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Abstract

This action research project looked at whether students could engage in critical talk utilizing young adult literature in the social studies classroom. Research indicated that students who were presented with multiple perspectives and documents in the social studies classroom did achieve critical talk. To examine this I utilized the four dimensions of critical literacy. I created my own lessons per each dimension. I analyzed the data based on the four dimensions framework for data analysis. It is evident that students who were exposed to critical literacy with a young adult novel in the social studies classroom did achieve and utilize critical literacy skills. Although each student in the study achieved critical literacy in different ways, I question if this was due to the difference in age and also their educational environment they are exposed to.

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Encouraging Students to Become Critical Thinkers:
Using Critical Literacy and Young Adult Novels in the Social Studies Classroom

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Abstract

This action research project looked at whether students could engage in critical talk utilizing young adult literature in the social studies classroom. Research indicated that students who were presented with multiple perspectives and documents in the social studies classroom did achieve critical talk. To examine this I utilized the four dimensions of critical literacy. I created my own lessons per each dimension. I analyzed the data based on the four dimensions framework for data analysis. It is evident that students who were exposed to critical literacy with a young adult novel in the social studies classroom did achieve and utilize critical literacy skills. Although each student in the study achieved critical literacy in different ways, I question if this was due to the difference in age and also their educational environment they are exposed to.

Encouraging Students to Become Critical Thinkers: Using Critical Literacy and Young Adult Novels in the Social Studies Classroom

To be an effective citizen, human beings need to be critical thinkers. Since the main tenets within the social studies classroom are citizenship, civics and culture, the idea of critical literacy should be a major component throughout the social studies curriculum. However, students are often not given the opportunity to think critically about social studies content. Therefore, students need to be taught how to question the information presented to them to better make more informed decisions (Hynd, 1999; Wolk, 2003). Given that comprehension is the largest and hardest component of literacy to assess, it is important for teachers to find a way to engage students with activities to aid in comprehension abilities in social studies (Wolk, 2003; Alonzo, Basaraba, Tindal & Carriveau, 2009). By incorporating critical literacy and young adult novels into the classroom, students will better be able to comprehend the social studies content as well as begin questioning the world around them.

Social studies content is taught more as a narrative rather than allowing students to engage in the material critically (Booth, 1994; Wineburg 1991). The content is told as a story of what happened rather than exposing students to multiple documents and allowing them to come to their own conclusions. Learning history as a narrative does not effectively aid students in being able to think critical about the content, perhaps disabling students from obtaining higher level critical comprehension. By including critical literacy and young adult novels in the social studies classroom, it will help students to question the material the way historians do (Wineburg, 1991). Students will become aware of the inequalities facing society, how they can bring about change as well as allow students a voice inside the classroom (Lewison, Flint & VanSluys, 2002; Beck, 2005).

Critical literacy can best be defined as examining the world with a critical eye to uncover and expose hidden oppression in terms of race, social class, gender and sexual orientation (Freire, 1972; Wolk, 2003; Lewison, Flint and VanSulys, 2002; Beck, 2005). It is important to note that while critical literacy can be difficult to implement in the classroom due to teachers own biases and beliefs and heated discussions that may arise, students will benefit from asking challenging questions to better understand the world at large. A way to help students make these connections and courage them to question the world around them is through a medium. Utilizing young adult novels within the social studies curriculum is a great medium to expose students to the issues currently affecting their lives.

Young Adult Literature has been around for decades, however, only recently has it become more socially accepted within the school setting (Owen, 2003). Young adult literature is aimed at giving teens a more mature understanding of themselves and the world through a main character similar in age. In social studies, there are many complex themes and topics. If these themes are accompanied with a young adult novel as well as critical literacy, students will be better able to internalize the information, comprehend what their learning and question the world around them to bring about change and equality.

To examine this, I chose a young adult novel and created my own critical literacy unit plan around the novel. I wanted to see if using a young adult novel in social studies would aid in students ability to achieve critical talk. I chose the novel *Hero Type* (Lyga, 2010). The novel deals with controversial issues pertaining to the war in Iraq. I created lessons that scaffold their thinking process to be able to achieve critical literacy utilizing the four dimensions of critical literacy created by Lewison, Flint and VanSluys (2002). I created all lessons used for this study. After completion of all lessons, I analyzed the data based on the four dimensions framework for

data analysis. It is evident that students who are exposed to critical literacy with a young adult novel in the social studies classroom were able to achieve and utilize critical literacy skills. Each student in the study achieved critical literacy in different ways. I question if this was due to the difference in age and also their educational environment they are exposed to.

Theoretical Framework

With advancement in knowledge and technology the notion of literacy has expanded. Over the years literacy has acquired many definitions and ideas about how to teach it successfully. While in the past literacy focused on a person's ability to read, write and speak, scholars are having a hard time coming up with a concrete definition (Ntiri, 2009). Scholars argue the reason behind this stems from the idea what literacy means to one person or culture does not mean the same to another person or culture (Ntiri, 2009; Freire, 1972). In the social studies classroom history is taught as a story and most often reflects the point of view of the dominate discourse. Texts represent different world views based on the perspective the text is written from; most likely written in the dominant, Eurocentric point of view (Larson & Marsh, 2005). Due to the fact that texts usually silence those of the minority, it is important for educators to critically examine these texts and model for students how to question the status quo.

Lewison, Flint, & VanSluys (2002) synthesized all the information they obtained about critical literacy and created the four dimensions of critical literacy as a way for teachers and students to better understand what critical literacy is and how to implement it into the classroom. The four dimensions of critical literacy include disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple view points, sociopolitical issues and taking action and/or social justice.

The first dimension of critical literacy, disrupting the common place, encourages students to use existing knowledge as a historical product and question how a particular text is trying to position them. Examples of how texts can position a reader include ulterior motives of the author, prejudices of the author and biases by the media. Specifically when examining pop culture and the media, students are encouraged to analyze how language is used to shape identity, construct cultural discourses and supports or disrupts the status quo. The second dimension, interrogating multiple viewpoints, students will look at multiple perspectives and how those perspectives influence the masses, examining the voices missing and whether or not these missing voices were intentional, and discuss how to make differences noticeable. Students will be able to better comprehend how different viewpoints can offer more insight into a topic. The third dimension, sociopolitical issues, encourages students to question unequal power in political systems and how it relates to them personally. Students are also challenged to go beyond what they know and attempt to understand the sociopolitical systems they belong to. Lastly, students will use literacy as a cultural event to achieve reforms for the oppressed. By allowing students this opportunity to examine sociopolitical issues, they will be more empowered to challenge the legitimacy of the unequal power relationships and to increase opportunities for the non-dominant classes. Lastly, the fourth dimension, taking action and promoting social justice, encourages students to reflect how to bring action upon the world in order to transform it. Students should also examine how language can affect the status quo to keep dominant groups in control. The fourth dimension teaches students how language can be used to enhance life and question practices of privilege and injustices.

Although it may be difficult at first, critical literacy is a student-centered type of instruction that allows students to actively engage with the material. The ultimate goal of

teaching for critical literacy is to address these issues and take action to promote social justice (Wolk, 2003; Larson & Marsh, 2005; Lewiston et. al., 2005). In order for students to become better citizens, students need to be able to question issues to make more informed decisions. Using a critical stance while reading a young adult novel will allow students to better make connections in social studies content because students will connect with the characters they read about.

By only exposing students to one side and not teaching or encouraging them to question how the information was obtained or the author's purpose, educators are not allowing students to be active learners. Literature, such as young adult novels, broadens a students' knowledge of people and society by allowing them to engage in imaginary situations as well as being able to identify with characters that possess the same or different qualities than their own (Rosenblatt, 1995). By connecting with the text, it allows readers to understand their own problems by keeping the reader role active and involved (Rosenblatt, 1995). Reader response, created by Rosenblatt (1995) allows the student to tie the text into the student's personal life allowing students to build off prior knowledge and their social identities to examine the text and allows the teacher to see how the student's knowledge impacts their interpretation. Having students read young adult literature in social studies will provide knowledge and insight into what it would have been like to live during a specific time period through the eyes of a character within the same age range. Young adult literature is easily relatable for students and they enjoy it due to the fast-paced nature (Owen, 2003). Utilizing a young adult novel within the social studies curriculum also provides a medium in which to discuss issues utilizing critical literacy.

Teachers can engage students in higher level comprehension by incorporating critical literacy in the classroom. By incorporating critical literacy into the class, it allows students to

question the distribution of power within society and how to bring equality into the world.

Critical literacy was first created by the work of Freire (1972). Freire (1972) took peasants in South America and taught them how to read not by just decoding but by examining the world critically. He believed the first step is to allow students to have a “critical consciousness” of the world around them. He also felt in order to have meaningful learning, students need to discuss their learning and take action upon what they believe to be important. Lastly, Freire (1972) felt the teacher and student should work together, not to have a top-down model of teaching where the teacher tells the students what they need to learn. Having student-centered activities enables to students to create lifelong learning as well as keeping the learning process active.

Critical literacy in the classroom enables to the student to not only actively engage in the learning process by asking questions and connecting the social studies content to what they know to gain acquisition and learning skills. Gee (1989) defines acquisition as a skill that is gained through exposure and not something that is not formally taught but happens in a natural setting enabling the learner to realize this is something they need to learn in order to function. Learning could be defined as the cognitive process behind the acquisition of a new skill. Gee (1989) discusses how learning is conscious knowledge which is learned through formal education; although not necessarily learned from a teacher. Learning is something that is broken down and analyzed (Gee, 1989). Teaching students how to analyze and question the social studies content through implementing critical literacy will enable them to better internalize the information and make them more active citizens (Wolk, 2003).

Research Question

In order to tighten the comprehension gap in social studies, teachers should utilize critical literacy activities and young adult literature in the social studies classroom to help encourage students to question the way information is presented and the world around them. By presenting critical literacy through a medium adolescents enjoy reading and can relate to can help students better understand the social studies content. Therefore, this action research project asks, can the use of critical literacy through a young adult novel encourage students to engage in critical talk within the social studies classroom?

Literature Review

For this literature review, information was sought on utilizing critical literacy within the social studies classroom. Different levels of comprehension were investigated and compared. Students' comprehension of what they read was studied to see if incorporating critical literacy could help them achieve a higher level of comprehension. Information was also sought regarding the use of young adult literature in the classroom. The articles obtained were to investigate specifically how using critical literacy along with young adult literature would aid in comprehension abilities. Lastly, information was reviewed on how critical literacy and the use of young adult literature would help students specifically within the social studies classroom with comprehension skills. The research obtained for this literature review demonstrated that incorporating critical literacy and young adult literature in the social studies classroom can aid in comprehension and critical thinking. Of the articles obtained, the most common theme appeared to be that teachers who utilized a form of critical literacy within their lessons, especially in the social studies classroom, enabled students to become better in comprehension abilities. When teachers implemented a critical stance in the classroom, it allowed students to begin think

beyond the text and in turn score better on state exams. Research also discussed the importance of young adult literature in comprehension abilities due to the fact students could easily relate to the characters because of the closeness of age and the real-life scenarios teens are currently experiencing.

Critical Literacy

Teachers can engage their students in higher level comprehension by incorporating critical literacy in the classroom. Critical literacy can best be defined as examining the world to uncover and expose hidden oppression in terms of things like race, social class, gender and sexual orientation (Freire (1972; Wolk, 2003; Lewison, Flint, and VanSluys, 2002; Beck, 2005). By incorporating critical literacy into the class, it allows students to question the distribution of power within society and how to bring equality into the world.

Critical literacy was first created by the work of Freire (1972). Freire (1972) worked with peasants in South America and taught them how to read not by just decoding but by examining the world critically. Freire (1972) believed the first step in education was to teach his students to have a “critical consciousness” of the world around them. A critical consciousness enables the student to have knowledge about their surroundings. If students have a critical consciousnesses will in turn make students become better citizens in the future (Wolk, 2003; Beck, 2005). Secondly, Freire (1972) felt that in order to have meaningful learning, students need to discuss issues and take action upon what they believe to be important in order to create unity. Lastly, he believed that the teacher and student should work together, not to have a top-down model of teaching where the teacher tells the students what they need to learn. Having students actively involved in their learning will keep them engaged.

Wolk (2003) describes critical literacy as a way of life. Critical literacy teaches students to question societal norms and unequal power. Critical literacy examines who has power and who is denied it. Critical literacy also critiques the issues of race, gender, culture, class, etc. The ultimate goal of teaching for critical literacy is to address these issues and take action to promote social justice (Wolk, 2003; Larson & Marsh, 2005; Lewiston et. al., 2005). In order for students to become better citizens, students need to be able to question issues to make more informed decisions. Using a critical stance while reading a young adult novel will allow students to better make connections in social studies content because students will connect with the characters they read about.

Lewison, Flint, & VanSluys (2002) synthesized all the information they obtained about critical literacy and created the four dimensions of critical literacy as a way for teachers and students to better understand what critical literacy is and how to implement it into the classroom. The four dimensions of critical literacy include disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple view points, sociopolitical issues and taking action and/or social justice.

By disrupting the commonplace, Lewison, Flint, & VanSluys (2002) state specifically students will examine the world around them, interrogate texts and question how are the readers trying to be positioned, examine how media and pop culture can affect how people think, and investigate how language can help or disrupt the status quo. Under this first dimension, students begin their critical thinking by questioning the dominate ways of life. The second dimension, interrogating multiple viewpoints, students will look at multiple perspectives and how those perspectives influence the masses, examining the voices missing and whether or not these missing voices were intentional, and discuss how to make differences noticeable (Lewison, Flint, & VanSluys (2002). Students will be able to better comprehend how different viewpoints can

offer more insight into a topic. By investigating sociopolitical issues, Lewison, Flint, & VanSluys (2002) discuss how students will question unequal power in political systems and how it relates to them personally and how literacy can be seen as a cultural event to achieve reforms for the oppressed. By allowing students this opportunity to examine sociopolitical issues, they will be more empowered to challenge the legitimacy of the unequal power relationships and to increase opportunities for the non-dominant classes. The last dimension, taking action and promoting social justice, students will reflect ways to encourage change throughout the nation or world and how using language enables them to bring awareness to other cultures (Lewison, Flint, & VanSluys, 2002). Students will take all of their information, reflect, and use language and action to promote equality. By teaching critical literacy in the classroom, students become more aware of the inequalities facing society and how they can bring about change (Lewison, Flint, & VanSluys, 2002).

In a study by Lewison, Flint, & VanSluys (2002) in which they examined a newcomer teacher to critical literacy, a teacher with no prior background knowledge in this technique, and a novice teacher, who had some background knowledge in critical literacy, found that both newcomers and novice teachers often stayed within the first two dimensions of critical literacy. The authors found most often teachers stay within the first two dimensions because they are the most comfortable and teachers lack the knowledge on types of books to use and critical questions to ask (Lewison, Flint, & VanSluys, 2002). In addition, Lewison, Flint, & VanSluys (2002) offer that over time and attending professional development and conferences will aid in ability of implementing critical literacy in the classroom. Using critical literacy in the classroom will allow students to internalize the information better due to the in-depth analysis nature of critical literacy and in turn will become better students and citizens.

It is important to note that while critical literacy is difficult to implement in the classroom due to teachers own biases and beliefs, students will benefit from asking challenging questions to better understand the world at large. Beck (2005) states that due to controversial issues critical literacy encompasses, at times strong, heated discussions will arise but these discussions are relevant to students' lives and therefore should happen. The reason critical literacy is looked down upon in the school setting Beck (2005) claims is due to the fact that it challenges everything the school stands for and maintain a status quo. According to Beck (2005) texts and information are strategically picked in order to keep the dominant group in power. By using sociocultural relevant books in the classroom and having students challenge the status quo empowers them to become active citizens in society and embodies what an actual democracy should be (Beck, 2005; Wolk, 2003).

Beck (2005) and McGregor (2000) support critical literacy in the classroom because it allows students a voice. McGregor (2000) also states in a study that students often get frustrated because they feel they do not have a voice in the classroom. The students stated the reason they attend school is to become a well-rounded individual, yet if they question a teacher or do not feel the same way as the teacher, they're wrong (McGregor, 2000). Although it may be difficult at first, critical literacy is a student-centered type of instruction that allows students to engage with the material. Educators who utilize critical literacy in the classroom must facilitate a respectful environment for students to feel comfortable sharing their point of views.

Importance of Comprehension

Given the five key components of literacy (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension), comprehension is the largest component and the hardest to assess (Alonzo, Basaraba, Tindal & Carriveau, 2009). However, comprehension is needed in

order to internalize the material to in turn pass curriculum-based exams (Gardner & Smith, 1987; Alonzo, Basaraba, Tindal & Carriveau, 2009, Leu & Kinzer, 1999; Lapp & Flood, 1983).

Comprehension is the major tenet within the social studies classroom (Wolk, 2003). Therefore, teachers need to find a way to engage students with activities to aid in comprehension abilities.

To help students better internalize the content, higher level comprehension is needed, but often lacking. Gardner & Smith (1987) for example, questioned if students' lack of higher level comprehension stem from psychological issues and if that egocentrism enabled students to have a difficult time seeing past themselves into the characters they read. Gardner & Smith (1987) took 40 racially mixed freshmen at an urban high school in Salt Lake City, Utah to see if reading ability was linked to 'perspective taking abilities.' Gardner & Smith (1987) found when comparing student responses to the California Achievement Test, students scored relatively well on questions that could be answered directly from the text. Students could find these answers directly within the text and they did not require the students to take on other perspectives. However, students struggled with being able to answer questions that could not be directly answered from the text. These questions required students to think beyond the text. The authors feel this is due to the lack of high level comprehension and perspective taking ability (Gardner & Smith, 1987). Social studies content is taught more as memorization than allowing students to engage the material critically. Memorization does not aid students in being able to think critically about the content or relate it to them, perhaps disabling students to obtain higher level comprehension.

Similar to Gardner & Smith (1987), Alonzo, et. al. (2009) also found that while literal comprehension questions were easier for students to answer, there were clear differences between literal questions and beyond the text questions. Students had significantly lower scores

within the inferential and evaluative sections. The authors found that the three categories of questions are in fact hierarchical and build off each other (Alonzo, et. al., 2009). Alonzo, et. al. (2009) examined 311 girls and 294 boys in urban and suburban schools in the Pacific Northwest to see how well students could comprehend what they read. Based on findings, Alonzo, et. al. (2009) argued that because students are poorly taught higher level comprehension skills, they in turn are left unprepared for state exams and graduation. Leu & Kinzer (1999) suggest that classroom teachers should continue to teach students basic, intermediate and higher level comprehension questions separate. Teaching students each comprehension level separately will enable them to better understand the foundation and in turn will be able to build off of all three levels to answer comprehension questions better. Lapp & Flood (1983) also argue that it is too difficult to measure comprehension questions as literal, inferential or evaluative.

Comprehension questions encompass all three levels which make it difficult to categorize them (Lapp & Flood, 1983). Therefore, teachers should work closer to state standards which will better enable students to effectively be able to answer higher level comprehension questions (Alonzo, et.al., 2009). Classroom teachers create overly simplistic and a too linear view of comprehension and should not teach each type of question separately. These three types of comprehension questions build off each other and teachers need to demonstrate to students the link between all three which will help students better understand the social studies content.

While administrators tend to only examine student performance, they often overlook what teachers are doing within the classroom. Students can better internalize social studies content with student-centered activities and by looking at the material critically, but teachers have to be willing to incorporate these types of lessons in the classroom. Langer (2001) believes how teachers' present information to students can affect student performance. Langer (2001)

looked at four schools within the United States which have diverse populations, do not meet state standards and are working toward improvement. Schools were chosen based on test scores as well as initiatives teachers and administrators were taking to improve the schools. The results showed all teachers, despite their locations, who combined direct, student-centered and critically based instruction, had students who showed greater gains in test scores than teachers who did not (Langer, 2001). Comber & Nixon (2011) argue that in an age where standardized tests are everything, teachers can engage students in critical reading comprehension. By teaching comprehension critically, students will be able to engage in the material to better internalize literacy skills (Comber & Nixon, 2011).

History of Young Adult Literature and Its Importance

Young Adult Literature has been around for decades, however, only recently has it become more socially accepted within the school setting. For the last few decades, young adult literature has been seen as a genre that was not worthy of discussion and were not real books (Owen, 2003). Adolescents enjoy reading young adult literature because the characters are similar in age to the reader, allowing them to relate to the character. These novels can help students make sense of their own lives because the characters address issues that our students are struggling with (Bushman, 1997; Bean, 2003; Tighe, 1998; Agee, 2000; Hall & Piazza, 2008; Moore, 1997; Owen, 2003).

Young adult literature is aimed at giving teens a more mature understanding of themselves and the world through a main character similar in age. Authors of young adult literature provide the protagonist and the situations but do provide answers, allowing the teen readers the ability to relate and decide for themselves the answers (Owen, 2003). Owen (2003) states the first young adult novels began in the fifties and continued to grow until the mid

eighties when it was believed the genre would die out due to cuts in educational budgets and poor writing and storylines. However, the genre was revived in the mid nineties due to the widespread growth of the internet (Owen, 2003). The internet provided a common ground where teens could log on and discuss what they've read with teens throughout the world. Owen (2003) states the reason young adult literature is popular is due to the format. According to Owen (2003), young adult novels are written fast-paced intriguing the reader to finish the book, contain less dialogue and dialogue which appears in written in controversial ways and young adult novels are written in a wide genres, themes and subjects.

After surveying his students, Bushman (1997) found that students did not enjoy reading the required reading because they could not relate to it. The novels were 'out of date' and the students spent most of the time listening to the teacher explain it. The students surveyed continued to say that they would be a lot more eager to engage in classroom assignments and discussions if teachers used young adult literature because they could relate to the characters (Bushman, 1997). Many young adult novels have many of the same themes, therefore, teachers should allow students to pick a novel they have interest in rather than requiring them to read something they do not. Teachers then run the risk of students being unwilling to read for any assignment.

In contrast to Bushman (1997), Agee (2000) states that the reason why many secondary teachers do not implement the use of young adult literature in the classroom is due to the fact that teachers are unfamiliar with young adult novels. They continue to teach difficult texts because they feel this is the type of education a student should receive. According to Agee (2000), this is not effective literature instruction. Although teachers may know newer practices, if they do not see the incentive to try new ideas in the classroom, they will continue to do what is comfortable

for them (Agee, 2000). In her study, Agee (2000) noticed teachers were reluctant to try new ideas in the classroom, instead leaving narrow topics and readings for students. By leaving topics too narrow for a student does not allow for them to engage with texts critically nor are they reading novels of interest to them. To help with this issue, Agee (2000) suggests building effective literature instruction into pre-service and graduate teaching programs.

Young adult literature offers such a broad spectrum that it could be used in any content, including social studies. Bean (2003) believes that using young adult literature within the content area allows a student to better understand issues pertaining to themselves and the world. Young adult literature will be successful in aiding comprehension as well as student enjoyment because concepts and themes come alive for students because they can relate to the character that has experienced it within the novel (Bean, 2003). Young adult literature can help bring the past alive with characters and engaging events that students can relate to. In social studies, there are many complex themes and topics. If these themes are accompanied with a Young Adult novel as well as other documents, students will be better be able to internalize the information.

Texts used with students can often be biased by authors or teachers. It is important that both teachers and students step outside of their comfort zone to think critically (Hall & Piazza, 2008). Hall & Piazza (2008) researched male students' responses of critically reading young adult literature. At first the male students had a negative perception of reading. It was seen as a girl activity. However, the teachers picked novels that were socially, culturally and linguistically varied. While students read, classroom discussions were administered based on the themes of the novels. The male students preferred books that demonstrated how they felt males should act socially and culturally. However, when asked to view the novels critically, students had a difficult time. The students could only discuss the unequal power they could relate to: bullying

(Hall & Piazza, 2008). This study demonstrates that students are beginning to think critically by looking at issues that pertain to them. It appeared that these students lack the foundation to divulge more deeply into critical thinking. Teachers who use critical thinking along with student-centered activities will in turn help students with their comprehension (Langer, 2001). With teachers' guidance, students will be able to use their prior knowledge to engage in topics known to them and eventually topics that are new to them. In turn, using young adult literature with a critical eye in the social studies classroom will expose students to stereotypes they might have, similar to the students in the study conducted by Hall & Piazza (2008). There are many controversial issues discussed inside the social studies classroom that, when paired with a young adult novel, will help students to see how this information affects their life as well as others.

In comparison with the study conducted by Hall & Piazza (2008), Tighe (1998) also wanted to see if morals could be taught critically by using young adult literature. Tighe (1998) gave eleventh grade high school students and pre-service teachers two young adult novels to read and react critically to determine if these novels should be taught within the classroom. Right away the high school students agreed that the novels should be required reading because they dealt with issues that high school students needed to address. While the pre-service teachers could relate to the characters, they were reluctant at first to use these novels in the classroom due to the issues within the novels. Through discussions however, both the high school students and the pre-service teachers began to realize that the high school students did better at recognizing moral issues through the characters they read because they could relate to them. The high school students also began to think critically as to why the world is the way it is and how they could help (Tighe, 1998). By incorporating young adult literature into the social studies classroom,

students will better be able to view social injustices and begin to think about social change through the characters they read.

Using young adult literature can allow students to begin connecting what they read in novels to real world events. Groenke, Maples, and Henderson (2010) state they use young adult literature in the classroom as a bridge to discuss controversial issues with their students. By using young adult novels in the classroom, students now have a forum to discuss these issues with their peers and teachers while at the same time teaching students how to articulate their opinions and being respectful of others viewpoints (Groenke, Maples, & Henderson, 2010). Racism is covered quite frequently in the social studies classroom and a highly controversial issue.

Groenke, Maples, and Henderson (2010) demonstrate how using the young adult novel *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers (2001) can enable students to begin making these connections to the real world pertaining to racism. *Monster* follows a sixteen year old African Male named Steve Harmon. He is a film major in high school who now finds himself awaiting trial because he is accused of being a lookout for a robbery. While Steve is in jail, he questions why he was involved in this crime; was it to prove himself to the other criminals in his Harlem neighborhood who felt he was not capable of committing a crime or did he even have to prove anything? After all classroom activities related to critical literacy, Groenke, Maples and Henderson (2010) noticed students began questioning local news stories students felt were racist. This evidence demonstrates that while it is in the beginning stages, critical literacy enabled students to begin thinking and questioning the injustices around them (Groenke, Maples, & Henderson, 2010).

Maples and Groenke (2009) wanted to utilize critical literacy with a young adult novel to discuss immigration and what it means to be American. In her classroom in the southeastern United States, Maples and Groenke (2009) noticed an influx in derogatory statements from her Caucasian students to her students of other ethnicities. To discuss this controversial issue of immigration within the classroom, Maples and Groenke (2009) decided to utilize Paul Fleischman's (1997) young adult novel *Seedfolks*. *Seedfolks* is written from thirteen different point of views of people from different ethnicities, races, social economic classes, etc., who all live in the same apartment building. Each point of view openly discusses their biases and stereotypes about the others who live in the apartment building. To begin the unit, Maples and Groenke (2009) wanted an activity to get the students talking about immigration. The authors created the 'Who Is an American' activity.

The 'Who Is an American' activity consists of six different profiles of people who are natural born citizens, legal immigrants, illegal immigrants and of all different races, ethnicities and social economic status in America. Students were required to read all six profiles, then grouped into teams of four, discuss what they read and then rank the profiles from most American to least American on a continuum (Maples & Groenke, 2009). When students shared out where they ranked each profile, conversation became heated. For example, one of the profiles was about a natural born citizen turned home grown terrorist. Students began to question the notion that being a natural born citizen does not necessarily make you American and at the end of presenting what they believed, most students placed the immigrant profiles as most American (Maples & Groenke, 2009). Although this was a pre-unit activity, it utilizes the core of what critical literacy is. Students were asked to question something that was considered social

acceptable and in turn search for what it means to be American, challenge sociopolitical issues in how to become a citizen and understanding multiple point of views.

Critical Literacy in Social Studies

Humans need to be critical thinkers in order to be effective citizens. The main tenets within the social studies classroom are citizenship, civics, and culture. Therefore, students need to be taught to question information presented to make a more informed decision (Hynd, 1999; Wolf, 2003). However, social studies textbooks do not provide students these opportunities, thus making students see social studies as an ‘objective truth’ (Hynd, 1999; Wineburg, 1991; Wineburg & Schneider, 2009/2010; Booth, 1994). Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy provides structure and a basis for teachers; it doesn’t fit perfectly within the social studies classroom (Wineburg & Schneider, 2009). Wineburg and Schneider (2009) argue that knowledge should not be at the bottom of the taxonomy. For history students, knowledge should be the highest aim. Students need to engage in the other levels of Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy in order to gain true knowledge in historical content (Wineburg & Schneider, 2009).

By incorporating multiple texts within the social studies classroom could enable students to begin thinking critically. Wineburg (1991) examined the differences in how a high school social studies classes are taught versus history courses in a college setting. High school classes are taught using one textbook to tell a narrative version of history whereas college courses require multiple readings and connections. When asked, professors stated college courses are taught this way to help students learn the historian discourse. In high school, history is taught as a narrative so it is easier for students to accept the information; however, the information presented is written from the dominant point of view and may or may not be biased (Hynd, 1999; Wineburg, 1991; Wineburg & Schneider, 2009/2010; Booth, 1994; Wolk, 2003; Beck, 2005). It

is important as educators to pick multiple sources as well as sociocultural novels within the classroom for students to examine to come up with their own findings.

Similar to the study conducted by Wineburg (1991), Hynd (1999) gave three different texts about Christopher Columbus to a ninth grade advanced placement history class, three different texts regarding the Gulf of Tonkin Incident to a tenth grade advanced placement class, and all six documents to history undergraduate students at a nearby college. When the ninth graders examined the articles regarding Christopher Columbus without explicit instruction, students were able to see the articles as arguments either in favor or not in favor of Columbus. Students began using their prior knowledge to begin basic questioning about the documents in front of them. When the tenth graders examined the multiple documents regarding the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, students did not examine these documents critically and instead just gave an overview of what they read. However, when undergraduate students examined all documents, they began to question right away the author's intent, when the document was written, why might it be written, the historical significance of the document, etc. The high school students were unable to think outside of what was provided for them whereas the college students questioned the documents right from the beginning (Hynd, 1999). By implementing a critical stance within the classroom and using multiple sources will enable students to begin making higher level comprehension connections.

On the other hand, Booth (1994) wanted to measure if students had the capacity and ability to use historical sources, understand the historical concepts and then see how in turn their attitude toward history and racial groups within the curriculum had changed. The students were provided with primary photos and documents and were required to group them in any way. Taking 53 students ages fourteen and older, Booth (1994) compared these students to a control

group of students comparable in age. The students provided with the primary source documents either grouped on what they were currently learning or grouped based on a common theme (Booth, 1994). Booth (1994) found the students who were presented with multiple texts comprehended the social studies content significantly better based on the end of the year exams than the students who were taught history as a continuous story and not presented with multiple materials. Therefore, students do better when information is taught critically with multiple historical documents.

Due to the difference in how the history curriculum is taught could be the reason behind different interpretations (Wineburg, 1991). College students are trained to look at documents and history as a historian would. Historians use their prior knowledge to question what was taking place during a specific time period to better understand the motive behind a primary document. High school students are taught history as a narrative, prohibiting them from being able to make connections to primary documents or to current events (Wineburg, 1991; Booth, 1994; Wineburg & Schneider 1994). Eckert (2008) states there is a disconnect between teaching history in high school versus college, causing students to be unprepared. Students should be exposed in high school and college professors should continue to use critical literacy within the classroom (Eckert, 2008). By providing students the opportunity to engage with the social studies content by building off their background knowledge will enable them to begin seeing the world in a critical way.

In information gained from Gardner and Smith's (1987) study demonstrates the need for textbook writers and teachers to provide characters which students can closely relate to. By incorporating young adult literature in the social studies classroom, students will be better able to relate to characters close in age versus a biography of a significant historical figure, for example.

Professors expect students to engage with texts critically whereas in high school teachers are more focused on the actual reading and decoding of the textbook. By utilizing a critical stance in high school, students will be better prepared for college.

Conclusion

Comprehension is the major tenet within the social studies classroom; therefore, teachers need to find ways to engage students with activities to aid in comprehension abilities. One way to implement this is by utilizing critical literacy and young adult novels in the social studies classroom. The research obtained for this literature review demonstrated that incorporating critical literacy and young adult literature in the social studies classroom can aid in comprehension and critical thinking.

Critical literacy enables students to question the distribution of power within society and how to bring equality into the world. Based on the initial work of Freire (1972), critical literacy has caused much debate whether or not to use it in the classroom. Lewison, Flint, and VanSluys (2002) created the four dimensions of critical literacy which summarizes over thirty years of research to help students and teachers to better understand critical literacy and implement it into the classroom. Critical literacy is a student-centered type of instruction that allows students to have a voice in the classroom. Those against the notion of critical literacy in the classroom state conversations can become heated and it challenges the status quo of the school system. Those in favor of using critical literacy in the classroom state that students will be better capable of internalizing the information due to the in-depth analysis nature of critical literacy and in turn will become better students and citizens. In studies conducted by Groenke, Maples, and Henderson (2010) as well as Groenke and Maples (2009), it was evident that students who

engaged in critical literacy activities began to question the world around them and were beginning to bring about change through the young adult literature they read in class.

Although young adult literature made its appearance in the fifties, it is now beginning to become socially acceptable in the classroom. Prior the nineties, young adult literature was seen as not real books, but adolescents enjoy reading young adult literature because it is fast paced, concentrates on real world issues and has protagonists around the same age as the reader (Owen, 2003). Many young adult novels have many of the same themes; therefore, teachers should allow students to pick a novel they have interest in rather than requiring them to read something they do not.

In order to be effective citizens humans need to be critical thinkers. However, social studies textbooks do not provide students these opportunities to engage critically with the information. Therefore, by allowing students multiple sources and young adult novels, students will be able to begin questioning the social studies content. Wineburg (1991) found that in high school students are taught social studies as a narrative instead of being offered multiple sources and thinking critically about those sources, similar to how history courses are taught in college. By implementing a critical stance in the social studies classroom and using multiple sources will enable students to begin making higher level critical comprehension connections.

Methods

Context

The location of this study took place at the college I attend in Upstate New York. As a requirement for my Masters degree, I tutored two students who will be the participants in this study. The tutoring sessions were held one day a week. The students who attend this literacy

tutoring program are struggling readers or writers. Students are referred by teachers or parents to attend for extra help. Students who are accepted are then grouped by grade level and placed in a classroom with their tutor. In the classroom I worked in for this literacy program, there are six students and four tutors. Two of the tutors, me included, worked with two students each.

Throughout the two hours we were all together, most of the time the room was quiet. However, occasionally the room did get loud, making it difficult for my students to focus on learning. To limit this, the desks were grouped into the four corners of the room so each tutor and their student or students had their own working station. Tutors were also required to create a tri-fold poster to use as a separator from the other groups, as well as having information on the board pertaining to literacy; specifically in reading, writing, and word study.

Participants

Student 1. Michael (a pseudonym) is a fourteen year old male and lives in a suburb in Upstate New York. He lives with his mother, father and younger sister in a house located in a quiet neighborhood where he is a tenth grader at the high school. Michael is of Muslim descent. His parents moved to the United States before he was born. Michael likes to read, but often struggles with reading comprehension. He is enrolled in the tutoring program to help improve his reading and comprehension abilities. Michael does very well in school and his favorite subjects are science and social studies. He is very easy-going and willing to try new activities. In his free time, Michael likes to play video games, hang out with friends and play sports. He is very energetic and quite frequently participates in extra-curricular activities outside of school. Michael is very eager to participate in the small-group setting.

Upon meeting Michael, I administered the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Reading Assessment (2010) to gain insight as to the type of reader he is. I administered the final three

Benchmark assessments, x-z. Beginning with a level x fiction text, I soon learned this selection was very easy for him to navigate through. With 99 percent accuracy and a satisfactory level of comprehension, a level x is his independent level. The next level, y, Michael again exhibited a 99 percent accuracy rate and a satisfactory comprehension level, making a level y also his independent level. Lastly, the administrator completed the Benchmark Assessment with a level z text. Again, he achieved a 99 percent accuracy rate and a satisfactory level of comprehension, making this also his independent level. For all three assessments he did receive a two out of three for fluency. The information obtained from this assessment allows me to see that with Michael's high level of sight words allow him to read with a high accuracy rating. He also uses many context clues and visual cues to help him decode unknown words which allow him to be great at self-correcting miscues. As far as comprehension, Michael has exceptional basic comprehension skills to which he can discuss every little detail. However, while he is in the beginning stages of higher level comprehension, he lacks the tools needed to engage fully with the text from a critical stance. While Michael is somewhat fluent as he reads, when reading out loud his sentences are still somewhat choppy.

Student 2. Kyle (a pseudonym) is a thirteen year old African-American male who lives in an urban area of Upstate New York with his mother, father and younger sister. His house is located within the city school district and he attends a K-8 school. Kyle is very vocal and loves to talk. He is very creative, but often finds himself off task. However, he is very eager to participate within the small group and likes a challenge. Kyle is easy-going and willing to try anything once. He does not like to read, but is aware of some of the strategies good readers use while reading. He is also enrolled in the tutoring program at the college I attend to enhance his reading comprehension and to become a better reader. Kyle is an average student whose favorite

subject is social studies. Outside of school, he likes to hang out with friends and play video games.

Upon meeting Kyle, I also administered the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Reading Assessment (2010) to him to gain insight as to the type of reader he is. I administered three Benchmark assessments, w-y. Beginning with a level w fiction text, I soon learned this selection was somewhat easy for him to navigate through. With 97 percent accuracy and a satisfactory level of comprehension, a level w is his instructional level. This level is his instructional level due to the accuracy rate being below a 98 percent. The next level, x, he exhibited a 99 percent accuracy rate and a satisfactory comprehension level, making a level x his independent level. Lastly, I completed the Benchmark Assessment with a level y text. Kyle achieved a 97 accuracy rate and a limited level of comprehension, making this his frustrational level. For all three assessments he did receive a one out of three for fluency. The information obtained from this assessment allows me to see that his high level of sight words allow him to read with a high accuracy rating and uses many context clues and visual cues to help him decode unknown words. Also, Kyle has exceptional basic comprehension skills to which he can discuss every little detail. He has stated that he knows what ‘good readers’ do and tries to incorporate these strategies as he reads. However, Kyle is in the beginning stages of higher level comprehension, he lacks the tools needed to engage fully with the text and examine it critically. Also, when reading out loud his sentences are still somewhat choppy.

Researcher Stance

I currently hold my Bachelor’s degree in Secondary Education and History and am a New York State certified teacher for grades 5-12 in social studies. Due to the fact that I will be working with Michael and Kyle in small group, I will be an active participant observer. Mills

(2011) defines this role as a teacher who is engaged in the activities while at the same time observes the activities, the people and the physical aspects. I will be actively monitoring the effects of my teaching based on student interaction and performance and will adjust my instruction accordingly (Mills, 2011).

Method

I observed for two hours every Tuesday for ten weeks in a small group format. To implement this study, I used a young adult novel to work through the four dimensions of critical literacy. *Hero Type* by Barry Lyga (2010), a young adult novel, focuses on current events and issues pertaining specifically to the war in Iraq and what it means to be an American and patriotic. I created lessons per each critical literacy dimension that align with *Hero Type* (2010) and the social studies curriculum (Appendix B). These lessons were designed to encourage Michael and Kyle to think critically and begin questioning the world around them. During this study, I observed whether or not students can effectively work through the four dimensions of critical literacy in a social studies setting by utilizing young adult literature. I wanted to see if utilizing critical literacy and young adult literature in the social studies classroom will aid in comprehension skills. To assess this, I used the Four Dimensions Framework which includes questions per each dimension for Data Analysis of Michael's and Kyle's student work.

To implement this study, I utilized the four dimensions of critical literacy created by Lewison, Flint and VanSluys (2002) (Appendix A). Lewison, Flint and VanSluys (2002) summarized over forty years of research into creating the four dimensions of critical literacy. While there are many different frameworks and ways of teaching and assessing students in critical literacy, I felt the four dimensions provided a better guide and building block for beginning teachers to critical literacy. The four dimensions provide beginning teachers with

helpful reminders and discussion prompts at a glance. Also, the four dimensions can double as an outline for teachers to use throughout a unit or the school year.

In the first dimension, *Disrupting the Common Place*, students will examine how the media can shape or influence the masses. Students read an article discussing what mass media is along with its' pros and cons. Students then used the Frayer vocabulary model (Appendix C) to examine the meaning of Mass Media, and create their own pros and cons list. The Frayer vocabulary model is a graphic organizer that allows students to examine a vocabulary word or concept more in depth. The graphic organizer contains four areas for students to fill out: the definition of word or concept, the characteristics of word or concept, examples of the word or concept and non-examples of the word or concept. The Frayer vocabulary model is effective for students because it allows them to see what a word or concept is and what it is not. Once finished, students then answered the essential question, how does/can the media shape the way people think, and will also complete a reader response question pertaining to *Hero Type* (2010) which asks students if there was ever a time in their life when someone influenced you to do something, what was it, how did it make you feel and what did you do about it. Second, students then examined what it means to be an American. Michael and Kyle used the Frayer vocabulary model to examine what Patriotic and Terrorism mean and then completed the Who is an American activity (Appendix D). Created by Groenke and Maples (2009), I wanted to re-create this activity with my students to challenge them with critical questions as well as make them aware of their own biases. The 'What is an American' activity allows students to question what it means to be American today. Michael and Kyle read six profiles of people who consider them to be American and then rank each profile by who is most or least American based on their own personal beliefs. The six profiles include two natural born citizens who are both in the United

States military standing up for their beliefs by protesting or killing innocent American lives.

Three people are immigrants who have created the American dream for themselves but cannot become citizens due to financial hardships or lack of paperwork and one person who became an American citizen for his job but has found it difficult to acclimate into American culture so in turn moved to Chinatown and created a life in America utilizing his Chinese heritage. After Michael and Kyle have ranked each profile, they discussed and challenged each other as to why they placed each profile on the most American to least American continuum. To sum up, students then answered the essential question, what does it mean to be American and answer a reader response question which asks students to relate this activity to *Hero Type* (2010). The reader response question asks students to think about how the town feels when Kevin, the main character, is unpatriotic when he removes his support the troops sticker from his car, making Kevin seem unpatriotic and a questionable act. Michael and Kyle were then asked if there was ever a time in their life that they did something that people could consider to be a questionable act, how did it make you feel and what did you do about it?

For the second dimension, Interrogating Multiple View Points, students examined the idea that certain groups are often silenced. Students examined how a situation within a text could have been different if written from another characters point of view. Students chose a scene from *Hero Type* (2010) and then rewrote the scene from another characters point of view. To complete this assignment, Michael and Kyle brainstormed the needs and concerns of their character by completing the Thinking From Another Perspective worksheet (Appendix E). The Thinking From Another Perspective worksheet contains five sections students are required to fill out to help them think from another's point of view. The first thing they will fill out is the characters name and that characters needs and concerns to help them understand how this character might

think and what they care about. In the next section of the worksheet, Michael and Kyle will have to provide proof from the text and explain how the text made them decide on the characters needs and concerns. After the four sections are completed, a short summary is written on the bottom of the worksheet based on all of the information obtained. Once completed, Michael and Kyle created a Facebook page for their character of their choice, and retold the event using Facebook statuses. Michael and Kyle then looked at how authors or the media can silence certain people, whether or not it is intentional and what can be done about it.

The third dimension which looks at and deals with Sociopolitical issues. This dimension had students challenge unequal power and attempts to understand the sociopolitical systems to which they belong to. Also included in this dimension will allow students to participate in society for cultural citizenship and an ongoing act of consciousness and resistance (Lewison, Flint & VanSluys, 2002). For this dimension, Michael and Kyle examined the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights and discussed how different our country and society could have been if these essential documents had been written from a different point of view. They first activated prior knowledge about the time period and discussed the government during the eighteen century. Also utilizing what students have examined through other critical literacy dimensions will question the agenda of the founding authors of these documents. Students then considered different races, ethnicities, social economic status, gender, etc. and then re-wrote the Bill of Rights based on the perspective they chose to represent historical context and significance and how power may or may not have shifted due to these documents having been written from a different point of view. Once finished, Michael and Kyle completed a ticket out of the door. A ticket out of the door can consist of questions which students are required to answer before leaving class as a way to sum up what was done that day for closure. Michael and Kyle's ticket

out of the door included the following questions: how different may society have been if the constitution and Bill of Rights were written from another point of view, now that you've examined how material can be manipulated to represent the authors agenda, what can you as a student and citizen do to make sure the information you obtain is accurate and was there ever a time that you manipulated a situation to benefit yourself, how did it make you feel and what did you do about it?

The fourth dimension, Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice, encourages students to reflect how to bring action upon the world in order to transform it. Students should also examine how language can affect the status quo to keep dominant groups in control. Lastly, how language can be used to enhance life and question practices of privilege and injustices (Lewison, Flint & VanSluys, 2002). There are a lot of controversial issues within *Hero Type* (2010) that can affect the lives of everyone. For example, the main character in *Hero Type* (2010) looks into the ideas of freedom. Michael and Kyle completed an I-search project about a controversial issue, the burning of the American flag. An I-search project allows a student to investigate a topic of their choice in depth and delivering a multimodal presentation. The presentation should include technology in some way. Students researched about the ethics of burning the American flag. Students then were required to find articles to support both sides of their argument then complete a 2-3 page response.

To ensure that Michael and Kyle are fulfilling the notion of critical literacy, I constantly observed either through discussions or through their written work. I wanted to see if utilizing critical literacy and young adult literature in the social studies classroom would aid in comprehension skills. To assess this, I will use the Four Dimensions Framework which includes questions per each dimension for Data Analysis of Michael's and Kyle's student work.

Quality and Credibility of Research

While conducting this study, it is important to ensure quality and credibility of the research at all times. As defined by Mills (2011) credibility is the researcher's ability to take into account the complexities that can occur in a study and the researcher to react to patterns that are not easily explained. To ensure credibility to the research, I will constantly observe Michael and Kyle. Sometimes data or research can be overlooked because the researcher knows what is expected. To also ensure credibility I will debrief with a peer about the study. A different pair of eyes can detect these problems as well as offer new insight to analyzing the data. Lastly, I will use triangulation in how I obtain my data. According to Mills (2011) triangulation is the notion of using multiple data sources and methods to see if any of the findings from the research overlaps. I will collect different types of data. I will observe daily and take field notes. I will also be informally interviewing each student, in an effort to see how well these strategies are working to improve Michael and Kyle's higher level comprehension. Lastly, I will collect Michael and Kyle's work and compare if each of them were able to achieve higher level comprehension using the four dimensions of critical literacy by utilizing young adult literature combined with social studies content.

To ensure transferability, which is defined as the researcher's belief everything is context bound and obtaining detailed and descriptive data that cannot be generalized (Mills, 2011). I will include detailed information so the reader can envision themselves in study, allowing the reader to make comparisons between contexts and relate it to the readers own circumstances. Mills (2011) claims dependability pertains to the stability of the data collected. To ensure my study includes dependability I will leave an audit trail. I will include all of my lessons and activities in the appendices to allow anyone to recreate this study. Lastly, my study should include

confirmability, which Mills (2011) states are how neutral the study is and how objective the study is. To make sure my study has confirmability, I will practice triangulation in the way I collect the data. By having triangulation, it will ensure that a weakness in one area of data collection is compensated as strength in another. Also, I will admit my biases and underlying assumptions of this study (Mills, 2011). I will keep a reflective journal throughout this process to enhance my research, my research question and to create new questions.

Informed Consent and Protecting the Right of Participants

Both students participating in this study have completed an assent form and a parent or guardian was asked to sign a consent form to protect their rights as participants of this study. This study is a qualitative study and I will work in a small group with Michael and Kyle. The consent forms discussed the purpose of this study, how it can affect future students and that there is no harm to the students participating. I informed participants in the letter of consent and assent that all names will be anonymous, pseudonyms have been used and all identifiable marks will be removed from student work. Also, any participant can opt out of the study at any time.

Data Collection

To collect data throughout this study, I will actively observe each time I meet with Michael and Kyle. While I observe, I will be taking field notes and after each meeting I will reflect in my journal if the lesson went as planned, what I could have done differently, what worked, etc. After each meeting, I will also informally interview both Michael and Kyle to see what worked for them and what didn't. Also, I will ask them how they feel the lessons are going, what they are learning, what could be more conducive to their learning, etc. Lastly, I will analyze all of their student work as an artifact. After completion of each dimension, I will use the Four Dimensions Framework Questions for Data Analysis to determine if Michael and Kyle have

achieved the notion of critical literacy with the lessons created for them. By utilizing the Four Dimensions Framework Questions will also allow me to determine how well they are internalizing the information by how they respond to the questions given to them.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, I thoroughly examined and coded their student work to find similarities, discrepancies and common themes within critical literacy. To present the data, it seemed most logical to utilize each of the four dimensions of critical literacy as themes. I chose these as themes because they are clearly defined and broken down into topics manageable to analyze the data. Table 1 showcases the four dimensions framework: questions for data analysis. The four dimensions framework model was used in analyzing the student work because it clearly states what needed to be provided in order for students to engage in critical literacy. The four dimensions framework was used as a checklist to guarantee the lessons created fit the guidelines of critical literacy.

Table 1 Analysis checklist	
Four Dimensions Framework: Questions for Data Analysis	
Disrupting the Commonplace	Do participants question everyday way of seeing? Do participants use language and other sign systems to interrogate “how it is”? Does activity question textual intentions or consumer positioning by exploring underlying messages and/or histories that inform constructed meanings?
Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints	Do participants consider alternative ways of seeing, telling, or constructing a given event or issue? Does activity involve attending to, seeking out, and/or considering silenced or

	<p>marginalized voices?</p> <p>Does activity involve examining competing narratives or producing counternarratives?</p> <p>Do participants engage in activity that foregrounds difference?</p>
Sociopolitical Issues	<p>Does activity move beyond the personal and attempt to understand relationships between personal experience and larger cultural stories or systems?</p> <p>Do participants challenge power relationships and/or study the relationships between language and power?</p> <p>Does activity include or create opportunities for subordinate group(s) participation?</p>
Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice	<p>Does activity involve rewriting, redesigning, or the taking on of new positions?</p> <p>Do participants move from spectator roles to actor roles?</p> <p>Does activity involve ongoing accessing and using language or image to change existing discourses?</p> <p>Are participants crossing borders and creating new borderlands that welcome and build on rich cultural resources?</p>

(Lewison, Flint & VanSluys, 2002).

Findings and Discussion

Lewison, Flint & VanSluys (2002) summarized all of the information they obtained during their research regarding critical literacy and created the four dimensions of critical literacy. The four dimensions include disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues and taking action to promote social justice. I chose to use the four dimensions as themes of my research because the four dimensions are clearly defined and broken down into topics manageable for teachers and students to implement critical literacy in the classroom. In regards to critical literacy, there is no right or wrong answer; it is strictly open to interpretation, allowing an open forum for discussion and interaction in the classroom. It encourages students to challenge social norms and bring about change. Although

each student was able to achieve critical literacy for each dimension, each achieved it in different ways. Due to their ages, educational backgrounds and personal experiences affected how each of them interpreted critical literacy in the social studies classroom.


Disrupting the Commonplace

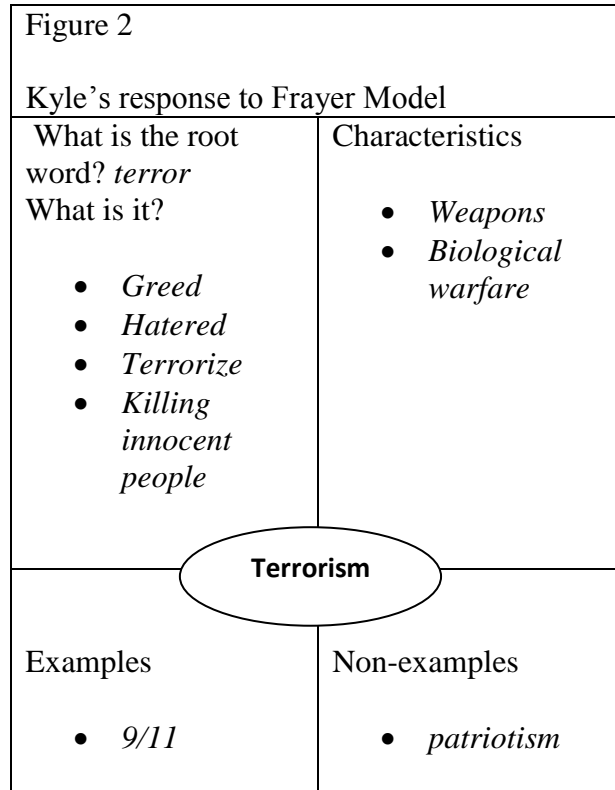
The first dimension of critical literacy, disrupting the common place, encourages students to use existing knowledge as a historical product and question how a particular text is trying to position them. For example, ulterior motives of the author, prejudices, bias by the media, etc. Specifically when examining pop culture and the media, students are encouraged to analyze how language is used to shape identity, construct cultural discourses and supports or disrupts the status quo (Table 2).

Table 2	
First Dimension Characteristics	
Dimension	Characteristics
Disrupting the Commonplace	<p>Problematizing all subjects of study (including adolescence, learning), and understanding existing knowledge as a historical product</p> <p>Interrogating texts: “How is this text trying to position me?”</p> <p>Including popular culture and media as a regular part of the curriculum</p> <p>Studying language to analyze how it shapes identity, constructs cultural discourses, and supports or disrupts the status quo</p>

To encourage Michael and Kyle to begin thinking critically, I created lessons based on the four dimensions of critical literacy. The first dimension, disrupting the commonplace, I wanted to pick activities that would activate prior knowledge and also encourage them to begin

questioning the world around them. First, I choose three important vocabulary words and/or ideas found throughout *Hero Type* (Lyga, 2010). These three ideas include mass media, patriotism and terrorism. Before beginning the activities, I wanted to make sure each student had a clear understanding of each vocabulary term. I hoped that by including this activity Michael and Kyle would have a clear understanding of these terms. I utilized the Frayer model (Appendix C) to examine these three important vocabulary words and/or ideas because this model allows students to clearly define the term, discuss characteristics of the term, and provide examples and non-examples. In analyzing the Frayer models, it is evident that both Michael (Figure 1) and Kyle (Figure 2) were familiar with the definition of these terms or ideas.

Figure 1	
Michael's response to Frayer Model	
What is the root word? <i>patriot</i> What is it? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Loyal to your country</i> • <i>Supporting your president</i> 	Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Voting</i> • <i>Flag</i> • <i>Taking part in government activities</i>
	
Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Soldiers</i> • <i>Buying American made</i> 	Non-examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>terrorism</i>



They proved this by differentiating between examples and non-examples that represent each concept. I allowed them to work as a group in answering these terms because if there were any confusion I wanted them to be able to help each other achieve the answers. However, by allowing them to work together did not allow me to and assess what they knew individually. Also, their answers may have been different had they worked by themselves. Since the media is a huge component of the first dimension, I wanted to make sure that both Michael and Kyle understood how it could be biased and were asked to answer two questions pertaining to the notion of mass media (Table 3).

Table 3	
Questions pertaining to mass media	
Michael	Kyle
How does/can the media shape the way people think and why? Children vs. Adults?	How does/can the media shape the way people think and why? Children vs. Adults?
<i>It tells them what it happens and it informs what you think on a topic. Children will automatically believe what they heard on it, but adults will stick to there facts and opinions</i>	<i>Yes because it sometimes lie and have different things showing. It effects Children by weather and adults by seeing what happened</i>
Why is this important to know when reading an article? Researching for a paper? Etc.	Why is this important to know when reading an article? Researching for a paper? Etc.
<i>When you read articles you read many others on the same subject so you know that the stuff you read is reliable.</i>	<i>Because you don't want to be stuck in the rain and you want to see who's on the news.</i>

By examining their responses, it appears Michael is beginning to utilize critical literacy by disrupting the common place. Michael sees that the media can be biased based on its intended audience when he states that “children will automatically believe what they heard on it, but adults will stick to there facts and opinions.” Michael is questioning how the media is trying to position people rather than following the norm and accepting the data as true. Kyle on the other hand appears to believe that “it effects children by weather and adults by seeing what happened.” Kyle responded with a literal response rather than an inferential response. He is not questioning the source or their intentions; he’s strictly taking the information verbatim and accepting it as absolute fact. Analyzing how each student responded to the questions demonstrates where each student falls within the comprehension stage and whether or not they’ve reached a higher level, using critical literacy. One important fact to mention which could explain the difference in use of critical literacy between the two students is the 2 year age difference, Kyle being the younger.

The difference in the quality of education between the two students could also play a role in Michael's greater ability to utilize critical literacy.

Continuing through the first dimension, Michael and Kyle then participated in the 'What is an American' activity. The 'What is an American' activity is set up to disrupt the commonplace by challenging a person's own beliefs and also challenging those of the status quo. I included this activity created by Maples and Groenke (2009) because I felt this would be a good test to see where Michael and Kyle fell in participating with critical literacy. I hoped that their answers would be varied so that both the students would have to discuss, defend their answers and also challenge each other. The 'What is an American' activity allows students to question what it means to be American today. Michael and Kyle read six profiles of people who consider themselves to be American and then rank each profile by who is most or least American based on their own personal beliefs. The six profiles include two natural born citizens who are both in the United States military standing up for their beliefs by protesting or killing innocent American lives. Three people are immigrants who have created the American dream for themselves but cannot become citizens due to financial hardships or lack of paperwork and one person who became an American citizen for his job but has found it difficult to acclimate into American culture so in turn moved to Chinatown and created a life in America utilizing his Chinese heritage. After Michael and Kyle have ranked each profile, they will discuss and challenge each other as to why they placed each profile on the most American to least American continuum. (Table 4).

Table 4	
Continuum of most to least American	
Michael	Kyle
<u>Most American</u>	<u>Most American</u>
-Matt	-Matt
-Monica	-Monica
-John	-Maria
-Mario	-LiMingshe
-LiMingshe	-Mario
-Maria	-John
<u>Least American</u>	<u>Least American</u>

After the students ranked each profile, Michael and Kyle then discussed why they placed each profile where they did. Michael was very adamant about his placement of the profiles based on whether or not the character exhibited behaviors associated with ‘being American’. “The characters tried to stand up for what they believed in even if it were considered wrong, tried to achieve the most they could and who tried to better themselves” (Discussion, Sept. 27, 2011). Michael described these behaviors as living the ‘American Dream.’ Michael challenged the status quo by placing the profiles in the order in which he personally felt was most accurate by his standards, rather than placing them in an order which might be more socially acceptable or agreed upon. Kyle on the other hand was very literal when it came to this activity. While Kyle stated that “you do not have to be born in America to be considered American”, he did feel that “to be considered American the person has to do well and try their best regardless of their age or ethnicity” (Discussion, Sept. 27, 2011). The response that Kyle shares represents more of what would be considered socially acceptable by the majority.

Maples and Groenke (2009) found when incorporating this activity into the classroom that their students began to question the notion that of being a natural born citizen does not

necessarily make someone American. Once their students presented how they ranked the profiles, most students placed the immigrant profiles as most American (Maples & Groenke, 2009). Similar to these findings, Michael was more concerned about the characteristics a person possesses rather than being a natural born citizen based on his rankings of the profiles (Table 4). Similar to Michael, it appears that Kyle also believes that the traits a person possesses are more important than their birthright.

Throughout the latter discussion about their rankings, each of the students wanted to discuss how and why they placed the profiles the way they did (Table 5). The table is broken down line by line and also states on the right whether or not each of them is disrupting the commonplace (DTCP). Michael challenged Kyle as to why he placed the profiles in the order that he did on the continuum by asking him in line 1 “why would you rank Maria third? What did she do that was patriotic?” (Table 5).

Conversation about the ranking of Maria		
<i>Line</i>		<i>Crit.Lit?</i>
1	Michael: Why would you rank Maria third? What did she do that was patriotic?	DTCP
2	Kyle: At least she came here to try to get-	
3	M: Same with Li, same with Mario, John was in America and in the army, Maria just came here and was supported by her Aunts and Uncles	DTCP
4	K: Good point. But at least she had gotten away from her bad government	DTCP
5	M: Same with Li, China is a communist country-	
6	K: But-	
7	M: That's a bad government too.	

Maria was a small child that fled Cuba to come to America with her mother, but on the trip overseas her mother died, leaving Maria to be taken care of by her aunts and uncles living in the United States. In line 1, Michael pushes Kyle to examine why Maria would be so high on his list

for being most American by stating “Why would you rank Maria third? What did she do that was patriotic?” When Michael states this, he is disrupting the commonplace. He is doing this by utilizing one of the key terms from the previous activity and is questioning Kyle as to why he ranked Maria third. While Kyle tries to answer Michael’s question in line 2 by stating “at least she came here to try to get-“, Michael jumps in again in line 3 by stating “same with Li, same with Mario, John was in America and in the army, Maria just came here and was supported by her Aunts and Uncles.” Not sure of how to answer, Kyle begins to back up his thoughts with the text stating in line 4 “good point, but at least she had gotten away from her bad government.” Michael responds to Kyle in line 5 “Same with Li, China is a community country-.” Kyle tries to respond back in line 6 by stating “But” however Michael doesn’t let him finish. Instead Michael states in line 7 “That’s a bad government too.”

Michael engages in critical literacy by questioning how Maria could be considered American due to her age and also her excuse of leaving due to a bad government. Building on his prior knowledge, Michael is able to compare her story and her excuse of a bad government by speaking out against it. He is defying social norms by not just accepting Kyle’s answer and instead challenges Kyle by discussing how other countries also have bad governments when he states “China is a communist country... that’s a bad government too.” (Discussion, Sept. 27, 2011).

Prior to this discussion, Kyle was still very literal and not thinking about the whole picture. By have each of them discuss this topic together, Michael challenged Kyle to think outside of what he knew and how it applied to the other profiles they both read. Michael was disrupting the common place by discussing the reasons that Maria left her home country. Instead of just taking the fact that her government was bad, he’s bringing in his external knowledge that

other countries may not have perfect governments either and that that is not a reason to flee. He is questioning the author's position on this writing and not just taking it at face value. Kyle instead does not question her motive for fleeing and accepts her reasoning.

The one profile that brought about the most controversy between Michael and Kyle was named John. This profile mirrored the life of Timothy McVay, mastermind behind the Oklahoma City Bombings (Table 6).

Table 6

Excerpt of 'What is an American' activity

3. John

I was born in a rural area of New York, out in the "boondocks," as some people say. Growing up I liked to collect guns and practice shooting at cans and stuff around our yard. There weren't that many people around. I got pretty good at collecting guns and would go to gun shows to trade and sell them.

My family's Catholic. When I was 10, my parents split up and me and my two sisters went to live with my Dad. He had a steady job, working for General Motors building car engines.

I was a loner in high school (I didn't like school very much). After I graduated from high school, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I worked as a security guard for a while, but the pay wasn't that great and the hours were long. I eventually decided to go into the Army.

I loved the Army. I loved the discipline it required. I loved teaching people how to handle their guns, and I'd offer to clean guns for my fellow soldiers when we had to go up in front of our unit's lead officer. Our unit was stationed in Kuwait, during the Gulf War. I did so well as a soldier that I was awarded the Bronze Star Medal.

I must admit, there were some things about the Gulf War that bothered me. I didn't like attacking innocent civilians or Iraqi soldiers who were trying to surrender and give up. But we were told all Iraqis were the enemy. I just couldn't believe that, though, so I admit, I started having bad feelings toward the US government. I tell you what else bothered me. I didn't like the way those FBI agents went into that compound in Waco and killed all those people. Granted, they were after a cult, but they should have handled that differently.

Not too long ago, I started thinking of a way to get back at the US government. I made a bomb out of fertilizer and auto racing fuel and put it in the back of a Ryder truck. I drove the truck and parked it in front of a federal government building, just as its offices were opening for the day. I ignited the fuse and ran off before the bomb exploded. The bomb explosion killed 167 people, including innocent children (I didn't know there was a day care center in the building). 850 people were injured.

I am currently awaiting trial.

In this instance again both of the students wanted to discuss how and why they placed the profiles on their continuum. Michael utilizes the profiles to defend his answers yet Kyle is using background knowledge to support his beliefs (Table 7).

Conversation about the ranking of John		
<i>Line</i>		<i>Crit. Lit?</i>
1	Michael: Who'd you put for number six? The last one.	
2	Kyle: John	
3	M: Why?	DTCP
4	K: He blew up his own, uh, building	
5	M: Yeah but-	
6	K: How do you blow up your own building? I had to rank him number six.	
7	M: But, I mean, he was in the army. He didn't believe in what he was fighting for	DTCP
8	K: Ok-	
9	M: That's patriotic	
10	K: Even if you blew your own building up you wouldn't rank yourself number six?	
11	M: No because-	
12	K: Why?	
13	M: Why? Unlike the other people he actually went into the war. I don't see Li going into the war, or Mario or Maria	DTCP
14	K: But Li worked for Microsoft or Apple or some computer software, they use computers in war	DTCP
15	M: They don't use iPhones. What do you mean they use it[computers]? Show me in the text	
16	K: To speak to their moms	
17	M: Yeah they use computers, but how does that make them patriotic?	DTCP
18	K: So they can talk to their family. You want to make sure they're being patriotic.	DTCP
19	M: That doesn't make you patriotic. At least John went into the army. I don't see the others going into war	DTCP
20	K: Ok. The others were illegal immigrants	
21	M: I don't see Li going into the army	
22	K: He was probably too scared	
23	M: Ok then so if you're too scared that means your not patriotic	
	K: I'm scared about going into the army myself	
	M: I'm scared myself too but he went for his country. Who isn't scared?	

Michael begins the conversation in line 1 by asking Kyle “Who’d you put for number six? The last one.” Kyle responds in line 2 with “John.” Michael asks him “why” in line 3. In line 4 Kyle responds “He blew up his own, uh, building.” Michael tries to respond in line 5 with “yeah but” however he is cut off. Kyle states in line 6 “How do you blow up your own building? I had to rank him number six.” Michael responds with in line 7 “But, I mean, he was in the army. He didn’t believe in what he was fighting for.” Kyle tries to respond in line 8 with “ok” but Michael interrupts him and answers in line 9 with “that’s patriotic.” Kyle, unsatisfied, states in line 10 “even if you blew up your own building up you wouldn’t rank yourself number six?” Michael answers in line 11 by beginning to say “no, because” but is interrupted by Kyle asking him in line 12 “why?” Michael responds in line 13 by answering “why? Unlike the other people he actually went into the war. I don’t see Li going into the war, or Mario or Maria.” Kyle tries to defend his answers by stating in line 14 “But Li worked for Microsoft or Apple or some computer software, they use computers in war.” Michael responds in line 15 with “they don’t use iPhones. What do you mean they use it [computers]? Show me in the text.” After a few second pause, Kyle hesitantly responds with “to speak to their moms” in line 16. Giving Kyle some reassurance, Michael responds in line 17 with “Yeah they use computers, but how does that make them patriotic?” Very defensively Kyle states back to Michael in line 18 “So they can talk to their family. You want to make sure they’re being patriotic.” Michael responds with “that doesn’t make you patriotic. At least John went into the army. I don’t see the others going into war” in line 19. Kyle, very frustrated, responds in line 20 with “ok. The others were illegal immigrants.” In the profiles, LiMingshe is from China and obtains a job as a software engineer for Microsoft. Li becomes an American citizen but finds it difficult to acclimate to American culture, so he settles in Chinatown in New York City and opens his own Chinese grocery store.

Michael is expressing to Kyle that Li had become an American citizen and did not enter the American military. Michael, knowing that Li was a legal citizen, responds back to Kyle in line 21 with “I don’t see Li going into the army.” Kyle softly states in line 22 “he was probably too scared.” Michael states back in line 23 “ok then if you’re too scared that means your not patriotic.” Kyle answers in line 24 with “I’m scared about going into the army myself.” Michael finishes the discussion by stating in line 25 “I’m scared myself too but he went for his country. Who isn’t scared?”

It is evident from this conversation that Michael is disrupting the commonplace by questioning the social norm. He is clearly defying, with his responses, which not be commonly accepted by the majority. Michael pushes the social norm by defending John when he specifically states “But, I mean, he was in the army. He didn’t believe in what he was fighting for... That’s patriotic.” (Discussion, Sept. 27, 2011). The general public, familiar with Timothy McVay and the Oklahoma City Bombings would agree with Kyle and rank him number six due to the fact he killed innocent civilians. How Kyle responds to Michael’s statements demonstrates that Kyle is agreeing with how the majority would about the John profile. Kyle responds to Michael by saying “even if you blew your own building up you wouldn’t rank yourself number six?” (Discussion, Sept. 27, 2011). Kyle is not disrupting the commonplace because he is responding with how the majority would. He sees John as a terrorist and that is that and not analyzing the background to make John do what he did. He is not questioning how the profile was written or if it was written in a particular way to position him.

Michael and Kyle were able to address the topic either with using the profiles to support their answers, using their background knowledge or both. Beck (2005) stated that due to controversial issues critical literacy encompasses, at times strong, heated discussions will arise

but these discussions are relevant to students' lives and therefore should happen. It is evident that both students were engaged in a heated discussion, but if this conversation wouldn't have happened, both Michael and Kyle may not have been exposed to another point of view on this topic. By using this sociocultural relevant activity with each of them and having Michael and Kyle challenge each other and the status quo empowered them to become active citizens in society and allowed them to participate in what an actual democracy should be (Beck, 2005; Wolk, 2003).

After completion of all activities created for the first dimension, it is clear that Michael is utilizing the notion of critical literacy by questioning information given to him and not just accepting it at face value. He voices his opinion and goes against the societal norm. Kyle, however, has not begun to use critical literacy because he is still very literal when it comes to comprehension. He does not question the information presented to him and instead accepts it as fact.

Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints

The second dimension, interrogating multiple viewpoints, students will look at multiple perspectives and how those perspectives influence the masses, examining the voices missing and whether or not these missing voices were intentional, and discuss how to make differences noticeable. Students will be able to better comprehend how different viewpoints can offer more insight into a topic (Table 8).

Table 8	
Second dimension characteristics	
Dimension	Characteristic
Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints	<p>Reflecting on multiple and contradictory perspectives</p> <p>Asking: “Whose voices are heard and whose are missing?”</p> <p>Paying attention to and seeking out the voices of those who have been silenced or marginalized</p> <p>Making difference visible</p>

For the second dimension, I wanted an activity that would encourage Michael and Kyle to interrogate another point of view of a character in *Hero Type* (Lyga, 2010). I felt that in order for them to continue moving through the dimensions of critical literacy, each of them would need to be able to examine situations from another perspective. Then taking what they learned from the first dimension, disrupting the commonplace, to begin questioning the status quo and asking themselves as to why certain characters may or may not be silenced, if the silencing was intentional, and compare and contrast multiple points of view to make difference visible.

Once Michael and Kyle chose a character from the novel, they were required to re-write an event from *Hero Type* (Lyga, 2010) in the form of Facebook statuses. I choose for them to recreate a Facebook page as a way to integrate technology into the classroom and utilize a tool each of them was familiar and comfortable with. Information on Facebook pages may or may not

be biased and I chose this type of medium as a way to demonstrate how media can affect individuals. I also wanted to demonstrate to both of them how much stories can be altered just by changing one character within a story.

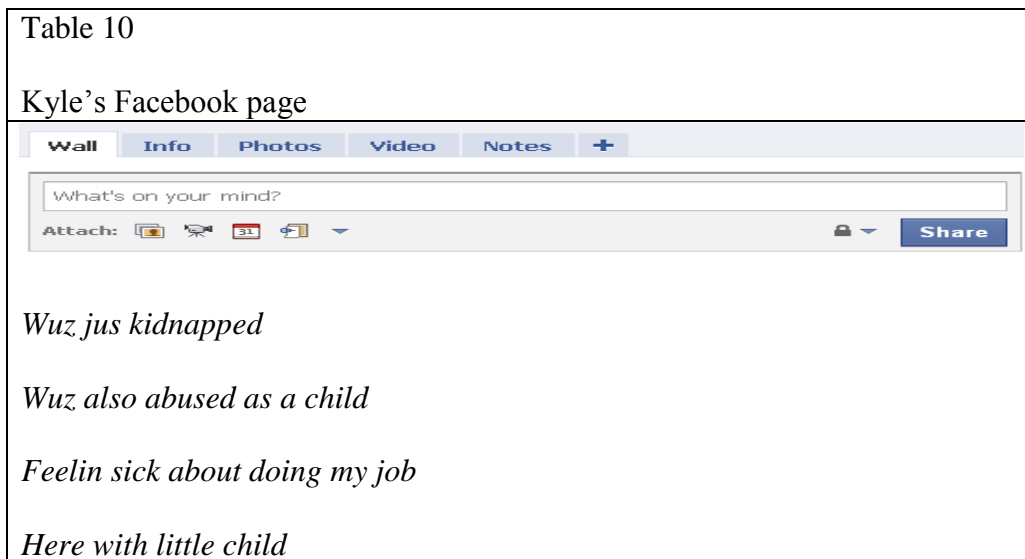
Michael chose to create his Facebook page from John's point of view and Kyle chose to write from Officer Sexpot's point of view. John is the main character's arch nemesis and Officer Sexpot is a doll that the main character and his friends carry around with them. I hoped from this activity that each of them would be able to retell a specific scene from the novel, internalize it, and be able to recreate it as Facebook status updates to retell the story. I also hoped that each of them would make the connection between how certain characters can be silenced and to question why they are silenced as a form of going against societal norms.

Table 9
<p>Michael's Facebook page</p>  <p>The screenshot shows a Facebook interface with a navigation bar (Wall, Info, Photos, Video, Notes, +) and a status update form. The form contains the text: "What's on your mind?" and "Attach:" with icons for photo, video, link, and document. A "Share" button is visible. Below the form, five lines of italicized text are displayed as status updates.</p> <p><i>I just destroyed Kevin in a debate fight</i></p> <p><i>Kevin just lost!</i></p> <p><i>I am raging! Kevin knows how to get under my skin!</i></p> <p><i>Wow! Kevin has some good points, he might actually beat me</i></p> <p><i>I persuaded everybody on the announcements today</i></p>

In Michael's Facebook status updates (Table 9), he chose to re-write the scene when Kevin and John debate about freedom and what the flag really means. Michael was able to take

what he read and summarize it to create his status. Also, Michael stuck with the Facebook format by starting his story at the end and working his way up, the same as if he were to actually input these statuses into Facebook. Michael was able to interrogate multiple viewpoints because he reflected and multiple and contradictory perspectives in order to create his Facebook page. He needed to be able to read the young adult novel, comprehend it, internalize it and produce a multi-genre type project from another character's point of view. Michael also was able to question the voices heard and the voices silenced within the novel. He wanted to give John, a secondary character, a voice by showcasing his side of the debate with the main character Kevin. Michael continues to make difference visible by showcasing another perspective that may or may not have been silenced intentionally by the author.

On the other hand, Kyle chose to create his Facebook status updates to retell the scene when the main character and his friends kidnap Officer Sexpot, a doll the main characters end up carrying around with them (Table 10). While Kyle did he follow the typical Facebook format because he wrote his statuses top down, this was a truly open-ended project for Kyle. While there is no right or wrong answers in critical literacy, I hoped that Kyle would have utilized his natural creativity to give Officer Sexpot depth since she is only a doll in the novel and therefore could have had many experiences to talk about during a specific scene. Although Kyle did set up the Facebook status updates stating "wuz just kidnapped" it appears that Kyle did not pick a clear concise scene from the young adult novel to create his status updates but instead just wrote what he knew about the character.



In terms of critical literacy, Kyle was able to interrogate multiple viewpoints because he was able to seek out a character within the novel that had been silenced or marginalized. He attempted to make difference visible by showcasing the life of the character Officer Sexpot. During this activity, Kyle stated many times “it was hard and just didn’t know what Officer Sexpot would think” (Discussion, October 11, 2011).

Similar to what Gardner & Smith (1987) found, Kyle seemed to have difficulty seeing beyond what he knew. As Gardner & Smith (1987) questioned that perhaps students’ lack of higher level comprehension stem from egocentrism which enables students to have a difficult time seeing past themselves into the characters they read. This seems to be evident in the case of Kyle. Kyle also struggled with being able to answer questions that could not be directly

answered from the text. Gardner & Smith (1987) state this is due to the lack of high level comprehension and perspective taking ability.

Michael and Kyle were asked to look at multiple perspectives within *Hero Type* (Lyga, 2010) and how those perspectives could influence the masses. They also examined voices that were missing and whether or not these missing voices were intentional. By completing this activity, Michael and Kyle will now be able to better comprehend how different viewpoints can offer more insight into a topic. Each of them interrogated multiple view points by choosing characters they felt were silenced with the novel. In order to choose a character, they had to ask themselves whose voices were heard and whose were missing. In turn they created their Facebook status pages as a way to make difference visible.

Sociopolitical Issues

The third dimension, sociopolitical issues, encourages students to question unequal power in political systems and how it relates to them personally. Students are also challenged to go beyond what they know and attempt to understand the sociopolitical systems they belong to. Lastly, students will use literacy as a cultural event to achieve reforms for the oppressed. By allowing students this opportunity to examine sociopolitical issues, they will be more empowered to challenge the legitimacy of the unequal power relationships and to increase opportunities for the non-dominant classes (Table 11).

Table 11	
Characteristics of the third dimension	
Dimension	Characteristics
Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues	Going beyond the personal and attempting to understand the sociopolitical systems to which we belong

	<p>Challenging unquestioned legitimacy of unequal power relationships</p> <p>Redefining literacy as a form of cultural citizenship and politics that increases opportunities for subordinate groups to participate in society and as an ongoing act of consciousness and resistance</p>
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For the third dimension, focusing on sociopolitical issues, I wanted an activity that both Michael and Kyle could relate to yet be able to challenge unequal power relationships within the sociopolitical issues they belong to. To help them address this, I focused specifically on the United States government because I knew each of them could activate prior knowledge on this topic. Each of them was required to read the United States Preamble of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. I wanted Michael and Kyle to utilize their knowledge from the two previous dimensions of critical literacy to question how these founding documents were trying to position them and looking for silenced voices. Then I hoped they would be able to see how these founding documents may or may not have restricted those of subordinate groups.

Once we read the United States Preamble and the Bill of Rights, we broke down the preamble sentence by sentence as a group and compared it to what we knew about that time period and perhaps the founding fathers ‘real’ intentions behind the writing of the United States constitution. They were then required to answer the following questions: why were these two documents written and did the authors have an agenda? (Table 12).

Table 12	
Questions regarding the constitution and bill of rights	
Michael	Kyle
Why were these two documents written?	Why were these two documents written?

<p><i>To give people their rights</i></p> <p>Did the authors have an agenda? In other words, whose interests were they looking out for and why?</p> <p><i>No. They were bored and made cause they thought about.</i></p>	<p><i>To keep order to stop a lot of trouble</i></p> <p>Did the authors have an agenda? In other words, whose interests were they looking out for and why?</p> <p><i>They were looking out for the united states so no wars would happen against British.</i></p>
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Although Michael answered the first question by stating “to give people their rights,” he did not elaborate or expand upon which people received rights. In this instance, he is not challenging the legitimacy of unequal power and simply just stating a generic comment. Kyle answers similarly to Michael by stating “to keep order to stop a lot of trouble.” While Kyle is utilizing his prior knowledge of the time period to answer this question, he has also failed to expand upon and challenge unequal power relationships.

How each of them responded to these questions surprised me. Prior to these activities, Michael has embraced critical literacy and has become very good at questioning the world around him as well as searching for those who have been silenced. Yet it appears that he did not go beyond what he knows and attempt to understand the sociopolitical systems to which we belong. On the other hand, Kyle also answers very generically. Kyle does not look at the bigger picture nor does he challenge the unequal power relationships within governmental systems. Perhaps this activity was not designed properly to encourage Michael and Kyle to challenge the unequal power in governments or I did not articulate well enough what was expected in how I wanted them to answer.

To try and encourage both of them to question our political system and as a way to increase opportunities for subordinate groups to participate in society, each of them were required to re-create their own preamble and Bill of Rights based on a view point of a

subordinate group. Michael chose to create his preamble and Bill of Rights on the idea of someone who believes in a monotheistic religion. Kyle chose to re-create his preamble and Bill of Rights as a slave during the late eighteenth century. Once they finished, each of them shared why they chose that point of view and how it may or may not affect society today (Table 13). The discussion was coded on whether or not they discussed the idea of the third dimension, focusing on sociopolitical issues (SPI).

Table 13		
Conversation about sociopolitical systems		
Line		Crit. Lit?
1	Kyle: I wrote about the, my point of view was slaves because I think they had a lot to do with not having equal rights and not being treated equally. They should been able to carry firearms for their own protection even when they ran off because you never know like (unintelligible)	SPI
2	Michael: That's not protecting the white man from getting-	
3	K: It's his fault for whipping him. My other one was not like not having somebody on you like property like industrial workers who were slaves because I think to do that's kinda unfair to other people by not letting them do what they wanna do. That's it.	
4	M: My perspective is from the monotheistic religion. Because those are the people, most of them lived during the late 1700s (unintelligible) Christianity was the dominant religion and Indians were and the people wanted to convert them to Christianity.	SPI
5	K: Why did you pick religion?	
6	M: Because they're a minority	
7	K: If you still have religion, in Britain they still got people that only celebrate some holidays or whatever the King or Queen celebrate they're on top, that's their religion but still that don't mean-	SPI
8	M: Are you supporting or defending my decision?	
9	K: Either way, no. One it's their religion that they want to do or that's how they want to be and two some of them didn't like staying with Britain and that's why they moved, came to Jamestown in the new land or new world whatever they called it they wanted to create their own religion and be Christian	SPI
10	M: They didn't create their religion. There were Christians in England; there were Christians from the beginning.	
11	K: If you think about it, some British people from Britain are not religious. Teacher: Think about government, how does government influence religion?	SPI
12	M: They don't. From what I've learned, lassiz-fare, hands off	

13	K: You know what I learned in school, government can knock on your door and you can be Hispanic but look black and ‘oh, you’re black.’ Basically the same with religion, they can just check you off as ‘oh your Jewish, oh your Muslim.’	
14	Teacher: Ok, so what can you as a citizen do to change that?	
15	K: Protest.	SPI
16	M: Well, in Jamestown they came here because they couldn’t practice their religion. That’s what America is for. So why is it when people come here to practice their religion and America tells them they can’t?	SPI

Beginning the conversation, Kyle states in line 1 “I wrote about the, my point of view was slaves because I think they had a lot to do with not having equal rights and not being treated equally. They should been able to carry firearms for their own protection even when they ran off because you never know like (unintelligible).” Kyle in this line has utilized the third dimension by challenging the unequal power relationships between the drafters of the constitution versus those who do not benefit from this document. He also is going beyond the personal and trying to understand the political systems to which we belong. Michael, pushing Kyle to analyze what he’s said states in line 2 “That’s not protecting the white man from getting-.” Kyle interrupts him and states in line 3 “It’s his fault for whipping him [the white man]. My other one was not like not having somebody on you like property like industrial workers who were slaves because I think to do that’s kinda unfair to other people by not letting them do what they wanna do. That’s it.” Kyle had shut down at this point and I did not push him to explain further, causing this to be a missed opportunity on my part. Michael restarts the conversation by stating in line 4 “My perspective is from the monotheistic religion. Because those are the people, most of them lived during the late 1700s (unintelligible). Christianity was the dominant religion and Indians were and the people wanted to convert them to Christianity.” Michael also begins to utilize the third dimension by challenging the unequal power relationships in regards to religion. In line 5 Kyle becomes the

leader and pushes Michael to explain why he chose this topic by stating “Why did you pick religion?” Michael responds generically by stating in line 6 “Because they’re a minority.” Kyle, confused, states in line 7 “If you still have religion, in Britain they still got people that only celebrate some holidays or whatever the King or Queen celebrate they’re on top, that’s their religion but still that don’t mean-.” Kyle again demonstrates understanding of the third dimension in this statement because he is challenging the unequal power of government overseas. He is stating that who is in charge makes the rules and the people will follow. Kyle is interrupted when Michael states in line 8 “Are you supporting or defending my decision?” Kyle responds in line 9 with “Either way, no. One it’s their religion that they want to do or that’s how they want to be and two some of them didn’t like staying with Britain and that’s why they moved, came to Jamestown in the new land or new world whatever they called it they wanted to create their own religion and be Christian.” With this statement Kyle has understood that as an ongoing act of consciousness and resistance subordinate groups can increase their participation in society themselves. However, Michael challenges Kyle by stating in line 10 “They didn’t create their religion. There were Christians in England; there were Christians from the beginning.” In response to Michael, Kyle states in line 11 “If you think about it, some British people from Britain are not religious.” Starting to get off topic, I tried to curb the conversation back to how government affects society by stating in line 12 “Think about government, how government influences religion?” Michael very adamantly states in line 13 “They don’t. From what I’ve learned, *lassiz-fare*, hands off.” Kyle responds by utilizing his prior knowledge in line 14 with “You know what I learned in school, government can knock on your door and you can be Hispanic but look black and ‘oh, you’re black.’ Basically the same with religion, they can just check you off as ‘oh your Jewish, oh your Muslim.’ Kyle made a valid point, so I wanted each of

them to expand on how subordinate groups could participate in society and as an ongoing act of consciousness and resistance by asking them in line 15 “Ok, so what can you as a citizen do to change that?” Kyle responds quickly in line 16 by stating “protest.” Kyle, with my prompt, focuses on sociopolitical issues by Redefining literacy as a form of cultural citizenship and by protesting allows a way for subordinate groups to participate in society and as an ongoing act of consciousness and resistance. In line 17 Michael responds with “Well, in Jamestown they came here because they couldn’t practice their religion. That’s what America is for. So why is it when people come here to practice their religion and America tells them they can’t?” Although the conversation ended here with a missed opportunity to expand upon this question, Michael has also focused on sociopolitical issues with his statement because he is not only questioning the unequal power relationships and trying to understand the governmental systems to which we all belong.

It is evident that Michael and Kyle are utilizing skills obtained from all critical literacy dimensions because they are beginning to question the world around them, finding voices who have been silenced and are noticing unequal power. It is important that both teachers and students step outside of their comfort zone to think critically (Hall & Piazza, 2008). This activity demonstrates that students are beginning to think critically by looking at issues that pertain to them. (Hall & Piazza, 2008). Similar to what Booth (1994) found in which students who were presented with multiple texts comprehended the social studies content significantly better based on the end of the year exams than the students who were taught history as a continuous story and not presented with multiple materials nor examined with a critical lens.

After analyzing the discussion Michael and Kyle had regarding how government affects or does not affect religion, it is apparent again that both boys are utilizing what they have learned

prior to defend their stance. Throughout the conversation, both boys did demonstrate understanding of the third dimension, focusing on sociopolitical issues. They were not only able to read and comprehend our founding documents, but went beyond the personal and attempting to understand the sociopolitical systems to which we belong to recreate the Bill of Rights and constitution from the view of a subordinate group. In completing this activity each of them challenged the unequal power relationships of our society. Lastly, in discussing their projects, Michael and Kyle were able to redefine literacy as a form of cultural citizenship by stating ways to provide opportunities for subordinate groups to participate in society as acts of consciousness and resistance.

Taking Action and Social Justice

The fourth dimension, taking action and promoting social justice, encourages students to reflect how to bring action upon the world in order to transform it. Students should also examine how language can affect the status quo to keep dominant groups in control. Lastly, the fourth dimension teaches students how language can be used to enhance life and question practices of privilege and injustices (Table 14).

Table 14	
Fourth dimension characteristics	
Dimension	Characteristics
Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice	<p>Engaging in praxis- reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it</p> <p>Using language to exercise power to enhance everyday life and to question practices of privilege and injustices</p> <p>Analyzing how language is used to maintain domination, how nondominant groups can gain access to dominant forms of language and culture, how diverse forms of language can be used as cultural resources, and how social action can change existing discourses</p>

To address the idea taking action and promoting social justice, Michael and Kyle were required to create an I-Search project. An I-Search project allows students to research a topic in depth, analyze both sides of the topic and then present their information. I wanted an open-ended activity that would allow them each of them to explore a topic, analyze each side of the topic, and then present their information. I also wanted a project that could utilize all of the dimensions learned previously as a culmination activity. In *Hero Type* (Lyga, 2010) the main character has a debate about the idea of burning the American flag. Both Michael and Kyle were able to see how this debate went within the story and in a sense were to re-create this debate themselves using the I-Search project. The I-Search project required each of them to research both sides of burning the American flag and then prepare a persuasive paper to bring to their debate. I hoped this activity would open their eyes and expose them to ways of standing up for what they believe in. Also, this project would demonstrate to them how taking action and promoting social justice can be as simple as familiarizing yourself with information on a topic to then be better able to inform others. Once they finished their essays, each of them wanted to debate and discuss which side they chose to support about burning the American flag (Table 15). The following discussion was coded based on whether or not Kyle and Michael touched on the basis of the fourth dimension, taking action and promoting social justice (TAPSJ).

Table 15		
Conversation about ethics of burning the American flag		
<i>Line</i>		<i>Crit. Lit?</i>
1	Kyle: I picked don't burn it, because one because it's a sign of unpatriotic and people are charged for it and um, even though it's like if you burn it you're burning the veterans that fought for the freedom and even though some people think burning it is not recycling it's smart to do because it shows you have respect for the soldiers	TAPSJ

2	Michael: Can I ask you a question?	
3	K: What?	
4	M: So, if you see someone from a foreign country burning the flag in America, what do you do?	TAPSJ
5	K: Kill 'em	
6	M: Why do you think that?	
7	K: They're burning our flag. What if we burn their flag? If we burn their flag they're going to want to kill us, so kill 'em	
8	M: How do you know those people aren't under cover?	
9	K: You don't burn the flag	
10	M: We should have the right	TAPSJ
11	K: If you were a soldier for the US Army and somebody burned the flag you wouldn't be so mad that you'd want to kill them?	
12	M: No. I wouldn't want to kill them that would be inhumane and uncivilized. We're civilized	TAPSJ
13	K: Still they're burning the US flag that symbolizes our soldiers and veterans. Why wouldn't you want to kill them or put them in prison?	
14	M: What's the point in killing them? What's it going to do to them? They're not scared of dying. I'd talk it out	TAPSJ
15	K: Talking it out doesn't work	
16	M: What if I'm protesting?	TAPSJ
17	K: Don't burn the flag. Protest against it. That's not protesting.	
18	M: MLK said non violence. Ghandi said non violence. What about that guy John we read about? You'd rather kill people to show protest or rather burn the flag and not hurt anyone?	TAPSJ
19	K: You're still disrespecting our soldiers. I keep coming back to this for a reason. It's disrespect.	TAPSJ
20	M: What does the flag mean to you?	
21	K: To me the flag means we have freedom, soldiers fought for us-	
22	M: Wait, say that again, the first thing	
23	K: What? Freedom?	
24	M: Ok, so if we have freedom we should be able to burn the flag	TAPSJ
25	K: I have nothing left to say	

Kyle begins the conversation by stating in line 1 how he feels in regards to burning the American flag: "I picked don't burn it, because one because it's a sign of unpatriotic and people are charged for it and um, even though it's like if you burn it you're burning the veterans that fought for the freedom and even though some people think burning it is not recycling it's smart to do because it shows you have respect for the soldiers." Kyle is taking action and promoting social

justice with this statement because his diverse form of language is being used as a cultural resource. By making these statements he is promoting social action which can change existing discourses with others. Michael in line 2 begins to challenge Kyle when he states “can I ask you a question?” Kyle responds in line 3 with “what?” Michael responds to him in line 4 with “So, if you see someone from a foreign country burning the flag in America, what do you do?” The question that Michael poses to Kyle utilizes the fourth dimension because he is engaging in praxis by reflecting as a way to take action upon the world. He is using language to exercise his power to enhance everyday life. In response, Kyle states in line 5 “Kill ‘em.” Not satisfied, Michael asks in line 6 “Why do you think that?” Kyle states “They’re burning our flag. What if we burn their flag? If we burn their flag they’re going to want to kill us, so kill ‘em” in line 7. In this statement Kyle is not utilizing the fourth dimension due to the fact that he is answering generically. He is not questioning the practices of privilege or injustices but rather just retaliating. Recognizing this, Michael responds back in line 8 with “How do you know those people aren’t under cover?” Very heated, Kyle responds in line 9 with “You don’t burn the flag.” Michael is unaware that Kyle has family in the United States Army and is currently overseas fighting. Kyle is defending what he feels is right due to the fact that his family is in the military. Michael does not have family in the military so neither of them necessarily sees each other’s argument. Michael responds to Kyle in line 10 by stating “We should have the right.” Michael is taking action and promoting social justices with this statement by reflecting and taking action upon the world that because each of them are Americans they have the freedoms to burn the flag if they want to. Kyle, still unsatisfied retorts with in line 11 “If you were a soldier for the US Army and somebody burned the flag you wouldn’t be so mad that you’d want to kill them?” It is evident that Kyle’s background knowledge is affecting his answers during this debate. Michael

rather perplexed answers in line 12 with “No. I wouldn’t want to kill them that would be inhumane and uncivilized. We’re civilized.” Michael again has utilized the fourth dimension by using language as a cultural resource. He is proving to Kyle that as Americans there are other ways to handle situations. It would be inhumane to kill someone purely based on burning the American flag. Kyle responds in line 13 with “Still they’re burning the US flag that symbolizes our soldiers and veterans. Why wouldn’t you want to kill them or put them in prison?” Michael responds in line 14 by stating “What’s the point in killing them? What’s it going to do to them? They’re not scared of dying. I’d talk it out.” Again, Michael is demonstrating how language can be used as a cultural resource. He knows that there are better more mature ways of handling such situations. He wants to use language as a way to exercise power to enhance everyday life and to question practices of privilege and injustices. Not satisfied, Kyle responds in line 15 with “Talking it out doesn’t work.” Trying to take another angle with this debate, Michael asks Kyle in line 16 “What if I’m protesting?” Michael is utilizing how social justice could change cultural discourses. He is challenging Kyle to think outside of what he knows to demonstrate an acceptable reason to burn the flag. Kyle states in line 17 “Don’t burn the flag. Protest against it. That’s not protesting.” Michael responds in line 18 with “MLK said non violence. Ghandi said non violence. What about that guy John we read about? You’d rather kill people to show protest or rather burn the flag and not hurt anyone?” Michael is referencing prior knowledge to support his argument and is using language as a way to demonstrate how nondominant groups can gain access to dominant forms of language and culture. Still unhappy, Kyle responds in line 19 with “You’re still disrespecting our soldiers. I keep coming back to this for a reason. It’s disrespect.” Kyle has shut down at this point and does not want to discuss this issue further. Kyle is having difficulty seeing beyond what he knows and not ready to accept all sides to this specific

argument. Michael, still trying to have Kyle see his point of view states in line 20 “What does the flag mean to you?” Perplexed, Kyle responds in line 21 with “To me the flag means we have freedom, soldiers fought for us-.” He is interrupted with Michael asks him in line 22 “Wait, say that again, the first thing.” Kyle responds in line 23 with “What? Freedom?” Michael responds with in line 24 “Ok, so if we have freedom we should be able to burn the flag.” Michael is again utilizing the fourth dimension by engaging in praxis. He is reflecting and taking action upon the world in order to transform it with language. Unhappy and unwilling to continue this conversation further, Kyle states in line 25 with “I have nothing left to say.”

The I-Search activity required Michael and Kyle to think beyond the text and were not able to directly turn to the text for the answer. While it appears that Michael had an easier time researching both sides of this argument, both he and Kyle enjoyed these discussions and lessons because it allowed them a voice in the classroom. They were able to discuss their beliefs and see what others had to offer. This is similar to what Beck (2005) and McGregor (2000) found in regards to supporting critical literacy in the classroom.

Both Michael and Kyle utilized the fourth dimension throughout this lesson. Throughout their debate, each of them was able to engage in praxis as a way to reflect and take action upon the world in order to transform it. An example of this would be in line 10 when Michael states “we should have the right [to burn the American flag].” Knowing that America was built on having freedom, Michael is demonstrating how as Americans we should be able to have this right. Each of them also used language to exercise power to enhance everyday life and to question practices of privilege and injustices. For example in line 14 Michael states “What’s the point in killing them? What’s it going to do to them? They’re not scared of dying. I’d talk it out.” He is not only using language as a way to exercise power to enhance everyday life and to

question practices of privilege and injustices but he is also demonstrating how language can be used as a cultural resource.

Implications and Conclusion

Based on my original research question, can the use of critical literacy through a young adult novel encourage students to engage in critical talk within the social studies classroom, there were many implications during my study that should be addressed. The implications found from this study include a difficulty of explaining what critical literacy is in a way for Michael and Kyle to fully understand, many missed opportunities on my part to engage each of them more fully with the material and the ability of feeling comfortable to create lessons based on the four dimensions of critical literacy.

Prior to this study, neither one of them were aware of what critical literacy was or how it affected them. I explained to Michael and Kyle before starting that it would be a lot of hard work and a challenge to implement critical literacy. To introduce the four dimensions to each of them, I copied the dimensions and pasted them into their student work notebooks so they could reference them at any time. The worksheet does contain some rather vocabulary that as we went over the worksheet I tried to explain to them in easier terms. As we worked through each of the four dimensions of critical literacy developed by Lewiston, Flint and VanSluys (2002), it appeared as though Michael grasped the concept naturally, whereas Kyle did not. While at first they seemed confused as to what was expected, at the end Michael and Kyle were eager and

excited to utilize critical literacy. As an introduction to critical literacy, this was the best way I could think of to introduce this concept. Week after week when I reviewed the four dimensions it seemed as though they did not internalize the information. If I were to redo this study, I would re-create the worksheet to more appropriately match their grade levels. I would have obtained information from their classroom teachers if I were unable to meet with them prior to the study. It is imperative that before introducing this into the classroom teachers know their students reading and writing levels to know if they will be able to internalize the information. If I had known each of them prior to the study, I would have known if the language was at their appropriate grade level.

Based on the findings and at the end of the study, it is clear that Michael very easily grasped the concept of critical literacy and the leadership role, while Kyle, who may have been open to the idea of critical literacy, still remained very literal when it came to controversial issues and did not question societal norms. When beginning critical literacy in the classroom it is imperative that teachers know their students to be able to create a safe atmosphere. Prior to this study I did not know Michael or Kyle and the first few days with them I tried to create a safe atmosphere. They worked together on an icebreaker activity and every day I reminded them that heated discussions could arise. Although it may get difficult, we would need to treat each other respectfully. By being respectful, we discussed it meant not to talk over the other person, to let them finish their sentence, be open-minded to what each other has to say. Going into this study, I felt comfortable but as the conversations turned heated I was unsure of how to handle the situation. Afterwards, I discussed with Michael and Kyle that this is a learning experience for everyone. Each week they returned eager to participate in the next dimension. There were times where the conversation did get heated. Not sure how to completely handle the situation, I let

Michael and Kyle continue to discuss the topic, only causing Michael to encourage Kyle more and more to think his way and causing Kyle to shut down. While each day Kyle said he was up for more challenges, I wonder perhaps if I made Kyle continue to feel as if it was not a safe environment because I didn't stop the conversation. However, I felt if I stopped the conversation each of them would not be engaging in critical literacy. It is imperative that teachers feel comfortable with heated discussions that may arise due to the controversial issues critical literacy deals with (Beck, 2005). Before implementing critical literacy, teachers should design a plan they feel comfortable with on how to react if conversations do go array. In this instance, a teacher has already outlined what they want to do. Then in the heat of discussion if a teacher wants to change it they may, but the outline would already be completed.

After self reflection, there were missed opportunities to engage Michael and Kyle in critical literacy talk. I feel this is due to my inexperience in having critical literacy discussions with students. I felt the best way to let Michael and Kyle engage with the material was just to let them talk it out. Once I began to analyze the data, I noticed missed opportunities to which I could have engaged them in. Similar to the study conducted by Lewison, Flint, and VanSluys (2002) which examined a newcomer teacher to critical literacy, a teacher with no prior background knowledge in this technique, and a novice teacher, who had some background knowledge in critical literacy, found that both newcomers and novice teachers often stayed within the first two dimensions of critical literacy (Lewison, Flint, & VanSluys, 2002). Granted, the first two dimensions were the easiest; I knew if I only stayed with the first two dimensions I was not giving Michael and Kyle the full benefits that critical literacy can offer. As for myself and for teachers, these missed opportunities will diminish once teachers are comfortable with the material and the notion of critical literacy.

I wanted to challenge myself by not only implementing my own critical literacy activities but also to push myself and my students to work through all four dimensions of critical literacy. It was difficult to think of activities to create to fit the last two dimensions, sociopolitical issues and taking action and promoting social justice. I turned to a trusted colleague to help brainstorm ideas. These activities pushed me to think and act outside of my own comfort zone while also pushing my students to question the world around them, something not usually asked by their regular classroom teachers. Similar to what Lewison, Flint & VanSluys (2002) found, I believe that with more experience and practice, I will become more comfortable and gain more expertise in implementing critical literacy in the classroom to become a novice teacher. As per teachers, it is important to seek help from trusted colleagues if struggling with activities to implement per dimension. Brainstorming with another peer is beneficial because they may offer points of views that you may not think of on your own. It could be beneficial for teachers to work as a team and implement critical literacy in all the classrooms. Therefore if issues do arise, there are multiple people who can help. Also, if critical literacy was implemented across disciplines, students could more easily see connections between the content areas.

This action research project left me with more questions. I question if the age difference between the students could affect how easily each of them could engage in critical literacy. Gardner & Smith (1987) questioned if children's egocentrism enabled students to have a difficult time seeing past themselves into the characters they read. Because Kyle was only fourteen years old and in the eighth grade at the time of this study, perhaps his young age caused him to have difficult time thinking beyond what he knew and seeing other perspectives. Michael at the time of this study was fifteen years old but in the tenth grade. However, their educational environments could also affect their ability to engage in critical literacy. Michael attends a

suburban school and Kyle attends an urban school. I wonder if the type of education both Michael and Kyle helps or hinders them in being able to participate in critical literacy.

Prior to this study, both students did not know each other. I wonder if this also helped or hindered them in regards to critical literacy. If each of them had been placed with other students they either knew or felt comfortable with, the conversations may not have become as heated or even happened at all for fear of looking wrong or stupid from their peers. Also, it was just the two of them when the study was taking place. Perhaps these results may not have happened in a whole group setting. Students may have become actively engaged in a classroom discussion or not have participated at all.

The findings of this study support the utilization of critical literacy within the social studies classroom. Michael and Kyle felt more empowered by not having the typical skill and drill routine that usually consists there day while at school. Each of them also felt they had a voice within the classroom. While it appears this type of learning came more naturally to Michael than it did with Kyle, each of them benefited from this student-centered learning. Each of them was exposed to different points of view and challenged their own beliefs. They are also more aware of the social inequalities by questioning the world around them now know ways to take action to promote social justice. While there are some disadvantages of using critical literacy in the classroom such as awkward moments and heated discussions, the benefits supersede the disadvantages.

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Appendix A-Four Dimensions Worksheet

Dimension	Characteristics
Disrupting the Commonplace	<p>Problematizing all subjects of study (including adolescence, learning), and understanding existing knowledge as a historical product</p> <p>Interrogating texts: “How is this text trying to position me?”</p> <p>Including popular culture and media as a regular part of the curriculum</p> <p>Studying language to analyze how it shapes identity, constructs cultural discourses, and supports or disrupts the status quo</p>
Interrogating Multiple View Points	<p>Reflecting on multiple and contradictory perspectives</p> <p>Asking: “Whose voices are heard and whose are missing?”</p> <p>Paying attention to and seeking out the voices of those who have been silenced or marginalized</p> <p>Making difference visible</p>
Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues	<p>Going beyond the personal and attempting to understand the sociopolitical systems to which we belong</p> <p>Challenging unquestioned legitimacy of unequal power relationships</p> <p>Redefining literacy as a form of cultural citizenship and politics that increases opportunities for subordinate groups to participate in society and as an ongoing act of consciousness and resistance</p>
Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice	<p>Engaging in praxis- reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it</p>

	<p>Using language to exercise power to enhance everyday life and to question practices of privilege and injustices</p> <p>Analyzing how language is used to maintain domination, how nondominant groups can gain access to dominant forms of language and culture, how diverse forms of language can be used as cultural resources, and how social action can change existing discourses</p>
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Appendix B-Lessons

Lesson #1

Title: Mass Media-What's the Deal?

Essential Question(s):

How does/can the media shape the way people think and why?

Information and Modeling:

1. The teacher will distribute the packet entitled 'Mass Media-What's the Deal?
2. The teacher will inform students they will be learning about Mass Media.
 - a. What is mass media? Students will complete with teacher the frayer model worksheet
3. Working in their cooperative base groups, the teacher will tell students to number off
4. The teacher will have the students open their packet to the article and write their number on the top of their article.
5. When the teacher says begin, the students (starting with student number one) will begin reading paragraph by paragraph until they have completed the article.

Guided Practice:

1. Once the students have finished the article, students will add information to the article and fill out the venn diagram in their base groups.
 - a. Students are to think about the pros and cons of media influence and how this can/can't affect them.
 - b. Once students have finished filling out the venn diagram, the teacher will review each groups responses via the overhead so students can add to their worksheets.
2. In their base groups, students will brainstorm the essential question.
 - a. How does/can the media shape the way people think and why? Why is this important to know when reading an article? Researching for a paper? Etc.
 - b. Once students have finished brainstorming, the teacher will open it up to a class discussion.

Lesson #2

Title: Patriotism v. Terrorism- is there a link?

Essential Question(s):

Can a person love their country so much that they could become a terrorist?

Information and Modeling:

1. In their base groups, students will come up with a group definition of what patriotism means using the frayer model worksheet. Once finished, the teacher will allow each group to share while the teacher adds each definition on the over head for students to see.
2. Students will then come up with a group definition of what terrorism means using the frayer model worksheet. Once finished, the teacher will allow each group to share while the teacher adds each definition on the over head for students to see.

Guided Practice:

1. Students will complete the What is an American activity.
 - a. In their base groups, students will number off. They will write their number at the top of their worksheet. Starting with number one, students will read each profile. Once they have completed reading, they will discuss and place each profile on the continuum as to who is most American or least American.
 - b. Once students have finished, the teacher will open it up to a group discussion by allowing each group to state where they placed each person and why.
2. The teacher will then discuss this as well as the Media into Hero Type. Within the story, the main character does a good deed, or so we think so. But the media spins the story out of control while questioning his patriotism. At the same time, Kevin has a secret but won't tell us what it is, all we know is he is ashamed of it.
 - a. The students will then complete the reader response as homework.

Lesson #3

Title: Who is silenced- the true story

Essential Question(s):

How different could a story be if it had been written from another point of view?

Information and Modeling:

1. The teacher will explain to students that in novels and the real world people are often silenced. It may be the choice of the author or the media. However, how might a story change if it were written from another point of view? Would the meaning change? Would how you perceive the story change?
2. In their base groups, students will examine who they believe was silenced in the novel. Students might share Leah, Kevin's dad, Kevin's brother, the mayor etc.

Guided Practice:

1. Students will brainstorm in their base groups a character from Hero Type they feel has been silenced. Once students have chosen their character, students will complete the Thinking From Another Perspective Worksheet.
2. Once the students have finished, they will be instructed to re-write their version of Hero Type from that perspective. Their re-write will only be a summary of two events, a minimum of 3 pages or by creating a Facebook page from the characters point of view
3. After the students finished, they will share one of their event re-writes with the class. As students listen to the other stories, they will write down their reactions on the corresponding worksheets.

Lesson #4

Title: The Constitution- written by who?

Essential Question(s):

How would society be different if the Constitution and the Bill of Rights were written from a different point of view?

Information and Modeling:

1. The teacher will review with students how people can be influenced by outside sources, such as the media. As a class, the teacher will review how they felt after the re-writing of events from Hero Type.
2. The teacher will then discuss how Hero Type deals with constitutional rights/Bill of Rights. The teacher will tell students to read the United States Constitution preamble and the Bill of Rights in their packets. The teacher will discuss with students who wrote the constitution/Bill of Rights, why they wrote it, what kind of agenda were they after and why, etc.
2. In their base groups, students will discuss the questions asked by the teacher regarding the constitution/Bill of Rights.

Guided Practice:

1. Students in their base groups will choose a perspective (Ethnic, Race, Social Economic Status, LGBT, etc.) and explain why they choose the one they did.
2. Once the students have picked their perspective, they will fill out the Thinking from another Perspective worksheet to help them brainstorm the needs/wants of the group they chose.
3. After the students finished, they will create their own constitution/Bill of Rights written from their perspective.
4. Once they have finished, students will complete the ticket out of the door question.

Lesson #5

Title: “Come on Baby Light My Fire”—Wait! Is that legal?!

Essential Question(s):

Flag burning: simple form of expression or punishable offense?

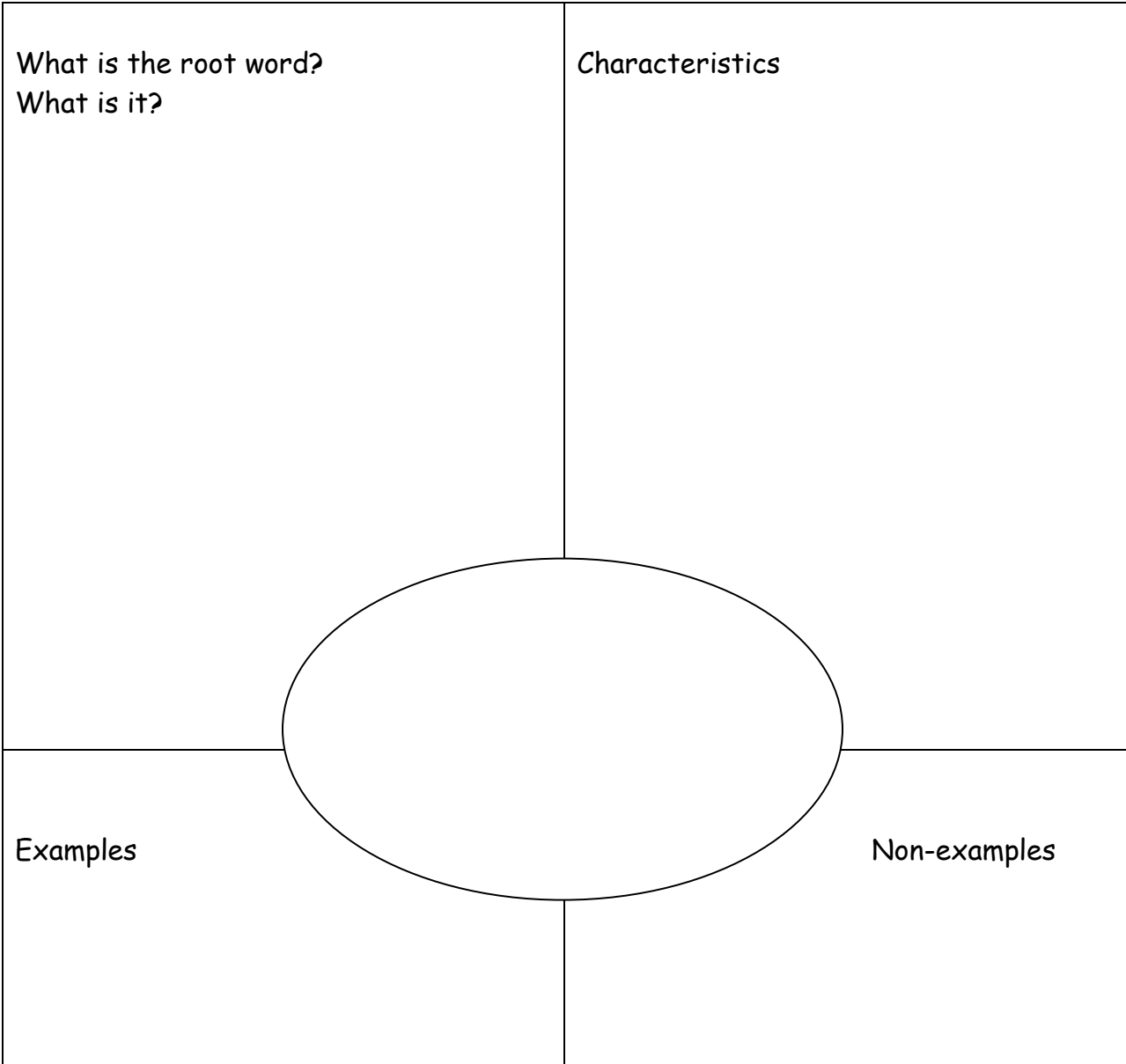
Information and Modeling:

1. The teacher will discuss that in the book *Hero Type*, Kevin examines a variety of different themes that all mean something to him. He did this by doing his own research online and from other sources.
2. One of those themes was the legality and ethics of burning the American flag. Students will perform an i Search researching this topic and will form their own opinion about it.

Guided Practice:

1. Students will receive the sheet with directions on it that will also include their outline template.
2. Students will then begin their research, filling out both sides of their outline as they go.
3. When they feel that their outline is complete and they have captured arguments on both sides of the issue, students will then use the information in their outline to write a 2-3 page response about whether or not they feel that the 1st Amendment protects our right to burn the flag as a means of expression.

Appendix C- Frayer Model



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Appendix D- What is an American activity?

What is American?

Directions: Read through each of the profiles. Decide which of the following persons are “most” American, “least” American, or somewhere in-between. Place each person (by name or number) on the continuum chart. In your groups, list the characteristics of an American and write a group definition of an American.

1. Matt

I served for a year in Iraq. Initially, I thought the Iraq war was a just war. Then, I realized that we were not there for the reasons that came out in the media. I knew that I could not continue to serve in the military. I applied for conscientious objector status—you know, someone who objects to serving in the armed forces or bearing arms on the grounds of moral or religious principles. I was denied this status because I had already served a year and they said I couldn’t suddenly develop new beliefs. They said that I was objecting for political reasons and out of self-interest – that I just didn’t want to go back to Iraq and serve my country. I didn’t suddenly develop new beliefs; I had held those beliefs all along – an unjust war is wrong. I just didn’t feel that I could express how I felt without being called a traitor or worse. I love my country. I just think war is wrong. And I think this particular war is wrong.

Anyway, when they denied me conscientious objector status, I ran. I took my family and kept going. We stayed in various places with friends and sympathizers. We never stayed long in any one place because I didn’t want to get anyone in trouble. I knew that the army was looking for me.. We stayed ‘underground’ for a year and a half. Then I realized that I was hiding more than myself; I was hiding my beliefs – again.

So, I began to attend protest rallies to voice my beliefs; I even visited Cindy Sheehan at her protest campsite near President Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas. When my six-year-old wanted to know why he couldn’t go to school like other kids, I realized that my family was suffering. I turned myself in; I returned to my army base. I face charges of desertion – I could even be put to death since the country is in a time of war. My family is upset, but they agree that what I did was right.

To anyone who thinks what I did was the wrong thing, I just have to say, there comes a

time in every person's life when they have to make what they feel was the right moral decision for themselves.

2. Monica

Some people believe that high school is a place for socializing; I believe it is a place to study. Throughout my high school career I believe I have made many positive contributions that will last beyond my days in those walls.

I graduated high school with a 4.0 grade-point-average, was one of 250 students to receive a \$20,000 National Merit Scholarship, and was co-valedictorian of my graduating class. I was very active in fundraising and was even able to raise over \$1,000 for a school club.

I also organized a bilingual certification campaign for students. This way students who spoke more than one language could be certified in both languages. This is a non-profit organization, meaning I had to work hard to raise enough money to fund the project and get it started in my home state.

While I have a very supportive home life, my mother's job at the nursing home was not enough to support my sister and me so I got a job selling cell phones. Nothing made my mom happier than when I was accepted into college. Actually, six universities accepted me! I chose one that would allow me to stay close to home, and it offered a full scholarship too!

However, my scholarship may be taken away because I am an undocumented immigrant. I came to America four years ago with my mother and my sister on six month visas. My mother wanted to give her children a better life, so we stayed. When I started high school I did not speak any English. Instead of giving up and failing, I devoted all of my time and effort into mastering the language of the country that I hoped would give me more opportunities. I have since mastered the language (as you can see from my 4.0 G.P.A) and spend my time helping other immigrants.

I think it's normal to feel scared that it may not work out like I hoped. But there are bigger things: the dream, the hope, the idea that you can better yourself. I just hope I won't get this far and then not have my dream realized.

3. John

I was born in a rural area of New York, out in the "boondocks," as some people say. Growing up I liked to collect guns and practice shooting at cans and stuff around our yard. There weren't that many people around. I got pretty good at collecting guns and would go to gun shows to trade and sell them.

My family's Catholic. When I was 10, my parents split up and me and my two sisters went to live with my Dad. He had a steady job, working for General Motors building car engines.

I was a loner in high school (I didn't like school very much). After I graduated from high school, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I worked as a security guard for a while, but the pay wasn't that great and the hours were long. I eventually decided to go into the Army.

I loved the Army. I loved the discipline it required. I loved teaching people how to handle their guns, and I'd offer to clean guns for my fellow soldiers when we had to go up in front of our unit's lead officer. Our unit was stationed in Kuwait, during the Gulf War. I did so well as a soldier that I was awarded the Bronze Star Medal.

I must admit, there were some things about the Gulf War that bothered me. I didn't like

attacking innocent civilians or Iraqi soldiers who were trying to surrender and give up. But we were told all Iraqis were the enemy. I just couldn't believe that, though, so I admit, I started having bad feelings toward the US government. I tell you what else bothered me. I didn't like the way those FBI agents went into that compound in Waco and killed all those people. Granted, they were after a cult, but they should have handled that differently.

Not too long ago, I started thinking of a way to get back at the US government. I made a bomb out of fertilizer and auto racing fuel and put it in the back of a Ryder truck. I drove the truck and parked it in front of a federal government building, just as its offices were opening for the day. I ignited the fuse and ran off before the bomb exploded. The bomb explosion killed 167 people, including innocent children (I didn't know there was a day care center in the building). 850 people were injured.

I am currently awaiting trial.

4. Maria

My name is Maria, and I'm eight years old. I used to live with my Mama and Papa in Cuba. Mama and Papa worked really, really hard, but we didn't have much money. I don't think anybody had much money. Mama and Papa talked a lot about how the government didn't provide for its people and that things would be better for us in America. They decided that Mama and I would go first and live with family in Florida. Papa would come later, when it was safe for him. It wasn't popular for Cubans to leave Cuba—people could die if they were caught leaving.

Mama and I got on a really little boat with lots of other people who wanted to go to America, too. We were packed together on that boat, and several people said they did not know how to swim. My Mama didn't know how to swim. It was cold. I was scared, but Mama said that everything would be okay because we were together. We were on the boat for a long time, and we were so thirsty and hungry. Then there was a storm that made big waves and really loud thunder. One of the big waves came and made Mama fall into the water. She didn't come back. Some of the people in the boat tried to save her, but she was already too far under the water. I wish Papa was there, because he could have saved her.

It took a long time for us to get to Florida, and I cried all the time for Mama. My aunt and uncle came to get me when we got off that little boat. They were sad that Mama was gone, but they said that it would be okay because they would take care of me. I wanted Papa, but he was still in Cuba.

My aunt and uncle let me play with video games. I had never seen those before, and they were so fun that sometimes I forgot how sad I was. They took me shopping for new toys and clothes. That was the best part about America—everything is new and clean.

Papa found out about Mama and wanted me to come back home to Cuba to be with him. I miss him. And I miss Mama. My aunt and uncle don't want me to go. They say that in America I can get a good education and have a better life than in Cuba. They say that's what my mama wanted for me. They are telling my Papa I will stay in America, that I am an American now.

5. Li Mingshe

When I graduated from the East China University of Science and Technology, I was immediately hired to write computer programs for Microsoft at their headquarters in New York City. Microsoft was eager to assist me with my transition to the United States. They helped me

get a visa and even bought my plane ticket. I was happily employed for quite awhile and eventually became a U.S. citizen.

As the Bush administration made its foreign and domestic policies known, I became more and more disgruntled with what is known as “American Culture” and felt like a foreigner in my new home. To make matters worse, I was unable to return to China because such a move would signify failure on my part and disgrace my family. Since I wasn’t happy with the political and cultural climate of America and I couldn’t seek shelter in China, I quit my job at Microsoft and committed all of my savings to the purchase and restoration of an authentic Asian food market. I feel like I’m helping to promote my culture by offering the same ingredients that my patrons might find in China.

As time has progressed, I have sought and found a thriving community of Asian people that has welcomed me. Chinese has once again become my primary language as I submerge myself in the culture of Chinatown in New York City. I met my Asian wife after opening my market and now we’re raising our children according to Chinese cultural standards.

6. Mario

I worked as an olive farmer in the old country. My family had lived in our town for four generations and we had an olive farm for three of those generations. We were able to avoid the war going on around us for a while, but then one day my life turned upside down. My mother, father, and sister were shot in front of me and my fellow townspeople. The army had decided that they needed examples to prove they meant “business,” but I think they just wanted our land and our money.

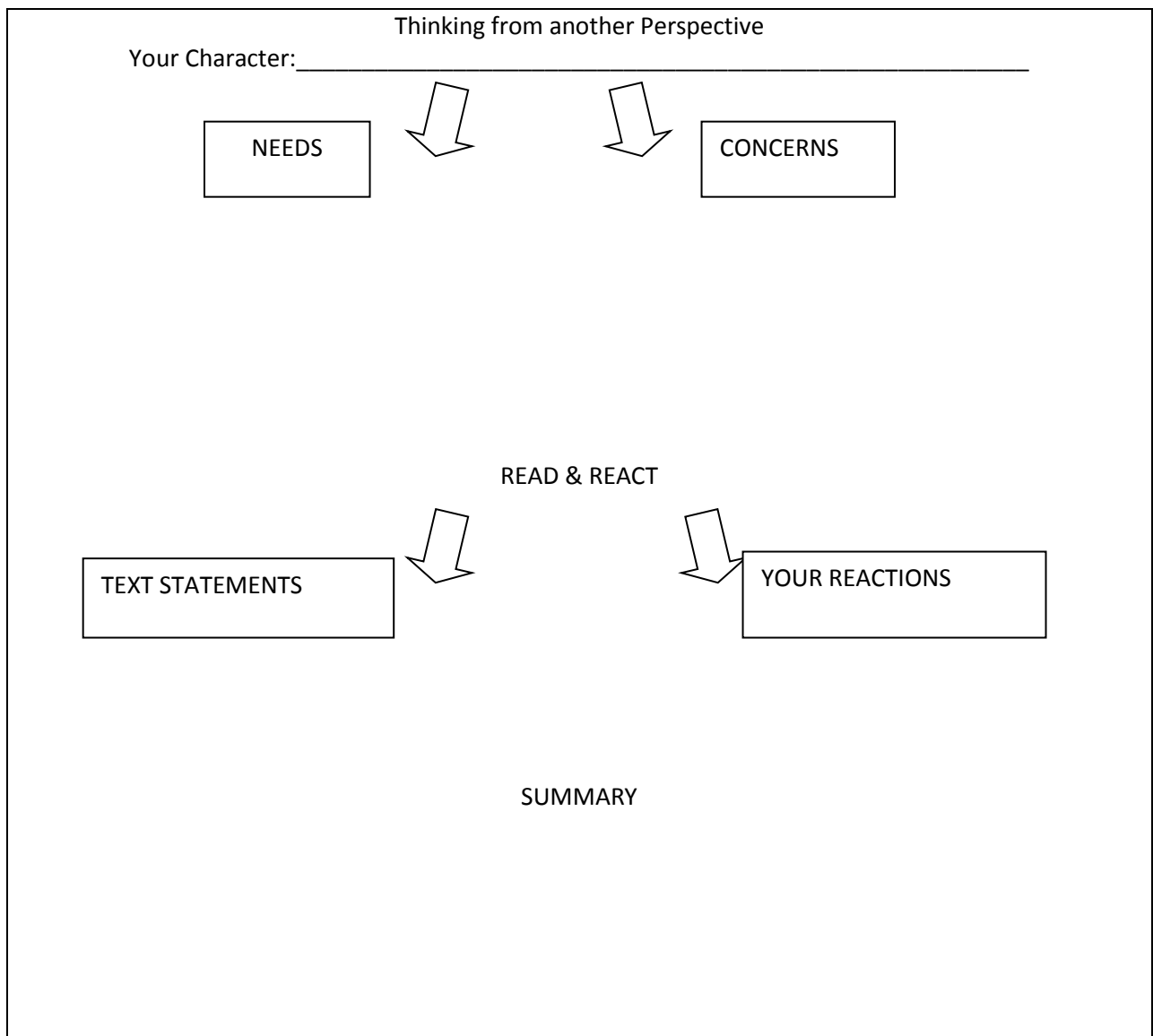
To survive, I knew I would have to leave my home country. I ran and ran until my legs felt as though they could run no farther; then I ran farther. I didn’t stop until I reached the woods miles outside our town. I was alone, but I had a burning desire to survive. I found a cargo ship that was crossing the Atlantic and became a stowaway. I rode in the cargo hold of a mouse-infested ship for 56 days before reaching the shores of America in California.

Upon reaching America, I had the strong desire to learn the American culture, but I had no way of becoming an American citizen. To become a citizen, you must have money and lots of identification, like a birth certificate and other legal documents. You also have to write a paper explaining why you are leaving your home country and you have to prove you have a job in the country where you want to go. As I have already said, I did not have the opportunity to collect such documents or write such a paper! I was running for my life!

I started working as a dishwasher in an Italian restaurant, but listened to English conversation and hung out in places where I could hear and practice my English everyday. I worked for the restaurant for many years, saving up my money. One day, I had enough money to open my own restaurant.

Today, my restaurant is flourishing. It is a favorite to local politicians and to tourists. I love my America.

Appendix E- Thinking From Another Perspective Worksheet



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