring Virtual Literature Circles.*

The study included pre-service teachers as participants in a hybrid summer program. Bowers (2011) analyzed the "written script" through a coded system pertaining to student comments focusing on efferent and aesthetic reading stances. The findings and results concluded to the uses of online literature circles as best practices in which, "student-led discussions enabled deeper, more thought provoking discussions of texts" (p.565).

Increased motivation continues to be a conceptual strand carried through both virtual and face to face literature circles, as students are provided opportunities to engage with each other. Guthrie's (2004) *Theory of Engagement* emphasizes the intrinsic motivation reflected in the previous social forums. Guthrie's approach through CORI (Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction) advocates his theory in which the established components include "integration of social collaboration into reading response activities, emphasis on student choice for both reading texts and responses, and the emphasis of themes within reading instruction" (p. 145-162). Moreillon's (2009) qualitative study, *Putting Web 2.0 to Work,* provided student choice through a combination of structured and unstructured Web 2.0 tools to promote reader-response engagement.

Two teachers Ms. Hunt and Ms. Gray (teacher-librarian) collaborated and co-constructed lesson plans that required eighth graders to create discussion forums on the Wikis. This inquiry approach was done as a way to link print text and digital production together in order to boost student motivation and engagement while deepening their cognitive thinking and responses to literature. Various literature circles were formed focusing on various themes of selected texts such as historical fiction, fantasy, and science

fiction. Students self-directed their learning after modeled lessons in regards to online and face to face etiquette when communicating. The teacher educators imbedded Web 2.0 tools to help enhance their multimedia projects in conjunction with the selected text. Students overall in the project were able to participate as 21st Century "Wiki Workers" and became thoughtful readers, writers, and media-makers when using influenced media tools such as Voicethread and Newspaper Clipper Generator to enhance their understanding. Moreillon's (2009) study expands on the design of the virtual learning circles in favor of Guthrie's theory and development of approach through adequate forms of engagement in choice of response.

Online literature circles encompass positives in being a unique educational and diverse environment within an asynchronous nature, allowing students to respond at their own pace. In Hofmeister's (2002) qualitative study *Virtual Learning Circles*, 115 students across various levels such as elementary, secondary, and collegiate were accounted for in combination of engaged practices pertaining to online message boards within the literature circle format. The findings suggested high relationships between reading abilities and higher-order literacy using the discussion board. However the high relationship between attitudes towards school and self-perception tied with cognitive complexity and virtual learning needed to be examined further.

Conclusion

There has been a sufficient amount of research conducted in the areas of face to face and online literature circles yielding information on reader response and motivation. As the review of the literature suggests, literature circles in various formats instills proactive skills and knowledge in reflective learning practices. Sanacore (2013) states,

"These reflective practices from personal to critical are important ingredients for effective literacy learning" (p.116). Educators are able to create opportunities for students to engage within a social community through the promotion of discussion and reading comprehension. Literature circles allow teachers to choose cross-curricular texts and media tools to deepen student inquiry as a collective group. This particular study will gather additional information about the impact of literature circles on third graders in a face to face and online forum through the use of trade books on Native Americans.

Chapter 3

Research Content and Design

For this study, I will be utilizing teacher research and taking a qualitative approach. Shagoury & Power (1998) state, "teacher researchers become critical, responsive readers and users of current research" (p.8). The statement enforces the importance in staying abreast of current research, ideologies, and best practices that support the shifts in education. Qualitative research includes collecting and analyzing data in an organized, systematic way in order to articulate teacher interactions and test assumptions. Therefore in doing so, teachers are able to take a critical stance on their experience and draw conclusions with supportive evidence. In my study, I observed and collected information that supports the practice of literature circles in an online and face to face social setting. Student responses were collected in journals and online discussion boards within small groups leveled by reading ability as well as teacher research through anecdotal notes and video recordings to review and enhance reading instruction within this study.

Procedure of the Study

The research was conducted over four consecutive weeks within a third grade inclusive gifted classroom. Before beginning the study, my reading instruction focused on several comprehensive strategies such as making connections and creating statements such as, "I notice, I predict, and I think" using post-its to mark their thinking in a novel read as whole class. Mini-lessons focused on summarizing the text and making text to self and text to text connections. The Reader's Workshop model established these practices and students learned to share their understanding by recording their thoughts from post-its into a written response within their notebooks. Days followed incorporated shared responses as a whole

group to help establish expectations of what it looks and sounds when sharing ideas. How to respond with effective questions and comments was explicitly taught to help develop the reader and group's comprehension of the information read. Students were required at least once a week to write a written response in addition to a summary that was shared with teacher oral and written feedback provided.

In order to prepare students for the social forum of online discussion boards a password protected homepage was created with a tab for students to post their responses online. The first few weeks of school students had to post a response and then reply to at least two students based on generic topics such as "What is your favorite genre and book?" How to post effective online responses was explicitly taught as well as directions in how to view another's comments and posts through a "threaded format."

The first week of the study, literature circles of established roles and procedures were taught and practiced in small groups based on the same novel read independently as whole class. The first week was primarily to establish structure through a guided framework of the workshop model. The roles students could choose were the Connector, Questioner, Passage Picker, and Vocabulary Finder. Students determined their role by analyzing post-its recorded over a few chapters that reflected the strategy most predominantly applied when reading. Then students met in small groups to share their thinking not by ability as the same text was read but by role, so each member represented showcased a different comprehensive technique.

The remaining three weeks, students were assigned to read a historical fiction novel that complimented the social studies curriculum of Native Americans. The range of leveled texts was 3.0-6.0 and students were grouped with five to six members for a total of four

reading groups. The level of text complexity in terms of content was analyzed and reviewed by the school's librarian and my third grade co-worker prior to assigning the books to the group members. Face to face literature circles met the second week and online discussions weeks three and four. Students when meeting in the classroom prior to their discussion, were expected to have read a certain number of chapters including a written response. The face to face meetings were scheduled once a day Tuesday through Friday right after recess. If a day was missed due to schedule conflicts two groups met the next day. Each child knew their assigned day to meet and it was expected they were prepared for the meeting by bringing their notebook, post-its, and novel.

The online discussion boards had the same format as the face to face literature group in which students could pick either the same or another role and post their response on the discussion board. Each group had their own topic thread indicated by the title of their novel. We had access to a class set of laptops on Tuesday afternoons. Students had to post a response by Tuesday on the discussion board based on the chapters assigned and then reply no later than Friday to two members of their group at home for homework. I realized that not all of the students are able to access a computer at home as computers are shared with other household members. Therefore for those students who were unable to do so, I provided time for them to respond using the classroom computers on Friday. When posting on the discussion board they had to indicate what role they picked despite what other members chose.

The novels selected were *The Last of the Moccasins*, *The Sign of the Beaver*, *Morning Girl*, and The *Birchbark House*. *The Last of the Moccasins* written by James Cooper is adapted to a third grade reading level and is about the American frontier during

the drama of the French and Indian War. *The Sign of the Beaver,* written by Elizabeth Speare is on a fourth grade reading level and is about a young male teenager who meets a boy in the Beaver Indian Clan and begins to better understand their growing problem in adapting to the "white man" within a changing frontier. *Morning Girl,* written by Michael Dorris, is also a fourth grade level text told through two interchangeable perspectives of a 12 year old Native American girl and her younger brother of their life on an island in pre-Columbian America. Lastly, *The Birchbark House* written by Louise Edrich is on a sixth grade reading level and is told through the viewpoint of a young girl with the Omakayas Tribe, living on an island in Lake Superior around 1847.

Data Sources

Several techniques were used to gather and organize data for the qualitative research study. In the beginning, students were assessed to determine their instructional reading level. Once reading levels were established, they were put into groups of four reading levels ranging from 3.0 to 6.0. Throughout the study I coded the responses said and written in relation to the assigned literature roles: Connector (makes text to self and text to text connections), Questioner (lists important questions about the text to use during the group's discussion). Passage Picker (picks parts of the text that are the most interesting, important, or confusing that the group should look back on), and Vocabulary Finder (looks for important, interesting, confusing, or unfamiliar words that the group members need to understand). The responses were documented as face to face and online and noted if critical thinking was presented in either or both areas for each participant. To further examine the data, I used their reflective writing piece to determine what they thought their strengths were as a reader which was written in a letter format, including a summary of the chapters

read. Their analysis of themselves was compared to my notes within my teacher research journal. My teacher journal was used as a reflective tool to help promote instructional decisions throughout the study. At the end of the study, students got to rate their experience of face to face and online literature circles using a created survey.

Data Analysis

The data recorded throughout the study was utilized to conclude the effects of literature circles within two social forums, online and face to face in the classroom. Discussions were recorded using the iPad and written responses were posted online to the student discussion board located on the classroom's private homepage. The written letters were used to compare notes from my observations to what the students thought about themselves as analytical readers and the effective strategies they felt were most prominent in their learning. Several categories were noted that identified observable patterns and themes emerged from the data collection. These findings will be discussed in detail in chapter four of this study.

Context

District. Brandywine is a public school district in northern New Castle County that is comprised of the towns Bellefonte, and Claymont in the state of Delaware. The school district is 33 square miles and encompasses a portion of students from the city of Wilmington. In the state of Delaware, parents are able to "choice" their child into a school district by filling out an application even though transportation is not provided outside the parameters of the district. Transportation is provided for students who live a mile and half away from their "feeder" school which their placement is mapped out to be considered in

the range of transportation. As of September 2013, the estimated population was about 10, 802 students overall according to the district's website. In continuation of race and ethnicity from 2012-2013, the population of American Indian was 0.7%, African American 36.6%, Asian 5.9%, Hispanic 5.1%, and White 50.3%. In relation to enrollment characteristics, English Language Learners were 4.7%, Low Income 43.8%, Special Education 11.6%, Drop-Out Rate 3.8%, and Graduation Rate 83.7%. According to the United States Census Bureau (2013), New Castle County is home to 538,479 residents, the median household income was about $64,670 and the poverty rate 0.7 percent compared to 11.5 percent for the entire state.

School. Mount Pleasant Elementary school's diversity according to GreatSchools.org (2013), consists of 46% White, 38% Black, 6% Asian, and 5% Hispanic. The percentage in regards to "choice" enrollment is 53% of students who attend this school through their feeder pattern assigned, 34% of students who "choice" this school who live in the district, and 13% who live outside the district which includes vocational and charter schools. The school's total population is about 805 students and 59 teachers. The students eligible for free or reduced lunch is about 44% in comparison to the state's overall 49 percent. Brandywine is the only school district in the state that offers a K-8 self-contained gifted program. There are two Kindergarten gifted classes and three first through third grade. Students move throughout the gifted program finishing 4-5th grades in Claymont Elementary and then 6-8th grades in P.S. DuPont Middle School. Mount Pleasant is considered a Title One School due to the regular education population, which consists of four classrooms from Kindergarten through Fifth grade.

I teach a self-contained gifted third grade class and for this particular study I decided to choose nine students at random out of twenty-three total. I organized four literature groups based on reading abilities ranging from 3.0-6.0. Three students were picked from the lowest instructional group which consisted of one African American and one White male and female. Even though there are four groups the two middle groups were instructionally at the same level of fifth grade which included two White males and females. Lastly, my highest instructional reading group at 6.0 included one White male and one female Asian American in the study. The study group included nine participants whose ages were 8-9 years old. Chapter four discusses the results of the data collected, my teacher research journal, student discussion posts, documented student discussions from my iPad, and various artifacts such as the students' reflections and surveys.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Chapter four discusses and analyzes the findings of my study which aims to answer the question, "What happens when third graders participate in literature circles face to face and online?" The chapter focuses on two major themes developed from the study: motivation and type of responses. Subtopics emerged from the big ideas such as participation through student interest and suggestions for improvement. These general themes occurred overtime through continuous analysis of my data collection which includes conversations from the student discussion board, videotaped sessions, teacher research journal, and student surveys.

An alignment tool known has Depth of Knowledge, was used to analyze student responses.

Depth of Knowledge (2014) was created by Norman Webb and according to New York City of Education:

"Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) provides a vocabulary and a frame of reference when thinking about our students and how they engage with the content. DOK offers a common language to understand "rigor," or cognitive demand, in assessments, as well as curricular units, lessons, and tasks. Webb developed four DOK levels that grow in cognitive complexity and provide educators a lens on creating more cognitively engaging and challenging tasks" (Webb, July 24, 2005).

The first level of complexity is known as "recall" and refers to a recall of a fact, information, or procedure in which processes is on a lower level. Level two is

"skill/concept" in which students are required to use information or conceptual knowledge when reading content. The third level is "strategic thinking" and requires reasoning, developing a plan, or a sequence of steps on a higher level of complexity. The fourth and final level is "extended thinking" which requires investigation over time, time to think and process and multiple conditions of the problem. Throughout my inquiry I reference the DOK levels in regards to the responses made in both social forums.

Student Responses

Throughout the study, student responses were critiqued and monitored based on the Native American novel they read within their literature circle groups. There was a total of nine students conducted in the study and were assigned a similar novel thematically. They were also grouped based on their instructional reading level within the range of 3.0-6.0 such as: *Last of the Mohicans* 3.0 (Al, Greer, and Shane), *Morning Girl* 4.9 (Tommy, Keiri), *Sign of the Beaver* 4.9 (Beck, Haley), and *The Birchbark House* 6.0 (Fenn, Sonia). Student responses documented online were over a period of two consecutive weeks, whereas face to face conversations was one video-taped session that lasted for about 10-15 minutes. The students were given opportunities to post in class and had the option to post additionally at home through a password protected homepage.

Overall online and face to face responses were similarly grouped into five categories; questions, connections, conclusions, recall, and vocabulary. Students were able to pick their "role" within each group based on their synthesis of information from post-it notes recorded within their novel. As mentioned in chapter two, Guthrie's (2004) *Theory of Engagement* emphasizes on "student choice" for both reading texts and responses, and the emphasis of themes within reading instruction" (p. 145-162).Their choice of jobs were

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Questioner, Passage Picker, Vocabulary Finder, and Connector. Initial responses were planned and constructed from student choice in preparation for their discussions, however replies to one another evolved more naturally based on the dynamics and flow of the conversations.

Questions raised from the discussions totaled twenty-five inquiring based on vocabulary words or story events. Greer asked the most questions and that was understandable as she indicated the role she chose the most was Questioner from the student survey. However many of her replies in response to others were also questions based on content. She posted two questions online, "In chapter 7 I read that the Huron's knife shined? Why do you think it shined? In chapter 3, I read their leader lost his way. Are they going to give up?" (student discussion board, November 18, 2014). Greer's questions alluded to responses that would be considered a level two on the Depth of Knowledge tool. They required her group members to infer and predict based on events in the story. Beck also picked being the Questioner as the role most often favored and his questions were based on domain specific vocabulary words. He posted," My first question is what is a squaw? The part in the text is "Squaw work." My second question is what does "Piz wat" mean? I wrote in my journal, "Beck inquires about words that are academically specific that helps the reader understand the language the author chose to include in regards to the Native American culture." (teacher research journal, November 18, 2014).

The questions were categorized pertaining to the Depth of Knowledge tool in regards to the type of answers that were acquired from the initial question. The data analysis concluded ten questions considered a one referring to recall of elements in relation to the story structure. For instance Beck asked, "Matt stood at the edge of the clearing for some

time after his father had gone out. What happened before that?" (face to face discussion, November 11, 2014). This question alludes to a specific event that occurred in the story and required a literal response. There were eight questions considered a DOK level two where a skill or concept was represented. Haley asks, "What is a blender bust?" Beck replies, "I think blender bust is a hunting gun and Attean would use it for hunting bulls and something else like deer. I know because I read a lot of books and I remembered reading that" (face to face discussion, November 12, 2014). Haley's question related to domain specific vocabulary referenced in the text and Beck used context clues and schemata to infer the word's meaning. There were only three questions considered strategic thinking, accounted for as a level three on the DOK tool. Sonia posts, "I read in the chapter Maple Sugar Time, Omakayas told Nokomis about the voices that she heard, she did not mention the gray mushroom that she found right after the bear cubs left. My question is, why did Omakayas not mention the gray mushroom to Nokomis?" (student discussion board, November 26, 2014). This question related to symbolism of the mushroom which was purposefully written by the author to indicate the mushroom's effect on the characters. This question presents critical thinking in relation to the underlining meaning interpreted from Sonia.

Prior to the study, students were taught how to make textual connections including text to self and text to text. The data collection indicated Tommy creating the most connections out of thirteen overall from the conducted group members. Tommy's responses were mostly text to self-connections about his family in relation to what was read in the text or in response to another's comment.

Tommy's (2014) discussion post online:

Student 1: My second question is, "Why was Morning Girl so mean to her brother?"

Tommy: (Student 1), I think it is just typical sisters because you don't know what terrible things my sister Elli does. First of all, she lies and tries to get attention. Secondly, she breaks, steals, and hides a lot of my things like once she, broke used, and even pretended that that $20 book was her book. Third, does stuff that is unbearable. Lastly she doesn't help my family all she does is read but, still takes the credit she doesn't listen to me she only listens if my parents yell it to her a lot of times. That is terrible things that typical sisters do. (student discussion board)

Tommy enjoyed making connections and continues the process by asking his peers to respond which demonstrates a reciprocal relationship forming online. Tommy's response was not directly aligned with the story but it brought a sense of group harmony and developed conversation. Other students in the study made one connection but it was brief and did not develop a strong aesthetic connection to learning.

Students in the study made about eight literal responses that were explicit to their understanding of the text. Most of the responses were considered a one in reference to Depth of Knowledge, in meaning most responses were of "recall" from the story. For instance, Greer posts the question "Why did the sword shine?" and Al's posts in response, "Because they cleaned it." His reply was literal and did not go into depth on a critical standpoint. Most literal responses were replies to questions such as Fenn's reply to the question, "What does keenly mean?" He responds, "I think it's an adjective because we went over that word last year I believe in unit 12" (face to face discussion, November 11,

2014). The response was not within context of the story but through memorization. Sonia made a comment in response to her question "Omakayas rescued a bird and it got into the moccasin but the Omakayas put the bird into a pouch, so how did the bird get into the moccasin? And I found the answer in the text, she put the bag on the floor and the bird hopped out" (face to face to discussion, November 11, 2014). Sonia was able to reflect on her metacognition by stating she found the answer in the text.

The second highest amount of responses resulted with the concept of Vocabulary. Fenn's role mostly picked was the Vocabulary Finder and a majority of his posts and responses were related to vocabulary words specifically domain specific to the Native American culture. For example, Fenn posts, "First on page 62, it has the word "quarrel" I read, they had settled down to quarrel canoe and now I was steaming mad. (HINT HINT Deydey's Ghost story) The word means to unwrap something I think well anyway if I got the wrong meaning reply to me." Fenn's uses context clues in the text to determine the meaning and references the event in the plot for his peer's to refer to when responding to his post. Another example is when Fenn states, "The word I picked is moccasins because people may not know what that is because it's cultural" (student discussion board, November 18, 2014).

Other group members in the study picked words they thought were interesting but used a dictionary as a resource to understand the meaning instead of making an inference base on context clues. Shane posts, "It is on page 56 and 57. The word is Grimaced. The definition is to show your teeth or to twist your face." He also posts, "The word is Colonel. The page number is 88. A colonel is a very high ranked person in the military" (student discussion board, November 25, 2014). Even though Shane and Fenn's favorite role was

the "Vocabulary Finder," how they picked their choice of words and reasoning of why in relation to their novel and understanding was different.

Conclusions from the context were commonly represented as a three on the DOK tool meaning strategic thinking was demonstrated. Haley's posts and comments were mostly conclusions based on her role of picking passages from the text that determined importance.

Haley (2014) posts online:

"I've chose passage picker. My first one is when Attean invites Matt to his village. I think this is important because it means they are starting to like each other more. I found this on page #79. My second one is when Matt is using Attean's technique. I think this is important because he listened and understood it so he wanted to try it. I found it on page 124. (student discussion board)

Haley's posts demonstrated critical thinking in regards to character development in the book *Sign of the Beaver*. She was able to understand the connection between the two main characters by drawing conclusions based on the character's actions and decisions. As referred to in chapter two, Bowers's (2011) qualitative research study titled, *Take It Out of Class: Exploring Virtual Literature Circles* it was stated "student-led discussions enabled deeper, more thought provoking discussions of texts" (p.565). Haley's discussion point enabled critical thinking portrayed online to her group members and brought a higher level of understanding to the conversation.

Other conclusions were in relation to the novel's plot and sequence of events. Shane, who read *Last of the Mohicans*, initial comments were only about vocabulary words

he found interesting but his reply on the student discussion represented critical thinking as he posts a reply to someone's question, "When in the book it said the silence of the grave it mean that it was very quiet. It was quiet because they had won the war" (student discussion board, December 2, 2014). This conclusion provided in depth thinking and the student discussion board provided a forum for Shane to post his thoughts. I wrote in my teacher research journal, "Wow! Shane made a critical point in relation to what he has read here. I am glad he starting to come out of his shell more and respond to others instead of only talking about vocabulary words" (December 2,2014).

As referenced in chapter two, Rosenblatt's (1978) seminal piece, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem,* "efferent reading response is what remains after the reading-the understanding acquired, whereas an aesthetic stance is a process of selecting ideas, sensations, feelings, and images making a unique and personal connection." A majority of the student responses were efferent, drawing meaning and literal understandings from the text, showcased throughout their discussions. Aesthetic stances rarely occurred within each novel besides *Morning Girl* where the relationships between the two characters as siblings ignited personal connections stated by Tommy.
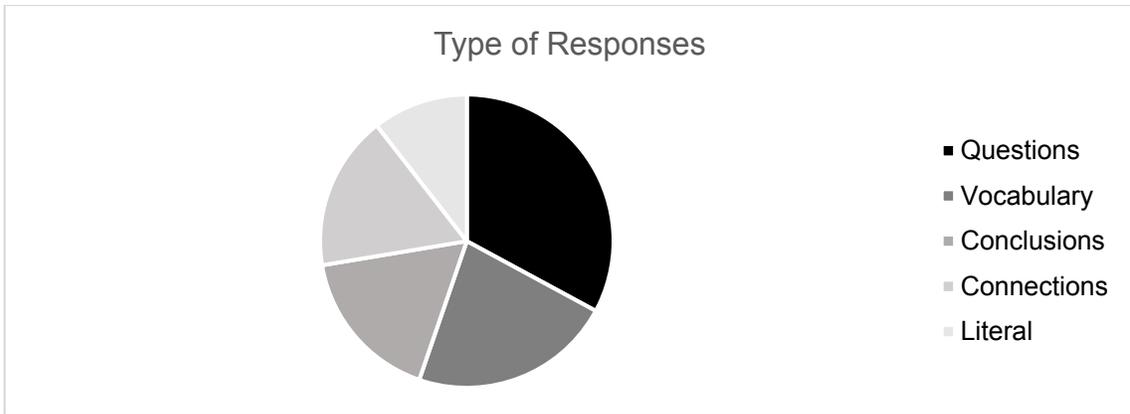
Figure 1. Type of Responses. This figure illustrates the various types of responses from the participants.
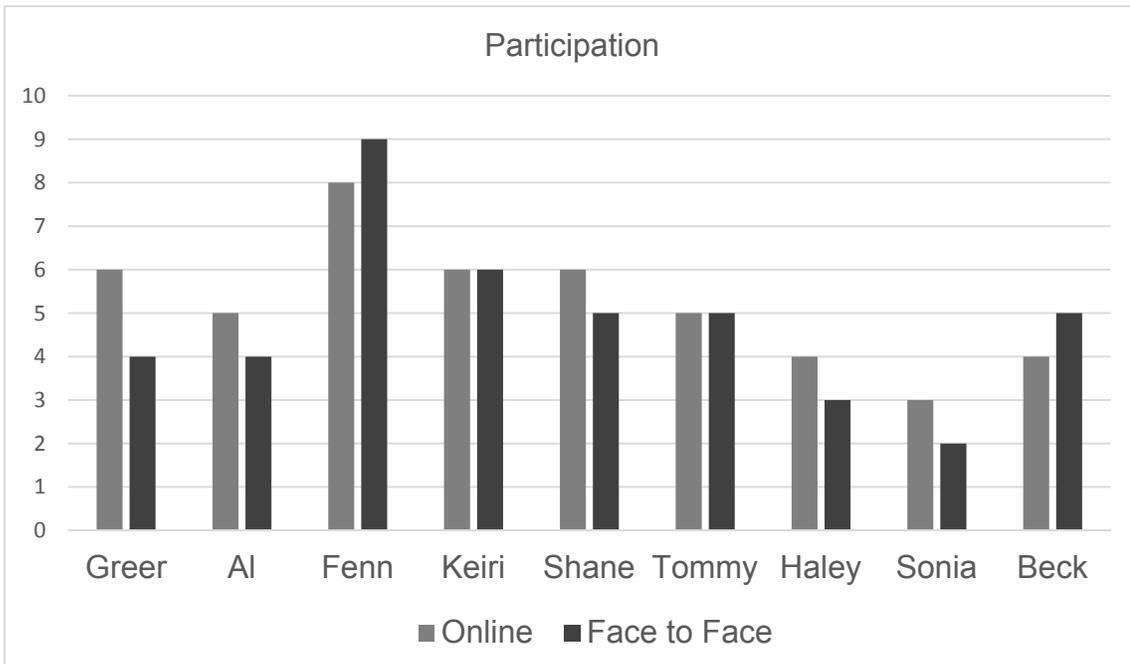

Figure 2. Participation. This figure shows the number of times a student participated.

Motivation

Motivation was analyzed through student participation in relation to the number of posts online and comments made within in-class discussions. Participation was accounted

for without teacher prompting as some discussions required me to speak up to help develop the flow of the conversation. Therefore I did not consider responses that were initiated by me to the students for my analysis. In reference to the bar chart, student responses were comparative based on the number of posts online verses face to face in the classroom. Fenn had the most number of responses overall with a total of 17. He is talkative in class and often shares many in depth insights on various topics. His favorite type of book club according to the student survey was online and so the data chart represents slightly more responses online than in face to face.

Surprisingly students who rarely participate in whole group discussions showed more interest in literature circles such as Keiri and Shane. Both of these students are quite in class but showed a higher participation rate in their literature circle as Keiri totaled 12 responses and Shane 11. As referenced in chapter two, King's (2001) article *The Role of Talk Within Literature Circle,* he states, "Guided discussions can encourage children to be readers, by enabling them to recognize reading as an active desirable social process rather than as a private activity" (p. 32). The social forums provided an outlet for Shane and Keiri to speak in a comfortable manner rather than having them view reading as an individual task. Even though Keiri and Shane showed a change in behavior other students such as Haley and Sonia did not represent a similar result. Sonia and Haley are both shy, quiet students and often do not respond in whole group discussions unless called on. Based on their data, the literature circles provided opportunities for them to speak but they did what was expected and nothing more in response to student interest.

Student surveys inquired about the role they felt they chose the most for each literature circle and why, what type of social forum they liked the best and why, and if they

felt anything needed to be improved. Greer indicated her favorite social forum was online and it showed when she posted more responses online than in the face to face discussion. I also noted, "Greer needs teacher prompting to speak in face to face discussions but not on the student discussion board." (teacher research journal, December 3, 2014). Whereas other students such as Beck were quite adamant about disliking the posts when he wrote, "I did not like posting online because if I forgot then I had to do it at home and like I speaking to people face to face." Although some students prefer to type at home as Fenn writes, "I liked online, it is good typing practice and you can do it at home" (student survey, December 5, 2014).

There was not a large disparity between online and face to face in terms of student choice. Four students liked face to face, three online, and two both overall as their favorite social forum. Sonia writes, "I like the student discussion board and face to face in class even though the student discussion board has many errors, it is still fun to read other posts" (student survey, December 5,2014). In future planning, there is not enough data to allude more of one social forum than the other in terms of motivation. However literature circles did provide a platform for communication for some students who are not motivated speakers in class.

The survey prompted student reflection in which students wrote why they chose that particular role. Based on Table 3, students who concluded the role they chose the most was reflected in their responses online and in-class. Fenn wrote in the survey, "I chose to be the Vocabulary Finder because I thought it was easy because there are interesting words in the book." Most of his responses were vocabulary based and so his comment was accurate. Greer's responses were almost all questions and she wrote in the survey, "I picked

questioner the most because I had <u>a lot </u>of questions in the book." Most of Greer's questions

were literal which alludes to the notion of the difficulty in her understanding of the story.

Table 1. Role Picked Most Often. This chart shows the amount of times the participant chose a role most often from the student survey.

Role Picked Most Often

Questioner	Passage Picker	Vocabulary Finder	Connector
Keiri	Haley	Shane	Tommy
Sonia		Fenn	
Greer			
Al			
Beck			

Table 2. Favorite Type of Book Club. This chart illustrates the participants' favorite type of book club from the student survey.

Favorite Type of Book Club

Face to Face	Online	Both
Keiri	Greer	Haley
Shane	Al	Sonia
Tommy	Fenn	
Beck		

Suggestions for Improvement

Student surveys addressed areas in need of improvement based on opinions of the

literature circles or as referred to in their survey "book clubs." Most of the students replied

with "nothing" or "It was fine." However those students who made recommendations

noted, about wanting to meet more often and the idea of choice in the text. For example

Haley writes, "Yes, one thing maybe like we did with the tribes we wanted to research in

class. We get to choose what book we like to read in book club." Fenn also writes, "One thing is we could have had more meetings for our club" (student survey, December 5, 2015). The idea of student choice from Haley was not the first time I have heard that in class. Since the setup of the student discussion board, students such as Fenn have been requesting to meet online about a book he and his friends are commonly reading independently. The idea of starting their own book club without my suggestion shows a great deal of motivation and excitement to read. I wrote, "I am so excited the students want to do an online book club of their own! I think the literature circles helped provide a purpose for their own reading" (teacher research journal, December 1, 2014).

In my own reflection an area in need of improvement is the layout of the student discussion board. The students type their initial post and when someone replies to that post it automatically goes to the bottom of the page instead of directly underneath the initial response. There are two layouts to view "classic and threaded." The classic layout is the easiest for the students to view however if they want to see who responded to their post they need to click on the threaded format which is more difficult. I concluded the online format limited the number of posts in regards to the conversation. For example, if Student 1 posted a question and Student 2 replied then it was rare that Student 1 would go back and read what Student 2 posted because it was not directly underneath the initial post. Whereas in face to face discussions, students had multiple responses back and forth based on one comment at a quicker pace.

Summary of Data Analysis

Students in the study overall were motivated and represented interest of both discussion formats. Both forums provided opportunities to those who do not commonly

speak in whole group discussions. The students enjoyed meeting together and wanted to meet more often. The generated responses enabled me to review what areas of understanding students felt most comfortable in sharing when reading texts based on similar content. The component of the student discussion board allowed voices to be heard within an unlimited amount of time and students were referring to their book and other resources when providing input. The face to face component allowed consecutive responses based on a question and comment as participation was taken into account through video. The option of "choice" of which role allowed students to participate easily without apprehension as they were willing and excited to be a part of a group based on their own findings and understandings.

Looking Ahead

Chapter four discussed findings and analyzed data taken from the study. Chapter five will discuss a summary of the findings, conclusions, limitations, and implications. In addition to recommendations for future research will be mentioned in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, Limitations, and Implications for the Field

In conclusion of my research, third graders developed meaningful conversations and student interests within the social forums of literature circles online and face to face in class. Common themes developed from student responses were questions, conclusions, connections, and sustained comprehension based on literal information from the stories they read. Student participation online and face to face were a reflection of student interest and engagement. Data reflected participation that was present in both social forums and provided a platform for some students who often do not contribute in whole group discussions. The Depth of Knowledge reference tool was used when thinking about how the students engaged with the content through the student discussion board and face to face meetings. Ultimately the project's findings were beneficial and provided evidence on the positive aspects of literature circles as a process to develop comprehension and understanding.

Conclusions

In looking at the results of the study, many conclusions were made based on the data collection. The analysis of the type of responses overall concluded that the most responses were questions. However most generated questions were from one student. The type of questions overall were generated depending on the level of the complexity of the texts. For instance, the group that read *Last of the Mohicans* most of the questions generated were literal and text dependent. Whereas those students who read *The Birchbark House*, a higher leveled text, the questions were related to character development and domain specific vocabulary related to the Native American culture. Students prior to reading their

chapter book, did not have a strong background knowledge on the Native American tribe referenced in the novel. Therefore as the students generated lengthy conversations about the vocabulary words and story elements, I was able to conclude it was because of their lack of prior knowledge. If the students were frontloaded with information prior to their assigned text, specifically in relation to the vocabulary referenced, they would have been able to make even stronger associations and connections. Whereas most conclusions and understandings represented in the forums were unraveling the story structure of the texts.

Overall within both social forums the number of responses totaled sixty-nine from the nine students who participated in the study. Even though most responses were related to the understanding of the story structure and plot, higher order thinking was identified through critical responses portrayed in Table 5. Online critical responses resulted as seventeen whereas face to face was seven. Students had more opportunities to post online than meet face to face which explains the contrast in the amount of critical responses. An example of a critical response would be considered a 3 using the DOK, in meaning to strategic thinking and reasoning. For example, in a face to face discussion, Fenn references a caption in the text to determine the meaning of the word "Calico" and how that describes the clothing of the Native American tribe he is reading about (face to face discussion, November 15, 2015).

Another example is when Haley (2014) posts:

Attean invites Matt to his village. I think this is important because it means they are starting to like each other more and when Matt starts using Attean's hunting technique. Matt is listening and understands what Attean is trying to say. (student discussion board)

Haley's critical analysis of the characters' relationship citing evidence in the text, proves how literature circles provides differentiated learning opportunities on various levels of comprehension.
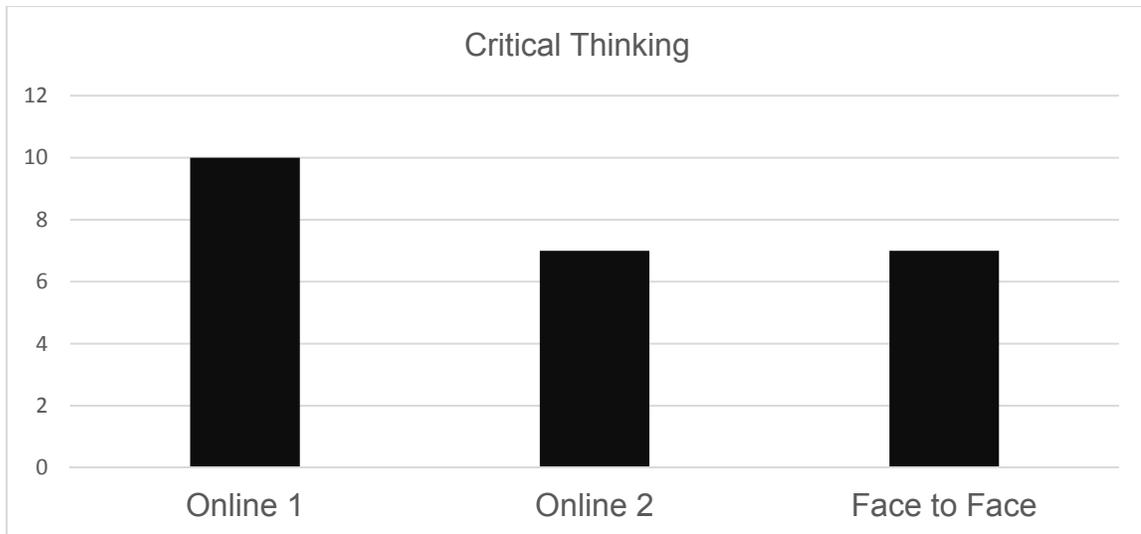

Figure 3. Critical Thinking. This chart shows where critical thinking was present during the participants' book club sessions.

Limitations

There were a few limitations during the implementation of the study and when gathering data. One limitation was the availability and use of technology in the building. The students were allowed to have access to the laptops as a whole once a week in the afternoon. During the time frame of the study, the "assigned" day was often interrupted due to days off from school and internet complications. Therefore students were asked to make some posts at home for homework. Some students in the study liked being able to have the option of using their home computer while others did not like having to do the

assignment as "homework." I communicated to the parents that they were not allowed to have parental input in their child's responses online, however I was not able to logistically prove that did not happen. As mentioned in chapter four, the layout of the student discussion board had the posts as replies at the bottom of the screen instead of under the initial comment. Therefore students who made initial posts usually did not respond to someone's reply to their comment. Limiting the number of responses challenged the students to maneuver throughout the discussion board more often.

Another restriction was when the students were ready to post, the computer programmed the former student's name who used that same computer before. For instance, Haley used a particular computer for the first time and that computer programmed her name whenever anyone entered the student discussion board. Therefore I had to individually "logout" the students each time they used a different computer using my personal information and password, limiting the students from using the computers in the classroom more freely.

A final limitation was the shortage of time throughout the projected study. The students were only able to post online within two consecutive weeks and meet face to face once for about fifteen minutes. As a teacher researcher, I would have wanted to acquire more information from the students meeting face to face in order to have more comparable data in the collection. Conducting the study in the beginning of the year with the amount of days off and preparation needed for students to access the discussion board effectively was a challenge.

Implications for the Field

In reflection of the study, recommendations occurred from the student surveys. One in particular was to increase the amount of meetings for the "book club" to meet, in reference to the face to face in-class discussions. In the future, it would be beneficial for students to meet more often in order to develop group harmony and collaboration based on a common topic. As a teacher, it was easier to assign students to post and analyze data on the student discussion board rather than video-tape one group at a time, making sure the rest of the class remained on task and quiet.

Another suggestion that arose from student conversations, was the idea of student choice with the selection of text to read. One student in the study asked if he could create an online book club based on a common book some of his friends not in the study were reading in class. This type of collaborative grouping was interesting in the fact that it was built on student motivation and could open up the possibility of other type of collaborative reading or possibly writing projects. Another student wrote in her survey that she liked in class how they were able to choose what topic to research and if she could do that with the next book they read. In doing so, students could strengthen their responses by citing information from sources of interest. Students could additionally read a more complex text because of their friends' interests. The ideal of "student choice" was referenced in chapter two in relation to Guthrie's (2004) *Theory of Engagement* advocating for "integration of social collaboration into reading response activities, emphasis on student choice for both reading texts and responses" (p.145-162). These types of suggestions support the notion of literature circles motivating student interests enough for them to want to develop their own collaborative groupings.

Further studies could also allow for student choice in text and use of interactive tools online. In Moreillon's (2009) qualitative study referenced in chapter two, "students were provided choice through a combination of structured and unstructured Web 2.0 tools to promote reader-response engagement such as through Voicethreads." Data collected in this study was through the student discussion boards based on typed responses. If more time was permitted, it would be interesting to see how students would choose to respond online given options to show their understanding such as Voicethreads, Power Point, or video.

After analyzing student responses electronically online and by video, I was able to conclude students had a lack of background knowledge in regards to Native American cultures. Many students asked or made comments based on literal analysis of information read in their novel. If students had the option of their choice of text, based on their familiarity of the author or topic, than possibly more outcomes could have represented critical thinking.

Teachers would be able to differentiate their instruction based on the type of responses such as those that surfaced from this particular study. Using the DOK as a frame of reference is another suggestive tool to use when analyzing student responses in literature circles. Teachers would be able to not only adapt to the rigor of the student's learning but instill fundamental learning blocks to enrich their thinking.

A paramount shift in education is that new literacies is the social practice that requires students to bring together skills, knowledge, and technology as mentioned in chapter two (Knobel & Lankshear, 2014, p.97). Allowing students to post discussions online as a form of communication is a step in the right direction in preparing our students

for future demands in literacy. This study also brought upon the ideals of effective communication. According to Roberts and Billing (2009), " teachers sometimes forget that learning to communicate *is* learning to think and like writing, conversation requires constant and ongoing practice" (pp.2-3). Literature circles is an instructional process that teachers can use to promote operative learning through conversations that teach students to become active listeners and speakers. As for the ultimate goal in our global environment according to Roberts & Billings (2009) is "being able to communicate successfully as the key to employment, to citizenship, and a quality life" and using literature circles as one teaching method in literacy is helping students to reach their ultimate potential (p.1).

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Appendix A

Student Survey Response Sheet

Name_____

Native American novel title_____

1. What role did you choose the most in your book club?

    _____

2. Why did you decide to pick that role?

    _____

    _____

    _____

3. Did you like participating in book clubs on the student discussion board, face to face
    in class, or both? Tell me why.

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

4. Is there anything you didn't like or you think can be improved on in your book club?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

Appendix B

Student Literature Role Sheet

Literature Circles

Show "Reading is Thinking" by adding post-its of your choice to the assigned reading in class. Then decide what role you would like to be based on your post-its. Fill out the information to share with your group.

- -

Name:_____   Date_____

Name of Text:_____

Name of Group Members:_____

Group Member Roles: (Choose a role and write your response in your reader's notebook)

Connector (Make connections with yourself, other texts, or the world. Then share the similarities or differences you made and how it helps your understand the story better)

Questioner (list important questions about the text to use during your group's discussion. Then right down the answers as your group shares what they think)

Part read in the text	Question	What the group says

For example: I read Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. couldn't play with his neighbors across the street because they were white. Why didn't his parents go and speak to his neighbor's parents?

Passage Picker (pick parts of the text that are the most interesting, important, or confusing that the group should look back on)

Page	Reason for picking	What the group says

Vocabulary Finder (look for important, interesting, confusing, or unfamiliar words that the group members need to understand)

Word	Page number	Definition of what you think	What the group says

Appendix C

Student Discussion Board

Keiri

Reply | Threaded | More
Nov 18, 2014; 11:29am
  Re: Morning Girl-Literature Circle

In reply to this post by JPurifico

I am a passage picker.
The part in the text I found was when on page 47 it says:It was the time for each person to tell a story,

 to act it out while the rest of us held our heads in fear or covered our mouth when the laughter grew

to strong to contain. I thought it would be fun to telln a story of what happened to me.

Tommy

Reply | Threaded | More
Nov 18, 2014; 11:37am
  Re: Morning Girl-Literature Circle

In reply to this post by JPurifico

Hi everyone,
 I am the connector. In chapter 6 Starboy was pulled away [page 38-44]. I have a text to text

 connection when in Ocean City New Jersey me and my cousins were playing in the ocean and

we decided we were going to do something else and as we were going out we realized we

could'nt move. I was the first one to get out and as my cousins were crying there parents got

them out and now, im the only kid who wasn't scared. but we barely made it out.

In chapter four on page 24 it says "I thought about how good it would feel when the waves splashed

high enough to sprinkle drops of water onto my skin. I think Starboy would get washed away

by the waves like seaweed what do you think why?

Nov 28, 2014; 10:19am
    Re: SECOND POST-The Sign of the Beaver 11/24/14

6 posts

In reply to this post by JPurifico

Hello I'm going to be questioner these are my questions:
1. How could snow possibly reach his house's latch? Page; 128
2. What is hemlock? Page: 129
3. What does spunky mean? Page: 134
4. What animal is a caribou? Page: 135

Haley

Nov 30, 2014; 11:15am
    Re: SECOND POST-The Sign of the Beaver 11/24/14

1 post

In reply to this post by JPurifico

Hi

I've chose passage picker . My first one is when Attean invites Matt to his

village. I think this is important because it means they are starting to

like each other more .I found this on page#79

My second one is when Matt is using Attean's tecnequie . I think this is

important because he listens and understood it he wanted to try it.

50

Shane
Reply | Threaded | More ∨ ⚑
Nov 29, 2014; 2:49pm
   Re: SECOND POST-The Last of the Mohicans

In reply to this post by JPurifico

I am a vocabulary picker.

The word is parried. The page number is 74. A parry is to defend yourself

by turning or pushing aside (a punch, a weapon, etc.)

6 posts

Greer
Reply | Threaded | More ∨ ⚑
Nov 30, 2014; 1:32pm
   Re: SECOND POST-The Last of the Mohicans

In reply to this post by JPurifico

Dear Group,
I am the questioner. I saw in the book on page 94 most of them spoke

French. Why do you think most of them spoke French?

 I also saw on page 103 that Uncas had warriors.

Who do you think where his warriors?

6 posts

Al
Reply | Threaded |

More
Nov 18, 2014;
10:55am
**Re: The Last of the
Mohicans**

In reply to this post by JPurifico

I am the questioner.On chapter7 in the story it said "blood spread across his

chest" Dose anyone know how that happend.

Fenn

Nov 18, 2014; 11:31am
Re: The Birchbark House

In reply to this post by Sonia

Maybye there are alot more responsibilities and he is strict when home or

frusturated?

4 posts

Sonia

Nov 18, 2014; 11:24am
Re: The Birchbark House

In reply to this post by -

I think Albert LaPautre shares his dreams because he wants to know the

meaning of his dream, and Deydey usually shares the meaning.

2 posts