Promoting authenticity and engagement through inquiry, dialogue, and personal connections: An action research project based on Weinstein's "Train of Thought"

by

Theodore F. Fabiano

B.S., University of Kansas, 1988
M.S., University of Kansas, 1994

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

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Abstract

This action research project investigates the effects of a critical literacy practice, the "Train of Thought," as applied by students to a complex text. It is implemented at a time when cries of "students aren't reading" and declining test scores are tempered with calls for relevance and equity. The intention is to determine to what extent this inquiry-based strategy creates opportunities for advanced literate behaviors while inviting student ownership of the learning experience. The theoretical framework is based on constructivist learning theory and critical learning theory. The study takes place during the first semester of the 2021 school year and January of 2022 at Mountain Peak High School, a northern Colorado 9-12 public school with an approximate enrollment of 715 students. Junior-level students from eight classes -- five on-level ELA 11 classes and three Advanced Placement English Language classes -- generate the artifacts and reflections used for this study. Two colleagues join me in implementing the strategy and reflecting on the experience. Students are prompted to use a set of criteria to generate an "interior monologue" of their thinking about a text, followed by small group and whole class discussion. Four possible outcomes of their thinking-- speculating, clarifying the question, eliminating possible answers, and demonstrating confusion – are coded for one student product from each class to identify the benefits of "thinking on paper." In this study, teachers and students are interviewed, and participating students are surveyed to determine attitudes toward the strategy and gain multiple perspectives on its effectiveness. The goal of the "Train of Thought" is to address concerns that students are ill-prepared for 21st century demands of independent thinking and problem-solving by providing guided training and putting power (and expectations of initiative) in the hands of the student.

Keywords: inquiry-based learning, student-centered learning, scaffolded reading experience, student ownership, critical reading, metacognition

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Major Professor
Dr. J. Spencer Clark

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The pervasiveness of the "read the passage and answer the questions" model of reading instruction has troubled me since I began teaching. Relying more on my sense as a teacher than research, I could still see the disconnect between a claim that learning happened and a limited set of responses to teacher-initiated prompts. Or, as a frustrated colleague said to no one in particular while grading "reading checks" in the department office, "These quizzes tell me nothing."

In my eighth year of teaching, I was asked directly by our principal to do what it took to raise our state reading scores. She said that this was one of her job targets, and that her evaluation depended on our success. Being one to embrace a challenge that had measurable results, I devised a plan to raise those scores. My first gambit was to have students realize the importance of reading with a purpose. "Why do we read?" I asked, sounding every bit like a movie teacher. Without a trace of sarcasm, a student quickly replied, "To answer the questions at the end."

This is a concern that has followed me through my various roles in education, from teacher to instructional coach for literacy in content areas and back again. I am invested in the cause of reading and writing being tools students use for growth and self-discovery. While there are several effective approaches I discovered in Larry Weinstein's *Writing at the Threshold* (2001), the "Train of Thought" - based on his Teaching Idea #7 – is the strategy I use most often (see *Fig.1.1)*. The strategy, predicated on student-initiated inquiry and connections to personal experience and prior learning, invites the reader to "think on paper" – to write a monologue of their grappling with a complex text.

Figure 1.1. *A modification of ideas and examples presented in Larry Weinstein's "Writing at the Threshold: Featuring 56 Ways to Prepare High School and College Students to Think and Write at the College Level" (2001).*

Train of Thought

Directions: Create your own Train of Thought in the right-hand column based on the passage below, then answer the follow-up question. Use the following criteria to guide your Train of Thought:

1. an observation/opinion
2. a question
3. connection to previous learning
4. connection to personal experience
5. Length (including all four of the above criteria at least once; fill the second column with your own thoughts)

Text: Poem	**Student's Train of Thought:**
The Red Wheelbarrow so much depends upon a red wheel barrow glazed with rain water beside the white chickens.	What does William Carlos Williams try to say in his "The Red Wheelbarrow"? Nothing, if you ask me. It's just description, a nice picture--- wheelbarrow, just after a rain, there's no one around (did the people living there take shelter from the rain? is that why they're nowhere in sight?) no, no one living but some white chickens. Actually, the more I think of it, the nicer, more pleasing, this picture becomes. And isn't that enough--- to please a reader by description? A writer doesn't always have to be "saying" something. Let me look at the poem again, in case I missed something first time through. "so much depends" "depends"--- What am I supposed to do with "depends"? "depends upon"=can't do without. Right? What can't do without that wheelbarrow? The picture, I suppose--- Without that wheelbarrow, the picture would be different---just white chickens! I can see already that this is more than a case of description. When I describe, I-I- Well, just paint the scene as I see it and leave it at that,

	the way I report on sports for the high school paper: "With two minutes left to play, the Rockville squad broke from its huddle in a brisk round of claps (though maybe even that isn't just describing, since I want to do more than describe-- I wanted to get my reader excited.) Anyhow, "depends" means there's *definitely* more than describing going on. I still think "depends" makes the poem more than just description, but I haven't put the point precisely. It makes it more than just description, but that's not because "depending" is a matter of opinion. No, "depends" makes it more than description because---Because it can't be seen? but you can't see whatever it is that depends doing its depending. Just as you can see my mom waking me up at 7(so that I don't miss French) but you can't see me depending on her to wake me even though I do! My learning: I clarified the question, and eliminated some possible answers. I think “depends” is an important part of this poem, but I’m not sure why. I’m pretty sure this poem is not just descriptive, but I don’t know what the chickens mean or why so much depends on the wheelbarrow. It may mean that everything matters, and if you miss one thing, it’s not the same?

Use of this strategy has yielded some of the most memorable moments in my classroom. It allows for students to offer impressions—not just aesthetic, but also efferent—that may not emerge under more teacher-directed circumstances. I recall a student who noticed in *The Great Gatsby* a sentence in which Nick, the narrator, lost a newly adopted dog within two weeks. That detail had escaped my repeated readings of the text. The student remarked, “This guy can’t even keep a dog;” it is an early reveal in the story that Nick may be as irresponsible as the wealthy lead characters he subtly judges. This was one of several students who had seemed disengaged in reading and withdrawn during discussions but began to participate after I shared one of their

responses with the class. This kind of experience fueled my interest in ways to invite students into the reading process.

Background of the Problem

These insights, which sound applicable to the present-day context of our world and our classrooms, were published 24 years ago:

> As a society facing serious political, economic, and scientific challenges, we cannot afford to have 'orderly but lifeless classrooms' where teachers continue to 'avoid controversial topics, simplifying complex issues into bite-sized pieces of information,' and where students routinely recall what someone else thought, rather than articulate, examine, elaborate, or revise what they themselves thought'" (Nystrand, 1997, p. 3, as cited in Reznitskaya, 2012, p. 455).

How has this call been answered by teachers of reading?

The 2019 study "A Synthesis of Quantitative Research on Reading Programs for Secondary Students" has a grim response: "The reading performance of students in U.S. middle and high schools is one of the most important problems in education" (Baye, 2019). According to the study, "the proportion of U.S. 12th graders scoring at proficient or advanced has dropped three percentage points" (Baye, 2019) since 1992, and that the mean performance of U.S. 15-year-old students was 24th among all countries. An OECD (2013) survey of adult competencies showed that the average reading level of U.S. young adults (16- to 24-year-olds) was below the international average for developed countries" (p. 133). A Literacy Lab study of 8th graders by Hasty and Schrodt (2015) showed that "most of the students consistently abandoned school-assigned texts." Students reported that their reasons for disengaging "included characters not

close to students' age, lack of interest in the story, and inability to follow plots that 'bounced around'" (p. 20).

Schools have responded in various ways to poor test scores: extra reading time or designated reading periods, the use of technology, and a deliberate focus on close reading, "the methodical investigation of a complex text through answering text dependent questions geared to unpack the text's meaning" (The Aspen Institute, 2012, p. 1). Close reading, in particular, has become the primary strategy for improving reading among secondary students. In fact, "close reading is the only authorized textual approach within the Common Core State Standards" (Eppley, 2019, p. 3). These marching orders have led teachers to do "exactly what many teacher guidebooks… have encouraged them to do...emphasize almost exclusively the structure and process of close reading without substantial discussion of its purpose and relevance to students' lives" (Beltramo & Stillman, 2015, p. 9).

Despite Nystrand's pleas, and current agreement on the significance of student-centered learning, little has changed with regard to teacher ownership of the reading experience and the purpose for reading. In Harste's (2014) critique of English language arts curricula, he asserts that "meaning making" is nearly the entirety of the reading experience; "for the most part, studying language and other sign systems in terms of the work they do and how they do it has been left out, as has providing daily opportunities to inquire into problems of personal and social relevance to learners." This detached approach leaves him to lament that despite our focused efforts, "students learn more about literacy on the streets than they do in the classroom" (p. 100). Given the challenge of reading instruction, the charge to teach writing as well can cause English teachers to wonder how to possibly accomplish both goals successfully. Anne Haas Dyson wrote in her *Collaboration of Writing and Reading* (1989),

> Throughout the history of American schooling, educators have periodically called for the integration of the language arts for writing, reading, talking, and listening to become collaborative processes in classroom activities, thereby furthering the development of each process and, more importantly, furthering children's learning about themselves and their world.

She concludes, "And yet that ideal seems to remain just that, an ideal broadly praised, yet not broadly attained." While Dyson expresses hope in the ideal of integrating reading and writing, Beck et al. (2021) argue that in today's classrooms, most teachers do not view these goals as related. This "worry that time spent teaching reading is time not spent teaching writing" is understandable, they contend, "as long as the literary analysis genre remains widespread as a standardized assessment task in English Language Arts" (p. 2).

Nystrand's assertion that recitation, rather than reflection, has been commonplace was echoed by Langer and Applebee in 1986:

> Studying typical patterns of literacy instruction in American secondary schools, we have found that the majority of school tasks require recitation of previous learning, in which the student has little room to claim ownership for what was being written or read.

These patterns have changed little since then: Chen et al. (2014) describe classes where "most of the learning is generally teacher led, where the assessing and evaluating is done formally—not with but to students." (p. 106)

Dyson's 1989 call for collaboration in the reading process, while accepted by scholars and contemporary reading theorists, remains largely ignored in the contemporary classroom. Student collaboration in general, or cooperative learning, "is familiar to many teachers and its use is not rare, [but] it remains the exception in high school classrooms" (Corcoran & Silander,

2009, p. 166). Monologic discourse continues, initiated by “teachers who follow the traditional classroom ground rules" and the perceived “tension between giving students freedom to interact with each other and delivering curriculum goals” (Lyle, 2008; Howe & Abedin, 2013, as cited in García-Carrión et al., 2020, p. 2).

While Garcia-Carrion et al. (2020) maintain that educational psychology made a turn in how individual and cognitive elements were understood, including broader factors in the learning process: from a focus on mental schemata of previous knowledge to a focus on culture, intersubjectivity, and dialogue as crucial for learning and development,” classrooms are only slowly adapting to this change. (p. 1)

And “despite the apparent popularity of culturally relevant pedagogy,” Ladson-Billings (2015) contends that “many practitioners, and those who claim to translate research to practice, seem stuck in very limited and superficial notions of culture,” a problem exacerbated by teachers clinging to their identity as the classroom’s sole source of knowledge, bearing sole responsibility for defining culture. Ladson-Billings (2015) concedes that “in this era of state-mandated high-stakes testing, it is nearly impossible for teachers to ignore mundane content and skills-focused curricula” (p. 83).

Statement of the Problem

- Because schools typically ignore what students bring to the reading experience, because we have taught close reading as a detached skill, because we have ignored the significance of who authored a text and who is privileged in a text, because skills or literary works are often taught in isolation, and because creating a unified classroom culture is often part of the unwritten curriculum, selecting culturally relevant texts, situating lessons in meaningful, thematic instruction, facilitating classroom community,

and recognizing the value of intersubjectivity may help foster the levels of student engagement needed for close reading.

- Because literacy seems self-evident for ELA, and few teachers understand the approach of literary scholars, and despite years of teacher-directed guided questioning, schools should consider that the discipline of literary scholars consists of constructing and pursuing generative questions or puzzles and using a combination of explicitly named set of practices and purposes.
- Because we often assume that students heed what a teacher assigns, because writing and reading tasks are often conducted independently, because writing may seem to be independent from a reading task, and because close reading may seem like a distinct skill that need not account for the individuality of students, having students write as they read helps them to read curiously, attend to the text as close readers, and stick with stories instead of abandoning them in frustration.
- Despite school guides that indicate three equal areas of study, despite measures that may indicate successful teaching of literacy, and while art seems to be an independent domain of study, studying language and other sign systems in terms of the work they do and how they do it, providing daily opportunities to inquire into problems of personal and social relevance to learners, and infusing the curriculum with art can promote critically literate beings who know how to make meaning and reposition themselves in the world in a more democratically thoughtful and equitable manner.
- There may be a wave of "voice and choice" recently, and while teachers believe that reading suffers when the focus is on writing, and vice versa, and individual desk work for

reading and writing seems like the norm, individualized coaching of students' writing about literature can also support literary reading.

Purpose of the Study

"Many students who enter postsecondary institutions do not display advanced literate behaviors… these students have a limited knowledge of and experience with academic discourse and often are unable to function beyond a basic literacy level within this context" (Spires et al., 1993, p. 114). This lack of knowledge and experience may be due to the fact that in secondary classrooms student agency in discussions is often confined to "aesthetic stances" and an "efferent stance led to discussions more dominated by the teacher" (Chinn, 2001, as cited in Barak, 2021, p.17).

This study is based on a response to Nystrand's admonition that students should "articulate, examine, elaborate, or revise what they themselves thought" in order to take ownership of their learning and develop "advanced literate behaviors" (Reznitskaya (2012), citing Nystrand (1997), 455). The process described in the following chapters is based on these claims: teachers should recognize the role of students' personal and prior experience as a part of the reading experience; teachers should model inquiry learning and reading as a problem-solving experience; having students write during the reading process will enrich skill development in both areas; and, social interaction should be a part of the reading process.

Because this study is meant for me to refine my own teaching, it is designed as action research. I have used the "Train of Thought" in several of my classes, to mixed but mostly positive results; some student work was remarkable. However, I have not studied the results closely or with enough rigor to back up my feelings about it. I also feel there is more potential in the use of this strategy than I can only realize through focused and extended listening to students.

The addition of student reflection about using the strategy and interviews with my two colleagues will give me feedback that will push my thinking about student-initiated reading and collaborative study.

Significance

A consensus among educators has developed that moving away from "teacher-focused" instruction is a more effective model for learning. My topic is related to "student-centered" instruction but is more accurately concerned with the ability of students to solve problems on their own (or in collaboration with peers) after practice with teacher guidance. It seems to be taken for granted that autonomous problem-solving is the goal of educating students, yet few classes build toward that goal, or even provide a single opportunity for students to do so. There are many moving parts to this topic: reading, writing, critical thinking, student-centered learning, social construction, inquiry-based learning, etc. Each of these topics has been studied closely, but an investigation of the intersection of inquiry, critical reading, and collaboration will hopefully prove useful to educators.

It has become clear that today's graduates face different expectations from employers than in the past. Fewer jobs define success as "follow my instructions more closely than anyone else;" machines have taken over these tasks. Increasingly, employers value the skill of independent thought and problem solving, and schools do far less than they are capable of in preparing students to do that.

Research Questions

This study is an action research project designed to investigate the effectiveness of an inquiry-based reading strategy in a dialogic classroom. Research questions that guide this study are:

1. How do students describe their reading experience using an inquiry and collaborative approach to the text?
2. How do teachers describe the learning that they see from students using the inquiry and collaborative model?
3. In what ways does an inquiry approach to complex texts create opportunities for authentic engagement and an invitation to all students, regardless of skill level?

Operational Definitions

Collaboration: "In the small-group configuration, interaction among students as they work together toward a common goal" (Davin and Donato, 2013, p. 4).

Critical Literacy: The critical stance "consists of the attitudes and dispositions we take on that enable us to become critically literate beings" (Scherff, 2012, p. 13).

Critical Reading: "A set of skills that extends beyond both functional literacy and higher levels of comprehension and analysis" (Cervetti, et al., 2001, citing Spache 1964, p. 2).

Critical Thinking: "In the field of education critical thinking is used interchangeably with the concept of higher-order thinking from Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001). According to Bloom's taxonomy, cognitive skills can be classified according to their level of complexity. In this sense, higher-order thinking skills therefore correspond to the levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation" (Cáceres, 2020, p. 2).

Dialogic Teaching: "Teachers and students act as coinquirers, collaboratively engaging in a generation and evaluation of new interpretations of texts to gain a fuller appreciation of the world, [them]selves, and one another" (Burbules, 1993, p. 8).

Inquiry-Based Learning: “An educational strategy in which students follow methods and practices similar to those of professional scientists in order to construct knowledge” (Pedaste, 2015, citing Keselman, 2003, p. 48).

Internalization: “The ‘transfer’ of tools from the social plane (interaction with others) to the inner plane (reasoning)” (Dillenbourg, 1999, p. 11).

Metacognition: “Higher order thinking that involves active control over the cognitive processes engaged in learning” (Livingston, 2003, p. 2).

Reading Stance: Reading is never neutral or natural but “is shaped, distributed and acquired in relation to community contexts and larger social institutions, discourse formations and ideological interests” (Luke, 1997, p. 143; see also Gee, 2001; Street, 1995).

Scaffolded Reading Experience: “A set of pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities which is specifically designed to assist the students in successfully reading, understanding, and enjoying the English text” (Maximilian, 2016, p. 192).

Self-Regulated Learning (SRL): A learning context that “emphasizes autonomy and control by the individual who monitors, directs, and regulates actions toward goals of information acquisition, expanding expertise, and self-improvement” (Paris & Paris, 2001, p. 89).

Theoretical Framework

The impetus behind this approach is to transfer the ownership of inquiry from teacher to student, an aspect of Paulo Freiere’s critical theory. While use of the “Train of Thought" strategy may lack the political context of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* it is firmly in the spirit of valuing the “ordinary people” who “can and do make history in how they think, feel, act and love,” part of the “genius” of the Freire text (West, 1993, p.xiii.). In “Beyond the limits of radical

educational reform: Toward a critical theory of education," Giroux (1979) defines the inspiring parameters of critical theory: "The critical use of theory for the student is thus steeped in a need to recognize the difference not only between appearance and reality, but between the world as it is and the world as he or she thinks it should be. Thus, theory becomes more than a structural device for selecting and defining facts; it also becomes the medium for social action, the medium for understanding and changing reality by acknowledging its emancipatory possibilities and working to make those possibilities a reality" (p. 37).

The vehicle for this emancipatory act is critical literacy, "language use that questions the social construction of the self" (Shor, 1999, p.3). Beck (2005) defines critical literacy as "an attitude toward texts and discourses that questions the social, political, and economic conditions under which those texts were constructed" (p. 382). Critical literacy "challenges the status quo" and "connects the political and the personal, the public and the private, the global and the local, the economic and the pedagogical, for rethinking our lives and for promoting justice in place of inequity" (Shor, p. 2). This perspective on language is a student-centered approach, involving "lively, sometimes heated, discussion about controversial, provocative issues" (Beck, 2005). Beck maintains that "encouraging this strong engagement with and discussion of subject matter that is deeply relevant to students' lives beyond the classroom is arguably at the core of critical literacy" (p. 383).

This kind of active learning has its roots in the constructivism of John Dewey. For Dewey, "the educational process consists of a continual reorganisation and transformation of habits and thereby a redirection of ongoing activities into other channels" (Kivinen & Ristela, 2003, p. 373). Dewey's belief that learning happens through sustained inquiry, rather than rote learning, is a key aspect of this research intention. In contrast to the behavioristic approach, "the

basic premise is that an individual learner must actively 'build' knowledge and skills (e.g., Bruner, 1990) and that information exists within these built constructs rather than in the external environment" (Huitt, 2009). While adherents of behaviorism "advocate first deciding what knowledge or skills students should acquire and then developing curriculum that will provide for their development," those following a constructivist approach "suggest that educators first consider the knowledge and experiences students bring with them to the learning task. The school curriculum should then be built so that students can expand and develop this knowledge and experience by connecting them to new learning" (p. 1). The inquiry-based learning (IBL) aspect of this strategy "engages learners actively in a knowledge-building process through the generation of answerable questions" (Harada & Yoshina, 2004, as cited in Chu et. al., 2017), an offshoot of Dewey. Learners in this context "adopt an inquiry mindset in addressing epistemic issues or in developing and completing projects with a relatively open-ended set of answers" (Chu et al., p. 9).

Vygotsky's social constructivism informs critical aspects of this research. The "zone of proximal development" focuses on the teacher's role in assisting the student to reach new skills and understanding (Zambo, 2009), a collaborative endeavor that contrasts with monologic teaching. Vygotsky also believed that learning could be rooted in "a variety of sign-based tools that function in this way—various systems for counting, mnemonic techniques, works of art—but the one that he undoubtedly considered to be of greatest significance—the 'tool of tools'—was language" (Wells, 1999, p. 46). Halliday (2014) expands the scope of Vygotsky by considering the "reciprocal relationship between language and culture." He places Vygotsky's observation in the "real world" context of how language occurs: "At the most concrete level, this means that we take account of the elementary fact that people talk to each other. Language does

not consist of sentences; it consists of text, or discourse—the exchange of meanings in interpersonal contexts of one kind or another" (Halliday, 2014, p. 47).

The theoretical approach of this study is post-positivist, "a critique of both the ontological and epistemological foundations of theories of knowledge" (Fox, p. 2). The purpose of research "is exploratory and transformational," in which I "reject any sense that there is an independent reality that is there to be uncovered, and consider instead that the social world is as a consequence of authoritative claims to know the truth" (p. 9).

Limitations

The study is limited to three junior English classes so that data from three different classrooms may be readily compared; thus, I cannot make determinations of effectiveness for students in other grade levels that have different levels of maturity and skills. The study will take place in the first semester, which means students will not have had prior experience with the strategy.

The teachers I am collaborating with will not have my level of experience in using this strategy. They will be meeting with me prior to the start of the semester, at which time we will practice the strategy together and discuss how it might be implemented into their existing plans.

Ultimately, my colleagues may apply the strategy differently than I do or than we agree upon initially. We may also differ in how we evaluate our own students' work. Much of the data lies in the students' speaking, writing, and self-assessment, minimizing the impact of teaching differences.

Scope and Delimitations

To gain insight beyond my own thoughts and my own classroom, I have invited two colleagues to join me. One of the three classes will be an Advanced Placement class; the other

two will be on-level junior English classes. This provides us with data to better understand the role of previously acquired reading skill in the application of this strategy. This study is limited to three teachers and the students of Mountain Peak High School, a school of about 700 students in a community of 7,191 as of 2019 (United States Census Bureau).

Generalizing about the effectiveness of dialogic teaching with complex texts is beyond the scope of this study; I hope to better myself as a classroom teacher as a result of this project and gain insights to share with colleagues.

Chapter Summary

This study is the extension of a career-long interest in the best ways to engage students and empower them to take control of their learning. The "business as usual" approach to the teaching of reading has declined in effectiveness as measured by standardized tests; it has always been lacking when seen through a critical lens. Calls for putting students at the center of the experience have been made for decades, but research contends that monologic teaching continues to dominate today's classrooms. The effectiveness, consequences, and significance of the "Train of Thought" strategy, designed for students to create their own problems after reading a text and to work with classmates to solve them, will be examined through action research.

Chapter 2 - Introduction

During the summer of 2008, as a participant in the Greater Kansas City Writing Project's Summer Institute, I was asked to create a "burning question" about my teaching—a question based on a recurring classroom issue that, if addressed, would make a noticeable difference for ourselves and our students. I thought back to an experience I had with one of my junior classes earlier in the year: having learned that "approving" a thesis sentence before students wrote an entire paper could prevent a stack of meandering writing, I conferenced with students one-on-one. Their task was to submit a thesis sentence for a literary analysis of *The Scarlet Letter*, and few of them met with my approval. What troubled me went beyond unsatisfactory writing: when I asked follow-up questions to go deeper into their thinking behind their question, I found that they had little to say. In fact, one student admitted, "I just wrote something down that sounded good."

It became clear to me that while students were complying with my assignment by writing, the critical thinking that makes meaningful sentences was absent. The words they put down on paper were not the product of problem-solving; there was little evidence of the engagement and investment behind the kinds of thesis sentences that vibrate with the promise of meaningful paragraphs to come. What was going on? Was this a writing problem, a reading problem, a thinking problem? Or, was this a teaching problem?

While researching my burning question (How can I get students to think deeply about a text and write an honest thesis?), I discovered a connection in Larry Weinstein's *Writing at the Threshold: Featuring 56 Ways to Prepare High School and College Students to Think and Write at the College Level* (2001). One of the "56 ways" described is a process he called a "Train of Thought," an assignment that asks students to write an interior monologue of their thinking about

a complex text. As I read the example included—a student response to William Carlos Williams' "The Red Wheelbarrow"—I was struck by the authenticity of the student voice. It was not an academic voice, but it revealed more academic thinking than I had seen in any of the analytical writing of my students: there were no organized paragraphs, there was admission of confusion, but there were explicit connections between a discovery and the text. Fascinated, I read further in the book, learning that at the heart of Weinstein's "preparation" was the notion that students came to class with critical thinking skills, but few classroom assignments tapped into these skills. I felt that I was asking my students to think, but what I discovered was that I was assigning a book, assigning a paper, and assuming that thinking would naturally result—probably because that's how I operated.

Inspired by the "Train of Thought" strategy and a newfound belief in using writing to make the struggle of thinking apparent, I began creating "student-centered" assignments. Initially, the "Train of Thought" confounded my students. The assignment to "just write down what you're thinking" about a poem or a picture proved to be too abstract. I modified the assignment to include four criteria for their reflection: (1) make an observation; (2) ask a question; (3) make a connection to previous learning; and (4) make a connection to personal experience. This proved to be a meaningful change in the assignment. I was thrilled to see the kind of thinking that could generate meaningful discussion and insights gained without direct instruction.

I began considering the impact of this strategy closely while responding to an *English Journal* call for manuscripts. Over the course of two years, I wrote and revised an article that was eventually published as "A Perfect Fit for Our Era: Using *New Yorker* Covers to Generate Curiosity and Provoke Argument in the ELA Classroom." In the article, I focused on how I used

covers of *New Yorker* magazine, coupled with the "Train of Thought," to have students produce argumentative topics that were current, but also personal (Fabiano, 2017). Since then, I have learned more about the potential of this approach while sharing it with colleagues in professional development settings. While I had included four distinct ways to identify evidence of learning in my original 2008 research (speculating, eliminating possible answers, clarifying the question, and demonstrating confusion) it was only recently that I saw how I could have students identify their own evidence as yet another way to claim ownership of their learning.

My research study is an extension of the work that began in 2008 as a response to my desire for critical thinking and authentic learning experiences in my classroom.

Literature Review

Reading Instruction

In 1938's *Literature as Exploration*, Louise Rosenblatt posed these questions: "How can the experience and study of literature foster a sounder understanding of life and nourish the development of balanced, humane personalities? How can the teacher minister to the love of literature, initiate his students into its delights, and at the same time further these broader aims?" (p. v). These questions were the seeds of a revolution in teaching, wherein the text was beginning to be removed from its pedestal and a new consideration of the reader was about to begin. This revolution did not happen overnight: "It was not until over 40 years later, in the early 1970s that literary critics, in reaction to the text-centered focus of the New Critics, began to evolve a theory of their own which worked to change the focus from the text to the reader" (Davis, 1992, p. 71).

The introduction of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010 initiated a new debate over literacy instruction, particularly the emphasis on "close reading." Many teachers inferred a return to the New Criticism of the 1950s, in which the words of the text, and only the

words of the text, should be considered in the reading experience, especially because the CCSS pointed out that development of academic reading skills, demonstrated through academic language in writing, would be the basis of future CCSS exams. However, as Hinchman and Moore (2013) point out, "recommendations for conducting the methodical interpretation of texts referred to as close reading vary in important ways" (p. 443). They explain that the term "close reading" can indeed hearken back to days of ignoring the reader, but it can also be a way of emphasizing reading slowly, re-reading, and paying attention to detail. While acknowledging that "some CCSS authors ignited much controversy when they devalued pre-reading instruction that tapped prior knowledge, apparently preferring to have readers closely read texts cold" (Gewertz, 2012b, as cited in Hinchman & Moore, 2013), they advocate a balance between intensifying skill development and maintaining research-supported practices. They assert that "given the well-established role of readers' prior knowledge when reading, this devaluation countered much current pre-reading instruction advice in the professional literature, as well as daily practice in classrooms" and that "helping students connect their everyday ways of approaching texts with academic ways is fruitful" (p. 446).

Student Engagement

Interestingly, while many educators are calling for increased focus on text comprehension, particularly across the disciplines, there is also increasing emphasis on the importance of student engagement (Christenson et al., 2012). According to Pedler et al. (2020), "student engagement is a current and topical issue internationally, with research findings showing that students who are positively engaged in their learning can be up to seven months ahead of their peers" (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation [CESE], 2017). Indeed, student engagement as a discrete learning process has been identified as an essential classroom

measure in terms of being able to predict immediate and future student outcomes globally (CESE, 2015)" (p. 48).

As with "close reading" and the "science of reading," an operational definition of "engagement" is complex. On its face, engagement can be defined simply as "students being actively involved in their learning tasks and activities" (Lei, et al., 2017, p. 517). However, the measurement of this involvement demonstrates a focus on what is being valued—cognitively, socially, or developmentally. Primarily, the "evidence" of engagement has been identified as "academic achievement" (p. 518).

Despite attention to "student-centered learning," Ng (2018) contends that "the role of student voice in promoting reading engagement remains undervalued," and that "students hold important and valuable knowledge about their reading and how they engage in, or disengage from, reading activities" (p. 701). Beltramo and Stillman (2015) suggest that learning begins with students, "when individuals use their previous knowledge, social connections, and ways of thinking—their cultural practices and discourses—to recognize and value problems or learning opportunities worthy of their efforts (Rogoff, 1990, as cited on p.11). In the desire to increase engagement, teachers would do well to "value student voice," because by doing so "they are better informed to listen and respond to students' spoken and unspoken concerns, needs, and critiques. In this sense, student voice, in addition to being an engagement enabler for students, also promotes teacher engagement through meaningful collaboration with students" (Ng, p. 702).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

This respect of the reader's experience seems especially urgent at a time when schools and teachers are becoming more aware of how dominant power structures have been reinforced, rather than challenged, through teaching methods. Moreover, these methods are reinforced by the

rewards of assessment systems, leaving teachers conflicted about what it means to "help" their students. Ladson-Billings (2014) posits that helping students means a culturally sustaining pedagogy that "is built on the...foundational notion of students as subjects rather than objects." She contends that ignoring the student leads to "academic death," which "leaves more young people unemployed, underemployed, and unemployable in our cities and neighborhoods, and vulnerable to the criminal justice system." Her conclusion about this "vicious cycle" is a call to remember the student's place as subject: "If we hope to disrupt this cycle, our pedagogies must evolve to address the complexities of social inequalities" (p. 77).

Vasquez, Janks, and Comber (2019) are among those also concerned with the trade-offs educators make about "extensive linguistic, cultural, and individual variation" in the name of testing success (p. 586; see also Dyson, 1997; Pearson, 2007). Their renewed concerns stem from recent focus on the "science of reading," a cognitive approach that has begun to gain influence in professional development as a response to research into dyslexia. As with calls for "close reading," these researchers worry about how "science of reading" will be defined and applied: "As long as scholars, policymakers, and practitioners treat the science of reading as primarily about assessed reading proficiency, these other aspects of reading instruction are relegated to the periphery, if not ignored entirely" (p. 586).

The Reading-Writing Connection

Much like reading, conclusions reached by research into the teaching of writing outpaced the implementation of these conclusions by decades. Emig (1971), Applebee (1971), and Hayes and Flower (1980) described purposes of writing in secondary schools that went beyond exclusively "evaluative purposes" (Marshall, 1987, p. 30). While schools developed reading and writing as separate curricular issues, these researchers saw reading and writing had much more in

common than they had differences. Marshall drew upon the work of Vygotsky (1962) and Bruner (1964) to argue for writing "as a constructive act which encourages writers to build verbal representations of their experience" (p. 30). Connecting this conclusion to Rosenblatt's similar views about reading, he concludes that "if both writing and reading are viewed as constructive processes, writing about reading should provide students with an opportunity to 'enrich and embellish' the meanings they have tentatively constructed, coming to a fuller possession of whatever the text may hold" (p. 31).

Beck et al. (2020), similarly, make connections between reading and writing on the basis of social construction, while also including the dialogic nature of teacher/student interactions: "We term this approach to assessment 'dialogic' for two reasons: first, because the method involves actual conversation between teacher and student, and second, because it is influenced by Bakhtinian ideas of dialogism, namely that learning is a process of becoming, rather than the achievement of criteria or milestones, and that composing writing always involves a conversation—or dialogue—between multiple texts." They challenge traditional structures of class design that teach reading and writing as separate disciplines: "An important benefit of this approach is that it allows teachers to flexibly and responsively switch between addressing problems of reading and problems of writing, allowing them to address both practices as intertwined" (p. 3).

Hasty and Schrodt (2015) studied how this would look in practice in their study of how literacy notebooks were used with eighth-graders in a Literacy Lab. They found that writing while reading "made it possible for students to connect personally with the texts while simultaneously requiring text evidence" and that "the literacy notebooks effectively balanced personal response with close reading skills." Finding evidence of "increased engagement and

improved understanding of texts" (p. 9), they conclude that "writing helped students to read curiously, attend to the text, and stick with stories instead of abandoning them in frustration" (p. 24).

Reading Instructional Practice

It has been established that what the student brings to the learning experience and opportunities for writing while reading should be a part of instructional design. Other considerations for the practice of teaching reading comprehension come from literary scholars themselves. As consideration of disciplinary literacy has increased among schools (see Shanahan, 2008, 2012, and Fang, 2013)—replacing outmoded "reading across the curriculum" ideas—Rainey (2016) sought to identify common literacy practices of scholars, habits that could inform which kinds of literacy skills should be practiced in English language arts classes.

While conceding that high school students are not literary scholars, she sought to find what kinds of practices could be applied to high schools, much as work by Wineburg (1991, 1998) that she cites influenced social studies teaching practice by understanding the habits of historians. Rainey determined six shared practices among literary scholars: seeking patterns, identifying strangeness, articulating a puzzle, considering possibilities, considering contexts, and making a claim (p. 62). She distills these six habits into two "shared orientations": problem-based and social nature. In a problem-based orientation, readers "create puzzles for ourselves to solve so that we generate new ways of reading, new ways of seeing text." The social nature orientation "articulates understanding that doing literature is social in nature," and that "[literary criticism is] a contribution out into a community of scholars that might change the direction of the conversation" (p. 60). These findings prompt her to pose these questions for teachers: "How 'disciplinary' are the learning opportunities that students tend to receive in ELA classrooms?

How might literary literacy practices and processes best be taught in K–12 classrooms so they are not disconnected from larger cycles of inquiry and the social nature of disciplinary communities?" (p. 69).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) reinforce the idea of teacher-student talk and group dialogue as catalysts of learning. As the literary scholars Rainey studied reported earlier in this chapter, social processes are a part of the approach of keen academic readers. Darling-Hammond expands on the benefits of such an approach in the classroom: "Researchers have identified a number of social processes that help to explain why small group work supports individual learning. These include opportunities to share original insights, resolve differing perspectives through argument, explain one's thinking about a phenomenon, provide critique, observe the strategies of others, and listen to explanations" (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). There is evidence that collaborators can generate strategies and abstract problem representations that are extremely unlikely to be observed when individuals work alone, suggesting that there are unique benefits of joint thinking." (Schwartz, 1995, p. 113).

The dialogue between teacher and student during the reading process can generate learning that may not occur without such an opportunity. In a review of strategies that produce learning gains, the researchers conclude "social interactions using language in support of thinking enable more strategic learning" (Tharp et al., 2000, as cited on p. 112). This occurs because "students sharpen their thinking as they converse about their reasoning and inquire into what they don't yet understand. When they are able to articulate concepts, use them in a task, see or hear other models of thinking, and get feedback, they learn more deeply" (p. 113).

These practices echo recommendations made by Langer and Applebee (1986) based on Vygotsky's (1962) "zone of proximal development," in which "effective instruction is aimed not

at the ripe, but at the ripening functions." They add that "effective instruction builds on literacy and thinking skills the students already have, and helps them to accomplish tasks that they could not otherwise complete on their own" (p. 186). If students are unable to "display advanced literate behaviors" after leaving high school—the criticism referred to earlier in this chapter—they must face these tasks during high school, as guided by their teacher.

Langer and Applebee also address the need for instruction to be a collaboration between teacher and student and among students. This was rarely the case as of their 1986 publication: "Teachers' roles in literacy instruction, however, are rarely collaborative. Much more frequently, the role is one of evaluation, usually tied to previous learning rather than to learning-in-progress. Collaboration is often thought of as cheating rather than of help, and teachers' responses take the form of grades instead of suggestions of ways to solve a reading or writing problem. Our studies show the role of teacher-as-evaluator as permeating almost all classroom exchanges involving reading and writing" (p. 187). More recent research contends that little has changed with respect to teaching during the process, rather than assigning at the beginning and assessing at the end. Adler et al. (2003) contend that while classroom "discussion" is common, the talk is rarely a collaboration or "an interaction among a variety of voices," defined as "dialogic discourse" (p. 312). This "free exchange of information among three or more participants" is in contrast to what they observed: "Classroom talk often tends toward the monologic, especially during lecture and seatwork, but also during interactions around literature where the teacher controls the pace and direction of discussion through the use of 'test' questions (Mehan, 1979; Nystrand, 1997). In most classrooms, class discussion is a time for transmitting and reviewing course content—we refer to this activity instead as a question-and-answer session or recitation" (Applebee, 1993; Nystrand, 1997, p. 313). Even more recently, Reznitskaya (2012) drew the same conclusion: "In

a recent carefully executed study of more than 200 American classrooms, the authors concluded that there was 'little discussion in any classes in the sense of an open and in-depth exchange...What most teachers in our study called 'discussion,' was, in the words of one teacher, 'question-answer discussion'—that is, some version of recitation" (Nystrand et al., 2003, p. 178). Thus, Reznitskaya concludes, "the reality of typical classroom practices today does not correspond to the highly advocated educational ideal of dialogic teaching" (pp. 446-7).

A study by Beck et al. (2021) makes similar assumptions about the need for "free exchange": "we assume literary reading practices to emerge from discourse communities that form around common frames of reference for shared meaning-making" (p. 3). Their study of three teachers, each using dialogic teaching, revealed that teachers could model literary practices for students while they read: "a particular mediational move… can be used in different ways to support the literary practice of claim-making. It can be used to gauge a student's literal understanding and support textual comprehension, but it can also be used to gauge a student's thinking about their interpretive puzzles that they are constructing from their disciplinary literary readings of the text" (p. 8).

Reznitskaya's conclusions about the efficacy of dialogic teaching intersect with accepted ideals of student-centered learning; and yet, there clearly remains a gap between what research says about effective classroom discourse and the reality of it. This can be explained by "the lack of opportunities for teachers to study their own practice in a systematic and deliberate manner" (p. 454). Thus, for change to happen, "teachers need to reexamine their own interactions with students, try out and evaluate new behaviors, discover discrepancies between their intended instructional goals and actual practices, and continually question their conceptions of effective pedagogy (Garet et al., 2001; Walsh, 2002; Walsh, 2002)" (p. 455).

Ownership/Equity

Allowing students the opportunity to read complex texts, negotiate meaning with the teacher and other students, and write during the process contribute to student ownership of learning and invite all students to join in, and benefit from, the learning process. Langer and Applebee (1986) include ownership as one of their directives for literacy instruction: "Effective instruction gives students the room to have something of their own to say in their writing or in the interpretations they draw in their reading. They must see the point of the task, beyond simple obedience to the teacher's demands. It is this sense of purposefulness that integrates the various parts of the task into a coherent whole and provides a sense of direction" (pp. 185-6).

Harste (2014) asserts that currently accepted instructional practices lead to the kinds of ownership that have students learning more about literacy outside of the classroom than in it (Gee, 2007, as cited on p. 90). Teaching methods "need to change," he writes, "in order to value new forms of literacy." Harste identifies that being literate is not an accomplished state, but a capability that can only be initiated by the student: "To be literate is to be able to elect what identity one wants to take on. Our goal needs to be to create agents rather than consumers of text" (p. 100).

Conley and French (2014) contend that student ownership of learning is crucial to post-secondary academic success. They acknowledge that schools place much emphasis on mastery of content; however, "students who demonstrate ownership of learning can be successful in a wide range of learning environments such as large classes and online courses where they have less interaction with the instructor. Strong ownership of learning can even compensate to a degree for less effective teachers. Students who own their learning can go beyond simply following teacher directions. They are more likely to complete complex assignments, solve problems that require

persistence, and create original or novel work of high quality." Unfortunately, they assert, "ownership of learning is one of several key indicators of college readiness that is not sufficiently taught" (pp. 1018-19).

The stakes go beyond college success; ownership of learning encompasses skills that will be "highly prized and rewarded characteristics" in the workplace of the 21st century. A student's "initiative," "drive," and adaptability will set them apart from students who have learned in traditional ways to follow directions. Conley and French conclude, "the world that today's young people are entering is one that will continue to change rapidly and that will make demands on them to be true lifelong learners. Their ability to take ownership of their learning will be key to their success not only in school but throughout their lives" (p. 1031).

A classroom approach that invites all students to participate, think, and grow, while crucial to a student's future, is every bit as much about recognizing the value of each and every student in the classroom. Student ownership is accompanied by an authenticity of learning and purpose that extends to honoring the unique individuals that we work with every day. As Rainey writes, "Anything less than rigorous instruction that supports all students' participation within and across the disciplines is insufficient and, further, that routine access to such instruction is a matter of social justice (e.g., Lee, 2004; Moje, 2008)" (p. 53).

This invitation to ownership intersects with Ladson-Billings's (2014) call for culturally relevant (or sustaining) pedagogy. A teacher willing to engage in dialogic learning "can engage what may appear to be the least able students so that they can become intellectual leaders in the classroom" (p. 80).

Chapter Summary

The "Train of Thought" strategy used in this study is based on research conclusions about the act of reading, student engagement, culturally sustaining pedagogy, reading-writing connections, reading pedagogy, student ownership, and equity. This review of literature demonstrates that there is a meaningful gap between what has been encouraged by literacy research and prevailing classroom teaching practice. Combining the ideal of inviting all voices to be heard with the promise of "advanced literate behaviors" demands deliberate and consistent academic practice. This action research project is designed to investigate the effects of a critical literacy practice in order to, in the spirit of Nystrand's admonition, create learning opportunities where students articulate, examine, elaborate, and revise their own thinking.

Chapter 3 - Introduction

Research Topic

Research Topic: Promoting authenticity and engagement through inquiry, dialogue, and personal connections, based on Weinstein's "Train of Thought" reading strategy

Keywords: Inquiry-based learning, student-centered learning, scaffolded reading experience, student ownership, critical reading, metacognition

The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of authentic literary experiences toward facilitating reading stances of high school students. Over the course of four months, students in three high school English classes, taught by three different teachers, will be asked to respond to fiction and nonfiction texts using modified versions of the "Train of Thought" strategy described by Weinstein in *Writing at the Threshold* (2001) and the "Critical Media Literacy Framework: Conceptual Understandings and Questions" from Kellner and Share's *The Critical Literacy Guide* (2019). These strategies do not elicit specific answers, but invite personal connections, critical thinking, and unanticipated responses. These teachers will take inventories from students in response to using these strategies, and the teachers themselves will be interviewed. As one of the participating teachers, I will be keeping a journal to reflect on the progress of the study. Student responses will be gathered and included in data collection.

Research questions that guide this study:

1. How do students describe their reading experience using an inquiry and collaborative approach to the text?
2. How do teachers describe the learning that they see from students using the inquiry and collaborative model?

3. In what ways does an inquiry approach to complex texts create opportunities for authentic engagement and an invitation to all students, regardless of skill level?

Research Design and Rationale

After consideration of many types of qualitative approaches, such as case study and phenomenological study, I selected action research. The process and product of Alice McIntyre's (1997) action research detailed in *Making Meaning of Whiteness* showed me the potential of semi-structured interviews, group sessions, field notes and a personal journal as tools to tell the story of a collaboration between multiple teachers and classes of secondary students.

Meyer (2000) writes that "action research is not easily defined. It is a style of research rather than a specific method" (p. 178). Clark et al. (2020) define action research as "an approach to educational research that is commonly used by educational practitioners and professionals to examine, and ultimately improve, their pedagogy and practice" (p. 8). Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) use the term "participatory action research" and define the process as a spiral that includes repeated reflection after acting and observing (p. 595).

In a study meant to investigate a strategy that puts ownership of learning in the hands of students, it is fitting that action research be the design. McNiff & Whitehead (2002), in their explanation of action research as dynamic rather than static, advocated for practitioner-based research: "I have come to see instead the importance of presenting accounts of practice to show its inherently unstable and problematic nature; and why these accounts should be presented by people themselves" (p. 4).

Action research supports this study's theoretical link to critical literacy, "questioning power relations, discourses, and identities in a world not yet finished, just, or humane (Shor, 1999, p. 2). The intention is for the findings of this project – not necessarily the strategy used

– to lead to substantive change in the way teachers approach using works of fiction, art and poetry with students. Kemmis (2010), writing about action research within health care, makes the distinction of how an action research project can have the kind of impact that goes beyond the classroom: "Action research aims to explore new ways of doing things, new ways of thinking, and new ways of relating to one another and to the world in the interest of finding those new ways that are more likely to be for the good of each person and for the good of humankind, and more likely to help us live sustainably" (p. 425).

Mertler (2016) observed that this type of endeavor, a professional educator doing research and gathering data from the students they serve, can be "reactive," a result of having "been pressed into these roles in response to federal or state mandates, or for a multitude of other reasons" (p. 2). This is not the case with this study. While this is my first formal attempt at action research, I have been proactive in formulating ideas, gathering data (in the form of student work), and pushing for change since I began teaching.

Guided by an intention to create authentic learning experiences for our affluent and perhaps sheltered high school students, Dr. Todd Goodson and I collaborated on "The 50-Mile Radius Project" in the early 1990s. The project was designed, in part, as a reaction to an article about our school that was dismissive of our students and laden with loaded language; a caption beneath a photo of a student's purse at lunch read, "A designer handbag is parked on a table in the student lounge." While some of our students certainly carried expensive accessories, our school had no student lounge; students ate on folding tables in the commons. Our students, of course, chafed at the portrayal, which included some measure of truth obscured by sensationalism. We agreed that this was a prime opportunity to have our students see if they could visit new territory and be objective. Students were to visit a rural, urban, or suburban town

or city within 50 miles of our school, spend part of the day at the local high school, and eat a meal at a non-chain restaurant, taking notes all the while in preparation for an experiential narrative essay to be shared with classmates.

The results were beyond our imaginings. Students wrote extensively without being prompted for length; some papers exceeded ten pages. The writing voice was authentic and measured; perhaps because of the initial article, there were few papers (if any, in my memory) that emphasized a stereotypical view of a small town or an urban school. Excited to share our findings, we collaborated (as our students did) on a piece of writing that was eventually published in a book of teaching practices by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

Comparing this experience to Mertler's description of action research, there are some things in common: we reflected on an issue in our classrooms, decided on a teaching practice that could impact the problem, implemented the practice, reflected on the results, and sought to influence a change toward authentic learning experiences through writing and publication. While we disregarded "the accepted frameworks related to research" and relied on our "own subjective knowledge," we had no data collection methodologies (Clark et al., 2020). This study attempts to impose order on the gathering of data in order to draw conclusions specific enough to inform future pedagogical decisions. "Utilizing action research," my colleagues and I hope to use action research to "be powerful agents for change" (p. 71).

This study is designed to understand the role of inquiry-based learning in reading instruction and comprehension, and my purpose and methods align with each of the "five broad ways in which action research can be successfully integrated into educational settings" described by Mertler (2016): connect theory to practice; improve educational practice; foster broad school

improvement; empower educators and engage them intellectually; and cultivate professional growth (pp. 3-4). I am excited to be doing this research with two of my colleagues, with the intention of improving my practice, and with the students who spend their days in the building and community I serve.

The intention is to listen to students and teachers talk about the reading experience, a practice that is rare during a typical school year. Teachers often make judgments about comprehension through formal and informal written responses, quiz scores, and participation/non-participation in classroom discussion.

I have seen the impact of individual or small group discussion about reading "as it happens." During a year in which ELA teachers of juniors were granted stipends to work with students before or after school to improve reading, I worked with groups of three to four students, reading short passages aloud and discussing. The revelation to me was how often I heard one of the students say, "I don't understand this." I realized how infrequently I had heard a student say that during a regular class assignment, despite the fact that I surmised as much when I saw puzzled looks or incomplete written responses. This admission, I felt, was significant in many ways: it not only provided an opening to improve, but it also originated from the student. The student was taking ownership of the reading exercise.

Traditionally, schools have gathered data about student reading skill levels through multiple choice tests adopted at regional levels, such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, or at state levels. Recently, computerized testing has expanded options from some tests, such as the Kansas Assessment Program's English Language Arts test (2019), to include short-form written responses. However, as Butler (2018) notes, "multiple-choice tests are arguably the most popular type of assessment in education" (p. 1). Most standardized tests of reading are multiple-choice

dominant, and classroom teachers continue to use similar kinds of assessments for assigned reading passages.

Rupp et al. (2006) contest the value of multiple choice tests of comprehension by asserting that readers do not apply the "continual, conscious, and linear engagement" that can have them score well on a test in a non-testing context (p. 443). In fact, they contend, "it is reasonable to hypothesize that responding to multiple choice reading comprehension questions on many standardized reading comprehension tests is much more a problem-solving process relying heavily on verbal reasoning than a fluid process of integrating propositions to arrive at a connected mental representation of a text" (p. 454).

In *Steps to Success: Crossing the Bridge Between Literacy Research and Practice*, Munger (2016) finds common ground between standardized and classroom approaches: "Even though the assessment of literacy using multiple choice items versus more authentic procedures seems like opposites, they do have an important feature in common: they both can provide answers to educational questions." Deciding which procedure is "better," then, "will depend on many different factors, such as the purpose of the assessment, along with the quality of the assessment tool, the skills of the person who is using it, and the educational decisions needing to be made" (p. 58).

In this study, students will not be asked the kinds of questions in response to reading that can be measured for "correctness." The questions posed in the "Train of Thought" are meant to engage the student and will likely yield a variety of responses. The goal, then, is not to gain knowledge about a student's reading skill that can be measured against norms, but to determine what approaches yield rich reading experiences and encourage students to value reading in their own lives. This study attempts to understand the reading experience of the student by assembling

and interpreting data from multiple means: examination of student writing in response to the "Train of Thought" and other inquiry strategies; recording of small group discussions about "Train of Thought" responses; responses to surveys given before and after use of the strategy; interviews with a sample of students from three classes; interviews with teachers using the strategy; and a journal kept by each teacher to record insights about application of the strategy and student responses.

Role of the Researcher

Three teachers, including myself, will be involved in implementing the strategy and reflecting on its utility. Because I am more familiar with this approach and am conducting this study, my investment in the process will likely be greater than that of my colleagues. I recognize that the student artifacts they share, and their reflections on the process, should not be viewed in the same way as my students' artifacts or my reflections. Acknowledging this, I feel the benefit of having conversations with colleagues and seeing artifacts and reflections apart from those I played a role in enriches this study. Additionally, working with colleagues aligns with Rainey's (2017) conclusion that collaboration is a fundamental aspect of the reading experiences of literary scholars.

Part of my role as researcher will align with good teaching practice, which will be to let students struggle sometimes. While I have seen the benefits of students owning their reading experience, I am unsure if these inquiry strategies are the best way to reach the goal of deep learning and motivation for future reading experiences; thus, I will refrain from "helping" more than usual to have students see the value in these strategies.

Setting and Participants

The teachers and students in this study will be from Mountain Peak High School, a public school in northern Colorado. According to Public School Review, BHS served 715 students grades 9-12 in 2021. The site reports "the percentage of students achieving proficiency in reading/language arts is 70-74% (which is higher than the Colorado state average of 47%) for the 2018-19 school year."

Participants in the study will derive from Grade 11 English Language Arts classes, either ELA 11 or Advanced Placement English Language and Composition. The teachers involved, Alyson Lester and Michael Shuster, will be contacted for participation based on their Grade 11 English assignment—there are two teachers in addition to myself that teach juniors at BHS. These teachers were briefed in using the "Train of Thought" strategy prior to the start of the 2021-22 school year. The limited number of teachers, while precluding the possibility of generalizing about the results, will allow for increased time for teacher interviews and data analysis and provide specific evidence regarding the value of using the strategy.

The work of all students in these three classes will be considered in the data collection, and all students will be asked to respond to brief surveys throughout the semester. A group of five students will be selected to participate in periodic reflections and interviews. These students will be selected to represent a diverse set of reading skills, from basic to highly proficient, based on previous test scores and the judgment of the classroom teacher.

Data Collection

Student Artifacts

Written "Train of Thought" responses will be collected each time the strategy is used. Example 3.1 shows the instructions and a student response.

The "Train of Thought" as applied in this study is a variation of one of the teaching ideas presented in Larry Weinstein's *Writing at the Threshold* (2001). Weinstein, citing the transcriptions of problem-solving thinking from Dewey's (1997) *How We Think,* contends that an inquiry-based approach builds on processes natural to students. His intent is to appeal to all students: "It is not tenable, it seems to me, to maintain that only some of our students have minds capable of true inquiry when virtually all must inquire innumerable times between getting up in the morning and going to bed at night" (p. 4). His "56 Teaching Ideas" are designed to "catch a student in the act of thinking" (p. 4). Teaching Idea 7, The Initial Think Tank, is the basis for the Train of Thought adapted for this study.

Weinstein's "Train of Thought" example uses a "student" response to William Carlos Williams' "The Red Wheelbarrow" (Weinstein notes that he created the response himself, emulating a student voice.) Impressed by the potential value this thinking tool could be to my students, I borrowed Weinstein's example, intended for "college-level inquiry," and added clarifying questions to assist on-level 11th graders. An assignment to "think out loud" seemed too vague; while I hesitated to interfere with the kind of authentic inquiry I seek, I recognized the need for some kind of structure. Thus, four questions were created to a) provide requirements to the student, and b) provide teachers with criteria with which to assess student work.

Including these questions gives me pause, out of fear of creating the kind of worksheet approach to responding to a text that I am trying to avoid.I seek to allay this fear through repeated modeling—of Weinstein's, of my own, and of student responses that eschew rote, chronological replies in favor of "messy thinking" and persistent "wondering aloud."

My first attempts at using the "Train of Thought," as part of an inquiry project for the Greater Kansas City Writing Project's Summer Institute, yielded student work that allowed me to

identify and classify the types of learning that can emerge from a "Train of Thought." I was inspired by the fact that in Weinstein's example, learning was evident, despite the "student" not making any final assertions about the meaning of the poem. I realized from reviewing my own students' work that there was value in speculating; asking questions; clarifying the question; eliminating possible answers; and even demonstrating confusion.

Class Discussion Transcript

Class discussion following our final "Train of Thought" will be recorded and transcribed.

Teacher Journal

I will record a Padlet journal entry after each time I have used the strategy with my class. The following questions will guide my reflections:

1. *On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being engaged throughout the allotted time, how would I describe student engagement with the text?*
2. *What evidence did I see of students using this strategy in a way that generated insights that may not have occurred with a different strategy?*
3. *What evidence did I see of struggle or misunderstanding that may be endemic to this procedure?*

Student Surveys

All students in each class will be given a brief survey following their experience with the approach. The following terminology for interviews is derived from Bhattacharya's *Fundamentals of qualitative research: a practical guide* (2017).

Questions will include:

1. *In your opinion, did using the "Train of Thought" help you understand the passage more than if you had no guidance?*

   Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree

2. *In your opinion, did using the "Train of Thought" help you understand the passage more than if you were asked a series of questions at the end of the reading?*

   Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree

3. *Was there something specific you learned from this passage as a result of doing the "Train of Thought" prior to sharing your work or class discussion?*

   YES | NO | If YES, briefly describe what you learned.

Student Interviews

The five students will sit for a discussion of no more than 30 minutes during the semester, to gain information about their reading stances and to discuss how using the strategy impacted their reading experiences and how they may/may not apply it in their future readings. The intention of these discussions will be to elicit, through interaction, replies that may not arise from individual survey responses.

Teacher Interviews

I will sit with my two colleagues for four interviews during the course of the semester: the first time, to gain information about their beliefs and practices in the teaching of reading; the second and third times, after using the strategy; and a final time at the end of the semester to discuss how they felt using the strategy impacted student reading experiences and how they

may/may not apply it in their future readings. The intention of these discussions will be to elicit, through interaction, responses that may not arise from individual survey responses.

Questions will include:

In your view of teaching, how do students become better readers?

How would you describe your role in the classroom?

Contrast Questions: These questions will be asked of teachers to determine what the differences are in their approach to teaching a text when using the "Train of Thought" and using other strategies.

Questions will include:

Describe one of the reading strategies or scaffolding structures you have used when assigning a piece of text in your class.

What are the limitations and possibilities of using the "Train of Thought" strategy as opposed to the strategy you described previously?

Descriptive Questions: These interviews will be done each quarter or semester to determine how teachers felt about the experience and what they learned about how their students learn and about their own practice. These will be in-depth, open-ended interviews.

Questions will include:

Describe your experience of using the "Train of Thought" strategy.

What did using the strategy reveal about your students' reading experiences?

What did you learn about your own teaching practice through using, and not using, this strategy?

Data Analysis

The surveys, interviews, and student work will all be considered the data of this study. Again, following Bhattacharya (2017) inductive analysis will be used to draw conclusions. I will be coding the interview transcripts and student documents according to the claims found in the literature review:

student personal and prior experience as a part of the reading experience

inquiry learning and reading as a problem-solving experience

writing during the reading process

social interaction as part of the reading process

The completed "Train of Thought" exercises (student artifacts) will be coded in the following ways to characterize the kind of learning that is being demonstrated:

clarifying the question

eliminating possible answers

speculating

demonstrating confusion

These codes were developed many years ago as part of my initial use of the "Train of Thought" as an attempt to identify the kinds of learning behaviors that were part of the process of identifying the theme of a text. The idea was to reward students for moving toward the goal, not just achieving it – encouraging students who may be less engaged in what typically is a "race for the answer" among the most skilled students.

Initial responses to the "Train of Thought" will be coded to determine the extent of their thinking about the passage. I will be asking the teachers working with me in applying the "Train

of Thought" to also review student surveys and interviews. I plan on asking for their reactions, conclusions, and insights before sharing mine.

Ethical Procedures

Student names will be removed from artifacts collected, and student surveys will be administered without names attached through Google Forms. Students who participate in interview discussions will be identified by a created name if they are quoted or paraphrased in reflections on this study. Teacher names have been changed, as has the name of the school.

Chapter Summary

This study is predicated on listening to student voices during the reading experience, whether these voices be spoken or in writing. Eliciting these voices will come through inquiry-based learning during a scaffolded reading experience followed by strategic collaboration. Insight about student experience of the "Train of Thought" will come from surveys, interviews, and analysis of their written products. Teacher reflections on learning achieved through application of this strategy will come from interviews and my Padlet journal. The process of this study, and insights derived from it, are part of an action research project designed to reflect on, and improve, the quality of reading experiences in high school classrooms.

These insights, which sound applicable to the present-day context of our world and our classrooms, were published 24 years ago:

As a society facing serious political, economic, and scientific challenges, we cannot afford to have 'orderly but lifeless classrooms' where teachers continue to 'avoid controversial topics, simplifying complex issues into bite-sized pieces of information,' and where students routinely recall what someone else thought, rather than articulate, examine, elaborate, or revise what they themselves thought'" (Nystrand, 1997, p. 3, as cited in Reznitskaya, 2012, p. 455).

How has this call been answered by teachers of reading?

The 2019 study "A Synthesis of Quantitative Research on Reading Programs for Secondary Students" has a grim response: "The reading performance of students in U.S. middle and high schools is one of the most important problems in education" (Baye, 2019). According to the study, "the proportion of U.S. 12th graders scoring at proficient or advanced has dropped three percentage points" (Baye, 2019) since 1992, and that the mean performance of U.S. 15-year-old students was 24th among all countries. An OECD (2013) survey of adult competencies showed that the average reading level of U.S. young adults (16- to 24-year-olds) was below the international average for developed countries" (p. 133). A Literacy Lab study of 8th graders by Hasty and Schrodt (2015) showed that "most of the students consistently abandoned school-assigned texts." Students reported that their reasons for disengaging "included characters not close to students' age, lack of interest in the story, and inability to follow plots that 'bounced around'" (p. 20).

Schools have responded in various ways to poor test scores: extra reading time or designated reading periods, the use of technology, and a deliberate focus on close reading, "the methodical investigation of a complex text through answering text dependent questions geared to unpack the

text's meaning" (The Aspen Institute, 2012, p. 1). Close reading, in particular, has become the primary strategy for improving reading among secondary students. In fact, "close reading is the only authorized textual approach within the Common Core State Standards" (Eppley, 2019, p. 3). These marching orders have led teachers to do "exactly what many teacher guidebooks… have encouraged them to do...emphasize almost exclusively the structure and process of close reading without substantial discussion of its purpose and relevance to students' lives" (Beltramo & Stillman, 2015, p. 9).

Despite Nystrand's pleas, and current agreement on the significance of student-centered learning, little has changed with regard to teacher ownership of the reading experience and the purpose for reading. In Harste's (2014) critique of English language arts curricula, he asserts that "meaning making" is nearly the entirety of the reading experience; "for the most part, studying language and other sign systems in terms of the work they do and how they do it has been left out, as has providing daily opportunities to inquire into problems of personal and social relevance to learners." This detached approach leaves him to lament that despite our focused efforts, "students learn more about literacy on the streets than they do in the classroom" (p. 100).

Given the challenge of reading instruction, the charge to teach writing as well can cause English teachers to wonder how to possibly accomplish both goals successfully. Anne Haas Dyson wrote in her *Collaboration of Writing and Reading* (1989),

Throughout the history of American schooling, educators have periodically called for the integration of the language arts for writing, reading, talking, and listening to become collaborative processes in classroom activities, thereby furthering the development of each process and, more importantly, furthering children's learning about themselves and their world.

She concludes, “And yet that ideal seems to remain just that, an ideal broadly praised, yet not broadly attained.” While Dyson expresses hope in the ideal of integrating reading and writing, Beck et al. (2021) argue that in today’s classrooms, most teachers do not view these goals as related. This “worry that time spent teaching reading is time not spent teaching writing” is understandable, they contend, “as long as the literary analysis genre remains widespread as a standardized assessment task in English Language Arts” (p. 2).

Nystrand’s assertion that recitation, rather than reflection, has been commonplace was echoed by Langer and Applebee in 1986:

Studying typical patterns of literacy instruction in American secondary schools, we have found that the majority of school tasks require recitation of previous learning, in which the student has little room to claim ownership for what was being written or read.

These patterns have changed little since then: Chen et al. (2014) describe classes where “most of the learning is generally teacher led, where the assessing and evaluating is done formally—not with but to students.” (p. 106)

Dyson’s 1989 call for collaboration in the reading process, while accepted by scholars and contemporary reading theorists, remains largely ignored in the contemporary classroom. Student collaboration in general, or cooperative learning, “is familiar to many teachers and its use is not rare, [but] it remains the exception in high school classrooms” (Corcoran & Silander, 2009, p. 166). Monologic discourse continues, initiated by “teachers who follow the traditional classroom ground rules" and the perceived “tension between giving students freedom to interact with each other and delivering curriculum goals” (Lyle, 2008; Howe & Abedin, 2013, as cited in García-Carrión et al., 2020, p. 2).

While Garcia-Carrion et al. (2020) maintain that

educational psychology made a turn in how individual and cognitive elements were understood, including broader factors in the learning process: from a focus on mental schemata of previous knowledge to a focus on culture, intersubjectivity, and dialogue as crucial for learning and development," classrooms are only slowly adapting to this change. (p. 1)

And "despite the apparent popularity of culturally relevant pedagogy," Ladson-Billings (2015) contends that "many practitioners, and those who claim to translate research to practice, seem stuck in very limited and superficial notions of culture," a problem exacerbated by teachers clinging to their identity as the classroom's sole source of knowledge, bearing sole responsibility for defining culture. Ladson-Billings (2015) concedes that "in this era of state-mandated high-stakes testing, it is nearly impossible for teachers to ignore mundane content and skills-focused curricula" (p. 83).

Chapter 4 - Introduction

This study took place in the fall of 2021 and the spring of 2022 at Mountain Peak High School in Mountain Peak, Colorado, a school of approximately 725 students, in junior English classes belonging to myself, Alyson Lester, and Michael Shuster. Ms. Lester is a 16-year veteran of the Johnson School District; Mr. Shuster has taught for 18 years, including K-12 and university, and is in his third year with Johnson. My two classes and Mr. Shuster's three classes are on-level English Language Arts 11 classes, and the three classes of Ms. Lester are Advanced Placement English Language and Composition.

During this unique school year there have been challenges to implementing strategies and collecting data, chief among these are the COVID-19 restrictions. While our attendance was entirely in-person for this time period, unlike the virtual or hybrid models in the fall of 2020 and the spring of 2021, we were under a county-enforced mask mandate from October through February. This presented a unique challenge to connecting with students. In addition, there was an atmosphere of distrust in education from the community, as illustrated from a local newspaper article:

> The board moved forward with extending the mask mandate to the high schools despite having received considerable pushback from parents and students after putting in place the Pre-K through eighth-grade mandate. During the public comment portion of Wednesday's regular meeting, 20 county residents addressed the board in-person with 17 of them arguing against the mandate.

One of those who addressed the board to express displeasure with the decision was Mountain Peak Town Trustee Grace Delgado, who has three children in Mountain Peak schools.

"The fact that I am here means you have failed the families of Mountain Peak and Loveland, the fact that they are coming to me, a trustee of Mountain Peak, is evidence that you are not doing your job which is to listen and act on their behalf," Delgado said and went on to quote the Declaration of Independence to emphasize her point that health decisions, such as wearing a mask, are not the role of elected officials or bureaucrats but belong solely to the individual and their family.

Delgado concluded her remarks by saying, "I find this board in violation of the Constitution of the United States of America and because you no longer represent the vast majority of the parents in your district, I am calling for your immediate resignation," to which she received thunderous and sustained applause from the near-capacity crowd. (Mountain Peak Weekly Digest, September 9, 2021)

In a journal entry for September 9, 2021, I wrote:

> *First Train done yesterday. In the midst of COVID-19, collaboration is not as easy. I just took a COVID-19 test the day before. Our school just instituted a mask mandate, some students are rebelling, and it has an impact on class and school climate. At a staff meeting, Robb says "when is someone going to take care of us, teachers? A kid has a peanut allergy and the world stops. I am immunocompromised and it's like good luck."*

That teacher collapsed during class the following month and never returned to school. He apparently recovered and some teachers believe he is in litigation with the school district over working conditions.

A project designed to foster authentic engagement thus began under the pall of teachers as enforcers of a largely unpopular school rule. Students who did wear masks often wore them improperly, either not covering their nose or either nose and mouth in what teachers called "the chin strap." On September 7, 2021, Johnson School District issued the following guidelines in anticipation of resistance to the new mandate:

> When students fail to adhere to the district's requirement, staff will offer reminders and informal verbal corrections regarding the masking requirement. When a student persistently fails to comply with the masking requirement, school staff will attempt to reach parents/guardians to discuss the masking requirement and engage in problem-solving strategies to achieve the student's compliance with the requirement. If the school's interventions prove ineffective, parents will be contacted and the student may be temporarily assigned to an alternative supervised classroom until the student is picked up. Ultimately, if a student persistently fails to comply with the masking requirement or if parents prefer for their student(s) not to wear masks, then JSD will offer such students an educational alternative, such as Johnson Connect Online.

The health protocols also limited the kinds of collaboration and group work teachers had grown accustomed to incorporating, including the kind I planned for this project. Later in the fall and in the spring, as restrictions eased, collaboration became easier.

Consistent implementation of the strategy was also hindered by ordinary, unanticipated school disruptions—fire drills, assembly schedules, etc.—and extraordinary ones. On September

23, 2021, the start of the school day was delayed for several hours as police investigated a threat to the school, as explained via e-mail to staff by Mitchell Hartman, the district's director of communications:

> Early this morning, a report was filed on the State of Colorado's Safe2Tell service which focused on a message that had been posted on the SnapChat social media site. The post contained a reference to violence directed at the Mountain Peak High School community.
>
> District staff members and law enforcement officers at the Larimer County Sheriff's Office immediately investigated the incident. Through their investigation, officers have determined that the threat was not credible and all students, staff and visitors are safe. As a precaution, law enforcement officers are completing a security sweep of the building, which will slightly delay when students and staff have access. Once the building is cleared, classes will resume according to their normal schedule.
>
> Please note that there will be an enhanced presence by law enforcement officers today at the school. This is being done as a precaution and also to assist students and staff to help them feel safe.

Ms. Lester remarked in one of our interviews that a "Train of Thought" exercise she had planned for her class was curtailed by the shortened schedule of that Thursday.

Mountain Peak High School also faced disruptions in the fall caused by "TikTok Challenges," social media posts that encouraged students to damage their school. On December 17, 2021, the district issued the following statement:

> Recently, there has been a large number of messages posted nationwide on the TikTok social media app regarding threats of school violence. As you will recall, earlier this

> school year a series of "challenges" were posted on the app which encouraged students to vandalize school property and commit other inappropriate acts while on school campuses. This new "challenge" now encourages students to make threats of violence that would take place at their school buildings tomorrow, December 17th.
>
> At this time, none of the posts on the TikTok app have targeted Johnson School District schools and no credible threats have been identified. Johnson staff will continue to partner with law enforcement and, as a precaution, officials will increase the number of patrols around JSD schools.

While our school did not weather the bathroom destruction seen in some schools, many students used plastic threads to cut into school furniture, including some in my classroom.

The "Train of Thought" was used as a reading strategy to accompany a text at least three times by Ms. Lester, three times by Mr. Shuster, and six times in my ELA 11 classes. After students engaged with the assigned text through the "Train of Thought," teachers followed up with peer discussion, group discussion, or both. The value of this strategy is maximized as a component of problem-solving, so I encouraged my colleagues to choose complex and challenging texts that otherwise fit into their curriculum. Ms. Lester chose AP prompt passages such as excerpts from Michael Singer's "The Singer Solution" and several paragraphs of Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal." Mr. Shuster used parts of The Declaration of Independence, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Into the Wild* with his students.

My students began the year with a "Train of Thought" in response to a May 12, 2008, *New Yorker* cover illustration by Daniel Clowes. Entitled "Man's Best Friend," the cover is

actually “part one” of a two-part visual story, in which a man is building a robot on the apparent cover and then playing poker with the completed robot on the interior cover.

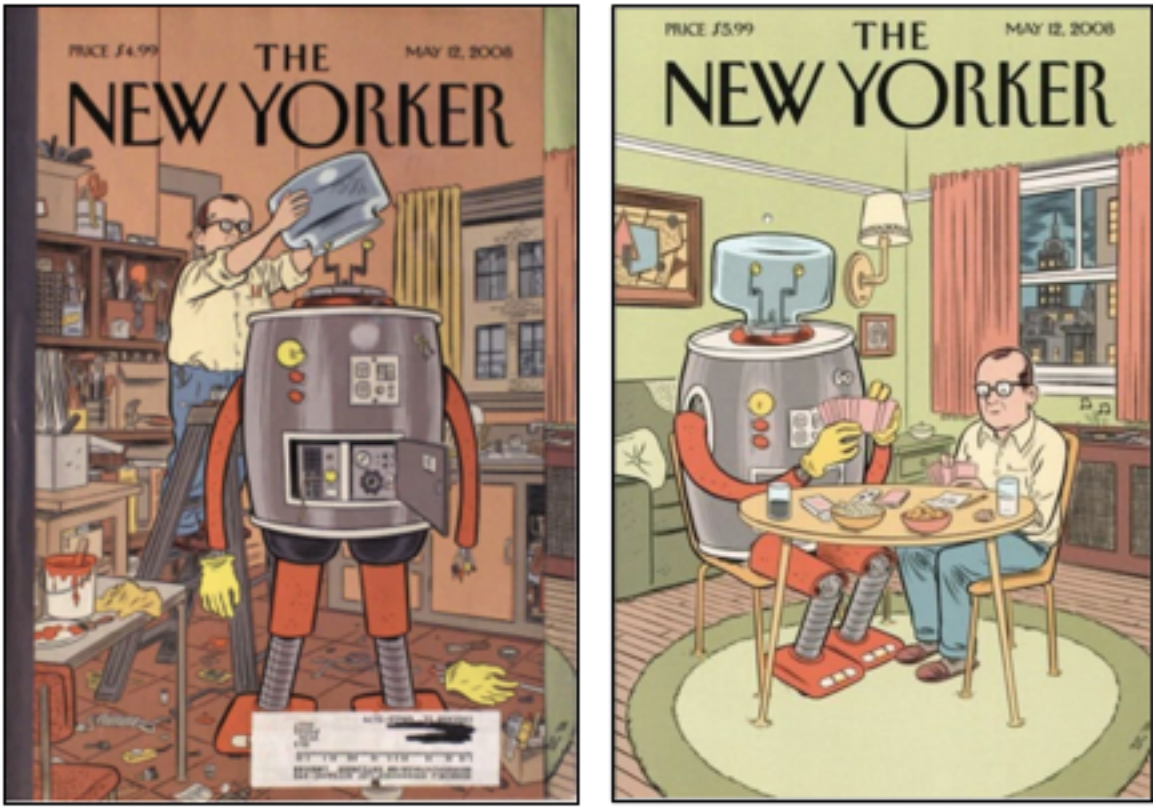


Figure 4.1. New Yorker *cover images used in first “Train of Thought” response.*

Using a visual image proved to be ideal for encouraging student engagement, questioning, and exploration of themes.

Later in the semester, as part of our reading of *The Crucible*, I had students use the “Train of Thought” in their reading of Irving Layton’s “The Improved Binoculars”:

> Below me the city was in flames:
>
> the firemen were the first to save
>
> themselves. I saw steeples fall on their knees.

I saw an agent kick the charred bodies
from an orphanage to one side, marking
the site carefully for a future speculation.

Lovers stopped short of the final spasm
and went off angrily in opposite directions,
their elbows held by giant escorts of fire.

Then the dignitaries rode across the bridges
under an auricle of light which delighted them,
noting for later punishment those that went before.

And the rest of the populace, their mouths
distorted by an unusual gladness, bawled thanks
to this comely and ravaging ally, asking

Only for more light with which to see
their neighbour's destruction.

All this I saw through my improved binoculars.

This second use of the "Train of Thought" yielded deeper thinking and included more open sharing in response to the prompts for personal connections.

Students used the "Train of Thought" three times during their reading of *The Great Gatsby*. Key passages were excerpted to fit on halves of two pages. As the three of us agreed during the semester, students' responses became more developed as their familiarity with the

strategy grew. My final use of the “Train of Thought” accompanied Lisel Mueller’s poem, “The End of Science Fiction,” as an introduction to a poetry unit.

After using the “Train of Thought" with our classes for the final time, we administered a survey to our students asking for their reactions to using this strategy and comparisons to other classroom reading strategies.

During the semester, I conducted three independent interviews with Ms. Lester and Mr. Shuster. Each of these, except for my final interview with Ms. Lester, occurred during a lunch period; I recorded our conversations on my iPhone for transcription at a later date. Due to scheduling conflicts, Ms. Lester’s final interview was completed on a Google Doc, with her responses to my questions on Mote recordings.

I conducted personal interviews with five of my students, two from second hour and three from fourth hour. These students were asked to discuss how they interacted with the “Train of Thought” model and the impact of peer and group discussion of our final passage, “The End of Science Fiction.”

Instructional Model

Students were given either a poem, illustration, or excerpt from a fiction or nonfiction text with the following instructions:

> On this page, write your Train of Thought for (title of text). Your goal is to fill in the second column meeting the five criteria:
>
> 1. an observation/opinion
> 2. a question
> 3. connection to previous learning

4. length (complete the half-page column, including all four of the above criteria at least once)

The passages were intended as "cold reads"—that is, these were texts that had not been previously used or discussed in class. Teachers did not preface their work with the text in any way, other than possibly reading it aloud. After students were given time to read and write—depending on the length of the text and perceived time needed by students—they were asked to share one of the four prompt responses they felt helped unlock the text for them either with a partner or with the class in a whole group discussion.

Figure 4.2.. *Students in my 4th hour class discuss their Train of Thought reactions to the illustration "Man's Best Friend" by Daniel Clowes.*

Evaluation of Student Work

All trains of thought, either as hard copies or digitally, were collected. The initial attempts were discussed in the follow-up interviews. The final use of the strategy—for all three teachers' classes—was evaluated by me only. It would have been interesting to see their analysis of their own students, but given the instructional and interview time I asked for, I completed the evaluations on my own.

The following codes were applied to student work to signify evidence of four reading behaviors: Clarifying the Question, Demonstrating Confusion, Eliminating Possible Answers, and Speculating. "None" designated no evidence of any of these indicators. Combinations of these behaviors in a single response were indicated by multiple codes.

Table 4.1. *Coding of Reading Behaviors in "Train of Thought" Writing.*

NONE	None of these Reading Behaviors			
C	Clarifying the Question			
D	Demonstrating Confusion			
E	Eliminating Possible Answers			
S	Speculating			
CD	Clarifying the Question	Demonstrating Confusion		
CS	Clarifying the Question	Speculating		
CE	Clarifying the Question	Eliminating Possible Answers		
DE	Demonstrating Confusion	Eliminating Possible Answers		
DS	Demonstrating Confusion	Speculating		
ES	Eliminating Possible Answers	Speculating		
DSE	Demonstrating Confusion	Speculating	Eliminating Possible Answers	

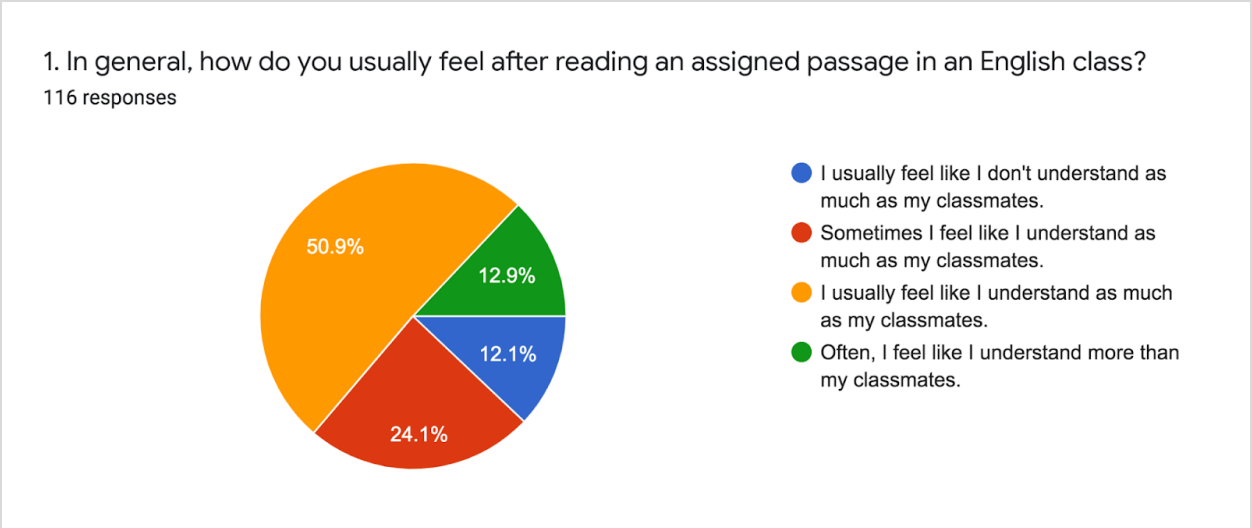
DSC	Demonstrating Confusion	Speculating	Clarifying the Question	
SCE	Speculating	Clarifying the Question	Eliminating Possible Answers	
DCE	Demonstrating Confusion	Clarifying the Question	Eliminating Possible Answers	
DSCE	Demonstrating Confusion	Speculating	Clarifying the Question	Eliminating Possible Answers

Response to Research Question #1: How do students describe their reading experience using an inquiry approach to the text?

This research question was answered through the exit survey, student interviews, and teacher interviews. One hundred sixteen (116) students responded to a survey created in Google Forms, completed by students following their final Train of Thought, and submitted through their Google Classroom.

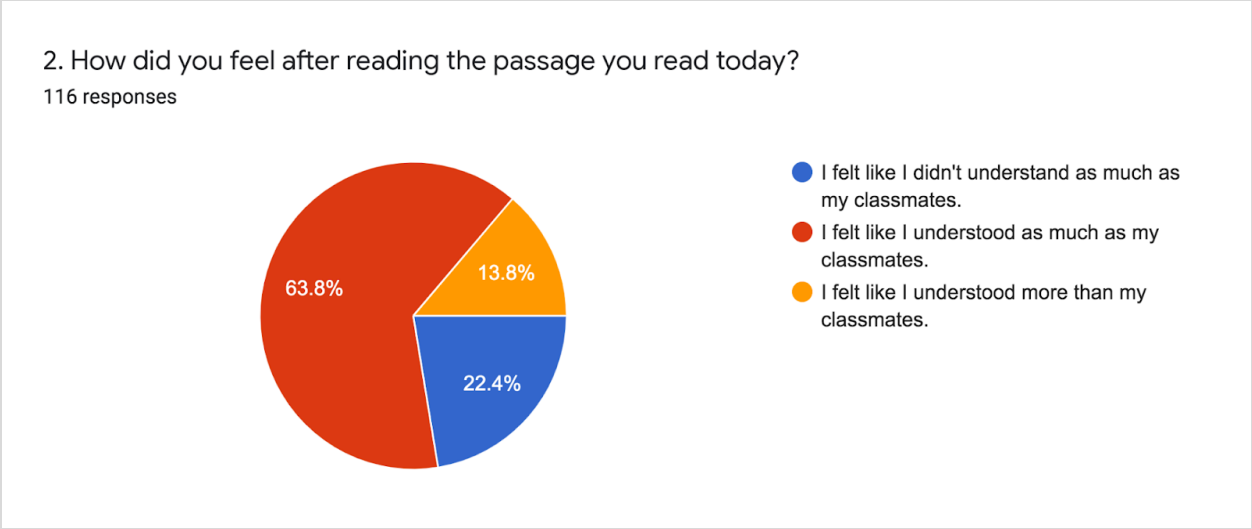
The first question attempts to establish the perspective of student agency. By asking students how they generally feel after reading an assigned passage, I begin with a focus on the reader, not the text. I also ask this question to provide a distinction between reading with the "Train of Thought" and reading without.

Figure 4.3. *Student Attitudes Following Reading of Assigned Passages in Class*



Based on these responses, the majority of these 11th grade students felt that they "usually" understood class reading assignments as much as their classmates, with 12.9% feeling that they "often" understood more than their classmates.

Figure 4.4. *Student Attitudes Following Reading of Assigned Passage Using "Train of Thought."*



Responses to Question 2 indicate a perception among 63.8% of students that they understood as much as their classmates following the use of the "Train of Thought" in their class. While 36.2% of students responded to Question 1 by saying that they "sometimes" or "usually" don't understand as much as their classmates in assigned classroom reading, only 22.4% of students indicted that they felt like they didn't understand as much as their classmates following their experience with the text and "Train of Thought" prior to the survey.

Question 3 of the survey asks, "How did using the 'Train of Thought' impact your understanding of the passage?" Students are given an opportunity for a brief open response, intended to gather more specific information about their experience with the strategy. These responses were then collected (see Appendix B) and reviewed.

The majority of open-ended responses said that using the "Train of Thought" assisted their reading. The following are examples of two such responses:

I believe it allowed and challenged me to take time and dig further into the ideas implicated in the passage. And by doing that I was able to incorporate my own life into the ideas making it more memorable.

It helped me to think deeper about a passage I otherwise may have just read and not truly taken the time to comprehend.

A few were ambivalent about using the "Train of Thought":

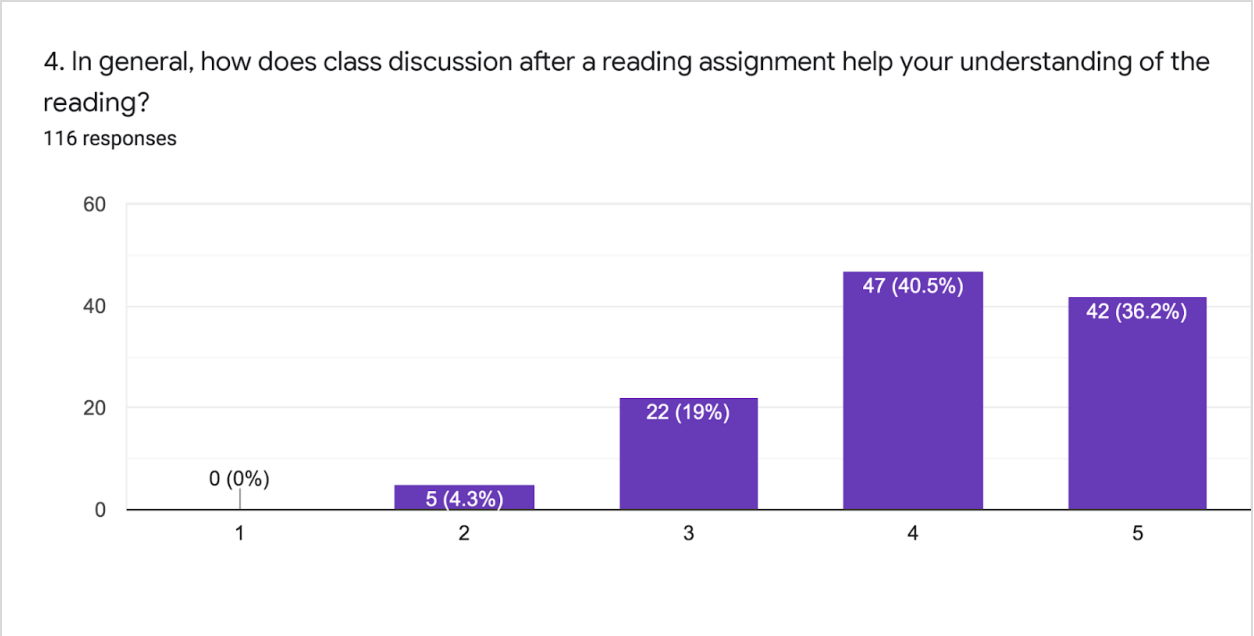
It didn't really. I think like that usually while reading, but when it asks questions it feels like I'm forced to come up with things that don't actually come to mind.

Also, a few stated that using the "Train of Thought" hindered their reading:

Writing it down put limiting breaks to my actual Train of Thought and processing of the passage.

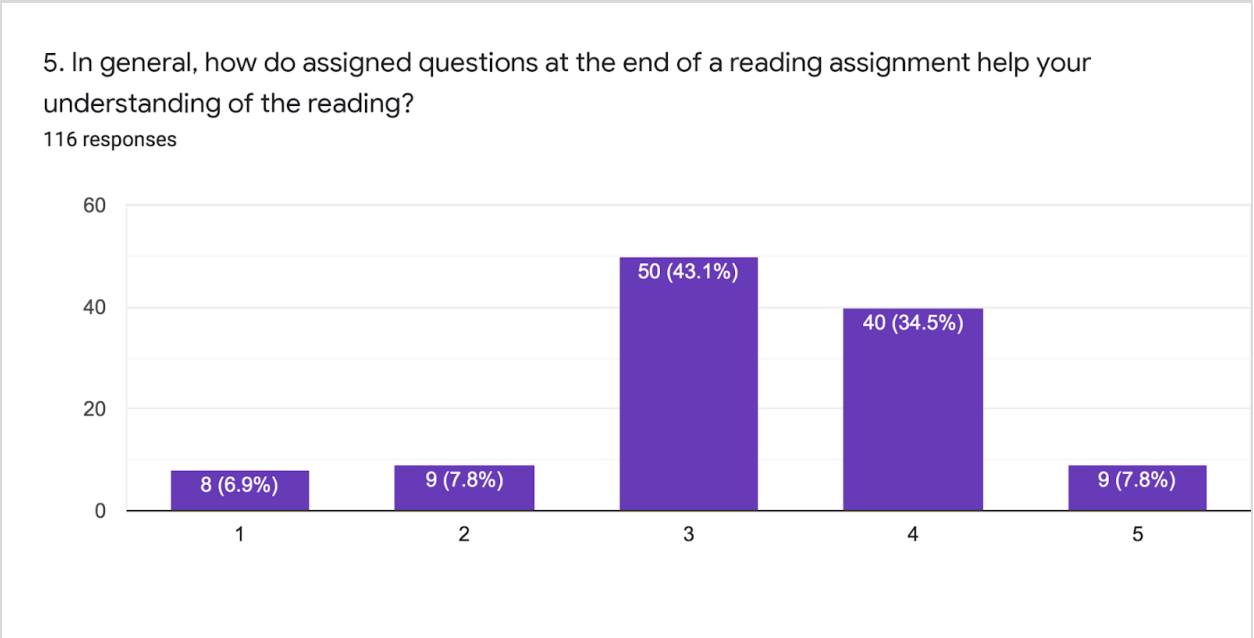
Questions 4 and 5 are intended to gather information about how students perceive different approaches to reading assigned texts. Question 4 asks students about how the common approach of class discussion after an assigned reading helps their understanding. Question 5 asks students about their perception of the effectiveness of content questions following an assigned reading.

Figure 4.5. *Student Perceptions of Class Discussions Following Assigned Reading.*



Scale 1-5 → 1 (Not Helpful) to 5 (Very Helpful)

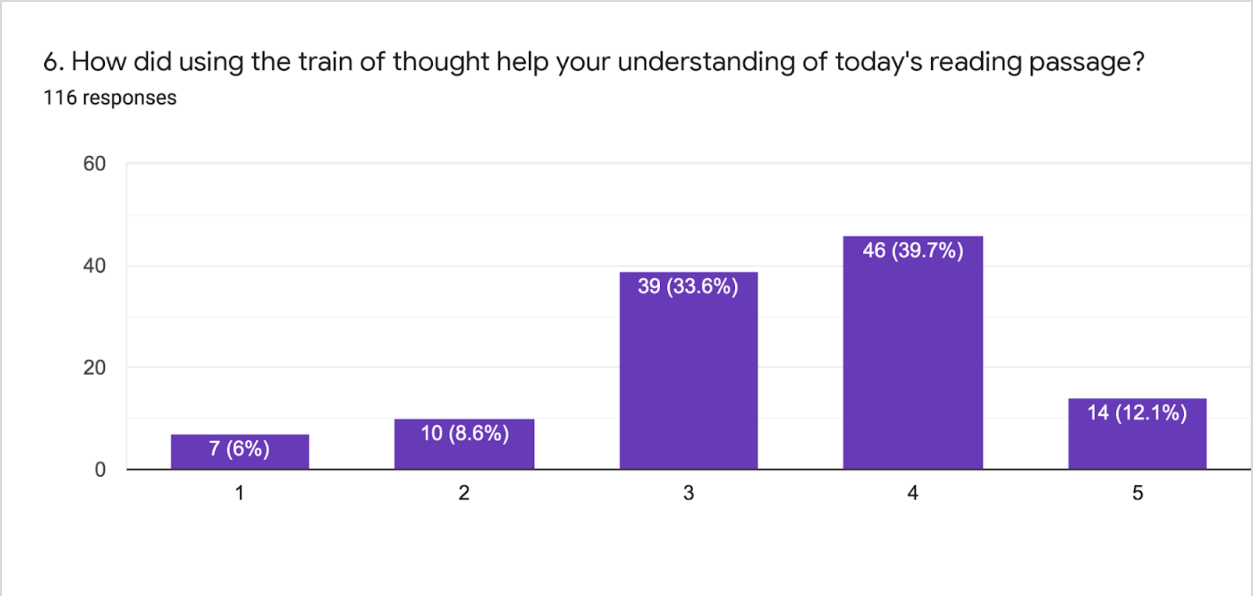
Figure 4.6. *Student Perceptions of Written Questions Following Assigned Reading.*



Scale 1-5 → 1 (Not Helpful) to 5 (Very Helpful)

Not surprisingly, students expressed positive feelings about the effectiveness of class discussions toward understanding. As Lemov (2017) noted, while this type of collaboration could certainly help individual understanding of a text, teachers are often left "conflating" insight gained through discussion with demonstration of, or increase in, reading skills (p. 16). Students expressed less belief in the efficacy of assigned questions after reading towards understanding the text. While 49 of the 116 students indicated a "4" or "5" on a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being "not helpful" to 5 being "very helpful," 60 students indicated scores of "4" or higher on Question 6, which asked how helpful they found using the "Train of Thought."

Figure 4.7. *Student Perceptions of Using the "Train of Thought" Following Assigned Reading.*



Scale 1-5 → 1 (Not Helpful) to 5 (Very Helpful)

This question is closely related to Question 3 with the purpose of gathering information as an open and a limited response. These limited responses are consistent with the sentiments expressed in Question 3: 17 students in Question 6 responded with a "1" or a "2," closer to "not helpful," while 16 open responses expressed a similar feeling.

Students Discuss the Inquiry Approach

Five students in my class were interviewed to get more insight into what were the benefits and what were the challenges of using the "Train of Thought," I asked them questions about their thought process and how they collaborate with others.

These students, interviewed individually, agreed that writing while reading was beneficial to their understanding of the text:

Fabiano:

... slow writing things down. Okay, cool. No, I get that. Tell me about it.

Kristin:

So, I think it's honestly like really nice, just because being able to type through all of your thoughts, and not having to refine it down immediately to what you think the right answer is, is really helpful because like, just as an individual, just like talking through things and writing through things and forcing myself to put out all of my thoughts before I come to a final conclusion is like super helpful. And this is like, this assignment's really nice for that specifically, because you just like write until you figure out what you specifically think.

Fabiano:

So it helps writing while you're reading?

Shannon:

I literally just did my "Train of Thought" while I was reading.

Fabiano:

Do you usually write it down like this or did you do it because this was part of the assignment?

Tammy:

I usually write them down just for my inner thoughts to come out easier. Because it just gets crammed up in there and I'm like, okay, well you might as well.

These students also expressed that writing while reading had the effect of slowing them down, allowing them to think about what they read and re-evaluate their conclusions:

Shannon:

This was actually kind of different, because it takes me a couple times to like read things through and make connections, but that was just kind of like, "Oh, well. That reminds me of that" type of thing.

Fabiano:

Do you usually, if you know for yourself that it's a good idea to read something twice or it takes you a couple times to do it, do you usually do that on your own?

Shannon:

I kind of do that on my own, but I think, what was I going to say? Me reading this the first time through, I kind of did my "Train of Thought" while I was reading it, which is different than what I normally do when we have these. So I tried that out, which definitely helps.

Fabiano:

Yeah, we could have read the poem and then said, all right. Tell me what you think this means. Instead, I asked you to do some writing while you were reading, Did that make a difference or not? Or how did it affect just the way that you read the poem?

Jamie:

I don't know. I guess I don't think it made that big of a difference.

Fabiano:

Okay.

Jamie:

When you write stuff down or maybe it's because it's like more time to focus on smaller parts so you can get deeper thoughts into it instead of having to remember the whole thing.

Using the "Train of Thought" also made them aware of their own thinking process as they read:

Fabiano:

When you are in any kind of class, when you're asked to work through something or come to a conclusion, what's your usual thought process? Like, do you like to come to conclusions quickly or do you like to take time with it? What's your usual way of thinking?

Kristin:

[The] ego part of me always wants to come to a conclusion really fast, but I know that usually doesn't work out. And so like this, the format of this assignment, I always try to get myself to do that, but that's also really hard when I'm just free styling and don't have this assignment in front of me. And so this is helpful for getting that routine down in my head of working through things like step by step instead of just jumping straight to the conclusion.

Fabiano:

I could tell from the last thing, you really came to a really good understanding about what that poem means. Your last answer there is kind of the essence of the poem. How do you feel like you figured that out? How did you recognize what this poem was about?

Jamie:

First reading the whole thing and then reading bit by bit after. I think what I did was read the full thing and then go back and read the first stanza, write something about that. Then the second one, write something about that. Then by the time I got to the last thing I wrote, it was kind of about the general thing. I had a better idea of.

Jordan:

Some of the things that I've done in the past is, sometimes I struggle with just the "Train of Thought" because I begin to overthink it, of what to do. It's like I'll overthink, "Okay, well this is what he's looking for me and expecting for the assignment." But if it's just like I'm reading a poem or a book or anything like that, I'll go through and I'll annotate it myself with a highlighter or something like that. And I can find keywords or key points from that poem or that book and find, "Okay, what is it really saying?" And then break it down into parts. Because if you look at it as a whole, it can become overwhelming, it's hard to understand, but if you break it down, and for example, I was like, "Just take it one by one and just look at it there and just, "okay, what does that one part mean?" And so just

annotating it by itself, but I mean the "Train of Thought" is fine, it's just sometimes I overthink it, that's just my brain.

Fabiano:

Okay. So it helped you focus on specific lines that made you go, oh, I see what this is about. When you're reading just on your own, and you're a good reader I assume, you do a lot of reading. How do you keep yourself focused when you read? Cause that's usually a problem for everybody, right? Is losing their focus.

Tammy:

Yeah. I just really try to understand and stand in the reader's shoes. And focus on what their emotions are toward what they're trying to get at in the point of the book.

Students were asked about the value of having a "blank page" with little direction, versus explicit content questions accompanying the text:

Fabiano:

Interesting. I gave you a couple questions to do, but most of it was just a blank page. I didn't give you questions. What happens in the third stance or how are people like robots? I didn't give you any direct questions. How would you rather deal with a piece of writing? Would you rather have a blank space and be able to ask a lot of questions? Or would you rather as a teacher, I ask you specific questions about that poem?

Tammy:

I'd rather just have a blank page. I'd rather start just blank and try to just write everything down that I feel. And how everything's going with COVID-19 for instance, and stuff like that. And then kind of just make the story out of that, as I go along.

Shannon:

So the first time reading it, that was the first thing that came to mind after reading the end of it, was where it said, "The first steps in the moon are in a room." Or something like that.

Fabiano:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Shannon:

And then I kind of just connected, I don't know how I honestly came up with that. It was just a quick connection. I was like, "The moon, the first steps." And then just, I don't know. Yeah. I mean.

Fabiano:

One of the questions is a connection to previous learning or maybe a connection of personal experience. Do you think that has anything to do with it? That you were thinking about, that the whole idea was about making connections? Did that have anything to do with it when you read about the moon that you made a connection to?

Shannon:

No, not really.

Fabiano:

Yeah.

Shannon:

It just kind of, I don't know, after reading it, I was like, "Well, it talked about the moon in the beginning."

Fabiano:

Yeah.

Shannon:

And I was like, "Well, evolution, and then the first steps." And then I kind of just made that connection on my own.

Making connections "on their own," like Shannon, and being able to explore their own direction, like Tammy, reflected the possibilities inherent in inviting students to initiate moves as readers.

Teacher Perceptions of Students' Attitudes

Teacher perception of students' attitudes were obtained through journaling, interviews, conversations with students, overheard discussions, and observation of student behavior.

Interviews with Ms. Lester and Mr. Shuster provided insight into how students responded to using the "Train of Thought" that went beyond the information reported by students in the survey. Both teachers heard from their students that the kinds of skills practiced while using the

"Train of Thought" were not commonly understood or practiced by students. Ms. Lester commented on a conversation she had with her class regarding the habit of writing while reading:

> *Lester:*
> *But it kind of floored me because in my mind, and I might be so out of touch, I figured when you are reading a text that you're engaged in, you just make notes. I thought everyone did that to the point where I brought out one of my favorite books and I just opened it up and I was like, "this is what my favorite book looks like." And they're like, "what class was that for?" I'm like, "no, it's for me." It's a note to myself. And even when kids graduate, if I hand a kid their diploma, I give them a gift of my favorite book with a specific annotation for that kid. And it's just, this is me sharing my love with you. This is my love note to you. It's through someone else's words, but I think it's important for you. I think they had a hard time grasping that someone would engage with a text other than just to pull someone else's information.*

Similarly, Mr. Shuster's students expressed surprise at an exercise that seemed to be "thinking about thinking":

> *Shuster:*
> *For some of the students, we've talked about the metacognitive. It was kind of like hitting them upside the head with a board. They were like, "Wait, what? People really do this? This is something that can be done?" Or just the whole question. Other students were already... They were already locked in on this.*

This exchange led to the three of us administering a survey to our students about their metacognitive habits. While this was not intended to be part of this study, the results revealed that Ms. Lester's AP English Language and Composition students had much more experience with habits such as creating their own questions, anticipating the responses of others, and visualizing images while studying. Approaches like the "Train of Thought," therefore, will naturally connect with students who already practice metacognitive habits. This insight seemed to challenge us to consider how we can teach these habits to inexperienced students, when we should do so, and at what grade level the "Train of Thought" is appropriate, considering the metacognitive demands.

Ms. Lester noted that students are trained to see their education as a "gathering" process, in which their role is passive and possibly distant from a text, rather than as a "sifting" process, which calls on them to interact with their subject matter. She responded that the "Train of Thought" might best be started with her freshman classes:

> *Lester:*
> *Well, I feel I need to do more of this younger because again, if the goal is to foster a love of learning, it's hard to do that. If we aren't teaching them how to engage and not treat it like a gathering process, but more of a sifting process. And so I don't know. I think maybe I'm at fault for even when they're freshman, I was like, "this is what you're looking for. This is what you're looking for in the text." And I should really be spending more time asking them to just engage.*

Mr. Shuster concurred that student attitudes prior to reading and while reading tend to be passive. In our discussions, he questioned his own teaching of literature like *The Odyssey* and *The Great Gatsby* when so many students failed to authentically engage with these texts. He felt that his on-level ELA classes, in particular, were not inclined to be active learners:

> *Shuster:*
> *When I think about my students that are not heading off to college, they're probably the group that sees education as very black and white. Pump my head full of knowledge so I can go out and apply what I know and stuff.*

Ms. Lester also characterized students' attitudes prior to reading as the groundwork for inauthentic responses:

> *Lester:*
> *I just don't think that they allow themselves to recreationally engage with the text.*

Another factor in student attitudes cited by both teachers is the ideological baggage that students bring to their reading of a text or their discussion of it. Ms. Lester noted the political nature of the "Singer Solution" article made some students hesitant to be authentic in their written and verbal responses:

> *Lester:*

I think also they're a little afraid to be too transparent with real personal experience. Because it's so hot, it's a hot topic right now. This idea of how we spend our money. I think too many people would be afraid other than the kids who are like, "I can't have my personal money. I'm a poor high school kid." Cause I did hear that quite a bit. Like "I don't have money to spend on this or that."

My 2nd hour class's discussion of "The End of Science Fiction," after students completed a "Train of Thought" and shared with small groups revealed that some students were not afraid to be transparent. The "Train of Thought" invites students to make their own connections and draw on their own experiences; thus, biases that may be unrelated to the reading may get airtime in a discussion, leading to a transparency that may intimidate, anger, or shut down others:

Davis:
I just realized this part right here that says, "Invent us as we were before our bodies glittered and we stopped bleeding." It's kind of saying before any bad things that happened, we kind of knew and it hurt us. Right. But now we're more masked or numb to things maybe.

Fabiano:
I like the way you put that. Yeah. That's just really a good statement.

Davis:
For example, the internet was created to reach somebody across the other side of the world. It still brings a level of divide for normal people, which led to a loss of empathy.

Fabiano:
Yeah. And these things like empathy, they're really like not "inventable" in a way, which is kind of the irony of like all of it. And many of you mentioned this as I walked around to the groups, talked about inventing, like you're saying, wait a minute, those aren't inventions, like you don't invent these things, but the believing and the stories are things that seem to be tied to human, like saving other people, to tie to what Student 1 was saying. A lot of inventions seem to be like success based or money based or make our lives easier based. But the stories are more human based, are more like saving someone.

Grayson:
Okay. So what I think is pretty much everyone these days is very conceited because everyone thinks that they're morally superior and they're like, oh yeah, I'm so inclusive with my friends. Look, half my friends are Black and half are Mexican. Like I'm so morally better than you. And they're really just doing it as a

show. Like I feel like we've definitely got[ten] better about, you know, racial discrimination and sexism and that kind of stuff. But our entire society today is based on showing who can outdo the other person at being inclusive. And it's to a point where it's not healthy, it's not good for anyone.

I challenged Grayson to consider that his use of "everyone" and "anyone" is inaccurate in any context, and that he stood a better chance at being heard by replacing those terms. He did agree that was a fair point, which I consider a teachable moment that may not have happened with a traditional close reading approach.

Collaboration Attitudes

Student collaboration is a key aspect to our application of the "Train of Thought": after an individual reading, students continue making meaning from the text without the immediate intervention of the teacher.

Students were asked in their personal interviews about how collaborating with classmates impacted their reading experience. Survey results indicated that students felt that they learned more about a text from class discussion than teacher-directed questions or a "Train of Thought," so it was not surprising to hear these students' positive views of collaboration following individual work:

Fabiano:
That's cool. When you did this assignment, you did this by yourself and then you met with the group. What were some of your observations about that, like the conversation you had with your group?

Kristin:
I think the conversation was really good, and it helped me push forward my thinking a little bit further, because it's just like, for people's different backgrounds, honestly really helps because just wherever they're at with literary comprehension, it having a different point of view is really helpful because a lot of times I get really in my head and get really focused on it. And then I can't, like, I forget to step back and be like, oh wait, that's exactly what was written and I just missed that.

Fabiano:
Putting them together. After you did this, I asked you to join with a group of other students to talk about it. In general, how does collaboration go for you in classes? Figuring things out as a group or talking about as a group? Do you like doing that? Not like doing that, does it feel like it helps you understand? Does it make a difference? How, how does that occur to you?

Jamie:
I like collaborating with groups because it can pull out stuff that I didn't catch maybe I think is a good idea. Yeah. Sometimes I don't talk much during the groups cause I just kind of like to listen to see what I miss maybe.

Jordan:
I've found that interesting too, because I was like, even when we were discussing it in class or whatever, we'd just be discussing it and I had Sean in my group. And nothing against him, I loved his opinions, I loved hearing his side of things because it's different from mine, it's like he's an atheist, I am a Christian. So just hearing those different sides of things was interesting. And he thought it was anti-Bible, and he thought it talked too much about the Bible at some points. And so I was like, "No, I think it's pro, but at the same time I'm not here to argue, I'm just going off of what I am gathering from this poem."

Fabiano:
Do you feel like it helps you collaborate out, like after you're collaborating with other people even if they don't agree with you or even if they don't see it the same way you do or didn't understand it the same way you did?

Jordan:
Oh, 100% because I mean it's the same way in life, you're not always going to see things equal or the same. And so just getting those different perspectives on the knowledge it really helps you build that understanding and that knowledge of like, "Okay, well this is how I see it." And then sometimes when they don't see it the same way or whatever it gives you a different look at it of, "Okay, well I didn't think of that before," and it makes your brain start working into that way of, "Okay, I never thought of it in that way, let me go back and work my brain into seeing it your way."

Lemov (2017) argues that discussion after reading, and using assessment afterwards to determine reading comprehension, "actually conflates two things: how much students understood of what they read, and how much they were able to augment and supplement their understanding during subsequent activities" (p. 16). The same can be said for how students gauge their own

understanding—if understanding the text and reproducing insight for a quiz or paper is the goal, it is likely students pay little heed to the accuracy or depth of their individual reading. The "Train of Thought" establishes an individual record of reading response that the teacher can examine. It also allows the teacher to reward students for grappling with the text and misinterpreting without penalty, building a habit in which students are more likely to take risks and develop a sense of agency.

Teachers also discussed the benefits and challenges of collaboration and group discussion in our interviews. Ms. Lester described her experience with peer discussion after a "Train of Thought" reading by considering how pairings were formed:

> *Lester:*
> *Yeah. Well and the sharing part. That might be an interesting thing to try next time, if I need more hot topic. Cause I let them choose who they spoke with after they annotated. And so they're likely going to be sitting with and talking to like-minded students, people who have similar political values. But if I were to have done this and had them mixed up, I think it would've been much more quiet. I think the anger would have been tampered down quite a bit.*

Mr. Shuster also discussed the social aspect of using the "Train of Thought" and how to make these conversations more productive. He felt that in the early stages, paired sharing was unproductive:

> *Shuster:*
> *And feeling that openness to say, "Well, am I willing to take a chance in thinking this with this person? Because, it's outside of the norms and customs, or certain expectations and stuff." But yeah, a lot of pair sharing is what we're doing. But, I never felt like I was getting a lot of depth with it. It was more of a, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, right. Cool. Yeah, we're on the same page." And that's it.*

Ms. Lester said that she did see her students make additions to their "Train of Thought" after working with a partner:

> *Lester:*

I think that would shift a lot too, because I know when they did meet, they were jotting down more notes. They were reconsidering a little bit. I don't know that anyone necessarily changed their opinion, but they went back and were retroactively annotating based on what the "Train of Thought" of their partner was.

The increasingly social nature of classroom learning is something that Mr. Shuster welcomes, particularly with regards to literacy:

Shuster:
Yeah. I like what you said about reading and writing and, and it's almost an individualist thing, which is ironic, because the whole purpose of reading and writing is a social thing.

Fabiano:
It is, for somebody.

Shuster:
Absolutely.

Fabiano:
Yeah.

Shuster:
But, you're absolutely right. The way that we engage it that way, as an individualistic thing. "You read this, you tell me what you think about it." And then, there's no communication back and forth, and then you get your grade, you move on.

He went on in our discussion to speculate on the role of confidence in reader response and sharing:

Shuster:
Yeah. I think about that one a lot because I've always been wondering, well, why do I have a kid here who has a lot to say about something, but they don't want to say it? For me, I'm kind of circling the drain with this idea of confidence. Do they have the confidence to believe what they're saying is a worthwhile academic response? Is it just their own opinion and therefore not worth bringing out? Is it of quality? That's one of the things that I'm really concerned with, is that students think, "Oh, this just isn't good enough." It's not thinking deep enough, or it's not ordered well enough or something.

In addition to the under-confident student, I observed students who resisted engaging with texts on a personal level for a different reason. In my Padlet journal, I recorded thoughts about a student who refused to make a personal connection to "The End of Science Fiction":

> *(Student 3) not wanting to be personal (trigger?)*
>
> *I'm learning about engagement -- we define it for students, we think we know what they want. They may not want to be engaged. Maybe their idea of being engaged is to do what I need to get a grade.*

In speaking with one of our resource room teachers, I learned that this student's mom told teachers her daughter didn't like writing about herself. It is likely that means she wouldn't want to write about her own thinking either. This kind of interaction challenged me to consider how to engage students who would prefer worksheets and quizzes, and how to anticipate the rising tide of parents wary of any kind of "personal" conversation in schools.

Response to Research Question #2: How do teachers describe the learning that they see from students using the inquiry model?

The three teachers applied the "Train of Thought" in ways that suited their teaching style and curriculum. In one case, on October 1, 2021, Ms. Lester, as a teacher of AP English Language and Composition, had students apply the strategy to a multiple-choice passage from a previous AP exam. After completing the "Train of Thought," students answered multiple-choice questions. She told me in a lunch interview that many students scored 100% on the questions for that passage, an unusual event given the nature of questions designed to create separation among student scores.

In all other cases, teachers examined the written responses of students to understand the learning that took place.

The following are final "Train of Thought" prompts administered by the three teachers. We all remarked how the last of the three showed students establishing more of a flow in their thinking, treating the "Train" less as a worksheet (due to the four questions) and more as a blank canvas. That said, several responses revealed that even after teacher pleading and modeling, many students continued to respond to the four criteria individually and in order.

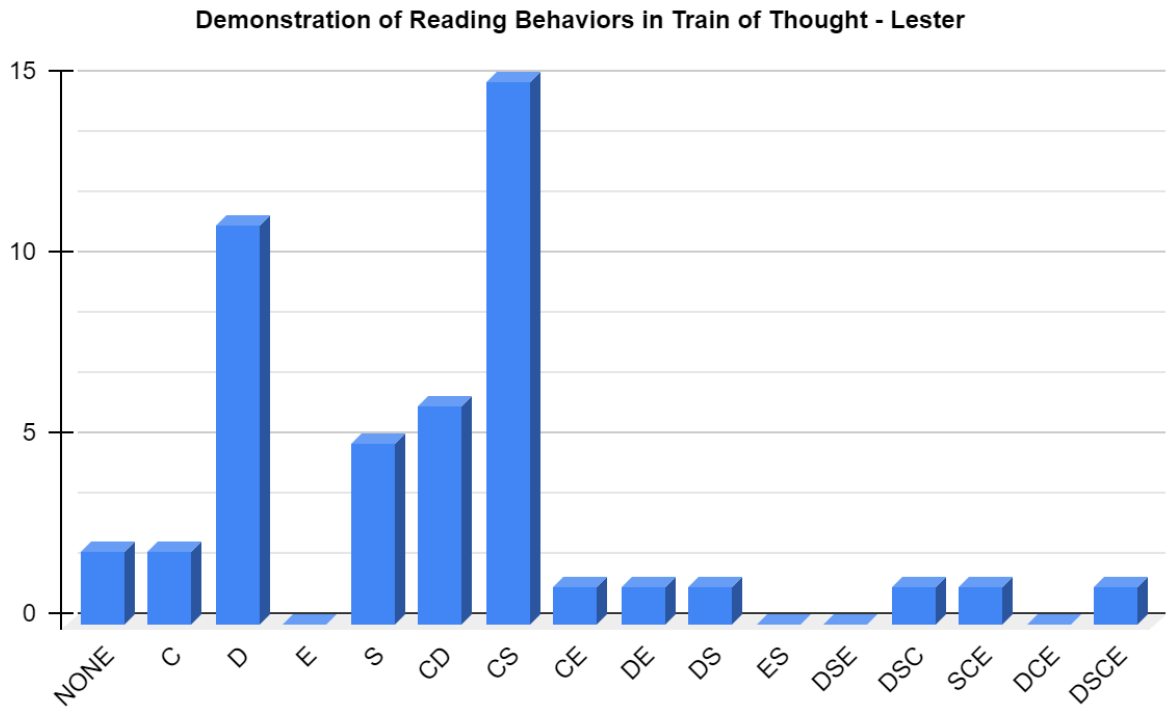
Ms. Lester's three classes, "A Modest Proposal" by Jonathan Swift

Text Used:

> It is a melancholy object to those, who walk through this great town, or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads, and cabbin-doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms. These mothers, instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in stroling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants who, as they grow up, either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country, to fight for the Pretender in Spain, or sell themselves to the Barbadoes.
>
> I think it is agreed by all parties, that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom, a very great additional grievance; and therefore whoever could find out a fair, cheap and easy method of making these children sound and useful members of the commonwealth, would deserve so well of the publick, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.
>
> But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of professed beggars: it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age, who are born of parents in effect as little able to support them, as those who demand our charity in the streets.
>
> As to my own part, having turned my thoughts for many years upon this important subject, and maturely weighed the several schemes of our projectors, I have always found them grossly mistaken in their computation. It is true, a child just dropt from its dam, may be supported by her milk, for a solar year, with little other nourishment: at most not above the value of two shillings, which the mother may certainly get, or the value in scraps, by her lawful occupation of begging; and it is exactly at one year old that I propose to provide for them in such a manner, as, instead of being a charge upon their parents, or the parish, or wanting food and

raiment for the rest of their lives, they shall, on the contrary, contribute to the feeding, and partly to the clothing of many thousands.

Figure 4.8. *Reading Behaviors of Ms. Lester's AP English Language and Composition Classes.*



Analysis of this data:

I am familiar with this text used in Ms .Lester's classes, having taught it several times at my previous school, so I felt comfortable understanding the context of their responses.

This excerpt from "A Modest Proposal" is a particularly complex text for 11th grade students, even in an Advanced Placement class. As such, it is an ideal text for a "Train of Thought," the initial step into a text that presents a problem-solving challenge on multiple levels: it is satire; it uses archaic language; its context is a social issue in Ireland in 1729; it employs a

point of view rarely seen by students; it proposes an idea that many students would likely resist accepting as being possible, given its outlandish nature.

The student work reflects this assertion. Many failed to recognize the piece as satire or the purpose of the author to address poverty and hunger in Ireland. While most students demonstrated one of the four behaviors in their reading, and many attempted to clarify the question while also speculating on the purpose of the text, few showed the "grappling" that is the long-term objective of using this strategy. Some were diverted by the phrase "beggars of the female sex" and assumed the author was referring to prostitutes. Three of the responses challenged the author's views on women: one asked "Where are the fathers?" adjacent to Swift's text in which "women are forced to employ all their time in strolling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants" (see Appendix C). Given that this text is used primarily to prompt an understanding of satire, it is interesting to see gender roles challenged in a way that Swift was likely not addressing.

The example in Appendix D demonstrates the confusion of an engaged reader: "I'm so confused, are they killing children? Or the parents? Or nobody? Feeding and clothing the kids orrr?" Also engaged, but perhaps more skilled as evidenced by using all four reading behaviors, is the student who writes: "It should be more about making sure people don't end up having to beg to get food for the day in the first place—basic necessities?" (see Appendix E).

Student responses revealed examples of personal attitudes that likely influenced their reading of the passage:

> *Female beggars with children are often helped more because they seem more desperate and trustworthy. I would be more likely to help a woman.*
>
> *So the author wants to employ children of poor, single mothers? Why not just employ the mothers too so that they can provide for the growing family? This*

> *person just sounds really pretentious. Of course the child should be able to get opportunities later in life, but the mother who wasn't able to provide should also get another opportunity to succeed.*
>
> *While I've never experienced the nuisance of poor people personally, I've volunteered at the food bank, and the sheer amount of food to be donated was overwhelming.*
>
> *One connection I can make to personal experience is the experiences I have had speaking to those who are around the age of my parents that come from a more conservative background who feel strongly about these topics. I often hear them speak out about the way they wish homelessness would disappear, but provide no solution other than "why don't they just get a job" which is an extreme oversimplification of the issue.*
>
> *This reminds me of people begging on the street and how it is annoying and I wish we had a solution.*

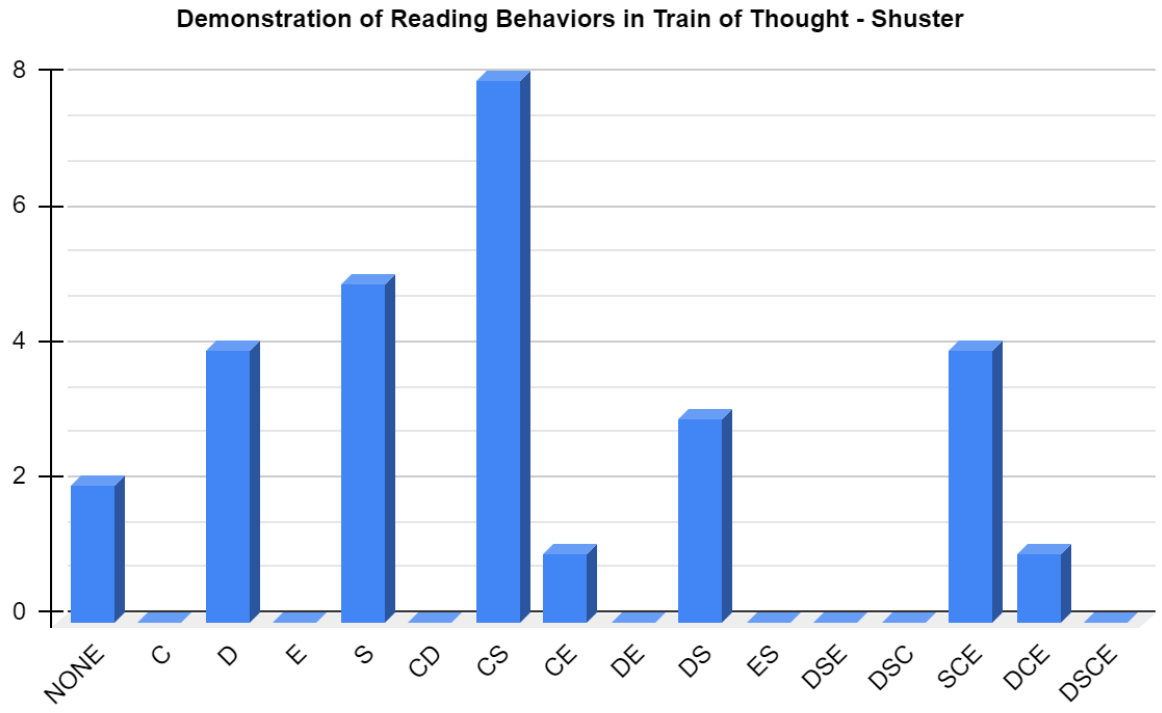
These attitudes would likely not emerge using a standard TP-CASTT (title, paraphrase, connotation, attitude/tone, shift, title, theme) or similar close reading strategy, but are crucial to a complete reading of the text. To recognize the absurdity and audacity of Swift's proposal, while ignoring the immorality of it, is to miss a key intention of the author.

Mr. Shuster's Class, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald:

Text used:

> *The Great Gatsby,* Ch. 5, p. 93
>
> "Daisy put her arm through his abruptly, but he seemed absorbed in what he had just said. Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one" (93).

Figure 4.9. *Reading Behaviors of Mr. Shuster's ELA 11 Classes.*



Analysis of this data:

The teacher approached the "Train of Thought" for this passage from The Great Gatsby—asking a specific question, "According to the narrator, what do you think Gatsby may have discovered about his dream?"—a bit differently than the other two teachers. In addition, an excerpt from a novel poses different challenges to a reader than a poem or work of art. Plot, character, and setting have been previously established, and those elements influence the reading of a passage that occurs late in the book, as this one does (Chapter 5 out of nine chapters).

Most of these students recognized the difference between Gatsby's expectations and the current state of his relationship with Daisy. However, this passage—and really any passage from this novel, given the density of the prose, the quirky nature of the characters and plot, and the heavy use of symbolism—begs for a patient reading, careful inspection, and consideration of

meaning from multiple perspectives. It is more than a failed dream, or the idea of the "having" falling short of the "wanting"—it's about a corrupt dream.

Most students responded to the "Train of Thought" exhibiting two of the four reading behaviors. None from the sample exhibited all four. Most recognized the disparity between the effort it took for Gatsby to fulfill his reunion with Daisy and his empty feelings having regained her. These types of questions (see Appendix F) were common: "Why would he want to build something that could be so great up to where, when it does happen he doesn't want it anymore? Why would he convince himself that this is what he wants but makes it too good to be true so when he has it, he doesn't want it?"

These students focused on the success or failure of Gatsby's plan, but some speculations showed a deeper level of investigation. While many students responded with personal experiences of being let down after anticipating something, and drawing that direct connection to Gatsby, two students included speculations that went beyond acceptance and examined why something seemingly contradictory would persist: "I struggle with this way too much. I am an idealist and I am still that little girl that thinks once this life event happens everyhting's just going to be better. But I think as humans we need to give ourselves that kind of motivation" (see Appendix G).

The student whose work is seen in Appendix H goes further by clarifying the question. Considering why someone would be disappointed in an outcome they sought was seen as the problem at hand in the text, but this student has constructed a different problem from the text: "I observe that they are metaphorically saying that Gatsby isn't feeling how he should with daisy feeling another way…This leads me to believe that it is kind of a one-sided love between the two of them and he isn't feeling as strongly about Daisy as she is of him." There is room for debate

about that final observation, but seeing this excerpt as a way of exploring the "two-sided" nature of relationships is a unique move compared to the other responses..

In our interviews, Mr. Shuster mentioned that using literature in the classroom brings a liability to authenticity—students using websites like SparkNotes, CliffsNotes, etc. as the source for their commentary. In fact, one "Train of Thought" he submitted in his class sets included a response clearly lifted "whole cloth" from a website without any additions by the student. That kind of response is so clearly ill-fitting for this assignment, though, that few of these could be expected. In fact, this highlights how the "Train of Thought" is designed to promote authentic student voice by rewarding grappling with the problem, rather than merely providing a "correct" answer.

Mr. Fabiano's class, "The End of Science Fiction" by Lisel Mueller

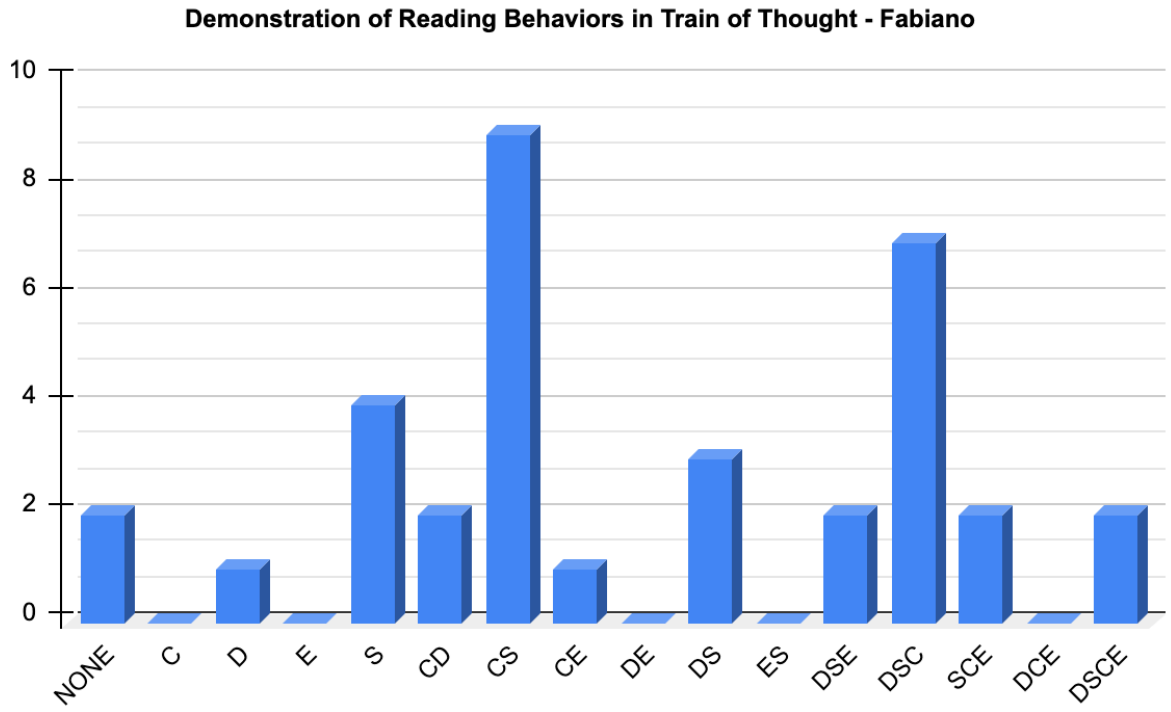
Text used:

> The End of Science Fiction
> By Lisel Mueller
>
> This is not fantasy, this is our life.
> We are the characters
> who have invaded the moon,
> who cannot stop their computers.
> We are the gods who can unmake
> the world in seven days.
>
> Both hands are stopped at noon.
> We are beginning to live forever,
> in lightweight, aluminum bodies
> with numbers stamped on our backs.
> We dial our words like Muzak.
> We hear each other through water.
>
> The genre is dead. Invent something new.
> Invent a man and a woman
> naked in a garden,

invent a child that will save the world,
a man who carries his father
out of a burning city.
Invent a spool of thread
that leads a hero to safety,
invent an island on which he abandons
the woman who saved his life
with no loss of sleep over his betrayal.

Invent us as we were
before our bodies glittered
and we stopped bleeding:
invent a shepherd who kills a giant,
a girl who grows into a tree,
a woman who refuses to turn
her back on the past and is changed to salt,
a boy who steals his brother's birthright
and becomes the head of a nation.
Invent real tears, hard love,
slow-spoken, ancient words,
difficult as a child's
first steps across a room.

Figure 4.10. *Reading Behaviors of Mr. Fabiano's ELA 11 Classes.*



Analysis of this data:

I would consider this poem to be an ideal text for a "Train of Thought": it is complex, there are conflicting indicators, there are meaningful themes applicable to student lives, and the language is informal and common. The conflation of "fiction," as used in the title, the "facts" delineated in the first stanzas, and an eventual segue into a future that is fiction, but close enough to be considered as fact, surely perplexes all readers of this text.

Analysis of student work showed many responses that included more than one of the reading behaviors, but only two student works demonstrate all four behaviors. Those two students seemed to write and think their way into understanding the complexity of the text. One of the two write several questions that seem off the mark (see Appendix I) – "Is he talking about the bible and how religion is science fiction?... Is this text talking about why it doesn't think science fiction is good?" Following this grappling, however, reveals speculation ("maybe humans have gone too far") that seems accurate.

Ideally, when using a poem as text, students will use the "Train of Thought" to wrestle with cryptic lines. One of the responses read: "I'm confused and uneducated right now but I don't understand the title saying 'The end of science fiction'... Also what does the author mean when saying, 'Both hands stopped at noon. We are beginning to live forever.'" (see Appendix J). Again, productive grappling is in evidence with the student's final line, "We are no longer socially as involved and caring about our society as we evolve."

Even when students' "Train of Thought" work detailed lines of thinking that led them toward misunderstanding, a productive reading seemed close at hand if they persisted. This inaccurate speculation (see Appendix K)—"I think they are trying to explain that we are making pointless science fiction stories and there's no point in doing so because it will never come

true"—preceded several written lines of thinking that led to "I have a background connection to God making the earth in seven days. But the writer claims that there are gods who can undo it all." The student has yet to see the author implying that it is men who now have the power of gods, but this response reveals authentic engagement and evidence of learning.

Student responses to this poem, much like those to "A Modest Proposal," revealed much of the "baggage" readers bring to a text that may not be revealed through typical close reading strategies. Several responses indicated that the juxtaposition of Bible stories with Greek mythology implied that the author was dismissive of religion (in the narrow view a student may have). This, coupled with lines that call for the reader (or society) to "invent" existing Biblical tales, seemed to trigger several students, leading to misreadings. These students saw the plea to "invent" as a sign that these stories were "fake," as opposed to the reality of science and progress. The line "We are the gods who can unmake the world in seven days" was referenced with negativity in more than one "Train of Thought." These are understandable misinterpretations given the complex manner the author employs, which is to imply that we need to "invent" ethical behavior because it has been forgotten, and that the achievement of the moon landing can be seen as an "invasion."

Teacher Reflections on Learning Demonstrated Through "Train of Thought"

The unique challenges of this year had teachers reconsidering how learning could look in their classrooms and what types of learning should take precedence. Employing a strategy that valued students' prior knowledge and personal connections seemed fitting; distant methods built on "preparing for the future" seemed inappropriate when the present was filled with uncertainty. In my Padlet journal for September 9, 2021, I wrote:

> *With COVID-19, I have put special emphasis on reading and writing that directly connects to students. There seems to be too many steps to get a kid to the crucible. It's important to use windows, but the windows we see now are so dire that we need some mirror time.*

Reviewing the "Train of Thought" work with students showed us that there was more to it than us, as teachers, identifying learning—we sometimes had to show students that what they were doing was learning. This is a key aspect of the "Train of Thought": rewarding students for grappling with the problem, even if they haven't solved it. Teachers had to not only provide these rewards, but also indicate to students why they should be rewarded, as Ms. Lester described in an interview:

> *Lester:*
> *And so we had to have a lot of conversations about actually engaging with a text and pretending it's someone who's speaking with you and how would you engage with a friend? Who's just really long-winded. And so where would you insert a personal story that shows that you agree and you're listening and they had never thought of it that way. They really kind of struggled with it. So I don't know.*

Mr. Shuster also noticed that a personal connection could correct an interpretation of a first reading:

> *Shuster:*
> *What I notice is showing an understanding of the quote through the personal connection. Maybe their initial response to the quote was a little off here and there. But once they came to the personal connection, they really got at the issue, which, for many of them, was interpretation of attaining that dream and getting there, and then it's not quite as great as the journey to get there was, and seeing that come up through personal experience.*

While I recognized examples of understanding within each "Train of Thought" from my students, I was also surprised to see misunderstanding from some of my stronger readers. As stated previously, "The End of Science Fiction" has many traps for readers: trigger topics like science and religion, incongruity between language and meaning, anachronisms, etc.

From this I realized that poetry presents a unique reading challenge when considering how to scaffold instruction. Following a strategy to read a poem, and having success, doesn't necessarily indicate that a student will successfully navigate the next poem.

Beyond the success or struggles on the individual "Train of Thought" assignments, I saw gains evident in the final papers from my students. Asked to respond to *The Great Gatsby* through the lens of mirrors, windows, and sliding doors, students were well prepared to draw meaningful conclusions about the novel that they could apply to their own lives. This I attribute to the three "Train of Thought" exercises used during the novel to elicit personal connections to the text (thankfully, Daisy Buchanan is fictional and was not present in the room to hear the comments of my male-dominated, on-level classes)..

Reviewing the artifacts from Ms. Lester's AP classes and comparing them to the responses from my classes highlighted the disparity in the kinds of learning that can be expected. As noted previously, her students indicated greater experience with and more continued use of metacognitive strategies. In my Padlet journal from November 5, 2021, I reflected on how this process has reminded me of the strengths and deficits of individual students:

> *It's easy to see using this tool how some students are ahead of others on every new text. It seems like it's all equal -- we front load, give them the same texts and the same instructions -- but their responses make it clear how everyone is starting from a different base. This seems like an obvious conclusion that belies the fact we don't teach as if this is the case.*

Response to Research Question #3: In what ways does an inquiry approach to complex texts create opportunities for authentic engagement and an invitation to all students, regardless of skill level?

Evidence of authentic engagement is seen through student writing on the "Train of Thought" assignments and heard in the discussions and interviews with teachers and students.

Some of the most insightful comments when using the "Train of Thought" came from students who were not the "high achievers" in the class.

Discussion of "The End of Science Fiction," which followed individual work and randomly assigned group conversation, yielded extraordinary insights by some students who, at the time of this writing, are failing the class (due to not completing or submitting work). Two 2nd hour students that fit this description shared the following insights:

> *Nolan:*
> *I feel like the reason they hate science fiction so much is because it's more than fantasy. Maybe it's more powerful than fantasy because it's easier to get into people's lives because it has that element of realness in it.*
>
> *He kind of talks about it at the beginning, but it's kind of like we're already living in something that couldn't be thought of.*
>
> *Fabiano:*
> *And is that good or bad?*
>
> *Nolan:*
> *He's seeing it as a bad way.*
>
> *Fabiano:*
> *Yeah. I agree with that. What, is there anything you see in the poem that supports that? I agree with what Jacob is saying. I agree with what Landon is saying. What's your evidence in the poem that kind of makes it seem like the author thinks that this world we're living in is not good.*
>
> *Nolan:*
> *Well, he starts giving examples of better ways because he starts talking about more examples and he is like, well, these could do better. He is like, invent this instead.*

This student (and his group) made some complex moves in grappling with this text. He was able to untangle the text's examples of "fantasy" as examples of reality, and he was able to identify that the "myths" were examples of genuine human kindness and empathy.

The "Train of Thought" provided an invitation to personal experience which allowed students to enter into a conversation they might otherwise have avoided. A second of the

currently failing students made a connection between the idea that caring needed to be "invented" and a movie he had recently watched:

> *Brian:*
> *I think the author does see another side of why technology is being made other than it just helping us. I think he sees it as a way for people to make a lot of money. And that's what makes them lose so much touch with humanity other than technology. I think he's trying to say it's deeper than, oh, it's just technology taking over. There's other things that lead to that. And then he says the end of science fiction, because like I've watched a couple science fiction movies like "Don't Look Up" with Leonardo DiCaprio. I don't know how to really connect it. I've been thinking about that the whole time when we've been talking, it's branched off from inventing hoverboards, like all these cool things. This could seriously really, really happen. Like I could definitely see that happening. And even then it's make believe, but it doesn't feel like make believe because of the science fiction aspect, 'cause of the science part.*

His remark that "it's deeper than just technology taking over" distinguished his response from those of well over half of his peers, who said something very close to that. "There's other things that lead to that" is certainly the crux of the poem.

Of course, an open invitation like the "Train of Thought" brings in opinions that could derail a conversation or introduce misreadings of the text. In her "exit" interview, Ms. Lester remarked that she always hesitates to call out anything as "wrong," and said she feels she needs to do a better job of parsing out inaccuracies in the moment before moving on. In this same 2nd hour class, the remarks previously mentioned regarding mask-wearing mandates and inclusivity could well have shut down the discussion. He was steering the discussion in an entirely different direction. Having been his teacher all year, I can attest that while his comments can be ill-informed and offensive, they are certainly authentic. I was not caught by surprise in the exchange described earlier in this chapter. In fact, my interaction with him continued:

> *Fabiano:*
> *Oh, can I agree and push back a little bit.*
>
> *Grayson:*

No.

Fabiano:
Okay. Thank you. I'm going to anyway. I would say that in making arguments that you really want to stand behind, allow for the possibility that that's not true like in every case. Like, I think it's possible what you're saying is true in some cases. But to say that every case is like that I think is probably not a way to advance that argument fully. Does that make sense?

Grayson:
We're all supposed to be wearing a mask right now, aren't we? And the rule is so you don't infect other people.

Fabiano:
I see that as different than what you're saying about inclusivity and diversity, this more of a health-related kind of rule. The other one is like a mandate. The other one might be like something that-

Grayson:
There are mandates about it.

Fabiano:
I don't think it's in the same way that a mask is a mandate. I get your point. I don't see that. I assume it is related, but not equal.

Grayson:
They are both morally related. So I think-

Fabiano:
Well, I would push back on the mask being morally related. I think health and morals are different domains. But we may disagree on that.

Grayson:
Well, if you kill someone, that's health related. And that's about morals.

Fabiano:
Right. Well, to get back to that idea, I think you can make stronger points by saying many or a lot of, rather than everyone just like that's fair. And I'm just saying in every argument that you do, I just think it's stronger to take out "every" or "everybody" because you're going to find, no matter what argument you make, you're going to find exceptions to that. And then it takes down your whole argument. Like you said, "everybody," but what you really kind of meant is most or some. So I'm just saying that as a way of strengthening your argument.

Grayson:
That's fair.

This exchange was not in the lesson plan, but it did fit with our previous unit on argumentation, how to listen, and how to get others to listen. This was a powerful moment of learning made possible by allowing personal connections to be a part of the reading process.

My 4th hour class, interacting with the same poem on the same day, also included students who rose to the occasion. This discussion was almost entirely different, yet unlocked aspects of the poem that led to similar insights. Two connections were made that I had not recognized in my dozen or so readings and teachings of this poem. One of them regards what seems to be the climax of man's progress, described in the poem as "beginning to live forever,/ in lightweight aluminum bodies/with numbers stamped on our backs." The detail of the kind of metal associated with man's new eternal life was not lost on these students:

> *Lawson:*
> *He specifically used aluminum instead of something like gold...*
>
> *Fabiano:*
> *Yeah. Oh, that's so great that you picked up on that. I love that. So what's wrong with aluminum?*
>
> *Lawson:*
> *It's literally like tin foil.*
>
> *Fabiano:*
> *Yeah. It's cheap, right? Gold sounds cool. Aluminum sounds ordinary.*
>
> *Lawson:*
> *The way he set up the poem. He has the paragraph of dread and he doesn't want that. And then he says, invent something new. And then he starts talking about the Bible and then the next stanza is, invent us as we were, where he is still talking about the beginning of time.*

The association of eternal life with "not gold," but "like tin foil" shows an advanced reading move by the student, relying on a detail that buries a word with cheap connotations in the midst of epic words of progress.

One of the students I interviewed, Shannon, is in this 4th hour class, and she has struggled, primarily because she opts in and out based on her interest. She took an interest in this poem, and made a connection based on previous learning that impressed all of us. Noticing similarities between the end of the poem and the beginning, she shared this:

> *Shannon:*
> *So, in the beginning it was like, who invaded the moon or something like that. And then at the end it was like, the first steps of something... First steps across a room. And so I don't know, I kind of made the connection when, whoever it was that landed on the moon was like, one small step for man, one big step... Something like that.*
>
> *Fabiano:*
> *That's a real good connection. What do you notice about the structure of this poem as far as time goes? Maybe history goes? Which direction is this poem going?*
>
> *Shannon:*
> *Back.*
>
> *Fabiano:*
> *It seems like it's going backwards, right? It starts with being on the moon and ends with a child, taking its first steps, right? So it's like-*
>
> *Shannon:*
> *It's kind of like the circle of evolution almost. But it starts in the middle.*
>
> *Fabiano:*
> *Interesting.*
>
> *Shannon:*
> *But ends in the beginning.*

After those two revelations, there was one more insight that exceeded my expectations for this discussion—and again, was a connection in this poem I had not made myself.

> *Kaylee:*
> *Make us human.*
>
> *Fabiano:*
> *Oh, say more about that. What do you mean make us human?*

Kaylee:
Well, death is what makes us human. It's that knowledge of we don't have forever, let's do what we can, with the time that we have. If we just become immortal, we might just stop doing things because we have all this time on our hands. Why bother?

These are the kinds of insights possible when students value their own reactions and have the confidence to develop their thinking in the moment. Ms. Lester cited this trust in one's own thinking in one of our interviews:

Lester:
And so I think it's just a matter of, I don't know, trying to get them to be more authentic with their thought process while they're reading. And so I think little activities like doing the "Train of Thought" is really helpful because it kind of starts to enforce those ideas that your thoughts when you're reading are significant.

This quest for authenticity, and for creating assignments that allowed for useful feedback, led me to abolish quizzes and tests in my classes. We read, we write, we think, we speak, we learn—and it has been not only possible but tenable in my classes this year. In our final interview, I asked Ms. Lester about this balancing act of engaging students and holding them accountable. She said that she "goes back and forth every year":

Lester:
Do I want to assign a rating quiz which feels really punitive? You know, did you read it? If not, here's your zero. But also, like sometimes kids kind of need that fear of repercussion. But I also think that that takes some of the joy in the engagement out of the reading and so discussion is good. I know there was a year like forever ago when I gave up on the quizzes and the ways that I held them accountable for reading as I pulled them up one by one and ask them some questions about the books and what they thought. And so I mean, I think we kind of went through that. "Train of Thought" one on one, but it was so short because you know, with 30 kids in a classroom and you're only talking to one at a time. That makes it kind of tricky. So I have no idea how to balance that individual accountability. You know, that's the struggle, absolutely.

Quizzes and tests seem to follow literature in schools as surely as the requirement for English class. The "Train of Thought" is one way to hold students accountable for reading, while inviting the freedom of thought that can lead to meaningful discovery and maybe even build confidence. It is not a gauge for determining reading comprehension. Then again, a quiz at the end of the chapter is just as unlikely to fulfill that purpose.

Developing the habit of reflection—on a text and one's own thinking—could be a step toward developing long-term reading habits. Ms. Lester highlighted the significance of reading as a reflective task, not an "absorbing" task, as it is often presented:

> *Lester:*
> *I guess it is a kind of reflective strategy. And through modeling like I said, if I were to sit down with* Great Gatsby *and talk through it with the kids, you know I would. Can you imagine what this would have been like if you would have just been in a car accident the night before? Reading this text? And so I think modeling and posing good questions in the classroom face to face with them is good. And again, in the hopes that they will. Being able to do this on their own as they're reading out in the real world, which I think as we've talked about, is just the whole purpose of education. The whole purpose of training thought is to train them up. On how to engage with the world around them, the texts that they're in and how to question appropriately. So they're not just taking everything at face value and not absorbing, absorbing the entirety of it, that reflective piece.*

Chapter Summary

Students from all three junior English teachers at Mountain Peak High School had an opportunity to use the "Train of Thought" strategy multiple times throughout the fall of 2021 and the spring of 2022. Based on work examined by their teachers, a survey that solicited their opinions and perception, and interviews with students and teachers, the "Train of Thought" seemed to be an effective approach toward promoting authentic inquiry and inviting all students to participate in the making of meaning from texts. Student attitudes toward using the protocol were positive, and all three teachers described the learning they saw from their students as a meaningful step toward developing a habit of authentically engaging with poetry, art, and

literature. The written artifacts from students indicated a willingness to speculate, question, and draw conclusions without the guidance of the teacher, an indication of student agency that we are trying to promote. Students and teachers agreed that collaboration, after time to independently read and think, was key to the successful use of the "Train of Thought."

We cannot conclude that all students made progress in grappling with an assigned text using the "Train of Thought." However, we gained insight into the process of how students make meaning from texts that demand more than comprehension skills. We determined that we are better situated to provide feedback to students with the "Train of Thought," as opposed to quizzes, by having access to a more complete picture of a student's thinking. Students using the "Train of Thought" also come to value the habit of considering their own thinking and the role that plays in negotiating with a text.

Chapter 5 - Introduction

Using the "Train of Thought" was inspired by two types of students that don't seem to have a lot in common. Their grades are on opposite ends of the scale. One will turn in every assignment and pay careful attention to their grade. The other will occasionally turn in work and pay attention to their grade only if prompted by parent ultimatums. The attentive student may get their work in, and it may be complete, but it lacks the student's investment, and whatever learning happens will evaporate. The resigned student is paying enough attention to recognize the level of skill required to think the thoughts and write the words of a model essay. What they have in common is that neither type is experiencing the "long-term flourishing" in my classroom that I want for all my students (Stuart, 2018).

The problems of lack of authenticity and engagement with classroom reading experiences can be traced to many sources. Schools typically ignore what students bring to the reading experience; close reading has been taught as a detached skill; we have ignored the significance of who authored a text and who is privileged in a text; skills or literary works are often taught in isolation; creating a unified classroom culture is often part of the unwritten curriculum, rather than insisted upon; and, "'multicultural' texts included in traditional canons of young adolescent literature" are often "outdated" (Beltramo and Stillman, 2015, p.11).

Another source of challenges to authenticity and engagement derives from few teachers understanding the approach of literary scholars, because literacy seems self-evident for ELA (Rainey, 2016). Despite years of teacher-directed guided questioning, schools fail to consider that the discipline of literary scholars consists of constructing and pursuing generative questions

or puzzles and using a combination of explicitly named sets of practices and purposes (pp. 54-56).

In addition, we often assume that students heed what a teacher assigns (Hasty & Schrodt, 2015). Because writing and reading tasks are often conducted independently, writing may seem to be independent from a reading task. In addition, some teachers believe that reading suffers when focusing on writing, and vice versa. Individual desk work for reading and writing seems like the norm (Beck et al., 2020).

Close reading, often formatted and formularized, may seem like a distinct skill that need not account for the individuality of students (Beltrano & Stillman, 2015). Common Core State Standards (CCSS), whether adopted or not, influenced curriculum development, and elevated the significance of close reading (Hinchman & Moore, 2013).

Despite school guides that indicate three equal areas of study, and despite measures that may indicate successful teaching of literacy, studying language and other sign systems in terms of the work they do and how they do it, providing daily opportunities to inquire into problems of personal and social relevance to learners, and infusing the curriculum with art can promote critically literate beings who know how to make meaning and reposition themselves in the world in a more democratically thoughtful and equitable manner (Harste, 2014).

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of a modification of "Teaching Idea 7" in Larry Weinstein's (2001) *Writing at the Threshold,* a protocol designed to encourage authentic experiences with texts and engage students who regularly decline to participate in classroom reading activities. Weinstein's approach draws on Dewey's *How We Think* (1991) and Perkins' *The Mind's Best Work* (1981) to assert that students come to class

with the ability to inquire; or, as Dewey cites from Perkins, that "Discovery depends not on special processes but special purposes" (p. 101).

The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question #1: How do students describe their reading experience using an inquiry and collaborative approach to the text?

Research Question #2: How do teachers describe the learning that they see from students using the inquiry and collaborative model?

Research Question #3: In what ways does an inquiry approach to complex texts create opportunities for authentic engagement and an invitation to all students, regardless of skill level?

The "Train of Thought" was the name given to the modification of "Teaching Idea 7," a "thinking on paper" strategy that asks students to write *as* they read, as opposed to *after* reading. Weinstein's directions call for students to "transcribe their thinking as they are doing it, in all of its inherent messiness" (p. 17). Four criteria added as guidance for students and accountability for teachers assigning points (Weinstein's audience is college and college-bound students, who likely need less guidance when asked to write their thoughts down as they read): include an observation/opinion; a question; a connection to previous learning; and a connection to personal experience. The instructions ask the student to fill up a blank column to the right of the text, essentially a half sheet of paper, with their thinking, including each of these four criteria at least once in their response.

"Train of Thought" assignments were intended to accompany a text or illustration that could be seen as a problem-solving opportunity for students—thus, fiction, poetry, and art are a better fit for this strategy than non-fiction. In this study with ELA 11 students from my classes, Michael Shuster's classes, and Alyson Lester's AP English Language and Composition classes

(all juniors), a variety of texts were used. I asked the two teachers working with me in this study to use the "Train of Thought" at least three times during the semester, with the understanding that the texts they chose needed to fit with their curriculum. While I advocated for fiction texts and used those exclusively in my classes, my two colleagues each used this approach with a mix of fiction and non-fiction texts. Of the body of student work they submitted to me, I chose to analyze only the responses to fiction.

In order to determine the effectiveness of this strategy, student work from all three classes was collected and coded with the following identifiers: "clarifying the question," "eliminating possible answers," "speculating," and "demonstrating confusion."

Further data was collected through a survey completed by students after they completed their final "Train of Thought" for the semester. These students were asked to identify their feelings about using the "Train of Thought," how they would rate their learning based on its use, and how it compares to other methods. I also interviewed the teachers three times, asking them to reflect on student attitudes, effectiveness of the strategy, and other observations about how we teach reading and writing. Five of my students were also interviewed after using the "Train of Thought" several times during the semester. In addition, I kept a journal of my observations, notes about class discussions, and collected research that I gathered along the way in a Padlet.

Summary of Findings for Research Question #1: How do students describe their reading experience using an inquiry and collaborative approach to the text?

The "Train of Thought," rooted in constructivist and critical learning theories, was conceived in response to my perception that student work was often inauthentic and that literary

study, in terms of disciplinary literacy, should be collaborative (Rainey, 2017). Based on their survey responses and interviews, students felt the "Train of Thought" strategy helped them in their understanding of a given passage. Students had various reactions to writing while reading, as opposed to writing reflections after reading or being asked specific questions that required written responses. Some saw that slowing the reading process helped them notice smaller details, and that the extra time allowed them to reflect on their thinking and develop insights they might not have had if not asked to write while reading. Some remarked that slowing down the reading process hindered their understanding.

It was clear to the three teachers involved in this study that few students had experience writing while reading. Jackson (2008) cites a "historical disconnect between reading and writing," which "has been reinforced by different models of English studies, such as the four strands of English (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and the tripod model (literature, composition, and language)" (p. 145). Thus, teachers were up against not only student unfamiliarity with the strategy but a well-conditioned paradigm of reading and writing as separate tools for understanding.

In explaining Dewey's constructivist model, Barrow (2006) writes that "problems to be studied must be related to students' experiences and within their intellectual capability; therefore, the students are to be active learners in their searching for answers" (p. 265). Responses to the survey and interviews indicated that students in this study did indeed see themselves as active learners. Their questions drove peer and large group discussions, rather than any dictated by the teacher.

Students indicated, based on surveys and interviews, that they felt group discussions were effective in helping them make meaning from texts. Some remarked that they heard insights

about the text that had not occurred to them. All student interviews included positive reception to group discussion as a way to see how multiple perspectives can apply to a single text. Their reactions support the efficacy of a constructivist approach, and match up with the kind of student described by Paris and Byrnes (1989): “Some students thirst for learning. They seek challenges and overcome obstacles sometimes with persistence and sometimes with inventive problem solving” (p. 169).

The “Train of Thought” does not follow a linear path towards understanding, as some close reading strategies do. While there are protocol questions, their order is meant to be irrelevant to their writing and also irrelevant to discussion. Some students reported that they were able to access “deeper meanings” in the text by writing while reading and afterwards discussing with peers. This affirms the constructivist process described by Harris and Alexander (1998), in which “it is neither necessary nor desirable to postpone engagement in higher-order thinking and advanced learning until mastery of basic skills and concepts has been demonstrated” (p. 115).

Summary of Findings for Research Question #2: How do teachers describe the learning that they see from students using the inquiry and collaborative model?

In our interviews, teachers agreed many students were able to generate their own questions and exhibit insight into the assigned text. They concluded that the “Train of Thought,” and metacognitive models like it, should be a permanent aspect of our teaching practice.

Student work was examined for evidence of progress toward making meaning from the text beyond comprehension. These replies were coded for “clarifying the question,” “eliminating

possible answers," "speculating," and "demonstrating confusion." While several pieces of student work exhibited at least one of these qualities, the goal of having students recognize these qualities in their own responses is an aspiration for future teaching, but beyond the scope of this study due to the limits of time, and recognition of the need for more teaching scaffolding and student practice.

The unique challenges of this year had teachers reconsidering how learning could look in their classrooms and what types of learning should take precedence. Employing a strategy that valued student's prior knowledge and personal connections seemed fitting; distant methods built on "preparing for the future" seemed inappropriate when the present was filled with uncertainty. In my Padlet journal for September 9, 2021, I wrote:

> *With COVID-19, I have put special emphasis on reading and writing that directly connects to students. There seems to be too many steps to get a kid to the Crucible. It's important to use windows, but the windows we see now are so dire that we need some mirror time.*

Reviewing "Train of Thought" exercises with students showed us that there was more to it than we as teachers identifying learning—we sometimes had to show students that what they were doing was learning. This is a key aspect of the "Train of Thought": rewarding students for grappling with the problem, even if they haven't solved it. Teachers had to not only provide these rewards, but indicate to students why they should be rewarded, as Ms. Lester described in an interview:

> *Lester:*
> *And so we had to have a lot of conversations about actually engaging with a text and pretending it's someone who's speaking with you and how would you engage with a friend? Who's just really long-winded. And so where would you insert a personal story that shows that you agree and you're listening and they had never Thought of it that way. They really kind of struggled with it. So I don't know.*

Mr. Shuster also noticed that a personal connection could correct an interpretation of a first reading:

> *Shuster:*
> *What I notice is showing an understanding of the quote through the personal connection. Maybe their initial response to the quote was a little off here and there. But once they came to the personal connection, they really got at the issue, which, for many of them, was interpretation of attaining that dream and getting there, and then it's not quite as great as the journey to get there was, and seeing that come up through personal experience.*

Hasty and Schrodt (2015) assert that this kind of personal response is critical not just for engagement, but for comprehension. Their study refers to the "heart"—the personal response—as an equal third to the "head" and the text: "Personal response to text yields higher comprehension than purely analytical writing. Often the personal connections allow a student to think critically and independently" (p. 24).

While the buzz (and hysteria) over implementation of Common Core State Standards has subsided, a feature of CCSS, "close reading"—which emphasized a repeatable pattern for students to follow, rather than a personal response—made its way through years of professional development to schools. Beltrano and Stillman (2015) express concern over "this proclivity to privilege structure and process over relevance and authenticity" (p. 9). Their study asserts that "purpose and authenticity" are significant to "equitably engaging all students in quality reading instruction" (p. 13). These ideas intersect with the "Train of Thought." In one of our interviews, Ms. Lester cited trust in one's own thinking as an important consequence of this strategy:

> *Lester:*
> *And so I think it's just a matter of, I don't know, trying to get them to be more authentic with their Thought process while they're reading. And so I think little activities like doing the "Train of Thought" is really helpful because it kind of starts to enforce those ideas that your Thoughts when you're reading are significant.*

While I recognized examples of understanding within the "Train of Thought" assignments from my students, I was also surprised to see significant misunderstanding from some of my stronger readers. As stated previously, "The End of Science Fiction" has many traps for readers – trigger topics like science and religion, incongruity between language and meaning, anachronisms, etc. From this, I realized that poetry presents a unique reading challenge when considering how to scaffold instruction. Following a strategy to read a poem, and having success, doesn't necessarily indicate that a student will successfully navigate the next poem.

Beyond the success or struggles on the individual "Train of Thought" assignments, I saw gains evident in the final papers from my students. Asked to respond to The Great Gatsby through the lens of mirrors, windows, and sliding doors, students were well prepared to draw meaningful conclusions about the novel that they could apply to their own lives. This I attribute to the three "Train of Thought" exercises used during the novel to elicit personal connections to the text (thankfully, Daisy Buchanan is fictional and was not present in the room to hear the comments of my male-dominated on-level classes).

Reviewing the artifacts from Ms. Lester's AP classes, and comparing them to the responses from my classes, highlighted the disparity in the kinds of learning that can be expected. As noted previously, her students indicated greater experience with and more continued use of metacognitive strategies. In my Padlet journal from November 5, 2021, I reflected on how this process has reminded me of the strengths and deficits of individual students:

> *It's easy to see using this tool how some students are ahead of others on every new text. It seems like it's all equal -- we front load, give them the same texts and the same instructions -- but their responses make it clear how everyone is starting from a different base. This seems like an obvious conclusion that belies the fact we don't teach as if this is the case.*

Summary of Findings for Research Question #3: In what ways does an inquiry and collaborative approach to complex texts create opportunities for authentic engagement and an invitation to all students, regardless of skill level?

This quest for authenticity, and for creating assignments that allowed for useful feedback, led me to abolish quizzes and tests in my classes. We read, we write, we think, we speak, we learn—and it has been not only possible but tenable in my classes this year.

Giroux (2010) speaks to this notion that defining the student's role is critical: "Education cannot be neutral. It is always directive in its attempt to teach students to inhabit a particular mode of agency, enable them to understand the larger world and one's role in it in a specific way, define their relationship, if not responsibility, to diverse others, and experience in the classroom some sort of understanding of a more just, imaginative, and democratic life" (p. 718). The "Train of Thought" strategy was implemented with the intention of bringing all students, regardless of the experience or skill levels they brought to the exercise, into the conversation. The student work I examined, the discussions I transcribed, and the interviews with students indicate several students in each class who not only participated but took leadership roles in collaboration.

The "Train of Thought" does not include the entire gamut of scaffolding a student needs to read complex texts; this much is clear from the many incomplete readings we received from students. However, it is a first step—an opening invitation—that can be one part of many steps in a reading experience. Rainey (2017) sees the initial inquiry into a text as the beginning of multiple revisits to the text and student questions: "As David put it, "there's a kind of feedback

loop" required to develop students' practices with literature" (p. 68). The three of us agreed that the "Train of Thought" did not lend itself to a complete understanding of a text by an individual or a class. It can be the start of the "feedback loop" Rainey (2017) advocates.

The "Train of Thought" can also serve to change the paradigm that students bring to the reading experience. Ms. Lester shared that she believes students see reading as an "absorbing" task, in which the reader picks up knowledge without questioning it or interacting with it. She sees the "Train of Thought" as a step to having students see reading as a reflective task, in which their participation is valued and necessary:

Lester:

> *I guess it is a kind of reflective strategy. And through modeling like I said, if I were to sit down with Great Gatsby and talk through it with the kids, you know I would. Talk about like you know you know. Can you imagine what this would have been like if you would have just been in a car accident the night before? Reading this text? And so I think modeling and posing good questions in the classroom face to face with them is good. And again, in the hopes that they will. Being able to do this on their own as they're reading out in the real world, which I think as we've talked about, is just the whole purpose of education. The whole purpose of Training Thought is to Train them up. On how to engage with the world around them, the texts that they're you know that they're in and how to question appropriately. So they're not just taking everything at face value and not absorbing, absorbing. The entirety of it, that reflective piece.*

Teachers of English may agree with these ideals of authenticity, engagement, and reflection, while in practice clinging to quizzes and tests to "make sure students are reading." While I swore off these methods this year, my colleagues and I agreed that it is a challenge to allow errors and misreadings without sending the message that effort is not required. In our final interview, I asked Ms. Lester about this balancing act of engaging students and also holding them accountable. She said that she "goes back and forth every year":

Lester:

Do I want to assign a rating quiz which feels really punitive? You know, did you read it? If not, here's your zero. But also, like sometimes kids kind of need that fear of repercussion. But I also think that that takes some of the joy in the engagement out of the reading and so discussion is good. I know there was a year like forever ago when I gave up on the quizzes and the ways that I held them accountable for reading as I pulled them up one by one and ask them some questions about the books and what they Thought. And so I mean, I think we kind of went through that. "Train of Thought" one on one, but it was so short because you know, with 30 kids in a classroom and you're only talking to one at a time. That makes it kind of tricky. So I. I have no idea how to balance that individual accountability 'cause I. You know, that's the struggle, absolutely.

Quizzes and tests seem to follow literature in schools as surely as the requirement for English class. The "Train of Thought" is one way to hold students accountable for reading, while inviting the freedom of thought that can lead to meaningful discovery and maybe even build confidence. It is not a gauge for determining reading comprehension (though a quiz at the end of the chapter is just as unlikely to fulfill that purpose). It is not everything the reader needs to complete a cycle of inquiry, but it does invite student agency and provides an access point for readers at all levels.

Implications for Practice

I found Lemov's article (2017) toward the end of this study, but it could have been the inspiration for the entire study: "Students routinely appear to understand what they read far more than they actually do" (p. 16). From the teacher who lamented, "these quizzes tell me nothing" years ago to the final student work I examined, understanding what students truly get out reading has been, and will remain, a challenge.

Possibly the most I ever learned from students about reading came from groups of 3-4 students many years ago. Required to meet with me after school due to low standardized test scores, these students and I read brief passages aloud and discussed them.. More often than not, students remarked that they didn't understand what they had just read. That marked the

beginning of their understanding. We broke the paragraphs down, sentence by sentence, word by word. How can I possibly replicate that impact with classes of 25 to 30 students, few of whom would ever admit their struggles in front of an entire class?

Examining the writing of individual students following a discussion reinforced Lemov's (2017) claim. The surprising moments of insight that came from struggling students made it feel (to me) as if the whole class was succeeding; a close look at their writing would suggest otherwise. There were great moments to be sure, but there was little evidence to support my objective to help all students make progress. My experience in our discussions did lead me to conclude that using the "Train of Thought" strategy can affect the attitude toward learning: students in general were positive and motivated. Paris and Byrnes (1989) see the goal of this constructivist approach "to understand and nurture the development of these attitudes in order to prevent students from rejecting the values of education, devising shortcuts to complete assignments, and setting minimal performance goals" (p. 169).

The coding of "clarifying the question," "eliminating possible answers," "speculating," and "demonstrating confusion" to determine how students responded gave me insight into how I plan to work with fiction in the future. I had been determined to let students grapple with texts before I jumped in to guide their understanding; but, without incremental feedback, I was letting them drift, and slowly students would lose motivation to "solve the problem." Most students waited for someone to save the day, perhaps jumping in themselves once they found their footing with the poem or story. The codes I assigned for this project could be shared with students after the first read of a text, before any peer or group discussion, with students aware of a goal of checking at least two boxes on every first reading. With my feedback—limited though it may be—students would at least have a sense of where they stand and how far they may need to go.

Following a second read and discussion, they could offer a revised "Train of Thought," and reflect on what they learned and how their personal reading led to misinterpretation or understanding. Lemov (2017) disputes for as much in his argument for writing before and after discussion (p. 16).

Reviewing the transcripts of class discussion revealed more developed speculation and persistent clarifying of questions than seen in their written "Train of Thought" assignments. In class discussion of "The End of Science Fiction," a student remarked:

> *"It feels like a call to action, because he's like, invent real tears, hard love, slow-spoken, ancient boards, difficult as the child's first step across the room. So he is talking about how it's like, starting over because they've gone so far. That it's like the beginning again, but it's so different that it's going to be hard for everyone."*

There was very little in the writing evidence that matches this level of insight. It is certainly likely that time spent reading, writing, discussing with peers and then discussing with the class facilitates more developed thinking. However, review of the transcripts also reveals that my questioning likely played a large role in clarifying the questions for my students:

> *Fabiano:*
> *That's really interesting to me, that connection. Another thing he said, you actually brought up that, what I hadn't picked up on either is, he uses that word 'invaded' the moon. Most people would say, we landed on the moon. This guy's saying we invaded the moon. That's a totally different word choice. Right? It applies to a lot of things. It's-*
>
> *Student 1:*
> *I want a conversation with this guy.*
>
> *Fabiano:*
> *Yeah. I know.*
>
> *Student 1:*
> *It'd be really funny to talk to him and then he'd be like, God didn't intend for us to touch other planets.*

As much as I value the depth of these discussions in reviewing these transcripts, it is clear that my goal of students creating their own "problems" by grappling with the text is hindered by my

role in the conversation. While I have labeled "demonstrating confusion" as evidence of learning, I stand in the way of "productive confusion."

Productive confusion is defined by Sullins et al. (2019) as "an instance of confusion that can be immediately or eventually resolved" (p. 289). This is what fiction, poetry and art attempts to cause for the thinking, reflective reader, and what I need to model and practice for my students. Sullins et al. (2018) elaborated on this type of approach: "Educators need to think about confusion in learning as an elastic slingshot. It has the potential to propel some learners into higher altitudes of understanding. However, pull too tight and the elastic breaks resulting in negligible or negative learning gains" (p. 1586). In applying this to how students respond to fiction, this study showed me that "demonstrating confusion" might be more usefully defined as "noticing contradictions."

This project also challenged me to consider why and how I use poetry, fiction, and art as a part of literacy activities. In one of our interviews, Mr. Shuster spoke about the advantages of students reading hunting or automotive manuals. With most on-level juniors already behind in comprehension skills, and many failing to see why reading a poem or novel will help them in life (and yes, I do hear the cliched pleas for teaching them how to do their taxes), is it worth the fight? I entered this project believing that poems and novels help build problem solving skills; that defining a problem on your own and finishing solutions is student agency, flexing the muscles of autonomy. While I acknowledge the pragmatic value of texts immediately relevant to students, the goal of getting students to define their own problems and engage with a complex text deeply enough to be at least temporarily confused applies more readily to fiction or art.

Certainly, there is a place for, and value in, these kinds of non-fiction texts in my class. However, the authenticity and engagement I saw in these activities encourages me to keep

challenging students with fiction. I find support for this conviction in Hollis (2021), whose study made connections between reading fiction and critical thinking: "Fiction had unique associations with different ways of changing one's thinking approaches, and could prompt CT [critical thinking] in subtle and circuitous ways. Furthermore, fiction was described as giving deep and rich insights into the real world, and engaging readers in fluid, time-extended, reflective thought" (p. 12). Fiction, then, promotes empathy and imagination but also the kind of thinking skills that are likely to be a part of a rigorous academic curriculum.

While I agree with Lemov's (2017) observations about how teachers might fail to see the reality of students' reading struggles, I disagree with his assertion that teaching and reading non-fiction is more difficult because it "doesn't follow the 'problem, rising action, resolution' conventions that students are familiar with from novels, movies, or sitcoms" (p. 10). Whatever nonfiction may concede in engagement, it does not go out of its way to mislead the reader or intentionally withhold information as fiction does. I am also skeptical that familiarity with a sitcom gives the student a road map to understanding a poem. Weinstein (2001) includes this passage describing inquiry learning from Shaughnessy (1977), which rejects the notion of road maps: "The aim… is not… to come up with a neat causal explanation for the event but to gain a respect for its complexity, to develop a taste for facts and information and a tolerance for answers that apply in some contexts but not in others or that point up the need for new questions" (p. 265). This notion of "answers that apply in some contexts but not others" captures the essence of reading fiction; the reader must learn to adapt, a habit that should be practiced, noticed, and rewarded.

This study affirmed my belief that inquiry should be at the center of my teaching. When students saw themselves as problem-solvers, rather than as servants of the curriculum, they

persisted in reading tasks and discussion. My intentions echo Harste (2014), who urges the study of art and language as tools of inquiry: “I think the disciplines are important. But they are only important in relationship to the inquiry questions of learners. It is for this reason that I want curriculum to begin with what is on students’ minds; with what makes them itch; with what questions they have” (p. 95). In a rubric from my Qualitative Studies class at Kansas State University, the highest levels of class participation included the student “leaving class wondering” (Bhattacharya, 2017). I want to keep encouraging my students to ask questions, and keep asking them even after they leave my classroom.

While making personal connections opened up amazing insights when discussing “The End of Science Fiction,” I also became aware that some students actively resist thinking, writing, or speaking about themselves. I became interested in this topic of “resistance,” and began to seek out and read articles about why students resist and what teachers can do in response. In “Student Resistance to Active Learning: Do Instructors (Mostly) Get It Wrong?,” Andrews et al. (2020) hypothesize that resistance can occur because “student-centered activities may require more effort, may require students to attempt a task they do not feel efficacious at or see value in, or may be outside of students' assumptions about teaching and learning” (p. 163). This description of a resistant student in higher education can certainly be applied to high school students, although I have worked with resistant students who may not be able to define their resistance in these clear terms. The fact that I am not only valuing collaboration, but also making it a requirement, gives me pause when I consider the few who are steadfastly anti-social. Students today are so far removed from an entire day of “sit at your desk” individual learning that they are unlikely to challenge a teacher’s social approach to learning. However, if my goal is to “start

with the student," I will need to consider what collaboration could look like for the resistant student.

Recommendations for Research

More recently, high school English teachers have become increasingly aware of the reading deficits of their students due to the spotlight of the effects of the pandemic on learning, and pre-pandemic legislation nationwide that compelled schools to increase their commitment to identifying and addressing dyslexia. These developments increase pressure on teachers who have seen research that shows remedial literacy gains from 9th to 12th grade are modest at best. Research is needed to help identify the best ways to help (specifically) high school students with reading deficits and explore how teachers can be trained efficiently.

Much has been written about the value of reading fiction (Bal, 2013; Rowe, 2018; Hollis 2021). However, determining how students read fiction, how teachers can help them improve their fiction reading skills, and how to scaffold instruction such that these skills are transferable should be of interest to all teachers. A look at the syllabi of 11th grade English classes would indicate that it would not be uncommon to see a class complete an assigned reading of *The Great Gatsby* and then pick up *The Grapes of Wrath*. How did a student's reading of *Gatsby* impact their reading of Steinbeck? Shouldn't we expect that they would be better readers of one novel, having just read another? The use of units and themes may put these experiences in silos, obscuring any focus on reading skills beyond the kind of "rising action, falling action" labels Lemov (2017) references.

Student-centered and collaborative learning have been widely accepted, but integration of these principles has been inconsistent within schools. The reason, according to Kaput (2018), is "that the transition to student-centered learning cannot be orchestrated from a hierarchical, top-

down structure. Rather, bold innovation and continuous improvements to traditional school should happen side-by-side in a 'split screen,' which provides the opportunity for changes to occur organically, over time as innovative approaches to learning are tried, refined, replicated, and adopted by others" (p. 21). This study has been an example of an "organic" approach to applying student-centered pedagogy. The value of student-centered learning is apparent; future research can continue to determine if what is happening in classrooms matches this ideal.

The clear and overwhelming value of at least the ideal version of student-centered learning, however, should not obscure the need for researchers to examine how the demands of socially constructed learning affect students who don't identify with their classmates. Perhaps teachers mistake student compliance in a group assignment with being okay or comfortable with the arrangement, when personal or cultural factors not divulged may cause discomfort and withholding of authentic expression.

Researchers should also be mindful of the real-time challenges to schools by parents who, angered by mask mandates and fearing "critical race theory," see schools as adversaries. Many of the foundations of this study—fiction, personal connections, encouraging inquiry, examining multiple viewpoints—are fodder for the kinds of criticism some parents are looking to level. Novels are a lightning rod for such protests: they are concrete, and can be examined and framed in a convenient context, and thus, easier to point to as "evidence" of potential corruption of students. As recently as the day of this writing, *New Yorker* magazine published "Why the School Wars Still Rage." Monitoring the impact school adversaries are having, and alerting teachers to the potential effects on their classroom conduct, will be crucial to maintaining the student-centered practices validated by the past twenty years of research.

Conclusion

In this action research study, three teachers collaborated to implement a "thinking on paper" reading strategy and discuss its effects in order to become better educators and make our classrooms a place for authentic engagement. Evidence of engagement and insight could be found in the written "Train of Thought" assignments gathered over the course of the semester, seen through an exit survey, and heard in classroom discussion and interviews. We completed this study with a resolve to continue using the "Train of Thought" strategy in our classrooms.

The benefits of this study went beyond the success of individual assignments. Several students who began the year passive and uninvolved became active members of the class and showed a newfound confidence in their reading and writing. Students who typically would not associate with each other were heard complimenting each other during collaboration, building a supportive classroom environment that enabled students to speculate more and worry less about making mistakes.

Awareness of the benefits of class discussion, and how it also limited my understanding of how students understood the text individually, led me to consider ways of interacting with students in the process of making meaning before they accepted conclusions drawn from peers or group work. I observed that after students complete a "Train of Thought" on first reading, I could offer brief feedback before a second reading and group discussion, and ask students to reflect on what they saw and didn't see from first reading, to second, to discussion. In this way, I may be able to see, and have students see, how they are progressing as readers in the same way that I have evidence they are progressing as writers through multiple drafts, rubrics, and "writer's memo" reflections.

The teachers involved also benefited from reflecting on their own practice and asking new questions based on the process and products of this study. While we share the goal of reading for personal growth and life-long learning, the focus of the project on authenticity made non-examples, in our teaching and in student expression, more evident. When students "went through the motions" of rote conduct, or prioritized point value over personal expression, we noticed, more keenly. We found ourselves wondering how to reconcile accountability for reading and cultivating learning for its own sake. We wondered how we could ask for authentic interest when we required all students to read the same passage. As Mr. Shuster said in one of our interviews, "Having to read, forcing the reading, forcing to write, where it kind of pulls, it dissociates that human connectivity with it because it's being forced upon me."

I saw how the "Train of Thought" strategy could evolve from any of its artificial constraints once students gained familiarity with the model and developed the thinking and confidence to design their own response models that aligned with the intention of authenticity and investment. I gained hope that I could achieve a goal I have always had, given precise wording by Harste (2014): "I want critically literate beings who know how language and other sign systems work and can use them to make meaning and reposition themselves in the world in a more democratically thoughtful and equitable manner" (p. 101).

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Appendix A - Reflection Survey

1. In general, how do you usually feel after reading an assigned passage in an English class?
    1. I usually feel like I don't understand as much as my classmates.
    2. Sometimes I feel like I understand as much as my classmates.
    3. I usually feel like I understand as much as my classmates.
    4. Often, I feel like I understand more than my classmates.
2. How did you feel after reading the passage you read today?
    1. I felt like I didn't understand as much as my classmates.
    2. I felt like I understood as much as my classmates.
    3. I felt like I understood more than my classmates.
3. How did using the “Train of Thought” impact your understanding of the passage?
4. In general, how does class discussion after a reading assignment help your understanding of the reading?

    Scale of 1-5 → 1 (Not Helpful) to 5 (Very Helpful)

5. In general, how do assigned questions at the end of a reading assignment help your understanding of the reading?

    Scale of 1-5 → 1 (Not Helpful) to 5 (Very Helpful)

6. How did using the “Train of Thought” help your understanding of today's reading passage?

    Scale of 1-5 → 1 (Not Helpful) to 5 (Very Helpful)

Appendix B - Exit Survey Responses

I didn't use my train of thought because I forgot what I read the second after I finished each paragraph
It was somewhat helpful, but once other people discussed what they picked up, I thought my ideas weren't right or as good.
I think it helped me think about what I was reading and deconstruct it more than I would if I was just reading it.
Using the Train of Thought impacted my understanding of the passage because I was able to connect one of the author's opinions to an inferred aspect of the passage and general message.
Train of thought allows we to get a clear idea of what the passage is trying to convey to the readers.
It made me think more about what I was reading and how different parts of the passage connected to one another.
It gave me a better understanding of the text
It helped me transfer my thoughts onto paper to make my thoughts more clear.
I thought that writing it down distracted me from focusing on the passage and made me focus more on trying to write things down, and made it more difficult to absorb information as I read
My train of thought never really helps me because i always end up reading the passage differently than everyone else
It helped me break down the text more and help me understand more.
If I am being completely honest, train of thought helped me to understand the passage because it pulled me out of my reading for entertainment mind and helped me get into the mindset of using the passage for school and to be able to annotate it if needed and to read the text with my classmates, having dicussions
I think that it helped slightly, it was a weird passage taken from the book so it was more difficult than having full context about what was going on.
It helped to keep track of what I thought while I was reading the passage.
I don't think it impacted my understanding very much.
My train of thought helped me in the process of breaking down the text into pieces to understand on a better level

It allowed me to make more connections than before.
It made me read it deeply and I had to make sure I understood what I read so I could make comments about it.
using train of thought impacted the understanding of my passage by not really knowing how to process this all
I felt like I didn't really see the humor behind it at first because I was trying to decipher what the author meant in my train of thought. However piecing all my notes together at the end helped give me a better general understanding of the passage.
It didn't really, cuz I've already read it.
I think it helped, but I don't know if it really helped more than just normal annotation. It might've just been because the passage was easier.
It evolved as I kept reading and helped me keep my thoughts in line
It caused me to develop more ideas about the passage and expand on them
Train of though caused me to focus on certain things that seemed more important and then getting to less important things
It helped me think more about what the passage was actually saying and what message it was trying to convey
it ruined it because i don´t really think about stuff to my self when i try to read so it screwed up my understanding
It made me more distracted from the actual paragraph, making me have to re-read things over, more than usual. I typically read it over multiple times, but switching between reading and writing often made me forget what I was going (I am diagnosed with ADHD if that helps you perhaps understand why).
It somewhat helped me understand the meaning of the passage, however, discussing it with the class helps me tie everything together more.
I was able to get to some of what my classmates were thinking. The problem is I did not make the gruesome connection that was supposed to be connected, not becuase of the train of thought, but becuase my real thoughts did not go down that road. Train of thought helped me to remember everything that I had previously thought.
it made me think about the smaller things more but i lost the bigger picture when i went to in depth
it makes me make sure i know what i am reading about
Train of though doesn't really work for me because analyzing each separate part doesn't successfully help me understand the overall meaning

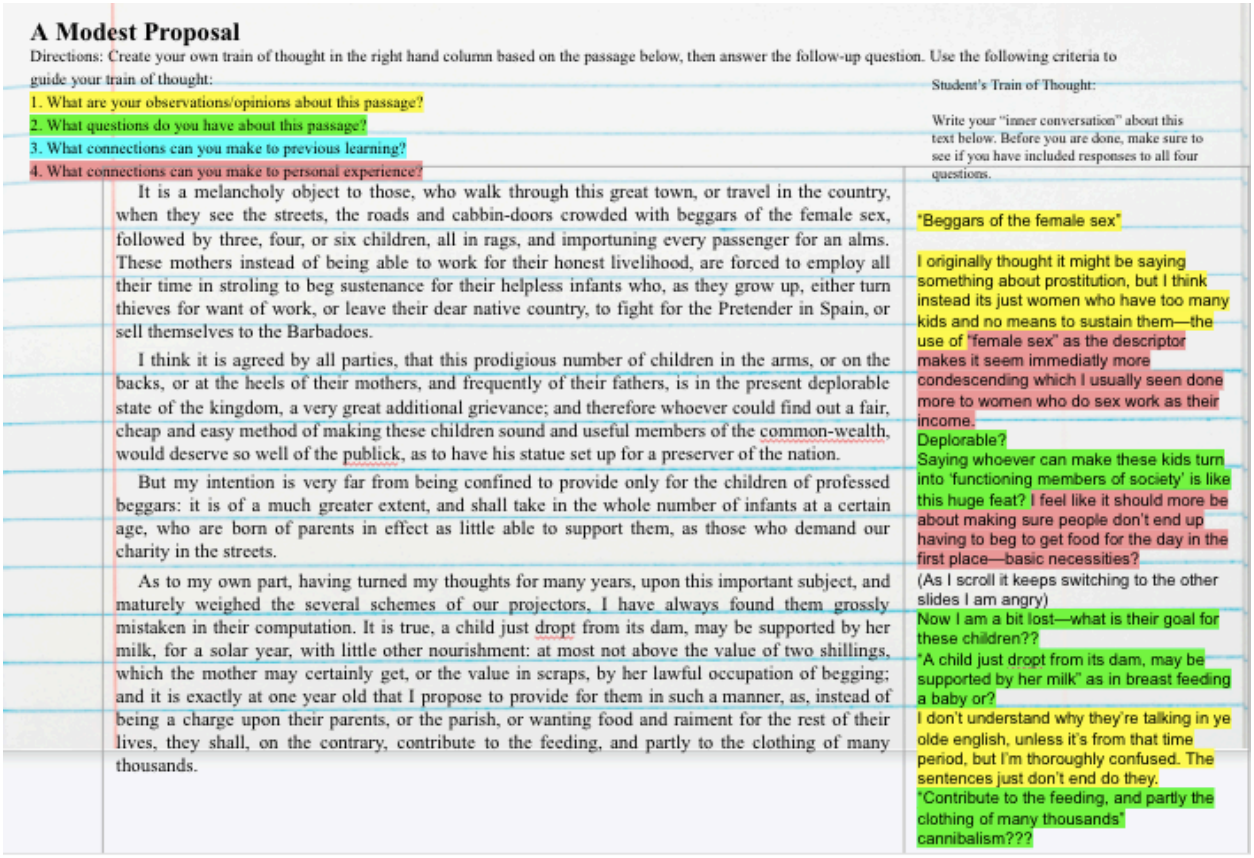
It helped me to further make connections helping to show where things similar to the passage fit into my daily life
It helped me keep my thoughts organized and I was able to go back and look at them later.
The train of thought helped my understanding by allowing me to look back on my thought process as I reread and understood the passage.
I don't think that it really impacted it that much
It allowed me to ask a lot of questions and think about the purpose of the writting.
It helped
It didn't change the reading significantly. The questions had little to do with the understanding of the passage, and were more so focused on how we read the passage.
It didn't really. I think like that usually while reading, but when it asks questions it feels like I'm forced to come up with things that don't actually come to mind.
Writing it down put limiting breaks to my actual train of thought and processing of the passage.
It helped but it would have helped much more if it was on paper and not on the computer. I usually annotate things I read on paper and it helps me but it helps less when I am required to annotate
It helped me to think through what was going on, and make deeper connections to the passage.
It helped me focus on one thing at a time and it helped me break it down piece by piece instead of being overwhelmed with the entire thing
I tried to comprehend what time period this was, since it didn't seem to familiar to me. I tried to figure out the importance of the passage.
It helped me string the thoughts occuring to me together by building off each new one & delving further in.
It didn't really help me understand more.
Writing down what questions I had regarding what specific quotes confused me helped, especially when I talked to my classmate. Otherwise I was still pretty confused with the reading.
Rereading the passage over and changing my answers helped me to better understand the passage and acknowledge the authors opinion and solution to homelessness.
it my made think very hardlee
It helped me understand others ideas about it
none

Impact yo
It helped me remember and get more engaged in the story
It helped me understand it more clearly
helped me dig deeper
I understood more than I did.
it made me make the connection to don't look up because when he asid it's no longer fiction i felt that with the movie it's almost as if it's not fiction its almost like a prediction
it help understand it a little batter of what going on in the story
It made me realize new things and think in a different perspective.
I feel like it brought a diffrent awarness to how the world is slowly forgetting how to be human.
Honestly I just read it and understand the poem.
I maybe opened up my mind to diversely think about the topic.
it let me want to talk about it
It was boring and made me bs the assignment to fit a length requirement
it made me understand on how it is kinda based in science fiction and fantasy
it didn't really help I had more of understanding speaking about.
I was able to connect it to other experiences in order to better understand the passage.
It helped me did deeper into the meaning of the poem
It deepened my understanding and revealed how I felt over lots of thoughts.
Write down my thoughts before I forget them
It helped me comprehend the passage because it let me spit out my thoughts as I was thinking them so that I could progress through my understanding of the text.
It helped me organize my thoughts about this passage
It made me think differently of the passage.
If I don't have a good train of thought I don't understand it well.
it helped a bit
IDk
It helped a little

It helps you write down what your thinking so you can recolecte it
it didnt really change what I thought about it, i picked up on him wanting to abandon progress right away.
It helped me understand what the author was trying to say in every stanza.
I usually hate doing the train of thought, but today it actually helped me
The more i thought about it and got other peoples pov’s i understood the passage more and more.
I liked talking with the class about it, that´s what broadened my understanding.
I think it made it better because I actually read it multiple times
I was able to look deeper into the passage. it wasnt exactly my exact train of thought because Im not actually able to write what im thinking while reading the passage.
i understood it a lot more i liked it and enjoyed reading it
it made it more free to answer and felt like there wasn't any right or wrong answers
It helps me think more about the passage, and gives my guiding thoughts. a lot of the time my thoughts are all over the place and it helps me organize them
It makes you depict every part of the passage to find different questions to ask and observations
It made me look at the passage in different angles more related to how the author understood the situation.
N/A
It helped me put the pieces together.
In my opinion I don't like the train of thought thing because I tend to get off track and start talking about everything but the passage.
The train of thought helps me, slowly, understand certain passages and articles i don't understand.
Not by much, I usually prefer the Journaling.
It made me think outside the box a little bit and make connections regarding peoples actions and their beliefs.
Using the train of thought did not impact my understanding in the slightest.
It impacted my understanding of the passage because it allowed for me to connect previous things that I had written down in the past, to new information that I was writing in the present.

It allowed be to think deeper about question like how it relates to the real world.
It helped me piece things together.
idk
it didnt do anything i wouldn't think of
It helped me connect to other learning and things I've gone through in my life or observed.
It helped me interpret the passage better, and make connections with it.
I mean when you sit and over anaylzing something you are always going to take more away from it than otherwise.
It helped me to understand the meaning of the passage and what was being conveyed.
I was able to think about the passage in more depth than I would just reading through it.
It was more of a claim to why a character was right, it was argumentative.
It was nice to be able to get into depth about the article
it doesn't normally stick with me
it helped me connect it more to me and i feel a deeper connection to the Chris Mcandless now
I believe it allowed and challenged me to take time and dig further into the ideas implicated in the passage. And by doing that I was able to incorporate my own life into the ideas making it more memorable.
it helped me understand
It helped me to think deeper about a passage I otherwise may have just read and not truly taken the time to comprehend

Appendix C - Lester Artifact #1



A Modest Proposal

Directions: Create your own train of thought in the right hand column based on the passage below, then answer the follow-up question. Use the following criteria to guide your train of thought:

1. What are your observations/opinions about this passage?
2. What questions do you have about this passage?
3. What connections can you make to previous learning?
4. What connections can you make to personal experience?

It is a melancholy object to those, who walk through this great town, or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads and cabbin-doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms. These mothers instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in stroling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants who, as they grow up, either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country, to fight for the Pretender in Spain, or sell themselves to the Barbadoes.

I think it is agreed by all parties, that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom, a very great additional grievance; and therefore whoever could find out a fair, cheap and easy method of making these children sound and useful members of the common-wealth, would deserve so well of the publick, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.

But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of professed beggars: it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age, who are born of parents in effect as little able to support them, as those who demand our charity in the streets.

As to my own part, having turned my thoughts for many years, upon this important subject, and maturely weighed the several schemes of our projectors, I have always found them grossly mistaken in their computation. It is true, a child just dropt from its dam, may be supported by her milk, for a solar year, with little other nourishment: at most not above the value of two shillings, which the mother may certainly get, or the value in scraps, by her lawful occupation of begging; and it is exactly at one year old that I propose to provide for them in such a manner, as, instead of being a charge upon their parents, or the parish, or wanting food and raiment for the rest of their lives, they shall, on the contrary, contribute to the feeding, and partly to the clothing of many thousands.

Student's Train of Thought:

Write your "inner conversation" about this text below. Before you are done, make sure to see if you have included responses to all four questions.

"Beggars of the female sex"

I originally thought it might be saying something about prostitution, but I think instead its just women who have too many kids and no means to sustain them—the use of "female sex" as the descriptor makes it seem immediatly more condescending which I usually seen done more to women who do sex work as their income.

Deplorable?

Saying whoever can make these kids turn into 'functioning members of society' is like this huge feat? I feel like it should more be about making sure people don't end up having to beg to get food for the day in the first place—basic necessities?

(As I scroll it keeps switching to the other slides I am angry)

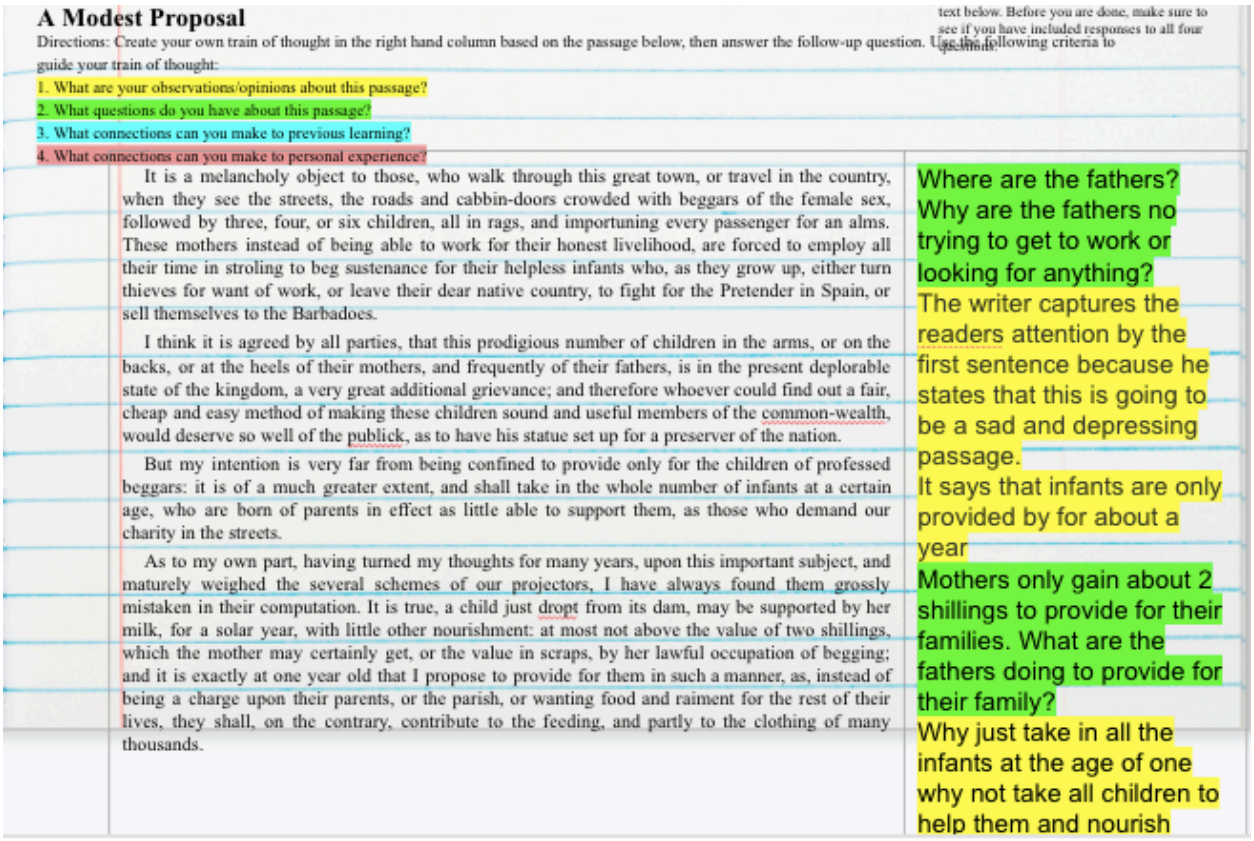
Now I am a bit lost—what is their goal for these children??

"A child just dropt from its dam, may be supported by her milk" as in breast feeding a baby or?

I don't understand why they're talking in ye olde english, unless it's from that time period, but I'm thoroughly confused. The sentences just don't end do they.

"Contribute to the feeding, and partly the clothing of many thousands" cannibalism???

Appendix D - Lester Artifact #2



A Modest Proposal

Directions: Create your own train of thought in the right hand column based on the passage below, then answer the follow-up question. Use the following criteria to guide your train of thought:

1. What are your observations/opinions about this passage?
2. What questions do you have about this passage?
3. What connections can you make to previous learning?
4. What connections can you make to personal experience?

text below. Before you are done, make sure to see if you have included responses to all four questions.

It is a melancholy object to those, who walk through this great town, or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads and cabbin-doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms. These mothers instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in stroling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants who, as they grow up, either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country, to fight for the Pretender in Spain, or sell themselves to the Barbadoes.

I think it is agreed by all parties, that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom, a very great additional grievance; and therefore whoever could find out a fair, cheap and easy method of making these children sound and useful members of the common-wealth, would deserve so well of the publick, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.

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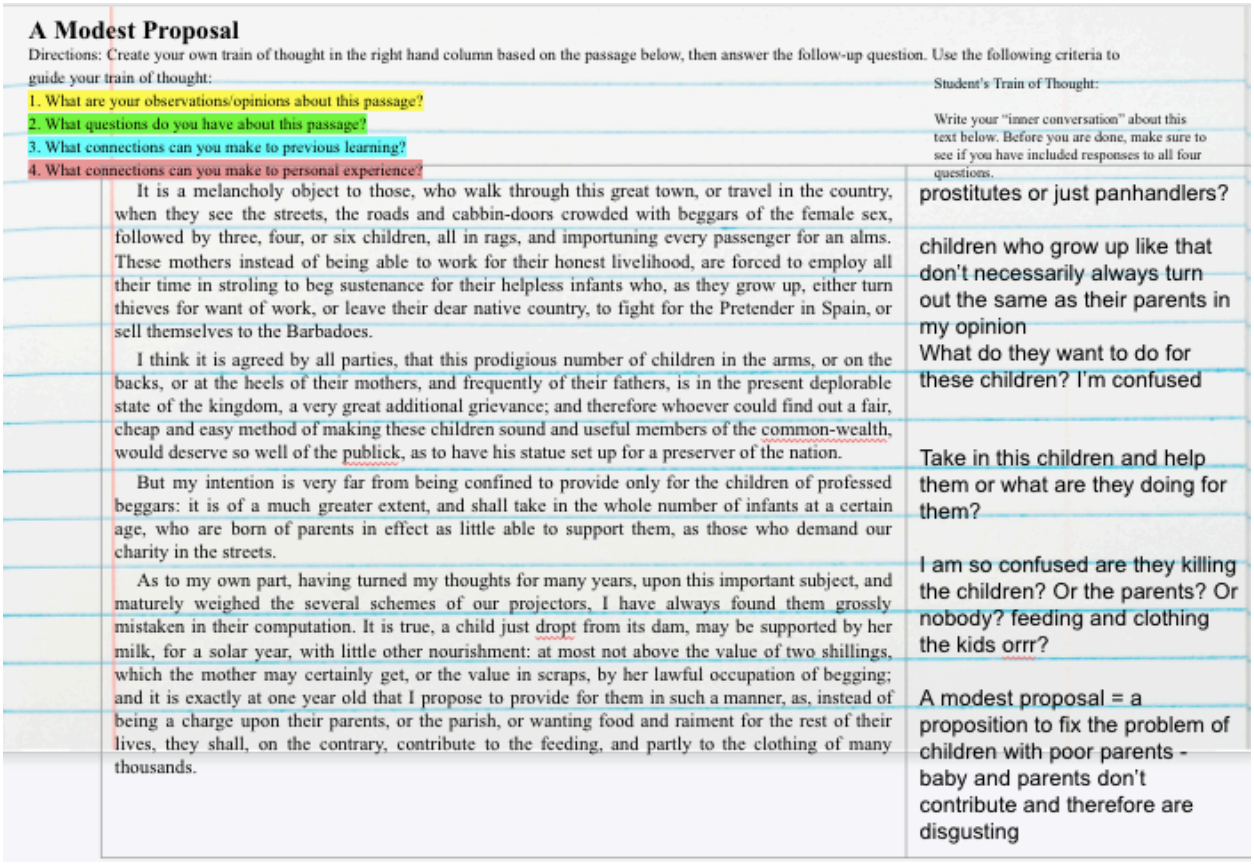
Where are the fathers?
Why are the fathers no trying to get to work or looking for anything?
The writer captures the readers attention by the first sentence because he states that this is going to be a sad and depressing passage.
It says that infants are only provided by for about a year
Mothers only gain about 2 shillings to provide for their families. What are the fathers doing to provide for their family?
Why just take in all the infants at the age of one why not take all children to help them and nourish

Appendix E - Lester Artifact #3



A Modest Proposal

Directions: Create your own train of thought in the right hand column based on the passage below, then answer the follow-up question. Use the following criteria to guide your train of thought:

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Student's Train of Thought:

Write your "inner conversation" about this text below. Before you are done, make sure to see if you have included responses to all four questions.

prostitutes or just panhandlers?

children who grow up like that don't necessarily always turn out the same as their parents in my opinion
What do they want to do for these children? I'm confused

Take in this children and help them or what are they doing for them?

I am so confused are they killing the children? Or the parents? Or nobody? feeding and clothing the kids orrr?

A modest proposal = a proposition to fix the problem of children with poor parents - baby and parents don't contribute and therefore are disgusting

Appendix F - Shuster Artifact #1

much and made it this big amazing dream of his. The light at the end of the dock shone so bright that he saw it as his chance to get Daisy back. He had bought his mansion so it was directly across the way from Daisy's and he kept dreaming about the day that he would finally meet Daisy again and hopefully win her back. One day he finally asked Jordan to set up a meeting with Nick and asked Nick to invite Daisy. Well this meeting started out very awkwardly with Gatsby not being his normal self. After he started talking to Daisy and remembering all the good things they had, he suggested that they go over to his house. There he started to show Daisy everything from his shirts to his hydroplane. After that they stood on his lawn and he told Daisy that the green light was the light that shined constantly off the end of the dock. At that point he had hooked Daisy and she linked her arms in his. This point was exactly when Gatsby had noticed that his dream of getting Daisy back was not what he had built up for himself at all. He noticed that the green light that had once shone so bright before he was with Daisy again, returned to being just a green light. His fantasy of how things with Daisy would go became a reality which he had noticed wasn't all that great. My question is, why would he want to build something that could be so great up to where, when it does happen he doesn't want it anymore? Why would he convince himself that this is what he wants but makes it too good to be true so when he has it, he doesn't want it? I can connect this to previous learning because there was one time in 5th grade when we started learning about the settlement of Jameson and all the things that had come with it. Well I was thinking "oh this is gonna be great! I can't wait to learn about this! This is gonna be so interesting!" but I was wrong. I had built it up so much that I was so disappointed when it wasn't as exciting as I thought it would be. Another thing I can connect to is something that happened in 3rd grade. In 3rd grade we went on a sleepover field trip to the Museum of Nature and Science. While it was still a blast, I thought there was gonna be much more freedom to it. Instead we had a strict schedule that we had to go by and I thought we were gonna have our own time to do whatever we wanted and then meet up again for dinner. I was so excited to roam around the museum with my dad and friends. I still had a blast and would definitely do it again (if I was allowed to).

Appendix G - Shuster Artifact #2

After fighting for this one thing, having a single person motivate him to do all of these extraordinary things. Once he was literally with that person, having her next to him, holding on to him. Gatsby realizes the climb is over, he's not chasing anymore. I wonder though if all he wanted from Daisy is for her to want him again. Or if he maybe did not know what he wanted to happen after he could get her attention again. Maybe he realized he didn't actually think that far ahead and is having an oh heck moment where he isn't sure what's next for him yet. But I think everyone is like this, I mean especially when we are young. You tell yourself when you are little that when you turn 16 it is going to be this magical transformation of life. You can drive and you will be in high school and go out and it will be just like the movies. We give ourselves these big idealist pictures of who much better it will be “once I get there” and then you get there and yes it is great you can drive and whatever but nothings really all that different. I struggle with this way too much. I am idealist and I am still that little girl that thinks once this life event happens everyhtings just going to be better. But I think as humans we need to give ourselves that kind of motivation.

Appendix H - Shuster Artifact #3

After fighting for this one thing, having a single person motivate him to do all of these extraordinary things. Once he was literally with that person, having her next to him, holding on to him. Gatsby realizes the climb is over, he's not chasing anymore. I wonder though if all he wanted from Daisy is for her to want him again. Or if he maybe did not know what he wanted to happen after he could get her attention again. Maybe he realized he didn't actually think that far ahead and is having an oh heck moment where he isn't sure what's next for him yet. But I think everyone is like this, I mean especially when we are young. You tell yourself when you are little that when you turn 16 it is going to be this magical transformation of life. You can drive and you will be in high school and go out and it will be just like the movies. We give ourselves these big idealist pictures of who much better it will be “once I get there” and then you get there and yes it is great you can drive and whatever but nothings really all that different. I struggle with this way too much. I am idealist and I am still that little girl that thinks once this life event happens everyhtings just going to be better. But I think as humans we need to give ourselves that kind of motivation.

Appendix I - Fabiano Artifact #1

Student's Train of Thought:

Write your "inner conversation" as you are reading. Before you are done, make sure you have included responses to all four questions.

What are they going to compare this to? Is he talking about the progression of our society? Is he talking about the bible and how religion is science fiction? This is definitely talking about the bible in some aspects but I'm not sure what the author is specifically trying to prove. Is this text talking about why it doesn't think science fiction is good? I don't understand why they decided to write this paper since it doesn't really have a clear powerful point. Are they talking about needing to go back to the way the bible was written? This may be referencing multiple different texts but I haven't read many of them (if any of them) so I can't really connect the words in the poem to words from a separate text.
This text seems to be making connections between the past of people and the progress that has been made by society.
Maybe talking about how technology might be dangerous or a mistake? Not much praise going on in the text. Humans are trying to extend their lifespan (live forever / lightweight aluminum bodies)
Probably saying that humans have gone too far and need to get back to their roots and go back

Appendix J - Fabiano Artifact #2

Student's Train of Thought:

Write your "inner conversation" as you are reading. Before you are done, make sure you have included responses to all four questions.

1.They might seem to have grown tired of the constant loop that we call life, which can be a strange thought on how we've become us today.

2. I'm confused and uneducated right now but I don't understand the title saying "The end of science fiction" but the rest of the prompt he portrays how our genre is dead and we need something new like what you would find in science fiction. Also what does the Author mean when saying, "Both hands are stopped at noon. We are beginning to live forever."

3.I noticed he made references to Lot's wife and Jacob and Esau both related to literature in more of a noble way. Or the way we have evolved as humans.

4.Maybe one of the main points the author was trying to portray is that we need new thing thought up of that's why we need to "invent" an new Adam and Eve. We are no longer socially as involved and caring about our society as we evolve.

Appendix K - Fabiano Artifact #3

Student's Train of Thought:

Write your "inner conversation" as you are reading. Before you are done, make sure you have included responses to all four questions.

It ends by talking about how difficult making stories are. But it got there by talking about how science fiction is dead and we need to make something new. Every example seemed like they were referencing actual stories or could be stories. I'm starting to notice how controversial this poem is because sifi is a huge genre and people will question why the writer wants to get rid of it. From what I'm getting, I think they are trying to explain that we are making pointless non-fiction stories and there's no point in doing so because it will never come true.

Do they think that the people of this world are living in fantasy? If not that, then why do they want to get rid of science fiction? What about it has made it no longer interesting?

In the beginning I have a background connection to god making Earth in seven days. But the writer claims that there are gods who can undo all of it.