Writing About Books of Choice:

Building a Classroom Community in a Middle School English Language Arts Classroom

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative dissertation study examines the use of shared writing about books of choice in an eighth-grade English Language Arts classroom. Drawing on data collected from 23 eighth-grade students, this study investigates how sharing writing in a classroom community impacts how students connect with a novel and how sharing writing helps to shape students' writing practices and identity. The qualitative data collected for this study includes open-ended surveys, written reflections, interviews, teacher-researcher field notes, and examples of student work and writing. The findings of this study demonstrate the value of book choice, the benefits of peer interaction and feedback, and the usefulness of multimodal composition. These findings present ways that secondary teachers can improve both writing instruction and literature study.

DEDICATION

For Duffy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to start by thanking the teachers who, directly and indirectly, inspired me to become a teacher: my high school Mock Trial advisor Mr. Bob Fenster, my college literature professors Dr. William Vesterman and Dr. George Kearns, and my college film professor Dr. John Belton. These teachers helped me unlock my passion for literature, film, and writing and provided me examples of what good teachers should be. Even though they probably do not remember me, I would not be where I am today without their influence.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In my first year of teaching English, I floated between three different classrooms each day. When I started teaching *The Odyssey* to my 9th-grade students that year, I opened the unit by having my classes listen to a segment from *This American Life* that discussed the hypothetical choice of having flight or invisibility as a superpower. I used the podcast to spark a discussion about superpowers and what it means to be a hero before I introduced Odysseus and his epic journey. When I finished the lesson, the veteran teacher, whose room I was in that period, came up to me and complimented the lesson, saying he might have to steal it to use when he taught *The Odyssey*. When I reflect on this moment and how much it helped my confidence as I struggled through my first year of teaching, I think how it never would have happened if I had had my own classroom. Sharing classrooms allowed others to see my teaching and to share feedback that helped me become a better teacher. Moving from classroom to classroom made my teaching more public than it would have been otherwise. It made me part of a small community of English Language Arts (ELA) teachers, which became an integral part of my development as an ELA teacher.

Even when I think back to my time in school, communities played an important role in my growth as a learner. Being a part of the Mock Trial and Model UN clubs in high school made me a better writer and public speaker. Working with the editorial staff to revise and publish my movie reviews at *The Daily Targum* in college taught me how to collaborate better. After college, I became part of an online community of aspiring

comedy writers. Even though we only knew each other through online pseudonyms and Facebook, Blogger, and fantasy baseball interactions, sharing and discussing writing with members of the community helped me become more comfortable with expressing myself in public spaces and taught me how to navigate the strange new world of social media.

When I became a teacher, my growth as an educator was shaped by my participation in writing communities like the Central Arizona Writing Project, a local site of the National Writing Project, and communities of English teachers like the National Council of Teachers of English and the Arizona English Teacher Association, along with a community of scholarship in my doctoral program at Arizona State University. These communities challenged me and gave me opportunities to grow, reflect, and learn with others. These communities strengthened my scholarship, my career, and my life. For example, participating in the Central Arizona Writing Project community with teachers from all grade levels helped me to better see the full scope of K-20 education and what students need to succeed throughout their educational careers. And being a doctoral student at ASU has given me the opportunity to travel to conferences where I get to interact with and learn from educators from all over the country. However, over the last year, as I moved across the country to a new and unfamiliar place, I've become disconnected from those communities and this isolation has challenged my writing, teaching, and scholarship.

Participation in professional communities of practice shaped me into the teacher, writer, scholar, and person I am today. I often wonder how many students have these opportunities to learn and work in community? I participated in groups in high school because my parents bought me a car. My college was paid for, so I could spend time writing movie reviews instead of having to work during the school year. Throughout most of my teaching career, I've been single, childless, and living in a state with a low cost of living. I had time to take advantage of opportunities like workshops and conferences that teachers with families or second jobs might not have been able to. My first year of teaching was a year of significant budget cuts. The activity bus that took students back home after participating in after-school clubs or events was one of the first things to go. All the great extracurricular organizations that my school had to offer--book club, film club, creative writing club, etc.--were only available to students with access to transportation, which is a problem in a school where some students lived in rural areas over twenty miles away.

Since all students don't have the time and resources to participate in the extracurricular communities that can be so beneficial to them, I believe there is a need to bring those communities into the classroom during the school day. This means opening up the work of the ELA classroom to develop relationships and build community.

As a classroom teacher, I first began to experiment with writing in a community out of necessity. Teaching Advanced Placement Literature and Composition to classes of over thirty high school seniors, I used peer review groups to help with providing feedback on practice exam essays students wrote in class. I had students review each others' essays using the exam rubrics provided by the College Board. Although I initially made use of the strategy for purely logistic purposes, as the year went on, I could see students begin to understand the writing strengths and weaknesses of their peers. By the end of the year, students asked if they could read each other's work more frequently. They wanted to read essays written by students outside of their peer review groups. What began as a time-saving measure evolved into a valuable means of developing connections between student writers. Since then, I have wanted to learn more about the ways communities develop within a classroom and how writing about literature can be a means to help form connections between students.

This dissertation study is intended to investigate how the work of writing about literature within an ELA curriculum can help build a classroom community of writers (Wenger, 1998). My hope is to examine the ways a classroom community may form through writing in connection to literature within one secondary class to better understand the way English language arts teachers can use writing to build and sustain meaningful community for students and as a way of understanding the kinds of habits, practices, and

strategies classroom teachers and students use in forming and enacting community engagement. I am interested in understanding the role of writing in creating, communicating, and sustaining a community within a literature classroom.

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theories represent a "dominant paradigm" for literacy research (Prior, 2006, p. 54). Although there is no single agreed-upon definition of sociocultural theory (Perry, 2012), this line of work is often based on the premise that learning takes place within social and cultural constructs, such as a community or school environment (Vygostky, 1978). Bazerman (2016) presented two aspects of sociocultural studies that serve as conceptual signposts for this research: learning as participating in social situations (p. 11) and learning as shaped by ideologies of schooling (p. 17).

The goal of a learner is determined, in large part, by the context in which she is working. Good writers often spend large amounts of writing time on understanding the requirements and nuances of the writing situation (Selzer, 1983). Bazerman (2016) described this as "continued participation in the forum" of writing, where a writer adjusts and adapts "to meet the needs and opportunities of the situation" (p. 12). When applied to the high school English language arts classroom, this perspective means that students

work in connection to one another, the teacher, and others to engage with reading and writing practices.

Building on Bazerman's work, Beach, Newell, and VanDerHeide (2016) noted that writing development is "more likely to occur when students are given ample time and support for making their own rhetorical decisions related to topic, genre, audience, and purpose" (p. 89). This coincides with Applebee's (2000) call for writing as participation in social action, where "writers negotiate their place within the many communities of which they are a part, with a variety of resources and competing demands." In a sociocultural classroom, students learn to negotiate the demands of reading and writing, within the context of audience, genre, and purpose.

When students are given the opportunity to grow and develop through authentic reading and writing, there is the "potential to make and remake selves, identities, and relationships" (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 8). Moje and Lewis (2007) also argued that learning "both involves and requires participation in something" (2007, p. 2). This participation could take the form of participation within a discourse community (Gee, 2004), including discourses that are not always recognized as "legitimate" literacy practices (Bartlett, 2007). Knowledge in these areas leads to identify transformation (Gee, 2001; Lave, 1996), changing a student's identity from a completer of assigned tasks to an active participant within a literate community.

The ideologies of schools and teachers also impact student learning (Bazerman, 2016). Examining prompts used in writing assessment shows that half of writing prompts do not specify any context or audience for the writing and some prompts specify the exact stance students are supposed to take in their writing (Olinghouse, Zheng, & Morlock, 2012). This indicates that state tests do not consider the sociocultural aspects of writing, rather, they are interested in measuring less contextualized skills and strategies. Furthermore, a test-centric ideology can lead to situations where students are only writing short, formulaic, or timed essays, or not writing at length or for diverse audiences and purposes (Applebee & Langer, 2013). Many ELA teachers are increasingly driven by the demands of external testing and assessment and curriculum and instruction have focused more and more on prescriptive and narrow forms of writing (Early, 2019). This runs counter to writing research, instruction, and curriculum that places value on learning to write diverse genres for authentic purposes (Early & DeCosta, 2012), developing writers in community with support and feedback and creating an environment that motivates writers (Graham & Harris, 2016).

Shifting writing instruction ideologies away from the closed forms of testing can have a profound impact on student writing development (Addison & McGee, 2010; Behizadeh, 2014; Kixmiller, 2004). Students respond well to writing environments where their ideas are not limited by the teacher (Aukerman, 2013) and when they can write for

real audiences and purposes (Behizadeh, 2014). Moving away from the prescribed prompts of a testing ideology provides students opportunities to develop the decision-making skills that are "essential for writing development" (Beach et al., 2016, p. 98). Furthermore, the testing ideology does not provide developing writers with the opportunity to experience writing in the myriad of forms it exists in the world beyond the classroom. Kwok et al (2016) note that "meaningful writing opportunities matter a great deal in every arena *but* school" (p. 257). To develop as writers, students need to engage in sociocultural situations of writing. They need to have the opportunity to go beyond prescriptive test prompts, literary analysis, the five-paragraph essays, and worksheets and "use literacy for a broad range of life activities that index goals and desires beyond the moment of instruction" (Kwok et al., 2016, p. 260).

Communities of Practice

One way to develop social situations that grow learners is to establish classroom communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998) defined communities of practice as spaces of learning that "emphasizes the learning that people have done together" (p. 4). Li et al. (2009) traced the evolution of the concepts of communities of practice as moving from a means of establishing professional identity to a focus on personal growth and, eventually, into a tool for improving competitiveness. For the purpose of this study, I draw from the earlier conceptualization of communities of

practice, focusing on interactions between the participants of a community of learning rather than the organizational structure aspects of communities of practice.

Wenger (1998) further defined a community of practice as a joint enterprise of mutual engagement that shares member-developed communal resources. Although communities of practice are often discussed in terms of corporate structure and training, Wenger's conceptualization of communities of practice fits perfectly in the environment of a classroom. Two of Wenger's (1998) indicators of a community of practice, "sustained mutual relationships" and "shared ways of engaging or doing things together" (p. 125) also reflect the structure of an effective sociocultural classroom. Developing relationships with and between students and working together as a learning community are admirable goals for a classroom learning environment. By developing a community of practice, a teacher can encourage social situations and identity reinforcing aspects of sociocultural learning.

Drawing in part on the work of Lave and Wenger (1991), Graham (2018) proposed the basic components for forming and sustaining writing communities. These components include purpose, members, tools, and actions. Purpose includes goals, norms, stance, and identity of the writing community. Members of a writing community include the writers of a text and the audience for the text. Members can also include mentors, like teachers or family members, who influence and guide writers and collaborators. The tools

of a writing community can vary greatly, ranging from the crayons of kindergarten writing groups to digital tools (like Slack or Google Docs) being used by writers on a collaborative blog. Actions are the methods that the community uses to carry out writing tasks. All of these components of the writing community impact the writers and collaborators within the community and help to shape the writing produced by the community.

In this dissertation study, I examine how classroom communities of practice can be formed through daily classroom literacy instruction, more specifically, through students writing about the literature they read within an ELA classroom. Wegner (1998a) and Graham (2018) both detailed the components of a community: mutual relationships, shared collaboration, purpose, tools, and action. This study works to examine ways English educators may use writing in response and connection to literature to develop and nurture these five components of community in their classrooms.

Multimodal Literacy

Within the broader scope sociocultural theory, I make use of Kalantizis and Cope's (2004) concept of multiliteracies, which developed from the work of The New London Group (2000) and Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez's (1992) concept of funds of knowledge. Employing these lenses allows for a broad and inclusive view of literacy, including what it means to think of literacy as a social practice (Street, 2003). The

concept of multiliteracies considers the ways diverse "modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2004, p. 5). Extending the work of the New London Group involves taking steps towards critical digital invention (Mirra, Morrell, & Filipiak, 2018). According to Mirra et al. (2018), in addition to consuming multimodal content, the future of multiliteracies must involve creating and sharing content among diverse and dynamic groups. Connected learning (Ito et al., n.d.), learning that values using technology tools in the support of "interest-driven, peer-supported, and academically-oriented learning experiences when used to design activities that encourage production, open networking, and shared purpose among learners" (Mirra et al., 2018, p. 18). In this study, I engage multiliteracies through assignments that fit the mold of connected learning. The curriculum for the instructional unit in the study is made up of assignments which require students to engage in using public facing digital literacy forms meant to be shared and commented on by peers.

Definition of Terms

In this section I define several terms that I use throughout this dissertation. I do not claim that these definitions are the only and absolute way to view these concepts, I only intend to clarify my conception of the terms and how I use them throughout this study.

This study investigates how a classroom community of practice is formed. I am basing my definition of *community of practice* in Wenger's (1998) two indicators of a community of practice: "sustained mutual relationships" and "shared ways of engaging and doing things together" (p. 125). I would emphasize Wenger's use of the words *mutual* and *together* in my definition of a classroom community of practice. When I refer to a community of practice in this study, I refer to a classroom structure where students are active participants and collaborators in shaping the classroom experience.

In this study when I refer to *book choice* or *books of choice,* I mean giving students free and absolute choice in the reading. I provided students with library resources to find out about books to read, but placed no restrictions on their reading, nor did I give them any reading lists to choose from.

Occasionally in this student I refer to *authentic writing*. I define authentic writing in terms of classroom writing: writing is authentic when it has an audience beyond the classroom teacher and a purpose beyond being submitted for a grade.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To better understand how to develop reading communities within the context of a middle school English Language Arts classroom, this review of the literature focuses on three areas of research to inform my study:

1. The Challenges of Creating Communities of Practice in Secondary Schools: How can an active and functioning community of practice be developed within the construct of a classroom where traditional hierarchies of teacher-student may prevent the organic formation of a community (Levinson & Brantmeier, 2006; Wenger, 1998)? This section of the literature review documents the challenges of establishing communities of practice in secondary schools.
2. Classroom Communities of Practice: How do communities of practice form in the secondary ELA classroom? Reading communities are often in the form of book clubs, both in class (Lapp & Fisher, 2009) and extracurricular (Alvermann, Young, Green, & Wisenbaker, 1999; Appleman, 2006; Whittingham & Huffman, 2009). Writing communities can range from writing partnerships (Hsu, 2009), peer writing groups (Saidy & Early, 2016), and classroom publications (Ife, 2012).

3. Writing About Literature: How can the ways teachers ask students to respond to literature help form classroom communities of practice? This section considers reader response (Rosenblatt, 1968) and out-of-school writing (Hesse, 2005) and their practical applications in creating a classroom community of practice.

The Challenges of Creating Communities of Practice in Secondary Schools

Wegner (1998b) identified three elements of a community of practice: domain, community, and practice. Francois (2013) described the process of building a school-wide community of practice to encourage reading development and engagement. Francois' study is structured around Wegner's three elements, focusing on the domain as time and space reserved for reading, community as emphasizing the social dimension of reading, and practice as a reading apprenticeship. By nurturing the domain, community and practice of a community of practice, the teachers at the site of Francois's study were able to "humanize" reading (p. 30). Francois noted that the school had attempted to improve reading by simply emphasizing independent reading in an individual classroom. That strategy did not improve student reading engagement and growth. Francois argues that an "integrated and multidimensional approach to reading instruction may be an important path for schools to take" (p. 31). Developing a community of practice is one way to develop such an integrated and multidimensional approach. However, the

traditional structures of school often make it challenging to establish authentic and functioning communities of practice.

Luttrell and Parker (2001) used a comparative case study to examine the disconnect between the literacy identities of students and the structural literacy of the school environment. Luttrell and Parker described students sitting in rows and being "told about literature" rather than experiencing it for themselves (p. 240). Luttrell and Parker described students who read and write--and who enjoy reading and writing--but who also feel that there is a "split between private and public reading" practices (p. 244). The literacy environment across the four high schools that Luttrell and Parker examined is not a community of practice, as it lacks "the shared ways of doing things together" that defines a community of practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 125). The students Luttrell and Parker interviewed desired something more from their literacy environment at school, but because the school lacked the elements of a community of practice, one student could only hope that college would become the "symbolic place where she will become the reader, writer and artist that she cannot be at Central High" (p. 245).

The schools described in Luttrell and Parker (2001) never achieve the formation of a community of practice because of what Levinson and Brantmeier (2006) defined as the two challenges of developing communities of practice: the challenge of authority and the challenge of authenticity. Luttrell and Parker described the hierarchical structure of

Central High School, where students are tracked into either vocational or academic tracks. This is an example of what Levinson and Brantmeier called the "institutionally sanctioned power over students" that teachers and administrators wield (p. 326). To establish a classroom community of practice, teachers must be willing to cede some authority to students and to value student voice and input in curriculum and class activities. Furthermore, Levinson and Brantmeier also identified a challenge of authenticity. To develop a community of practice, educators must consider how learning can be "transferred to authentic contexts outside of the school" (p. 327).

George (2004) described a professional community of practice (a middle school faculty book club) transitioning into a school-wide community where teachers and students are active and equal participants. When middle school students noticed their teachers reading young adult novels, they wanted to join in the discussions. George noted that allowing for the formation of this teacher-student reading community resulted in more frequent discussion of literature and reading lives. Both middle schools described in the article reported a positive change in school climate and interactions between students and teachers. Atwell (2015) has argued that adolescents need to see and interact with adults and peers who read and write. As a teacher-practitioner, she also advocates for teachers developing writing communities where teachers and students are co-participants.

These studies demonstrate the challenges of forming communities of practice in school environments. Wegner (1998a) noted that relationships and shared collaboration are essential components of communities of practice. When the attempts to create community are driven by teachers or administrators without student input or buy-in, the communities are being set up to fail. George's (2004) study demonstrated the path to successfully building communities: welcoming student input and participation. The next section of this literature review looks at studies that document ways to successfully form literacy communities in schools.

English Language Arts Communities of Practice

Broadly speaking, communities in secondary classrooms often form centered on either reading or writing. Although this study is a writing study, it is a study of writing about literature. This study makes use of classroom-based teacher-practitioner research to shed light on how reading and writing communities can be blended together in the secondary English language arts classroom. To that end, I include both reading and writing communities in this section of the literature review.

One way adolescents may form a community of practice within and beyond the ELA classroom community is through the formation and practice of book clubs. These book club can be formed in both in-school and out-of-school spaces. For example, Alvermann,et. al. (1999) documented a weekly after-school book club that met at a public

library. Calling their book clubs Read and Talk clubs, the researchers analyzed the talk and discussions of the adolescent participants and situated those conversations within the context of social and institutional constructs. The Read and Talk clubs described in the study quickly evolve into communities of practice. The club participants quickly reject the notion of all reading the same book or the same genre and, with the adult facilitators, co-construct a vision for the club where participants read what they want and focus on learning more about books and themselves through conversation. The participants also wanted to avoid discussing literature in the same way they did in school, viewing the library as a space to escape the restrictions of classroom literature study. The researchers conclude that there is a need for "institutional reform that would ostensibly liberate the learner from the institutionalized context of schooling" (Alvermann et al., 1999, p. 257), but they also acknowledge the limited number of successful examples of such reform to use as a model.

As an example of an in-school book club that met outside of school hours, Appleman (2006) detailed student participation in a before-school Breakfast Book Club. In the Breakfast Book Club, Appleman documented talk about books that blended in-school and out-of-school discourse. Participants made specific references to the text to support interpretations that ranged from the aesthetic to personal responses. From analyzing the type and frequency of talk at the book club meetings, Alverman noted that

participation in the book club led to increased motivation and enjoyment in the student readers. The Breakfast Book Club also served as an inspirational reading community, as other teachers and students went on to create smaller book clubs within the school.

In another study of a before-school book club, Whittingham and Huffman (2009) documented the improvements in the reading motivation of middle school students after participation in a weekly, semester-long book club. Like the Read and Talk clubs of Alvermann, et. al. (2009), the student participants in the Whittingham and Huffman study also had the opportunity to read books of their own choosing. Instead of discussing or analyzing a common text, the participants shared their readings by listening to and giving books talks. Unlike the Alvermann, et. al. (2009) and the Appleman (2006) studies, Whittingham and Huffman focused their research on a single quantitative measure: a 10-question Likert scale to determine reading motivation levels. Although Whittingham and Huffman spent very little time describing the structure of the book club, their research showed a clear positive benefit to participating in reading communities, particularly for reluctant readers.

Book clubs are also a well-documented classroom instructional tool (Daniels, 2002; Gallagher & Kittle, 2018; O'Donnell-Allen, 2006). Lapp and Fisher (2009) examined the role of a book club within a thematically-focused curricular unit in a high school English class. Unlike the more open-ended book clubs of Alvermann (2009) and

Appleman (2006), the students in the Lapp and Fisher study chose what to read from a teacher-provided list of books that related to the unit's theme. The book clubs were also just a part of the curricular unit. One class period (55 minutes) per week was given to book club meetings. These classroom book club meetings used a mixture of writing and discussion. In their book club meetings, students would write about their reading, share what they wrote, and then write in share in response to the initial discussion. Since these book clubs are a part of the class curriculum, the inclusion of a writing component, as opposed to the pure discussion of an extracurricular book club, helps to create a product that teachers can review and assess, even when there are multiple book clubs going on in a single classroom. Lapp and Fisher observed that participation in the book clubs resulted in engaged and active readers, with students eventually developing the knowledge and confidence to suggest supplementary readings and books to be included on the reading lists for future book clubs.

While classroom reading communities often take the same form (book clubs or literature circles) and vary largely in setting and population served, classroom writing communities exist in a variety of forms. A simple way a teacher can nurture a writing community is through partnering students together in writing groups or partnerships. Hsu (2009) described the process of using writing partners in an elementary classroom. Students were paired with a peer, who would become their writing partner for the year.

Writing partners are expected to help and communicate with each other first, before seeking out assistance from the teacher. These writing partnerships contributed to a gradual release of responsibility, where students are taking ownership of their own learning. By comparing two years of using writing partnerships with three previous years without having used them, Hsu documented how her classroom instruction shifted from traditional, teacher-directed instruction to a structure that more resembled a "fitness center" where students are developing their writing skills on their own (Hsu, 2009, p. 158). Although Hsu's study examined an elementary (5th grade) classroom, it demonstrated how writing with others can help develop a classroom community of practice. The methods and teaching practices (writing workshop and collaborative peer feedback) that Hsu documented in her article are transferable and applicable to a secondary classroom environment.

Saidy and Early (2016) documented how peer feedback groups may be used as an instructional method, similar to Hsu's (2009) writing partnerships, and applied to a high school classroom. Randomly sorting students into groups of four, Saidy and Early asked students to read and provide feedback on their group members' essays. But instead of providing feedback using teacher-generated tools like rubrics or checklists, students were asked to write letters to their classmates suggesting revisions. Students then discussed the revision letters and used them to develop a revision plan of action. By framing revision

through peer letter writing and discussion within feedback groups, Saidy and Early transform peer revision from a corrective exercise to an example of dialogic, discussion-based (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003) writing instruction. Through valuing a relationship-driven model of revision, Saidy and Early demonstrated the benefits of creating a classroom writing community that presents writing as "more than just a classroom activity done for the teacher" (p. 59).

Ife (2012) described the process of forming a "community of writing for power" (p. 64) where students read, discuss, and create activist texts. Ife detailed four things that needed to be valued in order to create this classroom community: student opinion, student interest, student voice, and writing assignments. Ife argued that students need to be an integral and involved part of the learning process and that writing assignments need to honor and encourage that involvement. Ife also brought the classroom community together by having students co-create an anthology. Students contributed to the anthology, but they could not submit any random piece. They had to create writing pieces that fit with the themes of the classroom community. Making use of self-publishing resources, Ife printed the anthology and donated a copy to the school media center, creating an even larger and more authentic audience for student work.

These studies demonstrate successful pathways to creating community through reading and writing. these studies also show the benefits of valuing student voice and

relationships. The challenge of forming communities of practice in school environment comes from the power imbalance that often exists between teacher and student. These studies show that a key aspect of forming classroom communities involves the teacher giving students a shared responsibility for classroom learning.

Writing About Literature

This study is intended to look at the formation of writing communities, but the nature of the class and curriculum where I conducted the research means that most of the writing students do in the class involved writing about literature. Rosenblatt (1982) theorized that a reader engages a text in two fashions: the efferent and the aesthetic. Efferent reading is reading for information and aesthetic reading involves making personal connections to the text. Secondary ELA students are most often asked to engage in an efferent reading of texts (Langer, 1998; Vijayarajoo & Samuel, 2017), possibly because such readings are easier to objectively assess. If students do not have the opportunity to engage a full continuum of efferent-aesthetic response, then there is the potential for literature to be seen not as a work of art but merely an exercise or drill completed for a grade (Probst, 1994). Providing opportunities for students to extend beyond efferent readings goes against the grain of standardized instruction. Thomas (2001) comments that "state or national standards, along with high-stakes testing, are wholly incompatible with authentic reading and writing instruction by teachers and

authentic reading and writing by students" (2001, p. 67). Irwing and Knodle frame this dilemma by pointing out that teachers recognize that "good writing, like art, is not a 'paint by numbers' end" (2008, p. 41).

When focusing on formal interpretations of the text, reading assessment has the tendency to become a means of trying to "catch" the students who are not reading (Morgan & Wagner, 2013). Valuing different modes of response and varied approaches to responding to a text creates an opportunity to provide the type of purposeful reading, writing, and thinking that contributes to a positive effect on student learning (Schmoker, 2007). Instead of a teacher providing the "correct" interpretation of the meaning of a text, teachers can allow for what Smagorinsky (2001) calls a cultural theory of reading. Students generating their own ideas about a text, whether through writing or discussion, leads to students developing and understanding the meaning of the text on their own, without being led to a meaning predetermined by the classroom teacher. This can help eliminate the privileging of one reading of a text over another, and values the student interpretation just as much, if not more so, than any teacher-assigned meaning (Probst, 1992). Moving away from teacher-assigned meanings or interpretations of literature could be a valuable step towards establishing the student involvement that is necessary in forming classroom communities.

When considering how students write about literature, one must keep in mind that reading and writing "depend on identical or similar knowledge representations, cognitive processes, and contexts and contextual constraints" (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000, p. 40). Part of the explicit teaching of writing is teaching these similarities and emphasizing the interaction between reading and writing (Graham et al., 2016; Graham, 2008; Shanahan, 1988; Sullivan, Tinberg, & Blau, 2017). There is solid empirical evidence to support the integration of reading and writing, although it should be made clear that just adding writing to a reading curriculum will not necessarily improve reading (Shanahan, 1997). However, when explicit and purposeful reading and writing instruction are integrated, there is evidence that reading can improve writing and that writing can help improve reading.

Hesse (2005) described two paths of writing: school writing ("a dull activity whose sole function is to generate a score") and "writing to accomplish something in a world of writers and readers" (p. 342). These two paths of writing present to Hesse a question of purpose for teachers: what writing should teachers of writing aspire to own? School writing consists largely of analytical writing and research papers (Addison & McGee, 2010; Applebee & Langer, 2013) for an audience of one: the classroom teacher. In order to use writing to help support the development of a classroom community,

writing needs to be purposeful and to be directed towards a public audience (Warner, 2019).

Lapp et al. (2014) described the types of assignments and activities that can help create authentic contexts for student reading and writing. Working with middle school and high school students, the authors encouraged students to become creators of content and not merely consumers of it. One ninth-grade teacher used video peer review to create an online repository of commentary about student writing. In one 10th grade classroom, students used social media to share informational brochures about research topics. Since they were presenting their research publicly, students had to carefully consider the information they included because of the "extensive reach and impact a message can have when shared with a much larger audience" (Lapp et al., 2014, p. 184). A 12th-grade teacher had his students create websites to publicly publish analyses of short stories. The authors argue that creating a public website instead of writing an essay that will only be read by the teacher empowers students to become producers of information and not just consumers of information (p. 186).

Hunter and Caraway (2014) detailed the use of Twitter in a high school English class. Instead of writing about literature only for the teacher, students in the study engaged in literature-focused Twitter conversations with their classmates and peers. The authors frame their study as a means of liberating students from more traditional assigned

works of the English classroom. Even though students didn't select the novel of study, the peer conversations conducted in the Twitter threads encouraged students to reread and re-engage with the text. Hunter and Caraway also noted students developing a "multimodal dexterity" (2014, p. 80), easily transition from digital discussion to in-class discussions to individual journal writing. Hunter and Caraway argued that reimagining the social structure of literacy learning and instruction has the potential to create what Freire (2014, p. 77) called "authentic thinking." These studies demonstrate that providing options for writing about literature in genres that aren't necessarily associated with school writing can be a powerful means of giving students control over their learning, which can hopefully be an impetus for building community in the classroom.

This study uses a sociocultural lens to examine how writing about literature can help form classroom communities of practice. This study takes a qualitative approach, using surveys, analysis of student work and reflection, and interviews with participants. A major focus of writing in secondary English Language Arts classes is responding to or analyzing texts (Applebee & Langer, 2013). Regardless of whether reading and writing are taught in integrated or separate fashion, reading and writing are often linked through the type of writing tasks students are given. And although there are studies that demonstrate the connections between reading and writing performance (Graham & Perin,

2007), there is little research that investigates how writing about literature can help shape classroom communities of practice.

Research Questions

1. In what ways does a curricular unit where eighth-grade students engage in shared writing about literature support them in making connections to their self-selected books they are reading as part of an English language arts curriculum?
2. How does an instructional unit of shared writing about a book of choice help eighth-grade students make connections to one another about reading books within an ELA classroom community?
3. How does an instructional unit of shared writing impact eighth-grade students' identities as readers and writers?
4. How does peer interaction and collaboration in an instructional unit of shared writing shape eighth-grade students' writing processes?

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Setting

This study took place at Western Tech (site and all participant names are pseudonyms), a K-12 public charter school located in the Hawaiian Islands. The school is situated in a suburban community about fifteen miles outside of the nearest major city. The town was originally formed as a place for sugar plantation workers to live. The immediate community surrounding the school is predominantly Asian-American and working class. As a public charter school located near the center of town and local bus stops, Western Tech draws students from all over the state, including rural, suburban, and urban communities. The entire K-12 school has slightly over 1000 students. Since it is a relatively small school, the teachers and staff at Western Tech are a tight-knit community, many of whom have worked together since the school opened in 2006. The demographic breakdown of Western Tech is 44% Asian-American/Pacific Islander, 41% white, 4% African American, and 1% Latinx. 25% of the student body qualifies for free or reduced lunch. 92% of 8th graders read at or above grade level. This study involves students in my own 8th grade blended learning English Language Arts class during the Fall 2019 semester.

Western Tech provides an interesting site to conduct research on building classroom community. Unlike most public schools, which draw students from a local area, Western Tech's students come from all over the island, some taking bus rides of almost two hours to come to the school. At other schools, your classmates are also neighbors and local residents, but students at Western Tech often only see each other at school, meaning that the community bonds that they form are often formed entirely in the classroom. There are also the important concepts of '*Ohana* (family) and *AIna* (place) that are strongly emphasized in island schools and communities. Living on an island far away from the rest of the country, students are taught the importance of valuing each other and valuing the relatively small piece of land we all share. The importance of community is built into day-to-day life on the islands, making it a fascinating setting to study how communities are formed in the classroom.

At Western Tech, 8th grade English is a mandatory course that focuses on literary analysis and close reading of short stories, poetry, drama, novels, and informational texts. All 8th graders take the same version of the course, as there are no advanced or remedial levels of the course offered. As a public charter school, Western Tech aligns curriculum to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), but there is no mandated curriculum for the school and teachers have the freedom to develop their own lessons and content to teach the standards. The class meets three days per week: twice in person for five hour-

long classes (ELA, Science, Math, Social Studies, and Advisory/Elective) and once in a forty-minute synchronous online class facilitated via Zoom. The other two days are set aside for students to work independently on assignments, with teachers providing student support both in-person and virtually.

Participants

I recruited eighth-grade students from my second-period class to participate in this dissertation study. This class had 28 students and 23 agreed to participate. Because all participants were under 18 years of age, I attained parental consent prior to the first week of the study. I presented a recruitment letter to both parents (via email and parent-teacher meeting, when possible) and students (in class) and asked for volunteers willing to participate in the study (see Appendix A for Recruitment Letter). After contacting parents and students, I sent home parental consent and student assent forms for willing participants to sign (see Appendix B).

Of the 23 students who agreed to participate in the study, 16 were female and 7 male. Reflecting the demographics of the school as a whole, 9 participants (39%) self-identified as white, 7 (30%) identified as Asian-American/Pacific Islander (AAPI), 3 identified as Mixed race, 3 as Latinx, and one as black. Since participants were drawn from an 8th-grade class, most participants were either 12 or 13-years-old, with one participant being 14-years-old (see Table 1 for Participant Information).

Table 1

Participant Information

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Race
Albert	13	Male	Mixed
Anita	12	Female	AAPI
Bruce	13	Male	White
Cary	12	Female	AAPI
Chris	13	Male	AAPI
Emily	13	Female	White
Gloria	13	Female	White
Irene	13	Female	White
Isaac	13	Male	Latino
Kara	13	Female	White
Karen	13	Female	White
Kendra	13	Female	Black
Kevin	12	Male	AAPI
Lana	13	Female	White
Lara	13	Female	Mixed
Larry	12	Male	Mixed
Mario	13	Male	Latino
Mary	13	Female	White
Melanie	13	Female	AAPI
Stacy	14	Female	White
Summer	13	Female	AAPI
Teresa	13	Female	Latina
Tori	12	Female	AAPI

After collecting data from all twenty-three participants in the study, I selected seven students to focus on in more detail, providing rich description and to allow the reader to see a more complete picture of the participants. This allowed me to focus more closely on a subset of individuals. I selected the seven focus participants using purposive selection (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) using the following criteria:

1. The focus participants largely represented the demographics of the whole participant group.
2. The focus participants reflected a range of reading and writing experiences.
3. The focus participants had completed all curricular and instructional tasks included within data collection.

Below, I briefly describe each of the selected focus participants. I include details about who they were as readers and writers within my class at the time of the study. I also provide information below about the books students self-selected for this book choice unit and how each student self-identified as a reader and writer at the start of the unit:

Albert

Albert is a mixed-race 13-year-old male who chose to read Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*, a popular young adult dystopian adventure novel. Albert stated that he enjoyed reading for school, especially when he could choose what to read. He was less enamored with writing for school, as he said that he enjoyed creative writing (especially

poetry), but that he did not like writing long essays. When asked in the initial survey, Albert identified as a reader.

Anita

Anita is a 13-year-old Asian-American female who was almost always one of the first students on campus before school started each morning. She would go from room to room looking for teachers who needed help writing things on the board. She was always the first student to question an assignment and she had no qualms about voicing her displeasure with any work or activity that didn't engage her interests. Anita chose to read *Keeping the Castle,* a young adult historical fiction romance in the vein of Jane Austen, by Patrice Kindl. When asked about her reading identity, Anita said that she didn't enjoy reading either for or outside of school.

Chris

Chris is a 13-year-old Asian-American male who loves basketball. He chose to read James Patterson's *Middle School: How I Survived Bullies, Broccoli, and Snake Hill*, the second book in a series about a boy's sometimes comic attempts to feel at home in middle school. When asked about his identity as a reader, Chris said that he sees himself as a reader because he reads every night, although he also pointed out that his ADHD sometimes causes him to skip over parts of books.

Kendra

Kendra is a 13-year-old black female who loves creative writing. She loves to write poetry and stories and is constantly writing down ideas and drafts in her notebook. When asked about reading, Kendra said that she will read for school assignments but does not read for pleasure. Kendra chose to read a No Fear edition of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that prints the text of Shakespeare's play on one page and a modern English "translation" of Shakespeare's text on the opposite page.

Lana

Lana is a 13-year-old white female who wants to be a poet and who is open and honest about her struggles with dyslexia. She noted that she enjoys reading. She prefers reading in school because she can get help from a teacher if she doesn't understand something. Lana read two books for the unit, *Homeroom Diaries* by James Patterson, a realistic teen novel about a girl coming back to high school after a mental breakdown, and *A Monster Calls* by Patrick Ness, a fantasy novel about a young boy struggling with his mother's illness. She also read the classic children's novel *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell, although she didn't use that book as a text for any of the assignments in the unit.

Stacy

Stacy is a 14-year-old white female who loves rabbits and memes. She chose to read Harper Lee's classic story of discrimination in the Jim Crow south, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Stacy identified as a strong reader who liked to read for school. She pointed

out that she doesn't read a lot outside of school because of difficulty finding books that hold her interest.

Tori

Tori is a 12-year-old Asian-American female who loves mixed martial arts. Tori was one of the few students to read a non-fiction book in this unit. Her interest in MMA led her to read mixed martial artist and wrestler Ronda Rousey's memoir *My Fight/Your Fight*. Tori stated that she saw the value of reading but did not view herself as a reader because she doesn't enjoy the act of reading.

Researcher

I served as the researcher and classroom teacher in this study. As a participant-observer (Spradley, 2016), I was conscious of bias or influence my dual role as teacher and research could create (Tracy, 2012). For example, this was my first time teaching 8th grade, as the bulk of my 10-year teaching career has been teaching high school. My teaching experience has also been in schools that have been predominantly white and upper-middle-class and in the southwestern United States. I have never before worked at a school with a majority-minority population. After leaving the state where I had spent my entire teaching career in the southwest United States, I came to a new state, a new city, and a new school as a long-term substitute teacher. While I was the classroom

teacher and the researcher of this study, I began in a place of transition professionally and as an outsider in every respect. I had never met students prior to this study and did not have a connection to their school, the faculty, or the community. As a white male who only speaks English, I was something of an outsider among the multicultural and multilingual students of Western Tech. As an outsider to the school, I came in with no knowledge of how a blended learning school operated and very little in the way of specified curriculum to teach. At a relatively small school like Western Tech, students often have the same teacher more than once (for example, most sixth graders will have the same English teacher in seventh grade as well), which means that students form strong relationships with their teacher. Since I came into the school year with no such relationships with students, and since I would only interact face-to-face with the classes two days per week, it made sense for me to develop a unit that focused on building a classroom community.

As the teacher of record, I designed the curriculum and assignments for this study with the goal of building a community and with the diverse background and interests of my students in mind. I didn't know my students or the school community which would make providing tailored book recommendations difficult, so I wanted to build choice into the unit that would allow students to read about topics and stories that would interest them. Since I haven't had much experience working with Asian-American/Pacific

Islander literature, I prepared by finding sources like the Los Angeles Public Libraries Teen Web (Los Angeles Public Library, n.d.) that I could use to provide to students to help them find books that reflect their culture and heritage.

In addition to my role as the classroom teacher, I also served as the researcher for this study. This dual role meant I had to be cognizant of both roles at all times. As a teacher, I had to focus on the needs of my students and curriculum requirements. As a researcher, I needed to be able to step back and critically consider my own teaching and my interactions with students. I chose to conduct this study in the class period immediately before lunch as that would give me the lunch period to step away from my role as a teacher and keep a field notes journal where I reflected on my teaching and my interactions with students.

Instructional Design

I conducted this study over a seven-week period within the first semester of the 2019-2020 school year (see Table 2). I named this unit "Engaging Literature" and focused on teaching students how to respond to an independent reading book of the student's choosing. For this unit, I gave students free rein to choose whatever text they pleased and from any literary genre (e.g. nonfiction, fiction, graphic novel, etc.). The blended learning environment at Western Tech impacted the instruction of the unit. Only meeting face-to-face with students for two sixty-minute class periods meant that I

emphasized scheduling peer review and sharing activities on face-to-face days. During the one virtual class each week, we would often read mentor texts or I would present mini-lessons about the current assignment. I always tried to start the writing process in the classroom, but much of the writing and creating that students did during the unit occurred on their independent days at home.

Writing Tasks

I chose the writing tasks for the unit based on several needs:

1. Assessment - I needed to address school expectations for writing about texts on the Smarter Balanced Assessment (Smarter Balanced, n.d.), the state standardized assessment that all eighth graders in the state take. To meet this need, I included a character analysis paragraph as one of the writing assignments. The unit first focused on using the self-selected novel to address 8th-grade curricular expectations such as analyzing a character and integrating quotes from literature in writing.
2. Making Connections to Books - I wanted to provide opportunities for students to make connections with their chosen book, which addressed my first research question. This meant including writing tasks that could be completed over the course of reading the book rather than only once the students had finished reading their book. To meet this need and to allow students multiple opportunities to

explore their connections with the book, I included a “Bookstagram” assignment, where students used a quote from their novel as the basis for an image and caption like would be posted to Instagram, and the literacy letter, where students wrote a letter to their parents about the book they were reading.

3. Sharing with Others - The need to provide opportunities for students to share their reading and writing and to collaborate to improve their writing assignments, which addressed my second and fourth research questions. With every assignment, I provided students time to provide peer feedback and to read and share their work with their classmates.
4. Reflection - The need to provide opportunities for students to reflect on their reading and writing identity, which addresses my third research question. In addition to having students read and write, I wanted to have them think about and reflect upon their reading and writing identity. To meet this need, I required students to reflect upon the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges of each of their writing assignments. I also included questions about reading and writing identity in the initial survey and the one-on-one interview I conducted with each student.

Instructional Plan

During Week 1, I asked students to complete an initial survey (see Appendix C) and to find a book to read using sources like the IndieBound Kids Indie Next List

(American Booksellers Association, n.d.), a quarterly list of books recommended for young people by owners and employees of independent bookstores, YALSA's Teen Book Finder (American Library Association, n.d.), an app from the American Library Association that searches notable and award-winning books for young people, and the local public library website (unfortunately, Western Tech does not have its own dedicated school library). Students chose a book to read and wrote me a brief note explaining why they selected their book.

During Week 2, as students began to read their book, I asked them to practice pulling quotes from a book as evidence to support a thesis or argument about literature. Western Tech has a school-wide annotation strategy that students are taught starting in 6th grade, so students had some prior experience in annotating a text. As students read their novels throughout the course of the unit, I asked students to keep a list of "Golden Lines," which are meaningful, original, or unforgettable quotes (826 National, 2011). The first of these quotes they included in their "Bookstagram" image and explanation. Students selected a quote from their novel and used a graphic design app (Canva, Google Drawings, or Adobe Spark) to create an image of the quote, similar to what people post to the #bookquote hashtag on Instagram (see Appendix D). Students also wrote a paragraph explaining the significance of their chosen quote and why they selected the quote for inclusion in the assignment.

Week 3, students wrote their first practice analysis paragraph, where they were asked to write about literature using at least one direct quote from the book as evidence for their analysis (see Appendix E). This assignment was designed to mimic the type of writing that students are expected to do on the state standardized test in the spring. Using the TREE model for organizing writing (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2002), I modeled the assignment using the book I was reading at the time. Students then shared their paragraphs with partners and made use of the Praise-Question-Polish strategy for peer feedback (Neubert & Mcnelis, 1990).

In Week 4, we began to write for an audience outside the classroom. Students drafted a literacy letter (Frey, Fisher, & Moore, 2009) to a parent or guardian (see Appendix F). Western Tech emphasizes strong parental involvement in student learning, so this assignment was a way to connect parents and guardians to what students are doing in the class. In their letter, students were asked to address three things: what book they were reading and why they chose to read it, their progress in the book and what had happened so far, and what they thought of the book. Classes again use the Praise-Question-Polish strategy during peer review. My original intention was to have students email their letters to their parents and BCC me on the email, but I learned that Western Tech's internet filters blocked students from using their school account to email anyone other than a teacher or fellow student. Therefore, I altered the assignment by asking

students to share their letters with their parents and write a reflection about what it was like to have to share writing with an audience outside of school.

Week 5 focused on using a non-textual form of composition. Students wrote and recorded a ninety-second book talk (Fisher & Frey, 2018; Hudson, 2016) and shared it via a class Flipgrid, a website that allows for recording and sharing quick videos with a closed community. Students could use the web cameras on their laptops or their phones to record their book talks and upload them to Flipgrid, where other students in the class could view and comment on the videos. After viewing a model book talk that I made about Elizabeth Acevedo's *The Poet X*, students first drafted a script for their book talk. For the peer feedback session, students partnered up and read their partner's script aloud. Writers listened to another student read their writing and used that experience to revise their writing to sound the way they intended. They also used the oral reading to time their scripts and revise to make sure their book talk fit within the time limits of the Flipgrid platform (see Appendix G).

Week 6, as students were mostly finishing their books, they focused on the final writing piece of the unit: a book review. In this assignment I asked students to brainstorm criteria they could use to evaluate a book and then use those criteria to evaluate the novel (see Appendix H). After reading a couple of full-length reviews (John Green's review of *The Hunger Games* (Green, 2008) and Pete Wells' famously scathing review of Guy's

American Kitchen and Bar (Wells, 2012), I had students look at the shorter reviews that are posted to websites like Amazon or Google Books. Students once again used Praise-Question-Polish to peer review, and they also used Slick Write (slickwrite.com), a website that analyzes writing for qualities like word frequency, sentence length, and percentage of passive voice used, to analyze their word choice and sentence fluency.

Week 7 focused on publishing writing during a guided instructional workshop day. Students created a portfolio website in Google Sites, collecting all of their work for the unit and golden lines all in one place. The websites allowed for anyone with a Western Tech Gmail address to see the work posted to the site. This also provided an opportunity for students to share their work with peers in other grades or classes, or even to share with their other teachers. I also used the time during this week to finish up interviews and to allow students an opportunity to revise assignments or make up missing work.

Note on the Public Sharing of Work: Since there are privacy issues with young students posting to social media, students did not actually post any work to Instagram or Snapchat or site with open access to the general public. Instead, they shared their images with their classmates in peer review and included the image in their portfolio website. I also encouraged students (with parent permission) to offer their images to be shared on

the official school Instagram account, which is often used to share what students are doing in the classroom with other teachers, students, and community members.

Table 2

Instructional Calendar

Week	Instructional Focus	Writing Activities
1	Choosing the right book	To-read list
2	Quoting literature	"Bookstagram" image
3	Character	Practice analysis paragraph (character)
4	Writing to a specific audience	Literacy letter to parent/guardian
5	Revision	Book Talk
6	Diction and Fluency	Book Review
7	Publishing and Reflection	Unit Reflections

Data Collection

My goal in data collection was to ensure data triangulation through a convergence of multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2017). The data I collected included all student writing, initial surveys, semi-structured interviews conducted in the last three weeks of the unit, and participant observation and reflection. Data sources are described in more detail below.

Initial Student Survey

The initial student survey (see Appendix C) included a mix of demographic questions and questions regarding how students perceived of themselves as readers and

writers. These questions included asking students if they enjoyed reading and writing both for school and outside of school and questions about the importance of collaboration and reading and writing at Western Tech. This was a self-designed survey that I distributed in the first week of the unit. These questions helped provide an initial set of data for examining participants' reading and writing identities, the topic of my third research question.

Interviews

I conducted an interview with each participant using a semi-structured format (Roulston, 2010, p. 15) to acquire more details about the process of forming and sustaining writing communities in the classroom, asking follow-up questions and modified the order of questions asked as needed (see Appendix I for interview protocol). I conducted interviews with participants within the final three weeks of the study. I conducted one interview with each participant to examine how an active reading community develops in a classroom environment. Western Tech reserves two days per week for meeting face-to-face or virtually with individual students, so I used that time to conduct the interviews either on campus in my classroom or virtually via Zoom. With participant permission, I recorded the interviews (audio only, for the interviews conducted via Zoom) to aid in transcription.

Writing Assignments

I collected all the major writing assignments produced by participants during the instructional unit. The writing samples I collected include:

1. A “Bookstagram” image featuring a quote and visual representation of the quote from a novel. This sample also includes a written explanation of why the student chose the quote and why they chose to represent the quote the way they did.
2. A literary analysis paragraph about the main character of the novel.
3. A literacy letter (Frey et al., 2009) written to a parent about their chosen book.
4. A book talk (Fisher & Frey, 2018) video where students present a quote from their chosen book and explain why they chose the quote and what they think of the book.
5. A written book review about their chosen book. Students developed criteria for evaluating their book and then wrote a review where they used those criteria to make an evaluation of the book they chose to read for the unit.

Written Reflections

I collected written reflections from students throughout the unit. I collected reflections after the completion of each assignment and a final reflection that was completed the final day of the unit.

1. Assignment Reflections - After completing each of the writing assignments listed above, I asked students to provide self-assessment of and reflection on their own work. I did this by asking students to share a rose (a positive or something that went well with the assignment) and a "thorn" (a negative or an area of challenge or struggle with the assignment). For each assignment I also asked how peer review had helped shape their draft. And since the literacy letter was written to a specific audience, in the reflection for that assignment I asked how writing for that audience had impacted their writing process. These reflections were collected and included with the writing samples.
2. Final Reflection- On the last day of the unit, I collected answers to five reflective questions (Appendix J) from the participants. I included questions such as What is your favorite thing that you read/wrote? and How do you think you've changed as a reader/writer? I use these final reflections to determine what worked and what didn't work with a unit or class. I collected the reflections and used them to deepen my understanding of participants' motivations towards reading, writing, and schooling in general.

Field Notes

My class was scheduled during the period right before lunch. After teaching, I used the lunch break to take field notes (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Tracy, 2012) from

the previous class period. I keep a small spiral notebook that I use as a teaching journal and after every class period, I wrote in my notebook and noted any meaningful interactions with students and included observations about how the students were going about completing their work during class time. I also made notes of who I would need to follow up with to further discuss their work and documented student feedback and responses to the assignments in the unit. I tried my best to jot down accurate direct quotes from students, but since I have no recordings or other documentation for those quotes, I didn't include any of those quotes in the findings for this study.

In keeping my field notes throughout the course of the unit, I tried to capture the activities in the unit that might not be reflected in the student work collected. One of the things I focused on when writing in my notebook after each class session was the interactions between students I observed, especially during the sessions that focused on sharing and peer feedback. Interactions between students are an essential aspect of creating a classroom community, and I used my field notes to help make sure those interactions were documented.

Data Analysis

I began the process of data analysis after collecting and sorting the data into digital folders for each participant stored on a flash drive. Within each participant folder, I included each piece of data collected as a separate file. I used a consistent naming

system for all the files to aid in organization. For example, I had a folder for the participant Albert. Within that folder were files named Albert IS (for initial survey), Albert LL (for literacy letter), Albert Interview, etc. I then loaded all the files into the CAQDAS application Dedoose ("Dedoose," n.d.). The file naming system I used allowed me to easily sort the data in Dedoose's media tab. If I wanted to look at all the data collected from one participant, I could do so by typing the participant name into the search filter. If I wanted to read through data by type (all the initial surveys, for example), I could enter the assignment name into the search filter. I structured my first read by going through the data in the order of the instructional calendar (Table 2). In this read through of the data, I did not start coding or taking notes. I was reading the data as a teacher looking at the data to see what students produced during the unit and that the data set was complete. I started with the initial surveys, then moved on to the Bookstagram assignment, and so on. In my second reading of the data, I reread the data one participant at a time. Using the title filter in Dedoose, I isolated and read all of Albert's work, then all of Anita's, and so on.

First Cycle Coding

In my first coding cycle, I created in vivo codes using the words of the participants (Saldana, 2015). As I read through the data sources, I used the highlighting and coding features of Dedoose to highlight excerpts and pull those excerpts into in vivo

codes. For example, one of the first codes I created came from Albert's initial survey, where he answered a question about in-school reading by saying that his reading enjoyment depended on the book and that he enjoyed "some more than others." To value the voice of my student participants, I tried to use in vivo coding throughout the first coding cycle, but I also used general descriptive codes when an excerpt would have been too long to make a clear and understandable code. For the video data source, I used Dedoose's memo feature to manually transcribe meaningful excerpts from the book talk video. With the transcribed excerpts in a memo, I could then highlight and code the excerpts in the same way I did the text-based documents like the surveys or literacy letter. This initial coding cycle resulted in over 30 codes, including in vivo codes like "reading bores me" and "I don't have a lot of time" and more general codes such as "Reading/Writing Connection" and "Collaboration with Others".

Second Coding Cycle

In this cycle I coded the codes (Saldana, 2015) to better organize my data before I began to develop broader categories based on the first round of 30 codes. Dedoose has a tab that shows all the codes that have been created and the excerpted text associated with those codes. I used this view of the codes for my second coding cycle to look at the 30 codes and start collapsing them. Looking at all the first cycle codes as a collective group, I looked for repetitions and similarities in the codes and began to collapse these based on

overlap and similarity. Dedoose allows the merging of multiple codes without losing any of the highlighted excerpts and I used that feature to combine similar codes. For example, there were two first cycle in vivo codes relating to how the choice of a book impacts whether or not a student enjoys reading it: “some more than others” and “it depends.” I merged these two codes together, reusing the in vivo code “some more than others.” As another example, I had first cycle codes of “dyslexia” and “ADHD.” Since both these codes were references to reasons that students struggled with reading or writing, I combined them into a single “reading/writing struggles” code. After I finished this second coding, I had recoded my initial codes down to 25 codes. In this second coding cycle, I had a difficult time collapsing the codes into the broader categories because I was still trying to get a sense of the data and was not ready to eliminate data or collapse it into something broader. This happened in the next round of coding.

Third Coding Cycle

In the third coding cycle, I used focused coding (Saldana 2015) to first sort the 25 codes into four categories. I started with my research questions and then looked at the 25 codes I had and came up with gerund phrases to serve as category headings (Saldana, 2015).

1. Connecting to Literature
2. Connecting to Community

3. Impacting Identity
4. Shaping the Writing Process

Next, I wanted to see how the 25 remaining codes fit into these broader categories. To do so, I created a table (see Table 3) with the four categories as headings and then clustered codes that fit with the appropriate category. In this cycle, I also eliminated codes. For example, three codes eliminated during this stage were "Definition of Writing, "Poetry," and "Nonfiction." I chose to eliminate these because, when I was sorting the codes into broader categories, they did not apply to a study about building community through sharing writing about books of choice.

Table 3

Coding Categories

Connecting to Literature	• "Some more than others" • Reading for fun • Imagining characters

Connecting to Community	• Collaboration with others • "My mom" • Sharing • "I should know who my audience is" • Movie version • "When people read it" • "Other's perspectives" • Teacher recommended
Impacting Identity	• Reading/Writing connection • Inspiration • "I would feel comfortable" • Reading identity • "It feels nice"
Shaping the Writing Process	• Reading/Writing struggles • Peer Review • "Feedback is the key" • Proofreading • "Make your writing better" • Revision

When I finished sorting the codes into broader categories, I again looked at the codes to figure out what I could combine into categories, if possible. For example, the codes "my mom" "movie version" and "teacher recommended" all referred to how

students found books to read. I collapsed these three codes into one code called “finding books.” This final cycle of code collapsing and editing resulted in nine codes (see Table 4).

Table 4

Final Codes

Code	Definition
Book choice	Statements about getting to choose a book to read.
Identification with Books	Reasons students gave for enjoying and continuing to read a book.
Audience awareness	Students discussing the impact of having a defined audience for their writing
Finding books	Reasons and methods students used to choose what books to read.
Motivation	Students discussing their motivation towards reading and writing.
Interactions with others	Students talking about collaborating and working with their peers.
Self-perception	Students talking about their view of themselves as readers and writers.
Writing practice	Students discussing the practice of writing: strategies, skills, techniques, etc.
Feedback/Response	What students thought about giving and receiving feedback to each other throughout the unit.

With the codes condensed down to nine, I went into each code to then read the data excerpts associated with the codes and wrote a statement summarizing how the

codes relate to the category. I used these summary statements to check that my categorization of the codes made sense in the larger scope of the research.

After this final process of reflection and reflection, I felt confident that my final codes and categorizations reflected the data from this study and I used these categories and codes to structure an outline for my findings.

1. Connecting to Literature
    1. Book Choice
    2. Identifying with Books
2. Connecting to Community
    1. Finding Books
    2. Interactions with Others
        1. Audience Awareness
3. Impacting Identity
    1. Motivation
    2. Self-Perception
4. Shaping the Writing Process
    1. Feedback/Response
    2. Writing Practice

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In this chapter, I describe findings that developed through data analysis described in the previous chapter. I structure this chapter around the four themes: 1) Connecting to Literature, 2) Connecting to Community, 3) Impacting Identity, and 4) Shaping the Writing Process. These three findings are detailed below.

Connecting to Books of Choice

Based on my analysis of the surveys, interviews, and final reflections, the data revealed ways students made connections to the texts they selected over the course of this unit. There were two notable factors students reported about why they made connections to the books they selected. These included book choice and identification with a book's characters. These factors are described in more depth below.

Book Choice

In the participant interviews, over a third of the students explicitly mentioned how they enjoyed choosing the books they read for the unit. Book choice was unfamiliar to many of the participants. Lana commented that she enjoyed the unit of study "because usually you don't choose the books and you have to read at the same pace as everyone else." From the onset of the unit, the concept of book choice was challenging to explain to the students. They had not experienced this in other English language arts classes and had, for the most part, never been given the opportunity to read a book they had selected

as part of the formal curriculum of any middle school class. After I introduced the book choice plan, students kept looking for catches and expected me to come up with a reason why they could not read what they had selected. For example, students asked if they were to read books that had been adapted into movies and Albert, who had seen the movie version of *The Hunger Games* and wanted to read the book, told me that previous teachers had forbidden him from reading books with movie or television adaptations. Students were concerned these books choices would be considered "cheating" or unfair. Despite their initial confusion, students adapted quickly to the book choice aspect of the unit. We spent a day in class exploring book search resources provided by the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) (American Library Association, n.d.) and public libraries. I encouraged them to ask their parents and siblings for book recommendations and gave them ten days to find a book to read. Allowing students to choose books without restriction, resulted in their selection of a broad range of titles, authors, and genres (see Table 5for Self-Selected Books). The majority of participants chose to read Young Adult fiction, including several fantasy novels written by J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis. The students who chose to read nonfiction works all read memoirs, including one student, Isabella, who read the young adult graphic memoir, *Hey, Kiddo*. Two students, Stacy and Kendra, chose to read canonical texts, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Hamlet*, respectively.

As students got more comfortable with the parameters and expectations of the unit, they started to get excited. Chris was delighted about the chance to read a comedic novel. He picked James Patterson's *Middle School: How I Survived Bullies, Broccoli, and Snake Hill*, telling me that it was nice to be able to read "a funny book" in school. Kara used the unit as an opportunity to read a book she was supposed to read in her previous school before she moved. Issac said that he had enjoyed reading *Wonder* in sixth grade and he wanted to read another book by that author.

Student's book choices reflected the diversity of their personal and academic interests. For example, Tori, a mixed martial artist, read a memoir of professional MMA fighter Ronda Rousey. Melanie, who enjoys the *Assassin's Creed* video game series, read a book set in that video game's universe. No student mentioned making a choice to read a book for the second time, although many chose to read books that were the basis of movies they had seen. These choices often reflected input from a community, whether it be family, friends, social media, or other entertainment medium. Instagram posts led Kendra to want to read *Hamlet*, and several students mentioned parent recommendations or library displays as ways they chose their books.

Table 5

List of Self-selected Books

Participant	Book Title and Author	Book Genre	Year Published	Movie Adaptation
Albert	*The Hunger Games*, Suzanne Collins	Young Adult Science-Fiction	2008	Yes
Anita	*Keeping the Castle*, Patrice Kindl	Young Adult Romance	2012	No
Bruce	*The Fellowship of the Ring*, J.R.R. Tolkien	Fantasy	1954	Yes
Cary	*Esperanza Rising*, Pam Muñoz Ryan	Young Adult Historical Fiction	2000	No
Chris	*Middle School: How I Survived Bullies, Broccoli, and Snake Hill*, James Patterson	Young Adult Comedy	2013	No
Emily	*Jerk, California*, Johnathan Friesen	Young Adult Fiction	2008	No

Participant	Book Title and Author	Book Genre	Year Published	Movie Adaptation
Gloria	*With The Fire on High*, Elizabeth Acevedo	Young Adult Fiction	2019	No
Irene	*Hey, Kiddo*, Jarrett Krosoczka	Young Adult Graphic Memoir	2018	No
Isaac	*Auggie and Me*, R.J. Palacio	Young Adult Fiction	2014	No
Kara	*Counting by 7s*, Holly Goldberg Sloan	Young Adult Fiction	2013	No
Karen	*One of Us is Lying*, Karen M. McManus	Young Adult Mystery	2017	No
Kendra	*Hamlet*, William Shakespeare	Classic Drama	1609	Yes
Kevin	*Fish in a Tree*, Lynda Mullaly Hunt	Young Adult Fiction	2015	No
Lana	*A Monster Calls*, Patrick Ness	Young Adult Fiction	2011 2014	Yes
	Homeroom Diaries, James Patterson			

Participant	Book Title and Author	Book Genre	Year Published	Movie Adaptation
Lara	*Facing the Lion*, Simone Arnold Liebster	Memoir	2000	No
Larry	*A Dark Inheritance*, Chris d'Lacey	Young Adult Fantasy	2014	No
Mario	*The Hobbit*, J.R.R. Tolkien	Fantasy	1937	Yes
Mary	*Eragon*, Christopher Paplini	Young Adult Fantasy	2002	No
Melanie	*Last Descendants*, Matthew J. Kirby	Young Adult Historical Fantasy	2016	No
Stacy	*To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee	Fiction	1960	Yes
Summer	*The Magician's Nephew*, C.S. Lewis	Fantasy	1955	No
Teresa	*The Maze Runner*, James Dasher	Young Adult Science-Fiction	2009	Yes
Tori	*My Fight/Your Fight*, Ronda Rousey	Memoir	2015	No

No student shared that they experienced any obstacles finding a book; however, once students chose their books, some had second thoughts regarding their selections. For example, within the first week, two students, Gloria and Anita, talked to me about them not really liking their book selections. Gloria had read the author's previous book *The Poet X* and she initially struggled with not liking *With The Fire on High* in the same way she had *The Poet X*. *The Poet X* is a novel in verse about a young poet learning to express herself through spoken word poetry. *With the Fire on High* is a prose novel about a teen mom for whom cooking is an escape from the stress of being a high school mom. When we spoke about the books (I had read *The Poet X*, but not *With the Fire on High*), Gloria talked about how she expected *With the Fire on High* to be more like *The Poet X*. She was expecting a verse novel with a more relatable protagonist. Since she loved reading *The Poet X*, Gloria decided to keep reading *With the Fire on High*. Anita struggled with the ups and downs of her book. In her literacy letter she explained that she enjoyed the book when there "was finally something happening like some action and OMG it's happening!" But those moments were too infrequent for Anita. I gave both Gloria and Anita the option to change books, but they both chose to keep reading to see if the books got any better. Both successfully finished the books by the end of the unit.

Once students selected their books of choice, they had five weeks to read them. Bruce, who initially wanted to read the entirety of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (a

book that is generally published split into three separate books), realized that five weeks wouldn't be enough time for him to finish. He decided, instead, to read the first volume, *The Fellowship of the Ring*. All students finished reading their books in the time given. Students were expected to bring their books to class every day and some students read their books in class after finishing other course work. However, the majority of the book reading took place at home.

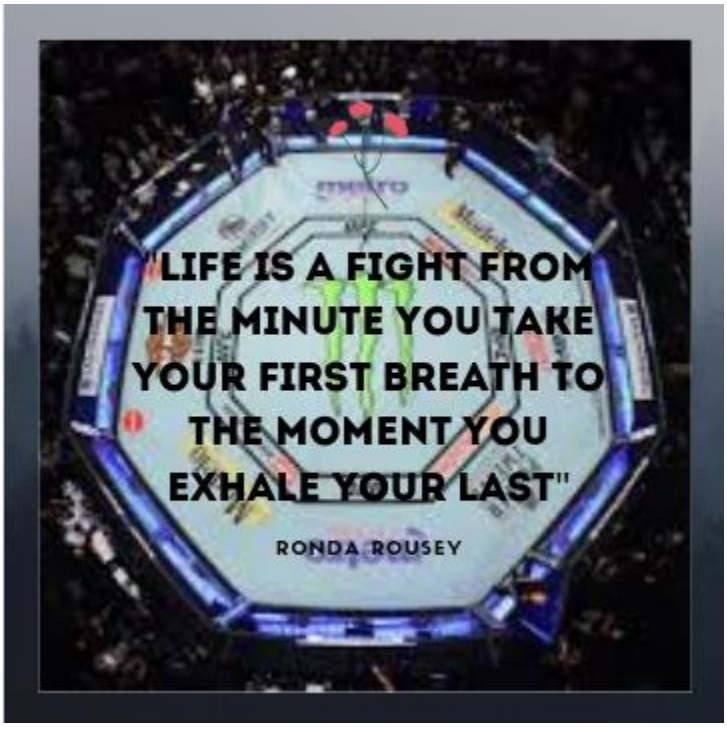
Identifying with Self-Selected Texts

A quarter of the participants talked about how they could identify with or relate to characters in the books they had selected and read. For example, Chris, who has a sharp sense of humor and sometimes tried to take on the role of the class clown, talked about how he could identify with some aspects of Rafe, the main character of James Patterson's *Middle School: How I Survived Bullies, Broccoli, and Snake Hill.* Chris identified with Rafe's outgoing, social nature and how that personality type can often get into trouble in school. Chris also made a comparison between the setting of the book, an educational camp, and his own experiences at basketball camp. Chris commented that the book, which is written in the 1st person, had a voice that he rarely encountered in the books he read for school: "It's like the story is being told by an actual male teenager going to middle school and summer camp." Like Chris, Tori also experienced a personal connection with a character in a book.

Tori chose to read *My Fight/Your Fight*, the memoir by mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter Ronda Rousey. Tori used her writing in the unit to critically explore personal connections she had with Rousey's experiences. Tori chose to read the book because she is an MMA fighter and she looks up to Rousey as a role model for female mixed martial artists. In her Bookstagram image, Tori focused on the inspirational aspect of Rousey's life story (Figure 1). She chose the quote, "Life is a fight from the minute you take your first breath to the moment you exhale your last."

Figure 1

Tori's Bookstagram Image



Tori then connected the quote to what she learned from the book about Rousey's early life: that there were complications at Rousey's birth that became the first of

Rousey's life struggles. Tori commented that she was inspired by this quote to overcome her own struggles, both in life and in the MMA octagon ring.

Even though she viewed Rousey as an inspirational figure, Tori also made critical observations in her responses to the book. In her literacy letter, Tori focused on Rousey's relationship with her mother. Rousey's mother pushed her to succeed at all costs, including training and competing while injured. Tori wrote in her literacy letter to her own mother, "I think that readers, especially adolescent readers shouldn't be encouraged to compete and train injured like Rousey did. I don't think that encouraging others to train and compete injured is proper because that's not good and very unhealthy." Tori also took issue with how Rousey responded to lack of success at the Olympics by giving up on her sport. In her writing about the book, Tori made connections to her own life by viewing Rousey as both an inspirational story and a cautionary tale. At the end of her literacy letter, Tori commented that she wanted to be a successful MMA competitor like Rousey, but that she didn't want to take the same path of training injured and binge drinking. Reading Rousey's memoir helped Tori to understand the professional realities of the sport she loves and gave her a template of what success and failure in MMA could look or feel like. Tori made these connections to her reading in connection to her own passion as a fighter and athlete.

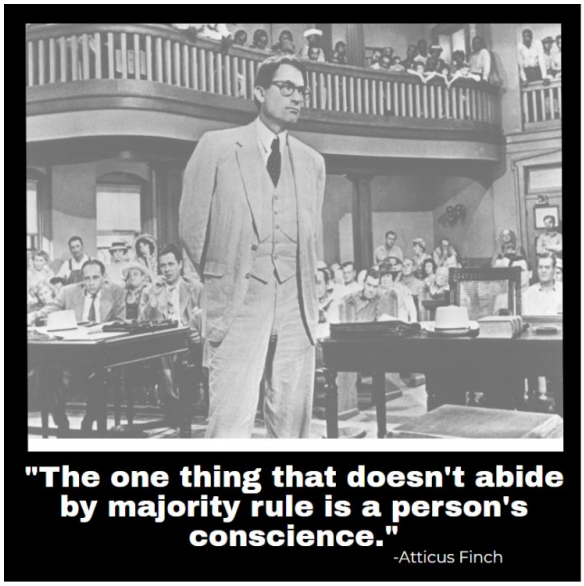
Two students chose to read books that are often assigned readings in high school. Kendra read William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (a book I assigned to 12th graders) and Stacy read Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (a book I taught to 9th graders). Other students who chose to read contemporary Young Adult works found it easy to connect with characters who were of their own age. Kendra found it challenging to identify with *Hamlet*. She struggled with Shakespeare's early modern English poetry. Although she read a No Fear edition with modern translation included, she emphasized that she really wanted to read the play without the help of the translation and she tried to turn to it only as a last resort. Although Kendra understood the scope of Hamlet's grief and the tragedy of the play, in her interview she told me that she found it challenging to identify with him as a character because she had never lost someone close to her. Instead of identifying with the character of Hamlet, Kendra felt connected to the community of *Hamlet* readers, which I will address in the Connecting to Community section of the chapter.

Stacy chose to read Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* because she had seen and enjoyed the movie adaptation and wanted to learn more about the racial injustices that have long been a part of America's history. In her literacy letter to her mother, Stacy wrote, "Since [*To Kill a Mockingbird*] talks about important racial issues in America, I wanted to read it to learn about our country's history on a more personal level." For her Bookstagram quote, Stacy chose a line spoken by the lawyer Atticus Finch: "The one

thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience" (Lee, 2010, p. 140). She superimposed the quote over a still frame from Robert Mulligan's 1962 film adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird* starring Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Stacy's Bookstagram Image



Stacy explained her design by saying she had seen the movie before she read the book. As she read, she explained that whenever she read Atticus' lines, she pictured Gregory Peck delivering them. Her connection to the film adaptation aided her appreciation and understanding of the novel. She also connected to the meaning of the quote she chose to represent in the assignment. In her book talk video, she said, "If people saw who Tom Robinson really was instead of judging him based on his skin color, they would have

realized it was wrong to accuse him." She pointed out how Atticus' views of equality are still relevant today and how the fight he tried to wage for Tom Robinson is still going on in courtrooms around the country.

Stacy made more connections between the book and the contemporary world in her literacy letter to her mother. She again presented the quote she used in her Bookstagram assignment and used it to help explain her interpretation of the character of Jem. The film adaptation that Stacy had seen before reading the book focuses much of its attention on Atticus Finch and the trial of Tom Robinson. Although the character of Jem is present in the film, he is not given as much attention and detail as Scout's narration in the novel provides. Stacy was fascinated by the character of Jem in the novel and how his changes and maturation with regard to racial issues were still relevant today. In her literacy letter, Stacy focused on a part of the novel where Jem, who has been the subject of ridicule since his father agreed to defend Tom Robinson, finally loses his temper. Stacy connected that scene to another famous line from the novel, when Atticus advises Scout that "you never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view […] until you climb into his skin and walk around in it" (Lee, 2010, p. 39). In Stacy's interpretation, Jem can't handle the racist taunts and he realizes the level of abuse Atticus and Tom Robinson must suffer every day. Jem loses his temper, but Scout completely understands why. She wrote in her literacy letter, "Jem finally learns to

appreciate his father's struggles because he is infuriated by the ridicule that he [Atticus] must endure. The reason he loses his head is that he has stepped into his father's shoes and feels Atticus's struggle to trust his conscience instead of the majority opinion." Stacy described the lessons she learned from the novel when she ended her literacy letter by writing that the novel "shows how important it is to remember that all people are equal and should be treated with love and respect regardless of race." For Stacy, the characters of *To Kill a Mockingbird* were still relatable even fifty years after Harper Lee published her novel. In writing about a quote from the novel and through explaining her experience reading the novel to her mother, Stacy was able to connect a canonical work of fiction to experiences in the world around her.

These findings demonstrate the value of writing about books of choice in the classroom. Students also used the opportunity to read a book of choice to explore their interests and passions. Regardless of whether they chose to read young adult literature, canonical works of literature, or genre fiction, students were able to find ways to connect to their books.

Connecting to Community

Students used their reading and writing within this curricular unit to make connections to larger communities around them. Even though they read their books independently and no two students read the same book, they became part of a literacy

community that helped influence what they read and how they wrote about their reading. Students used these connections with people within and beyond the classroom space to help them find books and to develop a sense of audience awareness in their writing for the unit.

Finding Books

I brought in a selection of books from my own personal classroom library to help students find a book to read at the start of the unit. These were mostly Young Adult books, with a few science-fiction and fantasy novels as well. I wanted to make sure that every student had access to a book, even if they couldn't get to a library or bookstore. However, only one student, Isabella, who borrowed my copy of *Hey, Kiddo*, took advantage of the books I brought in. All the other students got books to read on their own, and community connections played an important role in this process.

Unsurprisingly, the most common people students turned to for support in finding and selecting a book of choice were their parents. When I asked students how they chose their books, eight replied "my mom." This isn't all that surprising since the nearest bookstore to Western Tech is over thirty minutes away, so 8th graders would most likely need their parent's help in accessing a book to read beyond their own home or classroom. The most prominent example of parental influence came from Tori's reading of Ronda Rousey's memoir *My Fight/Your Fight*. Tori said, "My mom bought the book for me a

while ago and I decided to read it now." Midway through the book, Tori reflected on how she knew she had found a book she could connect with. She wrote in her literacy letter, "I really like the book so far, it's so cool to read about how much she went through to get where she is. She is an amazing athlete and such an inspiring person in general." Students also used one another as resources for finding books. Whether it was from reading someone's writing about the books or from seeing students reading and working with physical copies of the books in class, students were surrounded by new and different books throughout the unit. Students often asked to see the cover or to read the back cover of a book one of their classmates was reading or working with in class. For example, when Isabella brought back my copy of the graphic memoir *Hey, Kiddo* at the end of the unit, there were several students who saw that she was returning it and asked to be the next who could borrow it. Lana made use of the classroom reading community to help find new books to read. Lana was one of the participants who read multiple books during the unit. She is an avid reader and she said in her initial survey that she "loves discussing books." For Lana, the big connections she made came from learning what other students were reading. Although she pointed out that she likes reading assigned books for school since they come with a support structure of a teacher and classmates also reading the same book, Lana said that she really enjoyed the exposure to new books that came with a unit where everyone is reading a different book.

In her interview, Lana talked about how the books she read for the unit were part of a stack of books she had to read at home. When I asked her in her interview how she found the books she read, she talked about going to the library and picking books based on covers that seemed interesting or eye-catching. She'd then start to read the books to see if they were something she'd enjoy, something "sad or scary," as she put it in her interview. This means that she often starts books that she never finishes because they don't interest her. In her interview, Lana talked about the benefits of hearing about books from her peers, as it helped her figure out if the book would be something she'd like to read:

> I like seeing what books people had, like just looking at the cover. That's how I pick books. One boy was reading a James Patterson book, so I thought maybe I'd like that, too. I talked with Melanie a lot about her book. It made me maybe want to read it, but I'm not sure if I'll like it.

For Lana, reading her classmates' writing about books was a way to discover new books in a more productive fashion than picking by book covers at the public library.

Students also used their familiarity with pop culture adaptations of books to guide their reading choices. I suspected that students might enjoy reading books that were the basis for movies that they had seen, so I brought in copies of books like Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park*, John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars*, and the Timothy Zahn

Star Wars novels that I read when I was in middle school. Although students didn't borrow any of these books, their familiarity with movie adaptations played a strong role in helping them to choose books. Albert and Stacy read *The Hunger Games* and *To Kill A Mockingbird*, respectively, because they wanted to read the book that inspired the movie version. Bruce and Mario read Tolkien novels because they had enjoyed Peter Jackson's movie adaptations of the books. Albert, who read Susanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* explained in his literacy letter why he chose to read the novel:

> I thought it might be a quick but fun read that I can enjoy without having to go out of my way to read the whole thing. I also wanted to read it before I kind of lost interest in its plot and story, since nowadays the idea and plot seem a little more regular not to say it wasn't an original concept and awesome book series but I guess I just didn't want to forget about it.

Albert's first reason for choosing to read *The Hunger Games* was a common reason for many of the participants. They want to read books that are fun and enjoyable. But I found his second reason to be interesting in terms of how students interact with literature outside of school settings. Albert knew the story of *The Hunger Games* before he even read the books. The book is one of the most popular and influential young adult novels of the last twenty years, inspiring a film trilogy and countless imitations. In a pop-culture world of reboots, remakes, and knockoffs, Albert wanted to experience the

original. The literacy letter prompt asked students to share why they chose to read the book they did, and in doing so in his literacy letter, Albert connected the book to its place in a larger world of literature, film, and popular culture.

Kendra's choice to read *Hamlet* was influenced by social media. When I asked her why she chose to read *Hamlet*, Kendra responded that she had "read some posts [on Instagram] … about how Shakspeare could be pretty funny and what's better than Elizabethan sass." Influenced by the posts and memes she had seen on Instagram, Kendra chose to take on the challenge of reading a complex play. Kendra was the only student who mentioned the influence of online communities in choosing a book to read.

Interacting With Others

One notable series of interactions that I recorded in my field notes came when students first began working on the Bookstagram image. I had given students examples, including one I had made, and I gave them time in class to start working. I wanted them to start working on it in class so I could help troubleshoot any technical difficulties with the technology aspect of creating an image. I noted that students seemed inclined to start the project using Google Drawings, possibly because Western Tech uses Google Apps throughout all its courses. In my field notes for that day, I wrote: "Students tried to use Drawings to create their image post. There was a lot of struggling and a lot of frustration. I encouraged students to switch to using Canva and most of them eventually did." I

couldn't help them use Google Drawings because I have never used it and never really thought of it as image creation software. Once students got settled in using Canva, the experience I detailed in my field notes was much more positive:

> Students are figuring out Canva. Larry got the hang of it real quick and I deputized him as the class tech helper. Everyone knows that if I'm busy with someone else, they can ask Larry and he can probably help. He points them in the right direction or shows them where a certain option is in Canva and then they play/experiment with things until they figure it out.

As students became more comfortable with the technology required by the assignment, they began to share their experiences with each other. My classroom setup was conducive to sharing. There were no desks, just six rectangular tables on wheels that made it easy to move them about the room. And the chairs in my classroom weren't the hard blue plastic chairs that many other classrooms at Western Tech had. In my classroom, we had padded office chairs on wheels. When students needed or wanted to share, it was easy for them to turn to or roll over to a classmate. The Bookstagram assignment was the first major assignment of the unit and it was the first opportunity for students to interact with each other's work. In my field notes for the peer review day for the Bookstagram assignment, I noted:

> Students spent a lot of time today sharing and showing off. Someone (I think it was Kevin) found out how to include animated images in Canva and so everyone had to try to add that to their own project. Sharing was a little chaotic at first, with everyone really focused on the visual/technological, but I overheard some great conversations. Kendra trying to explain *Hamlet*. Bruce talking about differences between the book and movie. Irene using the book to help explain how she quoted a graphic novel. Ended up being a very productive first sharing session.

As the unit progressed, students developed a greater familiarity with the sharing and peer review process. It became something that I had to actively manage less and less. Students quickly grasped the procedures and the value of peer review. On the day that students completed peer review for the literacy letter assignment, I wrote in my field notes:

> I didn't have to do anything today. They knew what was on the schedule and got right to it. Instead of having to manage things, I got to go around and read the letter drafts. Lots of creative ways to address their parents, and more will probably do that now that they've seen others doing it.

After just a few peer review sessions, students had already taken ownership of the process. They were operating as a writing community, one that didn't need my management or influence. And the feedback they were giving each other was effective. In

their reflection on the literacy letter, many students talked about how peer review helped their writing become clearer. Stacy noted that her peers commented that she had a tendency to “drone on for a while.” Chris commented that “when my peer said that my writing was a little bit repetitive, I took out some of the repeating sentences and words.” Without direct help from me, students were working with each other to correct and improve their writing.

Throughout the unit, students interacted with each other by sharing writing, engaging in peer review activities, and writing for a specific audience. One result of these interactions was students being exposed to new and different books to read. Finding out more about the books others were reading was one of the positive results of interacting with others. The more formal interactions, like peer review, got a mixed response from students. When I asked a question in the interview about sharing work, five students said that they really enjoyed sharing their writing and four said that they didn’t like sharing at all. As one of the students who enjoyed sharing, Tori said, “I think it's cool for others to see your work, and it's cool to see other people's work. I have had to do that before and I don't mind it at all.” Stacy had the most positive view of sharing:

> I believe that sharing your work with others is incredibly helpful. I have been sharing my videos, writing, school assignments, and artwork with my family and

friends for feedback for years, and it has always helped me improve upon my work. Feedback is the key to successful revisions!

Anita was one of the students who did not like sharing and said, “I don't like sharing my work. Yes, I have [shared work in class] but I was forced to.” And Karen said, “I have had to share my work with others, but I don't really like it. It could mean that they copy me and then take the work I did and call it their own.” The rest of the students gave ambivalent responses, stating that they were fine with sharing but that they only did so because it was required in the unit. Mary said, “I was indifferent and I have done this before.” Kendra said, “It's okay, and I have done it before in previous school projects.” And Kevin responded by saying “I have done peer reviews before and it depends who I am sharing it with that I would feel comfortable.” Even though many students didn’t relish the idea of sharing their writing, their work throughout the unit demonstrated the positive and beneficial effects of sharing within a community, particularly with regards to how students conceptualized the role of a real audience in writing.

For her Bookstagram assignment quote, Kendra chose a line from Hamlet’s speech to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in Act II: “And yet, to me what is the quintessence of dust?” Kendra said she did online research about the line, using Google to look up the line’s connections to the Book of Genesis from *The Bible* and reading

about the importance of some of Hamlet's famous lines. Her classmates, however, had little to no familiarity with Shakespeare and his language. When seeking peer feedback on her Bookstagram post, Kendra noted that the students she asked to provide her with feedback were thrown off by the complexity of the word "quintessence." During classroom peer review sessions, I would often hear Kendra having to explain the plot of the play and Hamlet's situation to provide enough context for her peers to even make sense of her writing. In reflecting on the assignment, Kendra commented that she should have chosen a more universal quote (such as "to be or not to be" or "to thine own self be true") that would be easier for the reader to understand without needing to fully understand the plot and situations of the play. But Kendra did not view this as entirely negative. In her reflection on her Bookstagram assignment, Kendra said that her peer reader's confusion about the quote "gives me a chance to dive deeper into what the story is saying and how it's saying it."

Like Kendra, Chris had some difficulties in getting his peers to understand his writing. Where Kendra's challenges came from the difficulty of the text she chose to read, Chris' challenges stemmed from his own writing. Chris is a straight-A student who loves basketball, Youtubers, and engineering. Although he is a successful student, Chris likes to finish tasks as quickly as possible, often without taking into consideration the depth or complexity of the assignment. When he created his Bookstagram image (see

Figure 3), Chris' caption for the image was just one sentence: "I chose this quote because it says a lot about the book kinda sad but really motivating mood."

Figure 3

Chris' Bookstagram Image

In reflecting on the peer review experience with the Bookstagram assignment, Chris commented that he didn't get a lot of good peer feedback on the assignment. When I conferred with him about it, I pointed out that it might be difficult for a peer to provide feedback to just one fairly non-specific sentence about the book, he agreed and asked for an opportunity to revise and resubmit the assignment. He updated his response to include context about the plot and characters of the book and how those elements connected to his quote:

I chose this quote because it shows what the main character Rafe has to go through. He goes through a lot of adventures and has a lot of struggles in the book, but he learns a lot from it. I chose the image because the quote talks about failures and I thought the water made the image look sad. It could be rain or it could be tears.

Although Chris' revised writing probably still could have used more detail about his book, his revision after peer review and conferencing with me still doubled the length of his initial response. When it came time for Chris to write his review of the book, he revised his writing based on his prior experiences with the Bookstagram peer review. Instead of being vague and general in his writing about the novel, Chris demonstrated awareness of his audience and adapting his writing accordingly. Chris framed his review in the form of a conversation with the reader, inviting his reader to "continue reading to find his [the novel's main character] struggles and what friends he meets along the way." Chris realized that since the novel was part of a series, he had to contextualize the characters and events of the series for his readers. In his review of the book, Chris started by pointing out that the novel was the second in a series, "but you don't need to read [the first novel] to understand it." In his reflection on his review writing, Chris noted that he wanted to encourage people to read the book but that he knew some readers might not

want to start in the middle of a series and he wanted to start off his review by assuaging those fears.

Chris also attempted to make connections to the readers of his book review by imagining that some readers might have the same feelings about reading that he does. In his reflection on the book review assignment Chris wrote, “I normally don’t like books but I really like this series so I wanted readers to know that they’ll like it too.” Chris had said in the initial survey that his enjoyment of reading was dependent on the book. If the book is “action-packed and amazing and has a good story” then he’ll like it. In his review, he spoke to readers with similar views of reading when he wrote:

> In my opinion, books are boring but this book is amazing and funny. This book is a comedy and an action book and that's what makes it awesome. I don’t read often but this book got me hooked on the 8 or 9 book series.

Chris’ struggles with peer review with the Bookstagram assignment helped him to see the importance of audience awareness. As he continued to write about his book throughout the unit, Chris became more aware of the interactions between a writer and her audience and when he wrote his review, the final piece of writing in the unit, he took into account an audience that needs to know about the book and to be convinced of why they should read it.

These findings demonstrate the benefits of writing about books of choice in a classroom community. Students used connections to their parents and pop culture to help choose books to read. Working with their classmates helped students to improve their writing, learning to direct writing towards audiences other than a teacher.

Impact on Reading Identity

In the initial survey, I asked students if they thought of themselves as readers. Of the twenty-three participants in the study, twelve saw themselves as readers, ten did not, and one participant (Cary) had a neutral view of her own reading identity. When considering their writing identity, most of the participants (fourteen of the twenty-three) did not see themselves as writers. Only eight participants clearly identified themselves as writers, with one (Stacy) responding that she wanted to see herself as a writer and wanted to write more, but that she didn't normally follow through with actual writing.

In the post interviews, I asked participants if they thought their views of themselves as readers and writers had changed. In looking at the survey and interview data collected throughout the study, there wasn't much movement or change in reading identity. Students who did not like reading or who did not consider themselves readers at the start of the unit did not suddenly become avid readers with reformed reading identities. When I asked Anita, who did not initially see herself as a reader, if she thought she had changed as a reader over the course of the unit, her response was clear and direct:

"No." When I asked her to explain, she said, "I'm sorry, I just didn't like the independent reading." Several participants reported being more attentive readers because of the assignments that involved using quotes from the novels. Stacy said she had become a "more engaged reader." Larry described himself as being "more attentive in my reading," and Lara said, "I think I've improved on analyzing text better, and finding the different writing they [the authors] used." Only one participant, Tori, who initially reported a negative reading identity shifted her to a more positive reading identity towards the end of the unit. In her interview Tori said:

> I think I have improved my reading by really imagining I was the main character and things like that. This is the first book that I have read that I can relate to, so I really interpreted it differently than I would have if I read a book that I couldn't relate to.

Although there was no change in sense of reading identity, students did report a shift in their writing identities. This shift took place largely through peer comparison. Several participants who did not initially see themselves as capable writers reported a change in perception of their own writing abilities after comparing their writing to their peers. When I asked in the interview if they had changed as writers over the course of the unit, Gloria responded, "I think I write a little better because I have been reading a lot more lately than I have in a while." Lana commented in her interview that working with

others throughout the unit helped her strengthen her writing because “If I don't understand what to write about, I can ask for help and I can have someone help edit it.” These shifts in writing identity also related to shifts in student motivation towards writing.

Motivation

The act of sharing writing in a classroom community had a noticeable impact on student’s motivation towards reading and writing. As described in the section on book choice, students expressed that they were more likely to read a book if it was about something that interested them. Book choice helped motivate students to complete their reading and the work around it. But the most impactful motivator for students in this unit was the writing of their peers.

Throughout the unit, I used models to demonstrate the type of work I expected students to produce. These included book talks on YouTube, professional book reviews, and examples of the assignments that I created myself. But by far the most effective models were the ones created and shared by students themselves. In interview and reflections students talked about the benefits of seeing each other’s work, especially when they were still in the process of creating them. For example, when students created their book talks on Flipgrid, they could see the submissions that had already been made before they started the process of submitting theirs. This meant that the early submissions

of the book talk assignment were hugely influential. Larry, who submitted the first book talk, took a creative approach to the book talk that several students said helped them to create theirs. Since the book talk assignment asked students to talk about their book as if they were talking to a friend who had not read the book, Larry framed his book talk video as a conversation where he was constantly getting interrupted by an unruly puppet (see Figure 4). It was creative and comical, and it gave the students who watched it a clear idea of the purpose of the book talk assignment.

Figure 4

Larry's Book Talk

Kendra also influenced subsequent submissions of the assignment, as she was the first to use a Flipgrid feature that can superimpose emoji stickers on the video. She did

not want her face in the video, so she superimposed an emoji over her face (see Figure 5). Several other students did the same, and they pointed out that seeing Kendra do it gave them the idea to do it themselves. Lana even went so far as to borrow Larry's idea, as she talked to her dog in her book talk video. Seeing their classmates' creativity and personalization in their book talk videos helped students like Tori, who struggled with creating her video and who said that she watched every video that had already been submitted to help her get ideas before she created her own.

Figure 5

Kendra's Book Talk

In the interviews I conducted towards the end of the unit, I asked students, "How has seeing other peoples' writing impacted how you read and write?" Although a couple of students said that seeing other writing did not impact their own writing, most students discussed the motivating effects of seeing peer writing. Some talked about the benefits of seeing what an assignment was supposed to look like, like Lana who said that reading her

classmates' writing helped her "see what mine should look like." Many students noted that reading their peer's writing motivated them to try and improve their own. Chris said, "Seeing other people write seemed like theirs was better than mine so I wanted to try and make mine better." Tori commented that reading others writing "inspires me to do different things with my writing." Even Kendra, who I would rate as one of the better writers in the class, said that peer review "made me realize that I can do so much better. If everyone else's is so amazing and good, then I can strive to do that, too." Seeing their classmates' writing helped students better situate themselves as writers and gave them a motivator for improvement as well as models for how to get started and succeed with the assignment as a whole.

Self-Perception

As I mentioned earlier, the results of this study did not indicate any significant shifts in reading identity over the course of the unit, with the exception of Tori, who did describe herself as more of a reader by the end of the unit. Even though there were few dramatic shifts in identity (possibly an effect of the short length of the unit, a limitation I address in the next chapter), students provided valuable thinking and reflection about the nature of their reading and writing identity.

Anita's reflections on her identity as a reader provide insight into how what students read can shape their identities as a reader. In a reflection on one assignment in

the unit, Anita wrote (emphasis and capitalization hers) “I DON’T LIKE READING!” When I asked what her favorite reading experience was in school, she said it was when her 7th grade ELA class got to watch the movie version of *The Outsiders* after finishing the book in class. She occasionally mentioned that she was enjoying the book that she read, but only at parts where “there was finally something happening.” She struggled to finish the book by the end of the unit. Her lack of enjoyment of the book may have stemmed from how she selected the book. She went to the library and chose the book because it “had a cover that caught my eye...there was something about the book that looked different.” Choosing a book to read based on the physical appearance and design of the book probably did not help Anita select the best book for her.

During my interview with Anita, I asked her if there was anything she actually enjoyed reading. She responded by saying, “I only like reading my comics on WebToon.” When I asked what WebToon was, she explained it was a website and app where she would read comics that are written and uploaded to the website by the creators. She said she likes the comics because they had “humor, drama, comedy, romance, thriller/horror and so much more.” While she found the novel she chose to read lacking in excitement, she was able to find stories she enjoyed on the WebToons platform. I asked her why she didn’t mention this when she wrote about her reading identity in her initial survey and she responded by saying that she didn’t think that was the type of reading I was asking

about. Even though I asked about both in-school and out-of-school reading, Anita defined reading as reading the types of texts she would be assigned to read in school. So WebToons, the thing she truly loves to read, did not qualify as real reading in her mind.

While Anita did not view her favorite reading as real reading, Chris struggled to realize his perceived writing identity. As discussed in an earlier section, Chris struggled with early drafts of his writing about the novel he chose to read. His writing was too brief and non-specific to facilitate any real feedback or response from his peers. Chris' writing struggles surprised him, as he identified as an avid writer in the introductory survey. He noted that he enjoyed writing fictional stories and journaling notes and strategies to improve at basketball. But his proficiency with those writing tasks did not initially transfer to his writing about literature. The change for Chris, the impetus for making him realize that he was not putting enough attention and detail in his writing about literature, came from him thinking about the relationship between reading and writing.

When we discussed his writing in a conference before I had him make revisions, Chris commented that he needed to think like an author. A book author would never be brief or vague because they wouldn't want to confuse their audience. Chris decided to adopt this perspective in his own writing. Instead of thinking about writing as answering a prompt or as completing a school assignment, Chris started thinking about his school writing the way he thought about the writing he did for fun. He enjoyed writing because

he enjoyed the process of "shoving your ideas onto paper." When he revised his initial writing, he made sure that those ideas were clear to the reader, which he now recognized could be someone other than a teacher who had already read the book. This resituating of himself as an author instead of as a student merely completing an assignment contributed to Chris improving his writing by revising his writing for an audience of his peers.

Out of the ten participants who did not initially view themselves as readers, Tori was the only participant who reported a clear and complete change in their reading identity by the end of the unit. In the initial survey, Tori said, "I do not see myself as a reader because I do not read on my own time and in my opinion, there's only a couple good books and I kinda don't like reading." But by the interview at the end of the unit, Tori reported that she enjoyed reading for the unit and that the book she selected to read, Ronda Rousey's memoir *My Fight/Your Fight*, was "the first book that I have read that I can relate to." Tori began to see herself as a reader because she could relate to the book she chose.

Writing about books of choice did not have the positive impact on reading and writing identity that I had expected. Tori was the only student who experienced a pronounced shift in reader identity. I address potential reasons for and responses to this lack of impact in the limitations section of the next chapter.

Shaping the Writing Process

In discussing their work over the course of the unit during the interviews, students had a lot to say about the impact that collaboration had on their writing processes. The most notable, and almost universal among the participants was the impact of writing for an audience. Students wrote their literacy letter to their parents. Their book talks were posted to Flipgrid, a platform that made it easy for students to see each other's book talks. At the end of the unit, students published all their writing from the unit to a website that could be viewed by their classmates and other teachers. Participants noted that writing for an audience added a new layer of difficulty in writing. For example, in her interview, Tori commented that it was more challenging for her to write for her parents than for a friend or a teacher. When I asked why that was, she thought for a bit and then replied that she felt like her work had to be better for her parents because they weren't just going to grade the assignment and be done with it. They were always going to be her parents and that permanence made the literacy letter assignment all the more difficult for Tori. When discussing her writing about *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Stacy mentioned that writing for an audience outside of her teacher allowed her to focus on addressing the "very important racial issues" of the novel. Stacy felt that she did not have to worry about being graded in a way that was looking for a "right answer" and that allowed her to write about topics that she might have shied away from had she been writing to the audience of a teacher's

rubric. In addition to the impact of an authentic audience, students also frequently discussed the peer feedback and response process and the impact sharing had on their writing practice.

Feedback/Response

Kendra, like many other participants, expressed frustration with the type of feedback she received during peer review. She noted that most of the feedback she received was corrective, focusing more on typos or missed punctuation. What Kendra wanted was feedback that would help change her writing. She also said that the Praise-Question-Polish feedback was not helpful to her. She felt that the feedback was far too complimentary and not something that she could use to improve her writing. In our interview, I mentioned that this was probably because she's a talented writer and that providing ways to improve already good writing can be challenging. Kendra responded by saying, "I want to see what I can improve and if you tell me that it's just good or great then I can't make it better." When I asked her about the type of feedback she provides on her classmates' drafts, she said, "I say what I think, but nicer." In the peer review sessions, I tried to emphasize and model productive feedback, but I may have focused too much on the "Polish" aspect as Kendra's experiences with peer review in the unit seem to indicate that I could have given more attention to giving productive positive feedback.

This focus on correctness and grammar could also be the kind of feedback students were used to receiving from teachers of writing and a practice they were familiar with.

Some students, on the other hand, were appreciative of the basic, corrective feedback that Kendra did not find useful. Lana, who struggles with spelling and punctuation, stated in her interview that she was thankful for her peers' help in finding and editing the mistakes that she had missed. Tori also found corrective feedback to be helpful. "It has definitely helped me a lot, I believe that I just have to keep working at it and I'll get better." Albert also valued feedback corrective feedback. He describes his writing style as "somewhat unique," so the peer feedback helped him make corrections when his "vocabulary and sentence structure became too much." Albert was the only participant who talked about the benefits of corrective feedback going beyond the convenience of having someone else to proofread a piece of writing.

The feedback that participants found the most useful in helping to improve their writing was the feedback that came from the "Question" portion of the Praise-Question-Polish strategy. Asking questions of the writer forced the peer reviewer to go beyond the simplicity of saying that something's good or pointing out a mistake. Tori pointed out that when her reviewer asked questions about her draft, it made her realize that someone else was going to have to read and understand it so she had to "fix my opinions since I am the only person who's read it so far." Similarly, Albert noted that his reviewers asked

a lot of questions about some of his more confusing sentences. He said that addressing those questions in the revision process "was useful and helpful to me because I now look at the sentences as if I was the reader and not the author." Both Tori and Albert demonstrate here the impact of audience awareness and writing for an audience. Getting feedback from a peer audience helped Tori and Albert conceptualize how their writing needed to change to make more sense to a real audience.

In my interview with Stacy, she described her experience with peer review both in terms of giving peer feedback and in receiving it. She talked about her peer reviewer pointing out that her writing was often too wordy and rambling. Her peers would ask why she kept writing about points that had already been made and asking for more details in other places. After processing the peer feedback, Stacy commented that "I find my writing is improving a great deal when I cut out unnecessary words. I should be more succinct." She then took this feedback and applied it when she read her peers' writing. She talked about how her writing tends to be wordy and drag on, but "when I read a review that did the same, I found it difficult to pay attention to what the author was saying." She then used the feedback she had previously received for her own wordy writing to help her peer fix a similar problem. Stacy's experience with both receiving and giving peer feedback shows that good peer feedback can impact a writer's process by

providing guidance on how a reader sees a piece of writing and how the writer can make that writing clearer and more understandable.

Writing Practice

When I asked students how sharing their classmates' writing had impacted their own writing practice, almost all the responses commented on the impact of the audience awareness that was required in the assignments. Although many students said they had been required to complete peer feedback activities in other classes, they did not have as much familiarity with writing for public audiences. Other than Kendra and Stacy, who were members of the school's creative writing club, no student said that they remember writing for an audience other than a teacher. Since they were usually asked to write about whole-class books that the teacher would be familiar with, students were essentially used to writing to an audience that already understood the book they were writing about. That was not the case with this unit. There were actually few books that students chose to read that I had read or was familiar with. Students had to make a shift in their writing about the books because they realized they were not writing to an informed and expert audience. The teacher (me) and the other students in the class were all unfamiliar with their chosen texts and they needed to bridge this gap in familiarity with the material in their writing in a way they were not accustomed to. After peer review workshops and in

their final reflections, students often discussed the need for adding detail and clarity to their writing so the reader could understand the context of the book.

Tori commented in her interview that sharing her writing with her peers forced her to "change my point of view" when writing because her readers "don't know what the book is about." She had to shape her writing to make sure her audience understood everything she was trying to say. In a similar fashion, Irene said that writing for her peers "helps me focus more and keep me on topic most of the time." Gloria wrote in her literacy letter reflection that sharing her writing helped her find "what didn't make sense in my letter and what I needed to add more detail to." Albert commented in a reflection that knowing that most people are familiar with *The Hunger Games* helped him shape his writing towards that audience because "when explaining what happens in the book, I already know what my audience knows about the book meaning I can cut stuff out and focus on details and writing which is a good thing." In this reflection, Albert also talked about how having choice in reading and writing affected his writing, saying that his writing "would obviously be different if I had to answer the same prompts as everyone else." Albert described himself as having "a somewhat unique writing style" and in his interview he said he "was pretty proud of" the way his writing throughout the unit culminated in his book review.

As an example of how the peer review process impacted the actual drafts of student writing, Figure 6 shows some of the changes Anita made to her book review draft. Her changes involve adding more detail about the book, most notably adding a sentence to the end of the first and last paragraph that provides information about the main character's motivations. There are several changes where she adds detail by altering her word choice, changing money to fortune and rich to wealthy. Other changes are corrective, adding a missing verb, fixing pronoun confusion, and tweaking conjunctions. In her reflection, Anita talked about how having someone read her writing gives her a "double amount of understanding," meaning that she has her own understanding of the book and, after peer review, she has her reader's as well. Anita's edits to her draft reflect her attempts to improve her reader's understanding of the book she is reviewing.

Figure 6

Anita's Book Review Edits

Keeping the castle by Patrice Kindl

Have you ever tried to please your family? or Have you ever did anything and everything just to honor them? Well this book tells it all, a girl named Althea did all she could just to make her family feel like they fit in with everyone else or maybe better than others. Her goal is to make others around her happy.

Let's start from the beginning of the story. Althea had a grandfather that designed a castle that is by a 100 foot cliff overlooking the sea and used all his ~~money~~ fortune on building and furnituring the castle but her grandfather is not alive anymore so ~~there nothing~~ there is no possessions for Althea and her family ~~so~~ and the only thing that Althea could do is marry a very ~~rich~~wealthy man that has a large fortune to take care of her family. Althea, her stepsisters and Althea's mother was invited to a ball and Althea met the host of the ball which was the prince of the kingdom.
I'd rather let the reader read the rest of the book to see what happens next.

I really recommend this book because when you think about her situation it can play the role of a real life story ~~because~~since ~~she~~ Althea is trying her best to do something to help/save her family. (this book is slightly identical to the other Cinderella)

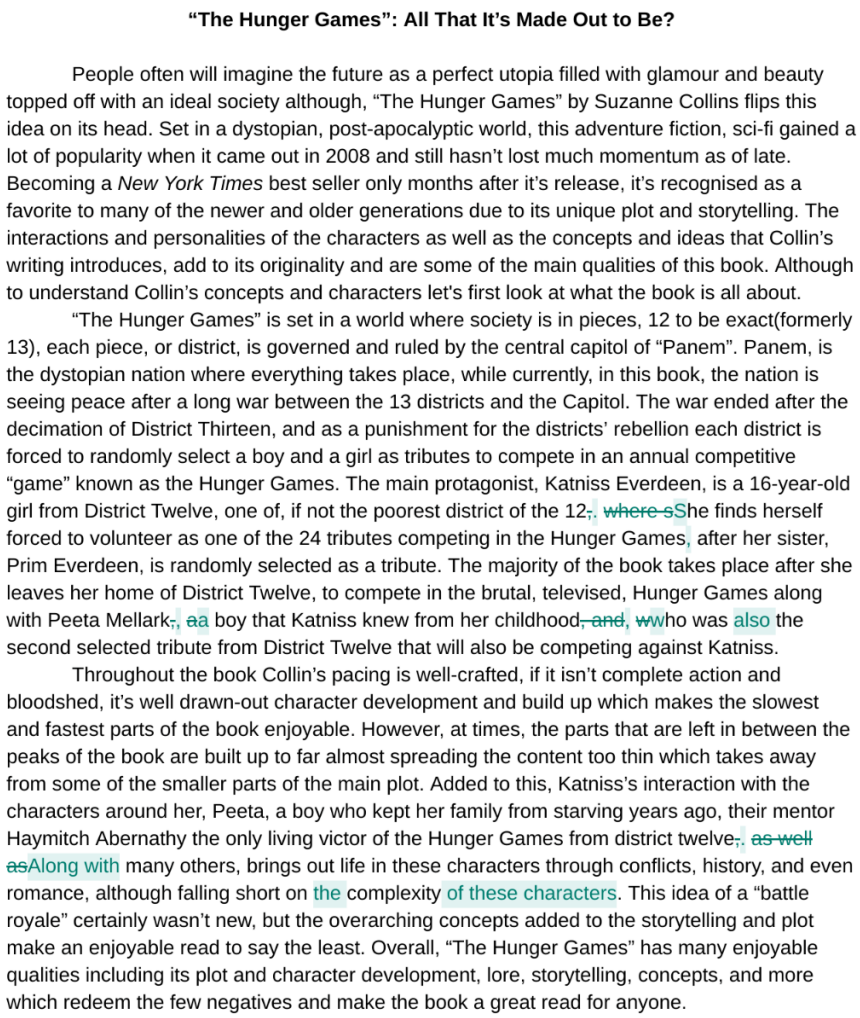
I based my evaluation on this book of how different it was from other Cinderella stories. Other Cinderella books is like a fantasy instead of a real life story, this book has more situations like Althea has to marry a man to please her family, Althea is the most prettiest in the house and her sisters are jealous of her, She is the youngest sister but everyone in the house depends on her~~.~~ and the main situation that she is going through is doing something that doesn't please her but pleases others, doing something that you would never want to do but had to do it for family or friends.

As a comparison to Anita's edits, Figure 7 shows the final edits Albert made to his book review of *The Hunger Games*. Albert had noted in his interview that most of the feedback he received was related to word choice and sentence structure, and the final changes he made to his draft reflect that. Peer feedback helped Albert notice some run-on

sentences that he repaired by splitting the original sentence into two. He also adds detail at one point, clarifying the type of complexity he is talking about.

Figure 7

Albert's Book Review Revisions



"The Hunger Games": All That It's Made Out to Be?

People often will imagine the future as a perfect utopia filled with glamour and beauty topped off with an ideal society although, "The Hunger Games" by Suzanne Collins flips this idea on its head. Set in a dystopian, post-apocalyptic world, this adventure fiction, sci-fi gained a lot of popularity when it came out in 2008 and still hasn't lost much momentum as of late. Becoming a *New York Times* best seller only months after it's release, it's recognised as a favorite to many of the newer and older generations due to its unique plot and storytelling. The interactions and personalities of the characters as well as the concepts and ideas that Collin's writing introduces, add to its originality and are some of the main qualities of this book. Although to understand Collin's concepts and characters let's first look at what the book is all about.

"The Hunger Games" is set in a world where society is in pieces, 12 to be exact(formerly 13), each piece, or district, is governed and ruled by the central capitol of "Panem". Panem, is the dystopian nation where everything takes place, while currently, in this book, the nation is seeing peace after a long war between the 13 districts and the Capitol. The war ended after the decimation of District Thirteen, and as a punishment for the districts' rebellion each district is forced to randomly select a boy and a girl as tributes to compete in an annual competitive "game" known as the Hunger Games. The main protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, is a 16-year-old girl from District Twelve, one of, if not the poorest district of the 12~~,~~. ~~where s~~She finds herself forced to volunteer as one of the 24 tributes competing in the Hunger Games, after her sister, Prim Everdeen, is randomly selected as a tribute. The majority of the book takes place after she leaves her home of District Twelve, to compete in the brutal, televised, Hunger Games along with Peeta Mellark~~,~~ ~~a~~a boy that Katniss knew from her childhood~~, and~~, ~~w~~who was also the second selected tribute from District Twelve that will also be competing against Katniss.

Throughout the book Collin's pacing is well-crafted, if it isn't complete action and bloodshed, it's well drawn-out character development and build up which makes the slowest and fastest parts of the book enjoyable. However, at times, the parts that are left in between the peaks of the book are built up to far almost spreading the content too thin which takes away from some of the smaller parts of the main plot. Added to this, Katniss's interaction with the characters around her, Peeta, a boy who kept her family from starving years ago, their mentor Haymitch Abernathy the only living victor of the Hunger Games from district twelve~~,~~. ~~as well as~~Along with many others, brings out life in these characters through conflicts, history, and even romance, although falling short on the complexity of these characters. This idea of a "battle royale" certainly wasn't new, but the overarching concepts added to the storytelling and plot make an enjoyable read to say the least. Overall, "The Hunger Games" has many enjoyable qualities including its plot and character development, lore, storytelling, concepts, and more which redeem the few negatives and make the book a great read for anyone.

Anita's and Albert's edits to their book review drafts demonstrate the impact of peer review. Both students took the feedback they received from their peers and applied it

to improve their drafts. For Anita, these changes were largely about adding details and specificity and for Albert the changes were largely to fix long sentences. These changes reflect the types of feedback that students often talked about. Anita received feedback that helped her find places to add detail, which was the type of feedback students valued most. Albert made positive use of corrective feedback, fixing grammatical errors, which was the type of feedback students most commonly received. Sharing writing with peers throughout the unit was an effective means of helping students shape and improve their writing.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

I began my path towards this study with an interest in book choice and how students interact with texts and each other in classroom assignments. As a classroom teacher, I was interested in why students read (or didn't read) and how they interacted with works of literature. In designing this study, I wanted to value both student words and student work so I attempted to design an approach that would center students' voices. This dissertation study takes a sociocultural approach (Bazerman, 2016; Prior, 2006) to examine the impact of shared writing about a book of choice in an eighth-grade English Language Arts classroom. The findings showed that students were able to form strong connections to books of choice by creating multimodal products directed at a defined audience. Furthermore, students strongly valued reading and sharing work within the classroom community. Lastly, sharing writing with their peers helped students to better understand and improve their own writing. In this chapter, I discuss the implications of this study's findings as they relate to classroom research and the teaching of English Language Arts in the middle school classroom. I also discuss the limitations of the study and implications for future research.

Discussion

Connections to Theory and Research

The findings in this study connect to sociocultural theories of learning and writing (Bazerman, 2016; Prior, 2006). Bazerman (2016) notes that "writers write to participate in social situations" (p. 11). The findings from this research demonstrate the process and

the impact of writing within the social situations of the secondary English Language Arts classroom. Students wrote about their books of choice with the knowledge that their work would be shared with their classmates and that this sharing would result in peer feedback on their drafts. The revisions that came from peer sharing and feedback sessions resulted in students becoming more aware of the relationship between reader and writer and the need to clearly convey meaning to an audience that may not be familiar with the literature being discussed in the writing.

The findings of the study also demonstrate the formation of a classroom community of practice. Wenger's (1998) indicators for a community of practice include sustaining mutual relationships and sharing ways of working together. The shared writing conducted throughout this unit reflects both of Wenger's indicators. By sharing writing throughout the unit, students developed productive relationships that could help each other improve as readers and writers. Even though students were working with different books throughout the unit, the writing tasks were completed using shared genres and tools. Students could use their classmates' drafts as mentor texts to help shape their own writing, as many students said they did when they watched book talk videos before completing their own video. By involving parents as an audience for the literacy letter assignment and by making all the writing of the unit available on a portfolio website, the

classroom writing community extended the reach of their work beyond the walls of their second period English class.

Although it wasn't a primary focus of the study, the findings also point towards the potential for engaging multiliteracies (Cope and Kalantizis, 2004) in the secondary English Language Arts classroom. Students created images, videos, and websites to demonstrate their understanding of their books. Students made use of multimodal texts as guides for producing their own and then shared their work within the classroom community. The multimodal products were able to fit into the same process of sharing and peer feedback as were the written pieces like the book review and the literacy letter. This indicates the potential for multimodal composition in response to literature to exist alongside more traditional writing assignments as a means of engaging "interest-driven, peer-supported, and academically-oriented learning experiences" (Mirra et al., 2018, p. 18).

Through the findings of this research, I present three implications that teachers and researchers can take from this study: 1) Choice in reading helps students form meaningful connections to literature. 2) Students value and benefit from social engagement when writing. 3) Multimodal writing should be used alongside traditional writing genres.

Implications

Book Choice Helps Develop Meaningful Connections to Literature

There are many teachers and researchers who have written about the benefits of student-selected reading and the ways it can help improve literacy, grammar, vocabulary, writing, and even empathy (Gallagher, 2009; Kittle, 2013; Krashen, 1989). In a 21st-century world of expanding and "new" literacies (Kist, 2000), literature teachers are often still focused on teaching so-called canonical texts (Applebee, 1993; Stotsky et al., 2010). There is a need in the literature classroom to expand the canon and to adopt texts that students are more willing to actually and engage with (Moore et al., 1999). In this study, students had the opportunity to choose their own books and to participate in a reading environment where they could successfully finish reading it within a community of readers. Book choice also allowed for students to make real and meaningful connections to their reading and to one another.

Ivey and Broaddus (2001) describe middle school reading as "full of mixed messages and inconsistencies" (p.350), detailing a disconnected learning environment where teachers want students to be avid, independent readers but where texts and tasks are most often teacher-selected. Ivey and Broaddus' used a survey to depict the state of reading in middle school classrooms through the thoughts and voices of 1700 students. This dissertation study is a significantly smaller sample size, the findings of this study

reflect some of the same results as Ivey and Broaddus', namely that students value the opportunity to read books of their own choosing and to share that reading with their peers. The connections Albert, Stacy, and Tori were able to make with their chosen books indicates the potential that book choice has in the classroom. The findings of this study also confirm previous studies that show that adolescent readers choose to read books that generally differ greatly from works taught in English Language Arts classes (Hopper, 2005). And the book choices of students like Kendra (*Hamlet*), Stacy (*To Kill a Mockingbird*), and Bruce (*The Lord of the Rings)* correspond with studies that show when given choice in choosing their texts of study, students still do select works challenging literary works (Hale & Crowe, 2001). The findings of this study go beyond looking at the reading preferences of students. This study demonstrates the potential for book choice to be a central focus of classroom instruction. If teachers worry about how to bring books of choice into the curriculum beyond and outside reading assignment, this study can provide a framework of how to successfully do so. Reading a book of choice need not be an isolated, individual activity. Students can study young adult fiction, canonical works, books with movie adaptations, and even books based on a video game series in the same classroom at the same time without taking away from the academic focus of a class. This study demonstrates that with a focus on shared writing, students reading their own book

of choice can successfully form a classroom community that can share and discuss literature in productive and beneficial ways.

Students Value and Benefit From Social Engagement When Writing

Findings from this study demonstrate how sharing writing about book choice can help create a supportive reading and writing community within a secondary language arts classroom. The examples of Anita's and Albert's revisions show that sharing writing resulted in positive changes to writing products. Even Albert, who thought the feedback he received was narrow and corrective, still used that feedback to improve his draft. For Lana, a student who struggled with spelling and punctuation, having a friendly and familiar peer reviewer helped her work through her struggles with proofreading. But the success of shared writing and peer feedback in this study went far beyond the benefits of peer editing. The use of models is a well-established component of successful writing instruction (Graham et al., 2016; Graham & Perin, 2007) and the findings of this study demonstrate the value of students having the opportunity to read peer models as well as professional models. I created examples of each assignment and also provided models from professional writers, but students talked much more openly about the benefits of seeing the classmates' writing as mentor texts and inspiration. The book talk assignment, in particular, was a place where many students made use of viewing their peers' work and then used that viewing to help shape their own videos. Peer models also served as

motivators for students, giving them examples of a level and quality of work they could aspire to attain. Students could look at their classmates' writing and see attainable goals. It is valuable to have students examine professional mentors to discover the moves and strategies that professional writers use, and this study shows it is equally valuable to let students use each others' writing to see how their peers are applying those strategies. Peer writing acting as a mentor text also serves as a motivator for the more skilled writers in the class. Even students who said the peer review did not provide them significant writing assistance made comments in their interviews about how the peer review was a confidence builder for them.

Multimodal Writing Should Be Used Alongside Traditional Writing Genres

Secondary writing often emphasizes short written genres like essays in response to texts (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Saidy, 2018). The requirements of standardized testing often necessitate traditional writing forms, but the findings of this study show how multimodal composition can complement written genres. Whether writing a book review or creating a Bookstagram image, students were able to explore their connections to literature. Stacy's Bookstagram image demonstrated her ability to connect her familiarity with the film adaptation to the content and characters of her book. Larry's book review showcased his creativity and personality with humor and energy that would be difficult to replicate in writing. Throughout this unit, digital composition blended with more

traditional written assignments, like the analysis paragraph and the book review. Students used mentor texts, peer review, revision, and reflection with their multimodal assignments in the same fashion as with written assignments. Teaching multimodal genres alongside written genres allows for teaching both for and with the digital generation (National Writing Project et al., 2010).

Implications for Research

I conducted this dissertation study acting as both researcher and classroom teacher. I hope that the study can serve as an example of the benefits of both practitioner research and qualitative research in the classroom. Western Tech, like many modern public schools, pays a great deal of attention to quantitative data. In addition to the state-mandated Smarter Balanced Assessment, the school also administers regular computerized testing in both ELA and Math. Teachers are expected to use this quantitative data to shape and improve instruction. There is no similar mandate for teachers to collect and reflect upon qualitative data. The rich qualitative data collected in this study shows the importance of valuing student voices and input in the classroom as a data source to be considered in addition to quantitative data.

I also hope this dissertation study can demonstrate the value of practitioner research conducted by teachers in their own classrooms. I agree with Dewey (quoted in McKernan, 1988) that “the contribution [to educational research] that might come from

classroom teachers are a comparatively neglected field" (1988, p. 177). Placing an emphasis on teacher-conducted research "challenges dominant research and development approaches that emphasize an outside-in, top-down approach to educational change" (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 7). In addition, conducting research as a classroom teacher gives you a new perspective into teaching. Working in the dual role as teacher and researcher provided me the framework that allowed me to step back and critically examine and reflect upon my teaching practice. Conducting qualitative practitioner research is also a means of learning more about students. As a teacher, I would only be responsible for grading and providing feedback on student work, but as a researcher, I had to closely examine student work not just as individual products but as pieces that related to each other and to the student who created them. Assignments become less a collection of individual tasks and more a portrait of a student.

Many studies of school-based reading and/or writing communities (Alvermann et al., 1999; Appleman, 2006; Whittingham & Huffman, 2009) document the activities and experiences of before- and after-school groups. This study goes further by examining a community formed within the day-to-day activities and curriculum of an ELA classroom. By making the reading and writing community a central aspect of the class curriculum, this study also furthers the work of a study such as Lapp and Fisher (2009), where the reading community only operates in the classroom one day per week. It is my hope that

this study can demonstrate the effectiveness of classroom communities of practice so that the learning, sharing, and community-building that takes place in extracurricular reading and writing groups can be brought into the classroom and made available to all students.

Rudduck and Demetriou (2003) and Rudduck (2006, 2007) argue forming partnerships with students and understanding student perspectives on learning are keys to improving teaching practice. This study provides a framework for embedding student perspectives into the learning process. By asking students to reflect upon each major assignment and on the peer review process that went with it, I was able to make certain that students had an opportunity to have their perspectives acknowledged throughout the course of the unit. By providing regular opportunities for students to reflect and provide feedback on assignments, teachers can enable a structure for valuing student voice and engagement in the learning process.

Limitations

The most significant limitation of this study is the time frame of it. A seven-week unit is less than what I originally hoped for when planning the study. Working as a long-term substitute, I had a limited amount of time as a classroom teacher at Western Tech. I used the time that I had available to me as a teacher-researcher in the best way I could, but ideally this would be a semester-long or even year-long study. Giving students more time to continue reading books of choice and sharing their writing about those books may

have produced more interesting data about reading and writing identities. If students had the opportunity to read multiple books and to use their classmates' shared writing as a sort of book recommendation engine, it would be easier to imagine seeing greater shifts in reading and writing identities. And a longer time frame would give students more opportunities to adapt and apply writing strategies they learn from reading their classmates' writing and from writing for defined audiences.

Another limitation of the study in terms of its replicability for other teacher-researchers is the site. Western Tech gave me the freedom to create the unit however I saw fit. They gave me no curricular mandates or restrictions. I realize that is not the norm for many teachers. And Western Tech's emphasis on technology and blended learning meant that every student had a computer and internet connection at home. Again, this is not the norm for many schools. The access to technology at Western Tech enabled me to utilize multimedia forms of composition and made the sharing process much easier. I believe the basic structure of this study (students sharing writing about literature) is replicable without technology, but it would require modifications to the writing tasks and sharing process. In addition, the time frame in which I conducted this study was free of any mandated testing, giving me even greater freedom in designing the unit. This study could be challenging to recreate in schools that mandate more frequent assessments that could take time away from other classroom instruction.

A final limitation of the study comes from the qualitative nature of the research. As the sole researcher, I was entirely responsible for every aspect of coding and data analysis. Coding and analyzing qualitative research can be a stressful and doubt-producing process. Am I seeing everything in the data? Should I eliminate this code or keep it? Is my closeness to the work as both a teacher and researcher limiting my view of the data? I think there is great value in qualitative research and a great need for qualitative practitioner research in secondary education, but having an extra set of eyes to help comb through and comb the data would have helped make sure that my vision of the data is not distorted or skewed by my closeness to the project. I will address potential remedies to these limitations in the next section of this chapter.

Further Research

From my perspective as a teacher, I would call the unit described in this study a success. Students enjoyed it and they produced work that demonstrated that they were connecting with and thinking deeply about the books they chose to read. From my perspective as a researcher, I would like to see this research expanded to address some of the limitations of the study.

Most notably, I like to see this research conducted over a longer time period, ideally an entire semester or full year of a course. I would also be interested in seeing how this study scales. Qualitative classroom research often involves relatively small

sample sizes. In this study, I worked with a sample pulled from one single class period. I would be interested in seeing how expanding the number of participants to include multiple classes or even an entire grade level impacts the interactions between students. The multimodal nature of the work that students created in this study could also allow for this research to be expanding into an online space and look at how community is formed within a group of students that never meets face-to-face.

I want to conduct research relevant to the realities of the classroom and I understand the real importance that is placed on quantitative data (especially test scores) to many schools. To address this, I think there is potential to extend this study from qualitative to mixed methods. How does working with literature as a community impact the quantitative reading and writing data that schools collect and track?

Finally, I think this research could be expanded into the focus of a professional learning community. In addition to expanding the sample size, bringing in more teachers as researchers on the project would help reduce the subjectivity of one teacher-researcher doing all the coding and analysis of data. From my personal experience as a teacher, helping to conduct research like this study as part of a campus professional learning community would have been very helpful to my growth as a teacher, especially in the early stages of my teaching career.

Conclusions

Before conducting the research for this study, I had spent a year teaching online, primarily asynchronous classes where I never actually saw or met my students. Being back in the classroom to teach and conduct the research for this study reinvigorated my passion for teaching. This dissertation can't capture the joy of teaching that I experienced while conducting this study. My write-up of the research findings could never fully capture the chaotic energy of Larry's book talk video, the dry humor of Kendra or Albert, or the effort that students like Chris, Tori, Lana, and Anita put into improving the quality of their reading and writing. The energy of the students and the quality of the work they produced will be a constant reminder to me of why I teach. I hope that other teachers and researchers have the opportunity to conduct research that is as engaging and inspiring as conducting this study was for me.

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT LETTER

Building a Classroom Community of Practice

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Jessica Early in the Department of English Education at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to study the role of public writing in building reading communities.

I am inviting your child's participation, which would mean the possibility of your child's work from an instructional unit in the 2019-2020 school year being used as an example in research. Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to have your child participate or to withdraw your child from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. Choosing to participate or not participate in this research study will not affect your child's grade or the amount or type of work completed in the class. If you choose to allow your child to participate in the study, they will be asked to participate in a brief conversational interview about their reading. This interview would be conducted by the teacher during advisory or student support time. Participation in this study will not require your child to participate in any activities outside the normal school day.

The results of the research study may be published or used in presentations, but responses will remain confidential. Your child's name will not be used and all identifying information will be removed from any quoted responses. Results from survey data will only be shared in aggregate. The conversational interviews may be audio recorded, but any audio collected from interviews will only be summarized and will not be shared directly. Your child’s name, voice, and image will not be shared as part of this research. Any audio recordings collected as part of this research study will be deleted upon completion of the study. Any student who participates in this study will be assigned a pseudonym we will keep a master list of names and pseudonyms that will be destroyed after data collection. All data will be stripped of original names after collection. Again, your student’s name, likeness, image, or voice will not be used in any public presentation or publication of this research study.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your child’s participation.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call me at (623) 505-8736 or contact me at shawn.towner@asu.edu. You may also contact the study's principal investigator, Dr. Jessica Early, at jessica.early@asu.edu.

Thank you for considering your child's participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Shawn Towner

By signing below, you are giving consent for your child _____ (Child's name) to participate in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Signature	Printed Name	Date

If you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

APPENDIX B

ASSENT FORM

Building a Classroom Community of Practice

I have been informed that my parent(s) have given permission for me to participate in a study concerning the role of public writing in the development of reading communities.

My writing may be summarized or quoted. All work will remain anonymous and have any identifying information removed.

My participation in this project is voluntary and I have been told that I may stop my participation in this study at any time. If I choose not to participate it will not affect my grade in any way.

_____ _____

Signature Printed Name

_____

Date

APPENDIX C

INITIAL STUDENT SURVEY

1. Name
2. Gender
3. Languages Spoken
4. Do you see yourself as a reader?
5. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a reader?
6. Do you like to read for school? Why or why not?
7. Do you like to write for school? Why or why not?
8. Do you like to read outside of school? Why or why not?
9. Do you like to write outside of school? Why or why not?
10. How does writing help you understand reading?
11. How does working with others help you write?
12. How important is reading/writing at Western Tech? How do you know?

APPENDIX D

BOOKSTAGRAM ASSIGNMENT

For the first activity with a Golden Line from your independent reading novel, you will be creating a Bookstagram style book post. (Bookstagram is what they call the community of people who post about books on Instagram.)

You can use Google Docs/Drawings or sites like Canva or Adobe Spark to create your image.

Your image should include the following:

- A direct quote from your independent reading novel.
- An image the represents the novel or quote.
- Stylish, visually appealing design.

You will create the image and post it to the Golden Lines page of your portfolio website along with a paragraph that explains the following:

Requirement	Explanation to Include in Your Paragraph
A direct quote from your independent reading novel.	Why did you choose your quote? What makes it a golden line?
An image the represents the novel or quote.	Why did you choose your image? What does it show or say about the novel or quote?
Stylish, visually appealing design.	Why did you design the image the way you did?

APPENDIX E

PRACTICE ANALYSIS PARAGRAPH

Prompt: All novels have a main character, often called the protagonist. Who is the main character of your novel? Who are they? What are they like? How does the author introduce the character and let the reader know what we're supposed to think about the character?

You will write one healthy paragraph in response to the prompt above. You will use the POW+TREE strategy (below) to organize and focus your writing. Your paragraph should include specific examples from your book, ideally in the form of direct quotes.

Pick an Idea - Develop an answer to the prompt.

Organize my Notes – Use TREE to plan and organize the structure and details of your writing.

Topic Sentence – Answer the prompt in one sentence, be clear and concise.

Reasons – Provide three or more reasons from your book to support your topic sentence.

Explain reasons – Say more about each reason.

Ending – Wrap it up by restating your topic sentence.

Write and say more – Use all the parts in the paragraph and develop your argument.

APPENDIX F

LITERACY LETTER ASSIGNMENT

For the second writing assignment with your novel, you will be writing a letter to your learning coach about the novel you are reading and your progress in it so far. Your letter should include:

- A salutation (Dear…)
- One paragraph that includes the title and author of the book you're reading and why you chose to read it.
- One paragraph about your progress in the book and what's happened in it so far. Include at least one specific example (ideally a quote) from the book to explain what's going on in the book.
- One paragraph about how you are liking (or not liking) the book. Include at least one specific example (ideally a quote) from the book to explain your thoughts about the book so far.
- Closing (Sincerely…)

APPENDIX G

BOOK TALK ASSIGNMENT

Your assignment is to record a 2-3 minute book talk about your chosen novel. The object of a book talk is to express your thoughts about the book to the viewer. Think of it as if you were sitting next to a person who hadn't read the book and wanted to know more about it. What would you tell them?

Introduction:

- Find an interesting, exciting, or mysterious quote to start off your book talk and get the audience's attention. Choose carefully and deliberately to try to capture the attention of your audience.
- Clearly introduce your book by stating the name and author of the book.

Body:

- Tell a little about the setting, important characters, and plot in general without giving too much away of the story. Do not just list the characters and the setting and don't give a drawn-out summary of the book. Under no circumstances should you give away the ending of the novel.
- State at least one theme of the novel with evidence.

Conclusion:

- Wrap things up with a general reason why someone might want to read the book? What could they gain/learn/experience from reading the book?

Recording Your Video: You will submit the video to Flipgrid. You can read the video directly on Flipgrid or you can use:

https://www.wevideo.com (Storyboard mode is the easiest to use)
https://spark.adobe.com/edu
https://www.screencastify.com/education
The camera app on your school Chromebook
Your phone's camera

APPENDIX H

BOOK REVIEW ASSIGNMENT

Your final written piece for this unit will be a book review of your chosen book (If you read more than one book, choose one to review). Your review should be at least 300 words and will include the following elements but other than the hook (which should come first), they can appear in whatever order you think works best

Hook - How will you draw the reader in? Think about the themes of your book and how those could potentially serve as a hook.
Background - What background info you will need to provide? Be aware of the knowledge of a general audience that hasn't read the book. What does your reader need to know about the book? Remember not to reveal too much about the book. No spoilers!
Evaluation - What is your opinion of the book?
Criteria 1 - What criteria will you base your evaluation on?
Criteria 2 - What other criteria will you base your evaluation on?
(Optional) Criteria 3 - What criteria will you base your evaluation on?

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What book(s) are you reading/have you read during the unit?
2. How did you find out about these books?
3. Do you know what other people in the class are reading? How?
4. What do you like most/least about the reading and writing we've been doing for this unit?
5. What do you think about sharing your work with others? Have you ever had to do that before?
6. What kind of feedback/response have you received from others about your writing? Has it been helpful or useful to you?
7. How do you think you've shaped or influenced other peoples' writing?
8. How has seeing other people's writing impacted the way you read and write?

APPENDIX J

REFLECTION

1. What is your favorite thing that you read this quarter? Why?
2. What is your favorite thing that you wrote this quarter? Why?
3. How do you think you've changed or improved as a reader this quarter?
4. How do you think you've changed or improved as a writer this quarter?
5. Anything else you'd like me to know?

APPENDIX K

IRB APPROVAL

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Jessica Early
CLAS-H: English
480/965-0742
Jessica.Early@asu.edu

Dear Jessica Early:

On 9/3/2019 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Developing Reading Communities Through Public Writing in a Secondary English Language Arts Classroom
Investigator:	Jessica Early
IRB ID:	STUDY00010517
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• IRB.pdf, Category: IRB Protocol; • Instructional Calendar.pdf, Category: Other (to reflect anything not captured above); • Assent Forms.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Reflection.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Parental-Consent.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Introductory Survey.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Conversational Interview.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Site Permission.pdf, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc);

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (1) Educational settings on 9/3/2019.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Shawn Towner
Shawn Towner