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Final Master's Portfolio

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Final Master's Portfolio

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A Final Portfolio

Submitted to the English Department of Bowling Green

State University in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the field of English

With a specialization in

English Teaching

1 August 2019

Dr. Heather Jordan, First Reader

Ms. Kimberly Spallinger, Second Reader

Table of Contents

Analytical Narrative: A True Reflection of Me3

Project 1: Holocaust-based Literature Unit: A Thematic Approach to the Act of Dehumanization during World War II (Pedagogy).....9

Project 2: Preparing Students for the Future through Social Action (Substantial Research).....37

Project 3: The Importance of Reflective Writing in the Classroom.....69

Project 4: Building Critical Thinking Skills to Develop Meaning within Literature.....79

Analytical Narrative: A True Reflection of Me

When I began my master's degree journey, it was the summer of 2016, and I was a 3rd year teacher. Within my first couple years of teaching, I taught multiple grade levels and different academic levels. However, I wanted more consistency and I also wanted to pursue what I was most passionate about: writing. The administrator at my school encouraged anyone in the English department to apply to BGSU in order to receive College Credit Plus (CCP) accreditation. Teachers who receive CCP accreditation can then teach college courses at the high school where they teach; therefore, students can stay in the building but still receive college credit. The goal of the administration is to have teachers with master's degrees in their content area so the school can offer more core classes and electives for students. Administrators also want to keep students at the high school, rather than attending college classes elsewhere. I instantly applied. I attended BGSU as an undergraduate student; I graduated in 2012 with an English Education degree. Therefore, I knew I wanted to continue my education at BGSU. I wanted to become CCP certified for several reasons. The most important reason is because I am extremely passionate about teaching writing. I love watching students work through the writing process and for them to be proud of their final product. As I learned through BGSU's University Writing Program (WRIT), reflection is paramount in writing. I had many creative ideas I wanted to incorporate into my writing classroom: one-on-one conferences, peer editing, reflection, e-portfolios, and different methods of creative writing. These are all professional reasons for continuing my education; however, personally I also knew as a teacher, I would be a life-long learner. I always want to continue to grow as a teacher, and hopefully one day become a professor at a university; I would love to teach first-year writing courses.

My first portfolio project is a unit plan that revolves around the novel *Night* by Elie Wiesel; this serves as my teaching-based piece. I originally crafted the unit plan within my ENG6090: Teaching Literature course with Dr. Coates. I had Dr. Coates as a professor when I was an undergraduate, so I was well aware of her high expectations. She required me to work extremely hard through intensive research and writing, which is why two of my portfolio pieces developed in her class. I felt like her class required me to question myself as a teacher and my overall teaching philosophy. Overall, I did well on the paper, but Dr. Coates did provide feedback. I was grateful for the feedback so I went to work making these changes. My biggest revision beyond Dr. Coates' suggestions is adding several appendix pages to aid my detailed lesson plans. Any activity, writing prompt, or reading is now included within the project. I added these pieces because I want any teacher to read through this lesson and be able to teach it. I have had several mentors throughout my teaching career, especially veteran teachers who shared lesson plans with me as a starting point. I would love to now be that person for someone else. Based off the feedback from Dr. Coates, I changed my title to be more specific. Originally Dr. Coates recommended that I add college-based statements on what students would accomplish within the unit; however, as I revised this piece, my pacing, assigned readings, and assessments ideas correlated better with high school students so I kept the Common Core standards. I did add "I can" statements for clarity because these statements told students exactly what they should understand within the unit. Lastly, I made sure I defined terminology within my guided questions to ensure students had enough background to understand this novel. I chose this project because I am passionate about the Holocaust time period. I taught this unit before, and students responded well to it. Students were interested in the nonfiction articles, they demonstrated close reading skills, and excelled in writing the synthesis essay. I wanted to challenge students by having them

read and analyze both nonfiction and fiction texts. Students also had the opportunity to work by themselves, in small groups, and participate in whole class discussions. These hands-on activities demonstrate my student-led approach; students should be leaders in the classroom, while teachers are simply the facilitators. Overall I learned how to write more clearly in order for both students and teachers to understand the lesson. I also wanted to make sure my learning outcomes correlated with my thematic questions, class activities, and assessment.

Next, my second project was originally written for ENG6040: Graduate Writing with Ms. Spallinger. The final project for the class was a proposal for a potential project to be submitted to a journal; I chose the *The High School Journal*. The purpose of this University of North Carolina press within *The High School Journal* is “to promote generally, by publishing deserving works, the advancement of the arts and sciences and the development of literature.” The UNC Press publishes a wide variety of subject matters that include Early American Literature, education, southern studies, and controversial topics in today’s society. More specifically, the journal covers a wide variety of topics including gun violence in schools, the impact the Common Core standards have on standardized testing, and overall effective teaching strategies with attached lesson plans. Therefore, this is my substantive research and analysis on a focused topic. I chose to write about Project Based Learning (PBL). PBL assessments are a growing trend in education and would attract readers from the journal. Once again, I am very passionate about this topic because it meshes well with my teaching methods. PBLs encourage students to create change through writing, but also to create change within their local communities. To me, this is what teaching is all about; students taking the initiative about something they care about in the environment they live in. Ms. Spallinger offered feedback; she suggested I organize the introduction, expand the literature review, and provide sample materials. First, I edited the

introduction to help the overall flow of the essay. I enjoy using a quote within my introduction; however, the original draft lacked flow from beginning of my essay to the rest of my paper. I provided more background on the attention-grabbing quote to begin the essay, but also the overall topic at hand. I also created a more specific thesis that provided a stronger, more specific argument. In the original draft, we were limited by page length; therefore, I added one source to better clarify my argument. Next, I added several PBL materials that I have used before. I implemented a timeline of events within the project, sample group assignments, daily check points through Google Forms, and a sample call sheet from community members. I believe the appendix pages will help the reader understand the overall goal of the PBL assignment. Lastly, I revised my literature review to make sure I was synthesizing my sources well, and not simply organizing them by idea. Revising this piece taught me the importance of organizing research within my own argument, and also providing enough background for the reader.

My third project is a reflective paper written for ENG6800 Dr. Hoy's Reflective Writing class. The original goal of this paper was to summarize theorists' methods I studied throughout the semester on a specific topic then apply a teaching theory. This final essay about reflective writing was important to me because throughout my education, professors have stressed the importance of this skill and I wanted to find effective ways to incorporate reflective writing into my classroom. Reflective writing truly makes students better readers and writers which is why I am so passionate about this topic. For example, throughout my high school and post-secondary schooling, I wrote daily journals, summarized weekly readers, created an e-portfolio, and now I am drastically revising my own writing to prepare to publish it. In order to successfully complete a master's program in English, specifically in teaching, I must write in analytical narrative to introduce the portfolio, along with substantially revising four other essays I have written

throughout my graduate studies. The goal of the portfolio is to prove what I have learned: how to research, write, discuss, and teach within the English profession. I try to apply as many reflection activities into my own high school classroom. Dr. Hoy's general feedback encouraged me to revise my introduction and conclusion paragraphs, then edit my sentence structure. She also wanted me to provide context for my claims and demonstrate a deeper understanding of the field, and of reflective writing as a whole. Lastly, Dr. Hoy noted grammatical errors where I added commas instead of semicolons. The main suggestion for revision was to link older research to more modern research; therefore, I reviewed my original sources and also added in one. I tried to be more specific and provide examples of reflective writing throughout my own education to aid in the research. Lastly, I also organized this essay to make it more argumentative, rather than just summarizing scholars. My thesis revolves around the benefits of reflective writing, such as developing critical thinking skills, using writing within other subjects, and providing ways for students to connect with literature.

Lastly, my fourth project is a critical essay I wrote for Dr. Coates' ENG6090: Teaching Literature course. The prompt was an email from a student who did not understand why reading fiction was important. The student was not an English or education major, and did not find meaning in discussing people or events that never happened. Therefore, I replied to the prompt "Why Teach Literature?" Dr. Coates did offer feedback; she commented on ways to vary my syntax within sentences, revise the referents I use, cite block quotes correctly, and use specific examples to connect to my research. First, I added the prompt at the beginning of the essay. This is a popular prompt; I read it in other portfolios as well. Therefore, the context of the email is important because it allows the reader to see what exactly the student was asking. More importantly, this is a question I get asked frequently in my own classroom. Students often

wonder why it is important to read texts from the past, or how they can relate these texts to their own lives. First, I revised many of the paragraphs by adding clarity to sentence structure and specific examples. In the first draft I was too dependent on the research, and I lacked my own ideas. More specifically, I now offer examples of how to apply the research to a Language Arts classroom. I tried to add a variety of literature to prove to students the value of both nonfiction and fiction such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, etc. Teachers must incorporate both genres into the curriculum because it allows students to connect with characters, historical context, and to make their own connections with the text.

In conclusion, there is not a common theme throughout my portfolio; rather, my portfolio is four pieces of writing that I am passionate about and that I can incorporate into my current classroom. I have learned about myself as a teacher, reader, writer, and student throughout this master's degree program. Now that I am a better writer, I can help my students become better writers as well. I can answer questions like "Why Teach Literature". I can also explain in more detail why a semicolon is needed here instead of a comma, or what exactly a referent is within writing. Lastly, I have learned to synthesize sources efficiently to help support my own argument. Beyond synthesis and writing skills, I have learned the importance of reflection, time management, and peer review. For example, as I compiled this portfolio, I was extremely grateful for the feedback from my peers and professor. Specifically, I found ways to organize each piece more clearly and offer a variety of ways to prove my main thesis points. I will take all of the skills I have learned to one day become a college professor.

Brooke Welch

Dr. Coates

ENG 6090

29 May 2019

Unit Plan Assignment Revised

Holocaust-based Literature Unit: A Thematic Approach to the Act of Dehumanization during World War II

Honors/Advanced English 10: A general education course emphasizing discussion of humanistic themes based on student responses to readings in fiction, nonfiction, drama, and poetry. Prerequisite: Honors/Advanced English 9.

Learning/Performance Objectives (Common Core standards, grade 10)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1 I can cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2 I can determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3 I can analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1 I can initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4 I can determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6 I can analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

This unit is designed to expose students to the harsh realities of dehumanization of Jewish people during World War II. The texts chosen represent common themes and style choices within Holocaust literature, and are mainly first-hand accounts such as Elie Wiesel's personal narrative *Night* and excerpts from Anne Frank.

Throughout the unit, students will be expected to

- Apply close reading strategies and annotations to both nonfiction and fiction texts
- Analyze figurative language such as metaphors, similes, personification, hyperbole, etc.
- Collaborate with their peers through small group and whole group class discussions
- Write a synthesis essay using multiple sources
- Research their synthesis essay topic
- Present their findings to the class
- Utilize technology effectively including Google Slides

Students will demonstrate their skills and ideas through several assignments including a close reading activity, a poetry explication presentation, a 5-paragraph synthesis essay, and weekly class discussions. Students will first read *Night*; throughout the text, students will practice close reading skills individually and with their peers. Then students will read “Tale of a Sprinter” and “Frozen Jews” in order to compare the overall themes to the novel. Lastly, students will read an excerpt from Anne Frank from Commonlit. Using several of the texts throughout the unit, students will write a synthesis essay focused on a thematic shared purpose within the unit.

Thematic Guiding Questions:

1. What does the word dehumanization mean?
2. How does this time period within the Holocaust represent the idea of dehumanization?
3. Are all people entitled to the same human experiences regardless of race, gender, sex, and religion even during wartimes such as World War II?
4. What would be the most powerful tool for a society, or government, to exercise total control over the individuals within it?
5. How important is identity within a community?
6. Is individuality a vital component to an individual’s happiness in order to be a valued member of society?

Narrative description of methods used to achieve unit objectives: To reach every student through differentiation, I use a variety of student-led instructional methods. Students will participate in both small group and whole class discussions. Students will be asked to present their knowledge through a poetry explication. I offer as much student choice as possible as they will get to choose the poem themselves. Based off the objectives for the course, we will continue to focus on close reading strategies through several close reading assignments (2 in class together and 1 on their own). Finally, students will write a 5 paragraph synthesis paper using several sources to find a “shared purpose” or theme. Students will use the fiction, nonfiction, and poetry texts. These methods allow students to be creative through several forms such as writing, presenting, talking with their peers, and analyzing different genres. I designed this lesson for high school students; therefore, I will give students a timeline of the entire unit, including a reading schedule. A schedule is important for students so they can plan a head and know exactly what I expect from them on a daily basis.

How these methods reflect teaching philosophy: In my classroom, I embrace a hands-on teaching approach that is student-led. I will explain and model skills for students, but ultimately, it is up to the student to apply these concepts. Therefore, the assignments, pacing, and timeline below revolve around student-centered activities. The day-to-day activities include several class discussions, two quick writes, and handouts to demonstrate the knowledge of such skills as diction, syntax, figurative language, close reading, and theme. Students will lead the class discussion through strategies like Socratic Seminars and think-pair-share discussions. Students will also have the chance to ask questions and share out their quick writes based on *Night*. Then to apply these skills, I will assign students three major assignments: a close reading assignment, a poetry explication and presentation, and a final synthesis essay. All the major assignments encourage students to be creative, be confident when interacting with their peers, and offer a new way of reading and analyzing multiple texts.

Day	Activity/assignment	Homework/Due dates
Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Introduce Elie Wiesel’s novel <i>Night</i> (hand out reading schedule) -Read CommonLit article titled “Elie Wiesel” -answer text dependent questions -Watch Oprah interview with Wiesel (video:30 minutes) 	Read pages 13-54 (Connections version of the novel)
Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Quick write: Why is it important to bear witness to an event? (10 minutes) -Complete ch. 1 close read activity (whole class; 15 minutes) -Complete ch. 2-3 round robin stations activity (15 minutes) 	Read pages 55-72
Day 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Write ch. 4 writing assignment: Elie’s loss of innocence (in-class) -Participate in class discussion -Read pages 73-91 	Continue reading through 91
Day 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Complete diction/syntax handout: complete individually first then you may discuss with a partner 	Finish reading novel

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Participate in class discussion -Read pages 92-end of novel 	
Day 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Complete ch. 6 close reading (individually; 10-15 minutes) -Complete ch. 5-6 figurative language group activity; discuss -Participate in class discussion 	HW: Night theme review handout
Day 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Wrap up novel discussion -Read Wiesel's Nobel Peace Prize speech; answer text dependent questions 	Finish speech and questions
Day 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Introduce ch. 7 close reading assignment (individual) -Work on close reading assignment 	Finish ch. 7 close reading assignment: due Day 9
Day 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Read Tale of a Sprinter (poem) -Read Frozen Jews (poem) -Write: QW: After reading both poems, what insight do the poems tell you about the time period of the Holocaust? About human nature? 	
Day 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Introduce poetry explication assignment -Choose a poem that parallels the theme(s) of the novel and poetry we have read thus far. 	Research and print your chosen poem for tomorrow
Day 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work Day: read and analyze your chosen poem -Begin to put together your Slides presentation 	Work on Slides
Day 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work on finalizing Slides 	Work on Slides
Day 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Present Poetry Explication 	
Day 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Finish presentations 	

	-Discuss background about Anne Frank	
Day 14	-Read “Who was Anne Frank?” (Commonlit) -Answer text dependent questions	
Day 15	-Introduce Synthesis Essay: Construct a multi paragraph response in which you identify and analyze the shared purpose (dehumanization) in the texts we read in class (<i>Night</i> , poetry, Anne Frank article) -Work on outline	Construct outline
Day 16	Write: Outline due tomorrow	Outline due tomorrow
Day 17	-Meet one on one with me; discuss thesis statement and overall outline -Draft final essay using MLA format	Draft essay
Day 18	-Write essay	Plan for a peer edit tomorrow
Day 19	-Complete peer edit -Make revisions	Correct revisions
Day 20	-Write Final draft of synthesis essay due by the end of the period	

Methods of Assessment

-Close reading assignment: Over the course of the semester, we have practiced close reading strategies and ways to become active readers. As we have discussed before, close reading skills can be applied to any subject and any text that you may read. Close reading helps you develop critical thinking skills and helps you better comprehend the text. Some of the strategies include circle words you do not know, making your own personal connections, summarizing each main section, and asking questions about the text. Throughout reading *Night*, we have completed two close reading assignments together. Now it is time to practice a “cold read” on your own within chapter 7 of the novel. My expectations are for you to apply the skills you have learned this year and actively annotate the passage. Then follow the directions on the handout by answering the questions based on tone, syntax, diction, and theme. The close reading assignment is an individual grade that will be assessed by me. (25%)

-Synthesis Essay (5 paragraphs): Throughout the semester, you have completed several “They Say, I say” template essays. To build off that knowledge and to prepare you for standardized testing, you will now write a synthesis essay using multiple sources. *Night* will be your main source; however, you may use other texts we have read as well, or you may find your own sources through the online database. (35%)

-Poetry Explication: Your job is to analyze each word of your chosen poem, and determine how it relates to the novel *Night*. Continue to look for common themes we have discussed such as silence and dehumanization. As we have discussed before, when reading poetry, you must read it multiple times. Then think about the narrator, the author, and the overall purpose or motivation of the poem. After you paraphrase the poem, it is your job to present/teach the poem to your classmates. Organize the material in a Google Slides presentation then share it with me; you must also have 2-3 visual aids to assist in your presentation. (30%)

<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/poetry-explications/>

-Class participation/discussion (quick writes, syntax/diction handouts) In order to receive full credit for participation, you must come to each class session prepared by reading the assigned material, completing the task(s) for the day, participating in whole group discussion, and collaborating with your peers. (10%)

Rationale for Readers: Overall, I designed this unit for an honors class at the high school level; therefore, the pacing is quicker than an on-level academic class would be for students. I wanted to challenge students by reading several different texts, encouraging them to take charge of class discussions, then displaying their knowledge through several different formats. I think I am asking students to accomplish a lot in a 4 week period. However, I will map out the entire unit for them through a reading schedule, and I will also discuss important deadlines with them. I tried to develop creative assignments that students would be interested in, while also offering them as much choice as possible. I have found the student choice and varying lesson activities are two of the strongest motivations for students. Lastly, I tried to incorporate as much writing as possible through quick writes then a final essay. Writing is a skill that should be applied to all subjects, and something that students will definitely use in their post high school plans.

Appendix 1

Close Reading: Night Chapter 1

Directions: Perform a close reading analysis for each of the following passages. Use the chart provided to guide you in analyzing all of the passage’s important elements.

Passage #1 (pg. 10):

THE EIGHT DAYS of Passover.

The weather was sublime. My mother was busy in the kitchen. The synagogues were no longer open. People gathered in private homes: no need to provoke the Germans.

Almost every rabbi's home became a house of prayer.

We drank, we ate, we sang. The Bible commands us to rejoice during the eight days of celebration, but our hearts were not in it. We wished the holiday would end so as not to have to pretend.

On the seventh day of Passover, the curtain finally rose: the Germans arrested the leaders of the Jewish community.

From that moment on, everything happened very quickly. The race toward death had begun.

Elements of Style:	Identification and Analysis: find at least 1-2 examples for each category and provide textual evidence & explanations
<p>Diction</p> <p>Carefully examine the language of the passage. Pay attention to the author’s diction (word choice), including vocabulary and words with strong or weak connotative meanings.</p>	<p>Ex: Wiesel uses the forceful word “commands” in place of a milder word such as “asks” or “requests.” It points to the power of the Bible for the Jewish people and suggests that, at this point, they were continuing their traditions more out of obligation than out of desire.</p>
<p>Syntax</p> <p>How are words arranged in the passage? Does the author use simple and direct or complex sentences? Are there unique uses of fragments or run-ons? What about structural</p>	

<p>devices such as repetition, parallelism, or commands, dialogue?</p>	
<p>Figurative Language Identify key rhetorical devices, such as simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, and imagery. Comment on their effect on the passage as a whole.</p>	
<p>Tone What is the speaker's attitude in the passage? What aspect(s) of the text (textual evidence) suggest this?</p>	

Passage #2 (pg. 19):

We were ready. I went out first. I did not want to look at my parents' faces. I did not want to break into tears. We remained sitting in the middle of the street, like the others two days earlier. The same hellish sun. The same thirst. Only there was no one left to bring us water.

I looked at my house in which I had spent years seeking my God, fasting to hasten the coming of the Messiah, imagining what my life would be like later. Yet I felt little sadness. My mind was empty.

"Get up! Roll call!"

We stood. We were counted. We sat down. We got up again. Over and over. We waited impatiently to be taken away. What were they waiting for?

<p>Elements of Style:</p>	<p>Identification and Analysis: find at least 1-2 examples for each category and provide textual evidence & explanations</p>
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<p>Diction</p> <p>Carefully examine the language of the passage. Pay attention to the author's diction (word choice), including vocabulary and words with strong or weak connotative meanings.</p>	
<p>Syntax</p> <p>How are words arranged in the passage? Does the author use simple & direct or complex sentences? Are there unique uses of fragments or run-ons? What about structural devices such as such as repetition, parallelism, or commands, dialogue?</p>	
<p>Figurative Language</p> <p>Identify key rhetorical devices, such as simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, and imagery. Comment on their effect on the passage as a whole.</p>	
<p>Tone</p> <p>What is the speaker's attitude in the passage? What aspect(s) of the text suggest this?</p>	
<p>Irony</p> <p>Find 2-3 examples of irony from the first chapter & record them.</p>	

Appendix 2

Round Robin Activity Chapters 2-3

1. Your table is your group. Each group will be given a color marker to indicate their team.
2. Rotate to each station. You will have 3 minutes at each station to follow the directions to analyze Chapter 2. Your group's answer must be unique - it cannot be the same as the answers already on the sheet. Your job is to come up with your own answer. It is a competition - the best answers will win a prize!
3. After each group has completed all stations, you will complete a gallery walk to read over what the other groups had to say. You will put a star by what your group believes is the best answer. You may not vote for yourself.

Station 1:

“The train stopped in Kaschau, a small town on the Czechoslovakian border. We realized then that we were not staying in Hungary. Our eyes opened. Too late.” (page 23)

Why does the author end his thoughts here with two very short sentences? What does this syntax (sentence structure) reveal about his feelings or attitude (tone) looking back on this memory?

Station 2:

“There are eighty of you in the car,” the German officer added. “If anyone goes missing, you will all be shot, like dogs.” (page 24)

Why does the author include this dialogue from the officer? What is the impact of the simile on the reader?

Station 3:

“There was a moment of panic. Who had screamed? It was Mrs. Schachter. Standing in the middle of the car, in the faint light filtering through the windows, she looked like a withered tree in a field of wheat. She was howling, pointing through the window:

‘Look! Look at this fire! This terrible fire! Have mercy on me!’

Some pressed against the bars to see. There was nothing. Only the darkness of night. “(page 25)

What literary device(s) are illustrated by Madame Schachter’s screaming?

How does the simile help you understand Madame Schachter’s appearance?

Station 4:

“ ‘Look at the fire! Look at the flames! Flames everywhere...’ (spoken by M. Schachter)

Once again, the young men bound and gagged her. When they actually struck her, people shouted their approval:

‘Keep her quiet! Make that madwoman shut up. She’s not the only one here...’

She received several blows to the head, blows that could have been lethal. Her son was clinging desperately to her, not uttering a word. He was no longer crying.” (page 26)

How is this incident an example of irony? How does this irony make the reader feel?

Station 5:

“...The doors of the wagon slid open. Two men were given permission to fetch water. When they came back they told us that they had learned, in exchange for a gold watch, that this was the final destination. We were to leave the train here. There was a labor camp on the site. The conditions were good. Families would not be separated. Only the young would work in the factories. The old and the sick would find work in the fields. Confidence soared. Suddenly we felt free of the previous nights’ terror. We gave thanks to God.” (page 27)

Explain the irony here. What is the impact on the reader?

Appendix 3

Ch. 4 Loss of Innocence Quick Write

1. In a paragraph explain how Elie Wiesel’s uses the metaphor that “the child that I was had been consumed in the flames” (34) to signal the end of Elie’s innocent way of viewing the world.

I. Provide the reader of your paragraph a sense of what was Elie was like before Auschwitz.

The reader first sees Elie as an **innocent** young boy who....

II. What does Elie experience at Auschwitz that causes the change in him?

In his first days at the Auschwitz complex, Elie ... (sees, feels, hears, smells, tastes)

But Elie’s most horrific experience is...

III. What happens to Elie that signals that he is no longer a child?

Seeing ... and smelling ... mark the end of Elie’s childhood. He no longer... (Use some anaphora here)... (End your paragraph by going back to the “the child ... consumed in the flames” metaphor)

Assemble your paragraph here:

Appendix 4

Night Chapter 4-5: Diction & Syntax Exercise

NEVER SHALL I FORGET that night, the first night in camp, that turned my life into one long night seven times sealed.

Never shall I forget that smoke.

Never shall I forget the small faces of the children whose bodies I saw transformed into smoke under a silent sky.

Never shall I forget those flames that consumed my faith forever.

Never shall I forget the nocturnal silence that deprived me for all eternity of the desire to live.

Never shall I forget those moments that murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to ashes.

Never shall I forget those things, even were I condemned to live as long as God Himself.

Never.

Discussion Questions

1. The words *never shall I forget* are repeated several times in this passage from chapter 3. What is the function of the repetition?
2. What function do the indentations serve in the selection?
3. By using the word *murdered*, what does Wiesel imply about his faith?
4. If we changed the word *murdered* to *killed*, what effect would it have on the meaning of the sentence?
5. By understanding the connotations of the word *condemned*, what do we understand about Wiesel's attitude toward life?

Appendix 5**Night Chapter 6: Close Reading Activity****Passage 1**

I soon forgot him. I began to think of myself again. My foot was aching, I shivered with every step. Just a few more meters and it will all be over. I'll fall. A small red flame... A shot... Death enveloped me, it suffocated me. It stuck to me like glue. I felt I could touch it. The idea of dying, of ceasing to be, began to fascinate me. To no longer feel anything, neither fatigue nor cold, nothing. To break rank, to let myself slide to the side of the road...

Identify an example of figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification...) in the above paragraph. Explain the meaning or impact of the figurative language you chose.

Choose one other example of good diction and explain its impact on the reader.

Passage 2

The road was endless. To allow oneself to be carried by the mob, to be swept away by blind fate. When the SS were tired, there were replaced. But no one replaced us. Chilled to the bone, our throats parched, famished, out of breath, we pressed on.

We were masters of nature, the masters of the world. We had transcended everything—death, fatigue, our natural needs. We were stronger than cold and hunger, stronger than the guns and the desire to die, doomed and rootless, nothing but numbers, we were the only men on earth.

What syntax is most impactful in the passage above? Explain how or why it is effective.

Describe the tone in the passage above. What specific diction helped you to figure this out?

Passage 3

“Don’t worry, son. Go to sleep. I’ll watch over you.”

“You first, Father. Sleep”

He refused. I stretched out and tried to sleep, to doze a little, but in vain. God knows what I would have given to be able to sleep a few moments. But deep inside, I knew that to sleep meant to die. And something in me rebelled against death. Death, which was settling in all around me, silently, gently. It would seize upon a sleeping person, steal into him and devour him bit by bit. Next to me, someone was trying to awaken his neighbor, his brother, perhaps, or his comrade. In vain. Defeated, he lay down too, next to the corpse, and also fell asleep. Who would wake him up? Reaching out with my arm, I touched him:

“Wake up. One mustn’t fall asleep here...”

He half opened his eyes.

“No advice,” he said, his voice a whisper. “I’m exhausted. Mind your business, leave alone.”

My father too was gently dozing. I couldn’t see his eyes. His cap was covering his face.

“Wake up,” I whispered in his ear.

He awoke with a start. He sat up, bewildered, stunned. Like an orphan. He looked all around him, taking it all in as if he had suddenly decided to make an inventory of his universe, to determine where he was and how and why he was there. Then he smiled.

I shall always remember that smile. What world did it come from?

What is sleep a symbol for? Explain the conflict regarding sleep Elie and his father are having.

Explain why the diction in “*What world did it come from?*” is so effective. In other words, why didn’t he write simply, “*Where did it come from?*”

Passage 4

The door of the shed opened. An old man appeared. His mustache was covered with ice, his lips were blue. It was Rabbi Eliahu, who had headed a small congregation in Poland. A very kind man, beloved by everyone in the camp, even by the Kapos and the Blockalteste. Despite the ordeals and deprivations, his face continued to radiate his innocence. He was the only rabbi whom nobody ever failed to address as “Rabbi” in Buna. He looked like one of those prophets of old, always in the midst of his people when they needed to be consoled. And, strangely, his words never provoked anyone. They did bring peace.

As he entered the shed, his eyes, brighter than ever, seemed to be searching for someone.

“Perhaps someone here has seen my son?”

He has lost his son in the commotion. He had searched for him among the dying, to no avail. Then he had dug through the snow to find his body. In vain.

For three years, they had stayed close to one another. Side by side, they had endured the suffering, the blows; they had waited for their ration of bread and they had prayed. Three years, from camp to camp, from selection to selection. And now- when the end seemed near-fate had separated them.

When he came near me, Rabbi Eliahu whispered, “It happened on the road. We lost sight of one another during the journey. I fell behind a little, at the rear of the column. I didn’t have the strength to run anymore. And my son didn’t notice. That’s all I know. Where has he disappeared? Where can I find him? Perhaps you’ve seen his somewhere?”

“No, Rabbi Eliahu, I haven’t seen him.”

And so he left, as he had come: a shadow swept away by the wind.

He had already gone through the door when I remembered that I had noticed his son running beside me. I had forgotten and so had no mentioned it to Rabbi Eliahu!

But then I remembered something else: his son had seen him losing ground, sliding back to the rear of the column. He had seen him. And he had continued to run in front, letting the distance between them become greater.

A terrible thought crossed my mind: What if he had wanted to be rid of his father? He had felt his father growing weaker and, believing that the end was near, had thought by this separation to free himself of a burden that could diminish his own chance for survival.

It was good that I had forgotten all that. And I was glad that Rabbi Eliahu continued to search for his beloved son.

And in spite of myself, a prayer formed inside me, a prayer to this God in whom I no longer believed.

“Oh God, Master of the Universe, give me the strength never to do what Rabbi Eliahu’s son has done.”

What does Elie’s description of Rabbi Eliahu reveal about the Rabbi’s character?

Good Diction/Quote/Textual Evidence	How the example <i>characterizes</i> Rabbi Eliahu (adjectives to describe his <i>personality</i>)

How does Elie’s prayer at the end of this passage exemplify both the themes of dehumanization AND the relationship between Elie’s faith and his identity?

Appendix 6

Night Chapters 5-7: Figurative Language

Directions: For each example, identify the type of figurative language. Then in 1-2 sentences explain the meaning of the example and how it impacts the reader.

Chapter 5:

1. “The essential thing was to be as far away as possible from the block, from the crucible of death, from the center of hell” (70).

Comparison: What exactly is being compared in the sentence?	Trope/Figurative Language	Impact: what impact does the device have on the reader?

2. “In the first hours of dawn, the icy wind cut us like a whip” (74).

Comparison	Trope/Figurative Language	Impact

3. “The camp had become a hive” (77).

Comparison	Trope/Figurative Language	Impact

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Chapter 6

4. “Death wrapped itself around me till I was strangled. It stuck to me. I felt that I could touch it” (82).

Comparison	Trope/Figurative Language	Impact

5. “A great tidal wave of men came rolling onward and would have crushed me like an ant” (83).

Comparison	Trope/Figurative Language	Impact

6. “Around me everything was dancing a dance of death. It made my head reel. I was walking in a cemetery, among stiffened corpses, logs of wood” (84).

Comparison	Trope/Figurative Language	Impact

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Chapter 7

7. Pressed up against the others in an effort to keep out the cold, head empty and heavy at the same time, brain a whirlpool of decaying memories. (93)

Comparison	Trope/Figurative Language	Impact

8. In the wagon where the bread had fallen, a real battle had broken out. Men threw themselves on top of each other, tearing each other, biting each other. Wild beasts of prey, with animal hatred in their eyes; an extraordinary vitality had seized them, sharpening their teeth and nails. (95)

Comparison	Trope/Figurative Language	Impact

Appendix 7

Text-dependent Questions: Nobel Peace Prize Speech

Discussion Questions

In the first paragraph, Wiesel states, “I know: your choice transcends me.” Transcend is defined as “go beyond the range or limits of (a field of activity or conceptual sphere).” What is the significance of the word “transcends”? As the speech progresses, how does Wiesel illustrate this concept?

In the second paragraph, Wiesel states, “It frightens me because I wonder...” Why is he frightened?

Wiesel was delivering this speech as a result of being awarded the Nobel prize. In this speech, he states, “No one can speak for the dead...” In this speech, how does he justify his right to take on this role? (Pg. 688)

Reread paragraphs four – six. In these paragraphs, Wiesel is portraying the young boy in two different ways. In paragraphs four and five, who is the young boy? In paragraph six, who is the boy? (Pg. 688)

In paragraphs five and six on page 688, the young boy first addresses his father, then Wiesel. How do the questions link together to support the relevance of memory and responsibility?

What is the tone in the sentence, “A young Jewish boy discovered the kingdom of night” (688)? Identify the shifts of tone in the subsequent sentences (“I remember his bewilderment...The fiery altar upon which the history of our people and the future of mankind were meant to be sacrificed” [688]) in the paragraph. How do the sentence structures (syntax) in the paragraph contribute to these shifts?

(Note: the title of Wiesel’s well-known memoir of his Holocaust experience is titled *Night*, which if the students are familiar with

the book, the teacher might want to extend the discussion of how the phrase “kingdom of night” connects to his book)

In the concentration camps, the Nazis used large crematoriums—furnaces used to burn the dead—to continually burn the large amounts of prisoners (most of them Jewish) that they were killing. The fourth paragraph on page 688 ends with the sentence, “The fiery altar upon which the history of our people and the future of mankind were meant to be sacrificed.” How does this sentence connect to the questions: “Can this be true?”, “Who would allow such crimes to be committed?” and “How could the world remain silent?”

In the first paragraph he uses the word “humility” (687), and in the last paragraph, he uses the word “humiliation” (688). What does each word mean in the context of each paragraph? How does Wiesel’s “humility” link to the “humiliation” he discusses in the last paragraph of the text? What is the concrete and contextual association between both words? (Pgs. 687-688)

What is the common thread that Wiesel establishes in his use of “And” (688) at the beginning of the following sentences: “And now the boy is turning to me...And I tell him that I have tried...And then I explained to him how naïve we were, that the world did know and remain silent” (688) sentences?

Parallel structure is an author's tool in which there are similar patterns of words used in writing. Wiesel uses this structure in the following passages: "Because we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices." "Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented" (688). These passages come from the last two paragraphs of the text. How does Wiesel use parallel structure in these passages to confront the audience with the consequences of silence? How does the syntactical structure of these passages work together to build and reinforce the forceful tone at the end of the last paragraph?

Appendix 8**Synthesis Essay**

PROMPT:

Construct a multi-paragraph written response in which you determine a shared purpose in the texts of *Night*, the two Jewish poems we read, and the excerpt about Anne Frank. You must compare the way that each develops that shared purpose. Your response must be based on ideas that can be found in all three texts.

Be sure to:

- Include an introduction
- Use evidence from the passages to support your explanation
- Include a conclusion

Synthesis Essay Outline

I. A. Hook

B. What are you writing about?

C. Texts/ Authors/Background

D. Thesis:

II. Support paragraph 1

A. Topic sentence:

B. Tag line, textual evidence, commentary (Source 1)

C. Tag line, textual evidence, commentary (Source 2)

III. Support paragraph 2

A. Topic sentence:

B. Tag line, textual evidence, commentary (Source 1)

C. Tag line, textual evidence, commentary (Source 2)

IV. Support paragraph 3

A. Topic sentence:

B. Tag line, textual evidence, commentary (Source 1)

C. Tag line, textual evidence, commentary (Source 2)

V. Conclusion (Restate the prompt)

After your outline is complete, you will draft your 5 paragraph essay. Here is a checklist to help you:

Essay Checklist – Make sure your essay has the following elements!	Y	N
<p>Your intro should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Have a great hook. <input type="checkbox"/> Introduce the sources by naming them. <input type="checkbox"/> Contain a transition between the hook and thesis by discussing the topic generally. <input type="checkbox"/> Have a clear, effective thesis that addresses the prompt. 		
<p>Paragraph #1 has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A clear topic sentence that directly connects to your thesis. (Focus) <input type="checkbox"/> Transitions to begin your paragraph and between ideas in your paragraph. <input type="checkbox"/> 2 sources to support your topic sentence. (Sufficient detail) <input type="checkbox"/> Proper internal citations. <input type="checkbox"/> Blended quotes. <input type="checkbox"/> Commentary or explanation to support your claim (topic sentence). <input type="checkbox"/> A concluding sentence that wraps up your paragraph. (Tie it back in to the thesis statement.) 		
<p>Paragraph #2 has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A clear topic sentence that directly connects to your thesis. (Focus) <input type="checkbox"/> Transitions to begin your paragraph and between ideas in your paragraph. <input type="checkbox"/> 2 sources to support your topic sentence. (Sufficient detail) <input type="checkbox"/> Proper internal citations. <input type="checkbox"/> Blended quotes. <input type="checkbox"/> Commentary or explanation to support your claim (topic sentence). <input type="checkbox"/> A concluding sentence that wraps up your paragraph. (Tie it back in to the thesis statement.) 		
<p>Paragraph #3 has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A clear topic sentence that directly connects to your thesis. (Focus) <input type="checkbox"/> Transitions to begin your paragraph and between ideas in your paragraph. <input type="checkbox"/> 2 sources to support your topic sentence. (Sufficient detail) <input type="checkbox"/> Proper internal citations. <input type="checkbox"/> Blended quotes. <input type="checkbox"/> Commentary or explanation to support your claim (topic sentence). <input type="checkbox"/> A concluding sentence that wraps up your paragraph. (Tie it back in to the thesis statement.) 		

<p>Your conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Clearly restates the thesis.<input type="checkbox"/> Effectively concludes the essay without introducing new information.		
<p>Your style contains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Effective word choice.<input type="checkbox"/> Sentence beginnings and sentence lengths are varied.		
<p>Mechanics – you shouldn't have any</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Errors in spelling.<input type="checkbox"/> Grammatical errors.		

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ENG 6040

10 June 2019

Preparing Students through Social Action: A Proposal for Project-Based Learning Research

Introduction

Writing in today's modern high school and even college classrooms is drastically changing. Not only are the motivations for student writing changing, but also the norms of the traditional five-paragraph essay are being challenged. Students are being asked to write different types of writing within the classroom such as persuasive, informative, and explanatory essays. Students are also asked to write more creatively within the classroom such as narratives about their lives when they apply to college within the Common Application for schools within Ohio. Therefore, the traditional five-paragraph essay is not adaptable to these varying essay requirements. How can teachers better serve the students today to help them become both college and career ready? More specifically, how can Language Arts/English teachers encourage students to find internal motivation to create something new and to create change in the community around them? Every day teachers are tasked with the job to try to help students become better writers. One way to assist students is through a hands-on writing approach, or giving students a platform to write about a topic they are truly passionate about in their own lives. Teachers need to find new ways to challenge and motivate students, and they can do this through PBL. The idea of writing to provoke change is extremely relevant and critical to today's youth as students try to navigate the world around them. Teachers need to allow students to have options in the classroom in order to create change, especially a Language Arts classroom.

Students desire more creative options because several aspects of students' education are out of their hands. Some examples include extensive graduation requirements like the American Institute of Research (AIR) assessments and college preparation tests like the preACT, American College Testing (ACT), and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). AIR testing begins in 3rd grade for students; it continues throughout high school. Students must earn enough credits in core classes such as English, Algebra, Geometry, Biology, American History and Government in order to graduate from high school. Beyond high school, colleges review student's ACT or SAT scores as part of the admissions process. All of the testing above is state specific to Ohio; however, other states have their own testing and graduate requirements. The constant pressure from the multitude of tests students take throughout their schooling puts an immense amount of stress on students. Rather than focusing on these varying assessments, educators, administrators, and law makers should embrace more hands-on, creative learning in their classrooms. More specifically, standardized tests do not teach the life skills students need to succeed; rather, they are simply learning how to master the blueprint of a test.

More beneficial skills include researching topics, conducting public speaking, interviewing subjects, and creating new forms of technology. The best way to succeed in teaching these skills is by incorporating project-based learning (PBL) into their curriculum. PBL assignments encourage students to write and research outside of a standardized testing model; rather, it encourages internal motivation for students to write and to make a difference. PBL assignments are a way to give students more choices within the classroom to truly peak their interest in what they are writing about and why. The goal of PBL assignments is to motivate students to write for change, rather than just passing a standardized test. Furthermore, author James L. Heap references the idea of negative and positive sanctions within the classroom. Once

again: why are students writing? Are they writing because they are interested and want to change something in today's culture, or are they only writing to pacify their teachers? As supported by Heap, teachers must value writing as a social action, and must incorporate writing as social action into the curriculum through a variety of differentiation strategies that include project-based learning assessments (PBLs).

In order to encourage more critical thinking and to engage students more fully in the writing classroom, many educators are looking to PBL because it encourages students to engage more fully with the world around them, hoping to move them to action and effect meaningful change. Overall, the elements of writing for purpose require the same characteristics. Students must be given choices in a Language Arts classroom; for example, if students have an option on what they can write on then students can choose a topic that is interesting to them and something they can relate to. Student choice is crucial because giving students this freedom will fuel students to be motivated throughout the writing process and to embrace change within their local communities. Furthermore, teachers in the classroom cannot hinder student creativity. Teachers must encourage student-led discussions and writing for each student to adhere to the writing process. Teachers need to challenge students beyond the traditional five-paragraph essays and incorporate more hands-on, interactive assignments like presentations to a real-life audience and project-based learning assessments (PBLs). If high school teachers are embracing this type of learning through social action, what do their classrooms look like? What do the assignments entail? How do students respond to this type of learning? What have been some successes? What have been some setbacks? Therefore, I propose that teachers should embrace PBL assignments in their classroom to support students as leaders; it also needs to be stated that more research needs to be conducted in the area of project-based learning. PBL assignments allow for students to

voice their own opinions, to work with their peers, and to incorporate the local community within the classroom to bring about change. Successful PBL classrooms encourage students to think beyond the classroom in a creative way to make a difference in the world around them. Although there may be some setbacks in the beginning of the process such as equal student involvement, overall each student will be responsible for his/her learning. For example, one way to log a student's progress is for each group leader to fill out a daily checklist form listing how each person contributed to the project. Most importantly, PBL assignments are beneficial to both students and teachers because it allows teachers to act as facilitators, it encourages students to take a leadership role, and it influences students to research local issues in their community to enforce change.

Literature Review

Before we can know what data we still need on PBL, it is important to have an understanding of what is already written about it. Past researchers such as Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon focused on developing IQ test for students. IQ test would eventually be used to assign students into certain "tracks" within the school curriculum; however, this type of tracking did not begin until the 20th century. According to Mary Hatwood Futrell and Joel Gomez in "Special Topic-How Tracking Creates a Poverty of Learning" both authors state,

Today, almost all schools are still implicitly defined by this curriculum paradigm, which often starts in primary school and continues through high school. The Westchester Institute for Human Services Research (2007) defines *ability grouping* as the practice of dividing students for instruction on the basis of their perceived capacities for learning, either within a class or into separate classes. *Tracking* historically refers to the practice of

grouping high school students by ability into a series of courses with differentiated curriculums; students take high-, middle-, or low-level courses related to the track they have selected or been assigned to (academic, general, or vocational). Most students, if not all, are enrolled in one of these tracks by the time they complete middle school.

(Hatwood Futrell and Gomez 75)

Hatwood Futrell and Gomez cite the historical context of why tracking ignited within the 20th century. As many immigrants came to America, administrators and educators tried to offer as many options for students with varying capabilities. For example, students who tested as “gifted” or “advanced” would attend enrichment classes and more challenging content; while lower level students were given simple, non-challenging tasks such as a fill in the blank worksheet (Hatwood Futrell and Gomez). The reason why this is important to PBL-type assessments is because the lower students were never offered this type of learning. Once a student was labeled in one category, it was hard to erase that label, especially as the importance of standardized testing grew. More specifically, the learning of struggling students was geared toward passing standardized tests, rather than building life skills and developing research and writing skills they could use beyond high school. In agreement with Hatwood, Futrell and Gomez is Brooke Alexis Burke who argues tracking devices are not an effective way of learning (12-15). Often times this type of grouping was based off one type of assessment such as an IQ test, or even the prior teacher’s knowledge over the individual student’s ability. Due to this grouping, students struggle to break out of the specific track they were placed in which causes students to lose motivation and to not recognize school as meaningful. It is also proven that teachers display lower expectations and standards for students who are placed within the lower tracking system (17). Considering this, tracking is one strategy that has hurt the educational system and the overall

idea that school should not always be based on one test or data; rather, school systems should incorporate more hands-on learning that can be applied to all learners such as PBL project and assessments. Researchers like Hatwood, Futrell, and Gomez prove older theories about tracking are not successful in the classroom; however, more research is needed to explore the idea of how to incorporate more PBL type assignments into the modern high school curriculum.

In addition, tracking students is not only unreliable because it is based on one test, but also because it does not challenge all levels of learners in the classroom. For example, Jeanette Miller, a teacher, would agree with Burke in the fact that students of all levels must be challenged in the classroom through “multi genre and co-authored assignments that encourage creativity and collaboration, along with embracing technology... (99). Creativity and collaboration are two key components to PBL assignments. Students must work together toward a common goal; they must also help one another through research and writing. The final component, according to Miller, is to embrace technology. The PBL assignment listed below encourages students to create a class website that can be published. Students will develop a research question, conduct research, and present their ideas both online and in person to an audience. Therefore, instead of having a hindering tracking system and specific five-paragraph essay requirements, students deserve the opportunity to be more creative and as well as to collaborate with all types of other students within the classroom. Gifted or advanced students should not only be working with students of their abilities; rather, it benefits both advanced, on-level, and struggling learners to learn and benefit from one another. Once again, PBL assignments are differentiated enough to reach all types of learners; if researchers can collect more data on how these strategies impact different students then more teachers would implement PBL assignments.

As mentioned in the introduction, James L. Heap develops a reference point to the overall discussion of altering the writing norms to create change in his article titled “Writing as Social Action.” First, Heap discusses students’ purpose for writing. In other words, are students writing for an internal motivation to accomplish a task in the community or are students simply writing to appease a teacher in order to get a high grade? Heap advocates for the “in order to” formula in writing; in other words, students are writing in order to do what? As a teacher, if you assign students a writing assignment as part of the “above ground prescribed curriculum” which is the traditional five-paragraph essay, are you really adhering to the “in order to” theory? For example, if the teacher is the only audience for the student, think about what truly is the student’s motivation for writing. Heap argues to travel beyond that; Heap states, “You must transform Hayes's general ‘task environment’ into ‘normative conditions’ of classroom writing. Between teacher and students, there is an enforceable distribution of rights and responsibilities, and rules, regarding what is to be done, where it is to be done, and how it is to be done” (150). In other words, teachers are mandated on what and how to teach students; whether it is by administration, the state, or its standards, teachers must teach through a strict code. However, Heap would argue this traditional classroom environmental hierarchy is actually ruining students’ ability to write for change and purpose. Heap states effective ways to improve the traditional style of writing is by offering students more choices: when and how they write. PBL assignments have the ability to offer students more choices; first, teachers offer students a list of topics discussed through documentaries that they may be interested in. From there, students can research their interested topic to eventually create a proposal for the class. The first two steps give students options and also give them the freedom to present their findings in whatever medium they wish such as a video, presentation, or website. One way to help teachers to adjust to this kind of thinking is to

teach students how to show concepts within their writing instead of simply telling the audience what they should know, as suggested in “Report and Recommendation Writing for Development: Rhetorical Skills for Social Action” written by Deborah Dysart-Gale, Kristina Pitula, and Thirevengagam Radhakrishnan. If students have this mindset of showing rather than telling, it will help students become better writers and communicators across all content areas because telling an audience is simple and subjective; on the other hand, showing offers high-order thinking skills and opportunity to adhere to a more objective perspective. For example, instead of writing “I went to the playground today and it was hot,” students should show the audience by writing “As I felt sweat beating down my face, I continued to go down the slide and climb across the monkey bars.” Sentence two shows the reader imagery; it describes the five senses in a way to put the reader in the writer’s shoes on the hot summer day. The “showing” rather than “telling” model is an effective way to write throughout PBL assignments because these projects will be presented to an authentic audience who can also be experts in the area. Students need to be able to write with clarity to teach the target audience. As the research of PBL advances, it could also provide additional writing instruction for teachers on how to accommodate more creative writing for students.

Furthermore, the classroom is the ideal place for teachers to create a safe environment for students to write. For example, Sarah Finn, a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts, would agree with Heap’s research. Finn created a case study around the idea of writing for social action on college campuses. She observes several on campus activist groups to discover why students were motivated to join in the first place, and also what varieties of activities they complete on campus; the goal was to discuss the overall “transformation of students” through academic writing. For examples, Finn states, “We can re-think both the public and the political in

order to create the rhetorical situations for students that support their affective agency in writing for change. The goal is not to move political writing outside of the classroom, but to re-conceive of the classroom as a site for writing for social justice” (14). This “public turn” Finn describes is essential for the rise in activist oriented teacher-research, public writing, community publishing, and the overall concept of projects like community service learning (12). The idea of “public writing” correlates directly to Heap’s overall argument: students must discover more meaning in writing, and this meaning is derived within the community. PBL assignments also offer a direct connection to the local community. Students would be researching and presenting about topics that they deal with on an everyday basis within the community. In addition, Finn challenges both high school teachers and college professors to embrace writing as social action within the classroom; she challenges teachers to create an atmosphere where students will be motivated by internal and external forces to create a change in themselves and in the community. As Heap points out earlier, students’ motivation should not be solely based on positive and negative sanctions from teachers; rather, students should have an inner motivation to be a better writer, and an external motivation to create change.

In addition to Finn’s case study to promote change within the community, educational consultant Gail Wood Miller discusses social action through writing in “Keeping the ‘Human’ in ‘Humanities’”. Miller focuses on The National Writing Project’s Writing for Change program that is administered to different schools. Overall, Miller’s research argues, “When writing affects a student’s goals, the impact of that motivation produces more meaningful writing” (131). Miller, similar to Finn, interviewed several students within a humanities workshop asking students their main purpose in writing, what motivates them, and also what concerns them about today’s world: locally, nationally, and globally. Therefore, students created a list of important

events or concerns that they were interested in enough to write about in a paper. This type of list can then be transformed into PBLs. Students can write, research, and create something new that will impact the community around them. Miller proves this by assigning her students to research a real life audience that students will send their final papers to read. Furthermore, through Miller's workshop and interviewing students, students truly enjoyed being able to write creatively, and not just "polishing up on formal writing" (132). Once again, "formal writing" would be considered the standard 5-paragraph essay. The message researchers like Finn and Miller portray of teachers beyond on the tradition writing in the classroom for projects more creative and hands-on for students. Lastly, relating back to Finn, Miller stresses the importance of reflection within the writing process. Both in high school and at the college level, students are expected to edit and revise several drafts before turning in a final copy to the teacher. Miller required each student to write and reflect after each class session. This caused students to truly think about what their goals were within the assignment and how they are going to get there throughout the process. Reflection throughout the PBL process is possible because students will keep a daily log of their goals and what they accomplished. At the end of the unit, students can assess themselves, as well as the overall class effort.

More specifically, an example of a possible PBL assignment "Empowering Students through a Social-Action Writing Project" written by Hannah Mancina focuses on an alternative high school classroom and how to incorporate writing as social action. Mancina had trouble motivating her freshman students, but the day she brought in a local newspaper, everything changed. Mancina had students read through each article and answer discussion questions. Overall, the school was portrayed in a negative light by inferring that the students were "druggies and losers." The teacher offered students a choice and let the students discuss and find a solution:

to write letters to the community explaining how the perception of the school and its students is being portrayed differently than reality. This lesson gave students authority, a voice, and motivation. Mancina stated her students now became “critical customers of information” (4). Students were interested in this topic and students were no longer writing to just the teacher as the audience member; students were now forcing change. Mancina is an excellent examples of someone who embraces PBL projects because trying new activities that intrigue students and challenge them is beneficial to students.

To be more specific, Tan and Chapman would describe project based learning as “a model that organizes learning around projects...projects are complex tasks, based on challenging questions or problems that involve students in design, problem-solving, decision-making, or investigative activities, and giving students the opportunity to work relatively autonomously over extended periods of time, and culminating in realistic products or presentations” (1-2). Projects similar to Mancina’s challenge students to answer vital research questions around their community and to create possible solutions in order to entice change. PBL assignments challenge the traditional ideas such as the five-paragraph essay; traditional formats are not preparing students for college and career readiness, as prior research would state.

Furthermore, according to Tan and Chapman, cognitive theorists in the 1990s stated education revolves around repetitive ideas and offer a variety of reinforcements; however, as time went on, research expanded by stating the process of learning should be revolve around students’ prior experiences and own reality (5-7). PBLs are ideal for this modern research; it gives students an opportunity to link their past experiences and knowledge with ways to impact the future through “self-directed learning” (14). Through this self-directed learning, students are practicing “good writing” techniques created by George Newell through the Ohio State

University. Good writing must be “context specific and socially situated” (3). The skills represented throughout Newell’s research is based on the fact that teachers should not focus on a generic writing model within classrooms; rather, teachers should create dynamic assignments that can be stretched across several academic areas. According to Newell, this revolves around developing an effective argument to reach the designated audience. For example, if students chose to write about ending gun violence within schools, they would need to develop a target audience. In other words, who could help their cause and help embrace change? Some of those audience members may include administration, board members, local law enforcement, or even state politicians. Once again, teachers must teach beyond the traditional types of writing in order to embrace the idea of writing as social action within the classroom.

Proposal

All of the research mentioned above agrees that writing for a purpose is crucial to high school Language Arts classrooms. However, many of these writers and researchers do not offer what exactly this should entail within a modern day classroom. For example, what do these writing assignments require students to complete? How do teachers motivate students to write and bring about change in their local community? Therefore, more research is needed to discover more effective ways to implement PBL into the classroom.

Teachers can start with project-based learning assessments or often called PBLs. PBL assignments must have two overall goals: to serve an educational purpose and the final project/outcome must be meaningful to students. One example of this was completed by the English department at a Northeast Ohio suburban school. The Senior English team collaborated together to create a 4-6 week long project for their students as a way to end the school year, but more importantly to invoke change in the community. First, students watched a documentary

called *Blackfish* in class, while filling out guided notes. Then students discussed the broader social issue of the documentary; it was not simply the poor conditions of whales at places like SeaWorld, but rather, the impact corporate greed has on the United States. There has to be a driving research question in which students can focus on; this would be similar to a traditional thesis statement. Next, students had to research and watch their own documentary, which they picked. Teachers gave students a list of documentaries they could choose, but students also had the freedom to deter from the list. For example, documentary subjects covered were gun violence, bullying in schools, the effects of pollution, and overall school safety. Students then had to create a 2-3 minute video proposal to the class discussing why their documentary should be the class research assignment. In class, students watched all the proposals and voted on one. From there, the students completed a student inventory on their interests so the teacher could assign them one of four groups: editorial team, primary research, secondary research, and the design team.

Each team had several responsibilities throughout the project, and checkpoints weekly with the team leader and the teacher. The final product was a class website about the chosen documentary. First, the primary research team were required to survey and interview members of the school and local community. Students created a survey, distributed them both in and out of school, then gathered appropriate data. The design of the survey was to show the perspective of community members about the topic at hand. Next, the secondary team was responsible for researching 10-15 sources to provide information in order to answer the research question. The research team presented their findings to the whole class, and ensured the in-text citations were correct on the class website. The editorial team was responsible for creating an annotated bibliography and reaching out to the potential authentic audience members. Students tracked all

their communication in a log via Google Sheets. Lastly, the design team critiqued other websites then created the actual class website. Students chose the host website as long as it could be made public. Throughout the research project, the design team was also responsible for reading and editing sources. One of the requirements was the website had to be made public and students had to identify authentic audience members. Finding authentic audience members meant researching local and state professionals that would agree to come to the school to observe the class presentation and website. Students contacted government officials like John Kasich, mental health professionals, gun control advocates, and local law enforcement. Lastly, on the assigned day, students presented their website, research, and solutions to not only the teacher, but also authentic audience members from within the community.

The impact this project had on students was tremendous; every day different students chose leadership roles by leading the discussion and research process. Furthermore, the final product was meaningful to the students because it impacted their everyday lives and the local community. By simply giving students choices and a platform to enforce change, students truly worked hard to make a difference in the school and surrounding community. Lastly, by incorporating 21st century skills such as team work and embracing technology, students were motivated to bring outside sources into the classroom. Students were also given feedback from the teacher, their peers, and the authentic audience members on the overall website presentation and the material itself. This specific PBL project proved to students it is not only about positive or negative sanctions within writing; it is more important to research, write, and present about an important topic to impact the community. This assignment is only one type of PBL; others can be adapted into the curriculum based on the much-needed research in the area.

Although this project lasted several weeks, the final outcome was well worth it. However, there are other, shorter ways to incorporate change and student choice into the classroom. First, teachers must get to know their students at the beginning of the year. By taking the time to do this, teachers will then know exactly what students are interested in. Teachers can then develop assignments, writing prompts, and class discussions around those interests. Next, consistently giving students a choice: whether it is a project, their groups, where they sit, or what type of assessment to complete. This will allow students to be more motivated and also more comfortable within the classroom. As discussed earlier, the classroom is the ideal place for students to brainstorm and write about change. The classroom needs to be a safe haven for all students. In addition, teachers must offer positive rewards and feedback in order to build each student's confidence. For example, teachers can meet one on one with students, or offer other positive reinforcement can help build rapport with each student; once again, making students more comfortable in the Language Arts classroom.

Discussion/Conclusion

Writing as social action and writing for change is a topic that readers would be interested in, both from an academic standpoint, but also socially within the local community. This topic affects students every day in the classroom. Teachers always hear students asking, "When am I going to use this? Or, how can this help me in college?" The answer to students' questions is finally here: by giving students choice and purpose for writing through PBL; PBL will allow students to be more motivated and engaged in writing, but more research needs to be done to demonstrate this.

In conclusion, project-based learning is critical to today's modern classroom because both students and the world of education is drastically changing. Students are engrossed in

technology and often times want instant gratification both in and out of the classroom. Teachers must be willing to adapt to students by embracing technology, allowing students to lead, but most importantly, teachers must give students a platform to create change through their own writing and research. By teaching students how to incorporate their own interests into a Language Arts classroom would be useful for students in all facets of their lives.

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Sample PBL Materials

DOCUMENTARY FILMS: IMPACTS ON VIEWERS AND SOCIETY

Essential Questions on Documentaries

- What is a documentary?
 - What is the purpose of the genre?
 - What documentaries have you seen and what were their purposes?
 - How do documentaries differ from movies?
 - How are we supposed to view documentaries?
 - How does this differ from other media?
 - What are the goals of the creators of documentaries?
 - How do they achieve these goals?
- In what ways do the creators of documentaries establish their authority on the subject matter?

What Are We Doing?

Documentaries aim to address a question/issue or offer a solution to a problem either socially or culturally. To do so, the creator of the documentary is making deliberate decisions with their rhetoric and their language in order to convey their point-of-view. This could include the evidence they provide and the tone of the piece. It is our job as “readers” to evaluate their work to determine the ethical nature of their documentary through a bit of sleuthing of our own. ***We must pose questions of our own and investigate the documentary, the subject matter it explores, the evidence provided, the creator of the documentary, and the other side in order to properly evaluate the film as a whole.***

We will begin first with *Blackfish* (2013), directed by Gabriela Cowperthwaite, as a class to practice the process. We will explore:

1. What the goal of this acclaimed documentary was,
2. What impact this film had on individual viewers and human consciousness,
3. And what results may have been spurred from this work?

You will be selecting a documentary to watch, read, and investigate. ***While watching your documentary you should be asking yourself how does it connect to a larger social or cultural problem that you wish to investigate.*** For instance, when watching *Blackfish*, you might ask yourself how does this documentary make a statement about corporate greed and it is your wish to expand off of that theme (*Essential Question Example: Is corporate greed American something that truly impacts America at large?*). Or, you might be finding yourself more interested in workplace safety concerns and expand your investigation to that specific issue outside of SeaWorld (*Essential Question Example: Do businesses have a responsibility to protect their employees from all harm when there are unforeseen variables to the workday?*). You will also want to investigate how the subject or topic might have changed since the

documentary was produced. For instance, *Blackfish* came out in 2013. It is now 2019. What policies does SeaWorld now have and what might these changes represent?

I know you are wanting to know what exactly you have to create. I would too. So, here is a breakdown of the upcoming assignments:

1. **BLACKFISH Film Study Worksheet (Due: THURSDAY, March 14th)**
 2. **CHOICE Film Study Worksheet (Due: FRIDAY, March 15th, HANDOUT)**
 3. **Proposal (Due TUESDAY, March 19th, START of class)** Students will create a document that details what documentary they watched, provide a brief description of the synopsis, and explain how it connects to a larger social/cultural issue they want to investigate. Students should also explain how they will begin to evaluate the film as a whole and what additional sources they are reaching out to for their research. Failure to watch documentary prior to this date will result in an automatic D or below.
 4. **Annotated Bibliography (Due WEDNESDAY, March 20th HARDCOPY):** Students will share their resources and thoughts on what makes their resources relevant. An annotated bibliography differs from a work cited page in that students includes a short summary of each source and why you are planning on using the source. Students should have their documentary cited as well as at least three more additional sources by this time. Sources should be scholarly, timely, and reliable.
 5. **Choice Documentary Presentation SCRIPT (Due: THURSDAY, March 21)**
 6. **Pitches (FRIDAY, March 22.... 11:59 P.M.)** Students will design a presentation to best reflect their documentary and research goals. The presentation should be well-rehearsed and professional in all aspects (practice, proofread, etc.). Students have freedom in their design of a presentation slides but at a minimum, students should:
 - a. Introduce their documentary
 - b. Explain and answer their essential research question through research
 - c. Use evidence to explain why the documentary was created and what impact the documentary has had or could have
 - d. Use evidence to evaluate how ethically sound the documentary is
 - e. Has a solid conclusion. NOT: “Ok, I’m done!”
 - f. In the 2 minute time requirement range
- *DUE FRIDAY, MARCH 22nd BY 11:59pm.**
7. **Pitch Presentation Viewing Party (April 1 & 2)**

Documentary Recommendations

Many can be found on Netflix, HBO, or on YouTube. Or, you can Google search “Top Documentary Films” and read up on some other options.

Hoop Dreams (1997)

Miss Representation (2011)

Finding Vivian Maier (2013)

Twenty Feet from Stardom (2014)

King Corn (2007)
Fodd, Inc. (2008)
Fed Up (2014)
Twinsters (2015)
Girl Rising (2013)
Undefeated (2011)
Particle Fever (2014)

Bert's Buzz (2014)
Twinsters (2015)
Man on Wire (2008)
The Cove (2009)
Bully (2012)
Super Size Me (2004)
Trophy Kids (2009)

Film Study Worksheet: BLACKFISH

Name _____

Documentary Seeking to Persuade the Viewer On a Matter of Political or Social Significance

TASK: Read the questions before you watch the film so that you will know what to look for while you watch. At breaks during the showing or at the film's end, you will have an opportunity to make short notes in the spaces provided. If you make notes while the film is playing, make sure that your note taking doesn't interfere with carefully watching the movie. You do not need to make any notes on the worksheet, but after the film is over, you will be required to fully respond to the questions.

Complete the assignment by answering each question in paragraph form. Answers need to be complete and comprehensive, demonstrating that you paid attention to the film and thought about what was shown on the screen. You may use more than one paragraph if necessary. Be sure that the topic sentence of your first paragraph uses key words from the question. All responses should be in complete sentences using proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

1. State the title of the film and the year it was released. Then briefly describe what the film is about and the position it advocates.

Notes:

2. Describe the progression of the film: how it begins, what happens in the middle, and how it concludes.

Notes:

3. List six facts described in the film that impressed you, and explain how each fact relates to the film's premise or theme.

Notes:

4. How did the filmmakers try to convince you of the position that the film supports? Look for appeals to logic, emotion, and prejudice.

Notes:

5. Did any of the reasoning given in support of the position advocated by the film seem to be weak or misleading? If so, describe the concept put forward in the film and why you thought the reasoning was flawed.

Notes:

6. Describe any cinematic techniques used in presenting particular scenes, images, or sounds which were designed to appeal to the viewer's emotions and to encourage the viewer to agree with the position advocated by the film, without reliance upon fact or logical argument.

Notes:

7. If the filmmakers asked how this film could be improved, what would you tell them? Describe the changes you would suggest in detail.

Notes:

8. Did the film change your mind about any aspect of the subject that it presents? What information, argument or persuasive technique caused you to change your mind?

Notes:

Period

Project Pitch Evaluation Form

NAME:

Student and Film Title	Topic / Essential Question Take some notes about the topic. What the student researcher proposes.	Ranking of Interest/Ability to accomplish change as a group. (1=low; 5 = high)
Joey B. <i>Killing Them Safely</i>		My Interest 1 2 3 4 5 Change Likely thru Project 1 2 3 4 5
Sukwoo C. <i>Supersize Me</i>		My Interest 1 2 3 4 5 Change Likely thru Project 1 2 3 4 5
Bryanna D. <i>7 Days of Heroin</i>		My Interest 1 2 3 4 5 Change Likely thru Project

		<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>Gabe F. <i>13th</i></p>		<p>My Interest</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>Change Likely thru Project</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p>

Individual Proposal Requirements

Senior Capstone Project 2019

After viewing and discussing *Blackfish*, you will choose a documentary about a local issue that you wish to watch and learn more about in class. This is an individual assignment. Your individual proposals will be approved by me then you will have the following week to watch your documentary and begin analyzing it.

By the end of the class period on **Friday, March 15**, you will submit your proposal to me. In your proposal, you must include

- The title of the documentary that you wish to study (2)
- A synopsis/summary of the documentary (3)
- An explanation of how your chosen documentary has a local connection (5)
- An explanation of why you chose your specific documentary (2)
- A detailed rationale of why this issue is important locally/why it needs to be addressed (3)

This will be worth 15 process points.

Name _____

Capstone Video Pitch Proposal

40 product points:

<p>Exceptional 40 100%</p>	<p>Above Expectations 35 87.5%</p>	<p>Satisfactory 30 75%</p>	<p>Below Expectations 25 62.5%</p>	<p>Unsatisfactory 20 - 5</p>
<p>Student proposal has uncovered a social/cultural issue that will lead to <u>deep</u> research. The research question is well-designed and the proposal is logical in nature. Local connections are clear and student has shown evidence of amount access to local data (2 sources cited correctly). Video meets <u>all</u> guidelines: 3 minutes, submitted on time, and answered all questions.</p>	<p>Student proposal has uncovered a social/cultural issue that will lead to <u>moderate</u> research. The research question is well-designed and the proposal is logical in nature. Local connections are clear, but may lack depthness. Student has shown evidence of amount access to local data (2 sources, one citation issue). Video meets <u>all</u> guidelines: 3 minutes, submitted on time, and answered all questions.</p>	<p>Student proposal has uncovered a social/cultural issue that will lead to research. The research question might require some work. Local connections are evident and student has shown evidence of amount access to local data (2 sources; 2 or more citation issues). Video meets <u>most</u> guidelines.</p>	<p>Student proposal has uncovered or <i>is</i> beginning to uncover a social/cultural issue that will lead to research. The research question requires some work. Local connections are developing and student has shown evidence of amount access to local data. Student did <u>not</u> meet video guidelines.</p>	<p>Student proposal did not uncover a social/cultural issue that will led to research. The research question might or does require some work. Presentation was not professional. Local connections are not clear and student has not shown evidence of amount access to local data. Student did <u>not</u> meet video guidelines</p>

Website Style Critique

Name: _____

As the design team presents, you should be jotting down notes and edits for our class website. Answer the following questions to help you develop design ideas for the class website.

1. Explain the general format of each website. Ex: Do they use sidebars/menus? Top menus? Images? Backgrounds? How is the text formatted on the website? Do we need to change any part of the format? If so, what? Give specific examples.
2. What type of information is included in each page on the website? (Give webpage titles and a brief explanation of what that means if necessary) Are we missing any specific pieces of information(Eg. Have you fully answered the research question? Local connections have been made?)? If so, where can we add it? Do we have enough tabs? Too many?
3. How is the data formatted (bullet points, graphs, etc)? Is that formatting conducive to reader/consumer understanding of the information? Why or why not? Does anything need changed?
4. What is the main purpose of the website? What are the biggest details you took away from the website?
5. What parts of the website help the community to address/fix the issue? How does it do that?
6. What is our solution to the problem? Is it listed on the website?

Checklist: Put a check mark if this information is on the class website.

- _____ **Research question**
- _____ **Solutions**
- _____ **Tabs with subcategories and specific content**
- _____ **Background information on the topic**
- _____ **2 Expert Interviews (questions and typed transcript of interview)**
- _____ **Survey and survey findings**
- _____ **Background on interviewees**
- _____ **Background on the authentic audience members**
- _____ **Images/pictures**

PBL Team Due Dates At A Glance

Assignment	Responsible Team	Due Date	Electronic/Hard Copy	Points
<u>Daily Check Point Form (Team Leader)</u>	All Teams	At the end of each class	Electronic	5 points/ PROCESS
<u>Expert/Audience Verification Sheet and Contact Log</u>	All Teams	START of class April 22	Electronic	30 points PROCESS (20 for inviting two people and 10 additional when they show)
Thank you Letters Final Draft *Includes being emailed to individuals	All Teams	May 10	Electronic or Hard Copy	20 points PRODUCT (10 for each letter)
Presentation with final edits	All Teams	May 7 by midnight	Electronic	
<u>Collaborative Article Information Sheet</u> *editorial team will need this for ann. Bib	Secondary Research	START of class April 22	Hard Copy	30 points/ PRODUCT
Research Team Findings Mini-Presentation	Secondary Research	START of class April 24	Electronic Google Slides	20 points/ PRODUCT
Evaluation of Presentation/ Checkpoint #2 *Provide Suggestions/Feedback to Design Team	Secondary Research	May 4	Hard Copy	10 points/ PROCESS
Inserting accurate in-text MLA citations on the website. Introducing the sources/lead-in.	Secondary Research	END of class April 26	Electronic Final Website	20 points/ PROCESS

Evaluation of Presentation Checkpoint #1 *Viewing Presentation and Providing Feedback	Editorial Team	April 22	Hard copy	15 points/ PROCESS
<u>Annotated Bibliography #1</u> ORIGINAL	Editorial Team	START of class April 24	Hard Copy	35 points/ PRODUCT
<u>Annotated Bibliography #2</u> Final, with additions	Editorial Team	May 3	Hard Copy	15 points/ PRODUCT
Evaluation of Presentation/ Checkpoint #2 *Provide Suggestions/Feedback to Design Team	Editorial Team	April 30	Hard Copy	15 points/ PROCESS
More on the Back Assignment	More on the Back Responsible Team	More on the Back Due Date	More on the Back Electronic/Ha rd Copy	More on the Back Points
Survey Questions Draft	Primary Research	START of class April 16	Hard Copy	15 points/PROCESS
Survey Findings	Primary Research	End of class April 22	Hard Copy	30 points/ PRODUCT
<u>Interview Questions Draft</u>	Primary Research	START of class April 16	Hard Copy	15 points/ PROCESS
<u>Interview Findings/Transcript</u>	Primary Research	END of class April 30	Hard Copy	20 points/ PRODUCT

Presentation website (Top two)	Design Team	END of class April 15	Hard Copy	20 points/ PRODUCT
Website Critiques	Design Team	END of class April 16	Hard Copy	30 points/ PRODUCT (3 critiques)
Webpage checkpoint #1 (edit suggestions)	Design Team	END of class April 29	Electronic on Site	10 process/ PROCESS
Upload Interview & Survey Findings	Design Team	END of class May 3	Electronic on Site	10 process/ PROCESS
Webpage checkpoint #2 (edit suggestions)	Design Team	START of class May 6	Electronic on Site	10 process/ PROCESS
Presentations	Presentation Team	May 10 Or as scheduled with authentic audience member	Electronic	

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Dr. Hoy

ENG 6800

22 June 2019

The Importance of Reflective Writing in the Classroom

Formative and summative assessments will always be part of the educational system; however, there are more effective strategies than others. For example, teachers who use reflective writing as a form of assessment offer students a process of self-reflection that is needed to become a better writer. For example, Phyllis Blumberg cites her definition of reflection: “Reflection helps people reconstruct experiences and make meaning out of them. According to developmental psychologists, meaning making is an essential component of lifelong learning and development. Because reflection leads to insights about one's behaviors and values, it remains a central task for adult growth” (90). Therefore, it is essential for teachers to encourage students to work through the reflective process in order to grow as writers. Reflective writing is a key component in a Language Arts classroom because it offers students to learn life skills they need beyond the classroom, it encourages students to think about their own values and beliefs through reading literature, and it allows students to look back on their own writing skills and processes

To begin, reflective writing teaches students life skills they need to succeed both in and out of the classroom such as deciphering their own emotions, developing critical thinking skills, and becoming lifelong learners. It is vital for students to learn the reflection process; this type of reflection allows students to make meaning out of their own experiences, along with character's experiences as well. A literature classroom is the ideal place for both students and faculty to

reflect because the classroom creates an open, learner-centered environment where students can be honest and look back on key events in their lives. Blumberg argues that the importance of reflection even goes beyond the classroom to develop “lifelong learners.” Jenny Moon also states in “The use of graduated scenarios to facilitate the learning of complex and difficult-to- describe concepts” that essential reflective skills include “clinical reasoning, decision-making, management of personal interactions, process of evaluation, evaluation of an activity, and both personal and professional development” (58). As one can see, these skills are needed in life, not just in a classroom. For example, while students are reading *A Catcher in the Rye*, most high school students can relate to the main character, Holden, at some point. Although Holden makes some detrimental decisions throughout the novel, students may relate to peer pressure, pressure to succeed in school, a death in the family, overbearing parents, or even mental health issues. Therefore, while students are reading the novel, they will also have time to reflect. Students may wonder what made Holden act this way, or how can he get through the tough times. One way for students to sift through their thoughts is to write frequently; a 5 minute quick-write is an easy way for students to respond to literature. 5 minute quick-writes allow students to independently think about the topic at hand; teachers can give them several prompts to choose from after reading a text. Although the general goal is to spend five consecutive minutes writing, it is also important for students to form meaning within this type of response.

Literature, such as *Catcher in the Rye*, gives students a starting point to writing; reading connects students to characters they can relate to in their everyday lives. Furthermore, some of the most crucial outcomes when reflecting upon literature include “some form of action, learning, knowledge, understanding, a process of critical review, ongoing professional development, emotion, and clarification and the recognition that there is a need for further

reflection and so on,” according to Jenny Moon in “Getting the measure of reflection: considering matters of definition and depth” (192). Reflecting on literature helps students learn about themselves and the world around them. It incorporates emotion and ways for students to turn their thoughts into action. All of these effective outcomes listed prove Moon’s final definition of reflection: “Reflection is a form of mental processing— like a form of thinking— that we may use to fulfil a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome, or we may simply ‘be reflective’ when an outcome may be unexpected” (192-193). The “mental processing” Moon mentions is critical for high school students. This allotted time to think about how a text made them feel is important for students to develop as they grow into adulthood. This type of reflection also gives students an opportunity to link literature to their daily lives to create meaning. Once students learn this skill, they can apply it to any discipline or scenario in their lives.

Not only is it important for students to develop meaning, but they also must learn how to think for themselves through metacognition. According to Grossman, it is important for students to not only think, but be able to report their thoughts about their thinking. It is important to know why students feel and think a certain way while monitoring their own understanding and creating mental pictures. Some ways to do this are giving students higher order thinking questions to reflect on and time in class that is not rushed to think about their own thinking processes. Grossman describes the importance of metacognition by saying students must “monitor their own understanding carefully and this was important in their ability to adapt their knowledge to such problems” (17). Grossman is pointing out the fact that not only should students be able to think about their own thinking, but it will help them in other areas as well such as problem solving. If students know how they think and learn best then they can apply any strategy to any

situation. Grossman also acknowledge the fact that every student learns at a different pace, therefore, he created a second approach to self-authoritative reflection. Grossman states, “It emphasized understanding the effects different thoughts about perceptions have on emotion and subsequent action. Students were aided in moving to this next level in both abnormal and sports psychology courses when I covered cognitive therapy’s view of the mind” (20). This proves that Grossman will continue to challenge learners in all content areas. He uses several different approaches to reach novice learners, as well as advanced learners who may have some prior knowledge with reflective writing and the skill of metacognition. All teachers should focus on the skill of metacognition; one way to improve this skill is through reflective practices. These strategies encourage students to think about themselves, why and how they write, and how to improve. Teachers can assess the overall process students go through, but all the final product. Throughout Grossman’s approach, students are spending a considerable amount of time revising their work in order to turn in a final project they are proud to have graded by the teacher.

Furthermore, reflective practices are not only necessary throughout high school, but also college as well. Teachers encourage students to practice reflective strategies in order to become lifelong learners. Not only can the reflection process be useful for high school students, it can also be applied to a college setting. For example, Bowling Green State University’s English graduate program requires several modes of reflection. One assignment required students to reflect on every reading throughout the semester; the class was Graduate Writing with Ms. Kimberly Spallinger. Students could write on ideas they agreed or disagreed with, or ideas that stuck out to them. Then the final project at the end of the semester was to revise the original reflective journal. Students annotated and edited their own original drafts then turned it into the professor. Over a semester long course, this type of reflection allows students to see themselves

as writers and to realize writing is a process. This type of journaling began with students reading nonfiction about literature topics such as the literary cannon and peer review techniques. This reader-response journal was an excellent example of reflection because it gave students a platform to evaluate their own work. For example, it enforced the idea of metacognition; while I was revising my journal, I thought to myself: why did I respond this way? Why did I pick this passage to write about? The revision process made me a better writer because I could self-assess my own work and where I could strengthen my writing. The next example through BGSU is the master's portfolio within the English program. The final credit class requires students to create a portfolio with four drastically revised projects. Once again, the process of writing and reflection encourages students to look back at their work, to notice their strengths and weaknesses, then improve as students continue to write. Throughout this process, students are researching, writing, and editing their own essays. Students are also required to evaluate their peers' essays as well. The portfolio process covers years of writing for each student; it also allows students to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses within their writing.

Lastly, the reflective process is important for students because it gives them an opportunity to grow as writers through the revision process. For example, Robert Grossman in "Structures for Facilitating Student Reflection" references four different levels of reflection: content-based, metacognitive, self-authorship and transformative/intensive reflection. First, students can relate to content-based reflection because Grossman discusses the importance of feedback and giving students the opportunity to rewrite. Content-based reflection is defined as "the intentional consideration of an experience in the light of particular learning objective" (16). This can be applied to any classroom across any discipline. This is crucial in a high school and college setting because as a teachers do not want to rush the writing/creative process. This also

means teachers need to give students time to think, brainstorm, write, edit, and rewrite. Students need to know and understand it is okay to make changes throughout their different drafts; in fact, it is encouraged. Considering most students do not have much prior knowledge on reflective writing, Grossman's approach is extremely beneficial to students because he gives them time and an actual experience to go through. For example, he sent his students into multiple tutoring sessions with younger students. At first, these journals were simply a log of what happened throughout the session; however, as Grossman went through what reflection should look like, students began to write more in-depth. Students began to remember certain conversations with students, record dialogue, and recognize the student's strengths and weaknesses. Overall students improve throughout the process while getting feedback from Grossman. Grossman's overall ideas correlate well to Blumberg's when she mentions that writers must focus on the process throughout writing; this includes pre-writing, drafting, editing, and reflecting. The reflection process encourages students to further research and revise their work. Once students revise their work, it is easier to reflect on one's strengths and weaknesses before moving on to the next piece of writing.

The importance of reflection in a Language Arts classroom is vital to student's development; other researches like Kathleen Blake Yancey proves these beneficial reflection practices by offering sample activities. In "Social Life of Reflection" Yancey discusses the importance of an e-portfolio, self-assessment and Summarize Respond and Reflect (SRR) throughout the reflection process. First, an e-portfolio is a modern tool that should be used in higher education classrooms. Yancey and also through Hughes' research, describes an e-portfolio

as a way of being and of interacting as well as an artefact. The shift to genre allows us to rethink learning landscapes as the potential for reassembly and re-presentation challenges and potentially destabilize traditional notions and methods of learning, teaching and assessment which are often fixed in time and contexts and controlled by the institution rather than the individual. (Yancey)

E-portfolios will need to be adapted by both professors and students. Professors must “destabilize” the traditional portfolio writing and embrace the new, more modern version because there is a multitude of positive effects. Yancey’s first main point about portfolios are they cannot just assess the end of a marking period, rather it should show the learners process over time. Yancey states, the new e-portfolio “is environmental: it provides space for working throughout a term as well as space for reflection that supports learning and is culminating.” Therefore, students are creating their own portfolio throughout the semester, and not just waiting until the last minute to piece it together. Students should be able to assess their strengths and weaknesses over multiple papers through an e-portfolio. In addition, the platform itself is beneficial to students. Students have the opportunity to embrace modern technology to update, edit, and share their e-portfolios with others. Again, this is something that can be used across any profession. As Yancey stated, having the portfolio online gives students the ability to “document learning as it occurs.” This is important because students will be honest with themselves throughout the process, as well as applying this reflective technique to their everyday lives.

Next, Yancey’s SRR- Summarize, Respond, and Reflect is a great resource in any classroom. The professor required each student to keep a reading notebook where students had to pick out two direct quotes, synthesize from other sources, and reflect on their reading/reaction and to write a summary of each text throughout the semester. This notebook encouraged students

to make their own connections between each reading. Not only were students making connections, but also writing and discussing them with other class members. In addition, the most significant element of Yancey's SRR is the different expectations; some entries are meant to simply submit to the teacher, while others will be shared with the class. Again, collaboration and conversation is vital to the reflective process. Since each student is required to complete a SRR, students are not put on the spot to share their answers with their peers. Instead, they have already developed their own opinions, shared emotions, and reflected on the overall content. As Yancey experimented more with SRR's, she also created a third category- a collaborative share. Yancey describes the third category as "a collaborative share, and I organized four different collaborative groupings—each student wrote with a single partner; in a group of 3–5 colleagues; in a second group of 3–5 different colleagues; and in a different pairing—such that each person wrote with nearly every member of the 17-person class." The collaborative SRR's went into more depth such as asking for analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Through this higher level grouping, students reflected, discussed, and evaluated their own opinions like never before. By giving students a purpose to reflect, and also multiple forums to complete it in, Yancey states that students embraced this process. Students began to see how they could benefit from the reflective process and how it could change their academic future. Lastly, SRR's keep students organized and up to date on the content being covered in the class. Similar to the e-portfolio, creating an SRR is an ongoing learning process that cannot be done at the end of the semester, it must be completed throughout.

In conclusion, the skills related to reflection such as critical thinking and metacognition are effective ways to assess students in a literature-based classroom. These theorists, Moon, Yancey, and Grossman, take previous approaches such as Dewey, SchÖn, and Mezirow and

apply their findings to the modern-era classroom. Some of the newer strategies include e-portfolios, SRR's, classroom discussions, and effective strategies such as scaffolding. These strategies and activities can be used in any classroom across any discipline. The importance of the research is to teach students the skills to think independently for themselves, problem solve, and begin the act of self-reflection. Teachers who embrace reflection as assessment within the classroom are giving students life skills they need to be successful throughout their schooling but also beyond as adults in the workforce.

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Building Critical Thinking Skills to Develop Meaning within Literature

Prompt: A colleague of mine recently received the following email from a student (obviously I've left out the names to protect the respective parties):

“The non-English/non-Theater major in me is starting to creep out and I feel like I'm struggling a little to understand the basis of our class. Before I explain what I mean, I am NOT trying to be a smart-ass about this, I am genuinely interested in your answer. I guess the most basic way to put this is that I don't understand the point of discussing a fictional piece of literature. For example, in class today when you asked us to get into groups and [discusses group activity relating to a specific text], but I felt unsure of why we needed to answer that question at all. [Character X] never actually existed so to discuss her relationship to her husband just seems like a fun thing to do. Since I got to college, and especially since I started taking honors classes, I have been wondering about the purpose of discussing fiction. It never happened so our only means of discussion seems to be speculation. And if you wanted to perhaps compare the story to real life that too would have to be based on speculation. I can grasp the importance of learning about literature; discussing why someone may have written something, the influence that work had on people, things like that, but to only talk about the story feels fake. Obviously in our class we have talked a lot about [Author Y] the man, the time period he worked in, etc. I love the days we have those discussions. But, when we spend the entire period talking about what happened in the chapters and what we think they meant... I leave class wondering what the purpose was. I'm

sorry if this sounds like a terrible attack on the way you teach or something, that's not it at all.

I'm sure that all English courses are taught this way but I think you are a really great teacher so I

just wanted to know why you think learning about [Author Y] is so worthwhile that you've

dedicated your work to it, and what exactly is one supposed to get from discussing a fictional

story in general? Thoughts?" ~A student

What would you say in response?

Maya Angelou once said, “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you.” The key to teaching, and understanding literature, is to discover a connection between one’s own personal life and experiences to a character’s life lessons in a text. Reading both nonfiction and fiction help students understand specific time periods and eras of history through the author’s perspective. As an active reader, one must ask questions, understand vocabulary and discuss the overall themes with their peers and professors. Furthermore, regardless of a student’s intended career path or past learning, reading, interpreting, analyzing, and discussing a variety of literature benefits students because it allows them to develop a new perspective on human nature which includes an emotional response to all types of characters; literature expands reader’s knowledge through understanding history, and literature helps develop critical thinking skills through evolving one’s vocabulary and writing skills.

To begin, every student develops a passion for a specific career at some point in his/her life; literature is no different. Young potential teachers who study and want to teach literature develop an intense feeling of wanting to open up this new world to their future students each and every year. From a teacher’s perspective, if a student can learn how to read several different genres, then they will succeed in reading anything in life. First, learning to embrace literature is important because it helps students feel empathy toward characters, along with sharing certain life experiences. For example, in David Richter’s anthology *Falling Into Theory: Conflicting Views on Reading Literature*, he references writer and literary critic Terry Eagleton. In “The Rise of English”, Eagleton states, “Literature should convey timeless truths, thus distracting the masses from their immediate commitments, nurturing them a spirit of tolerance and generosity, and so ensuring the survival of private property” (51-52). The main purposes of literature are to

allow the readers to take a break from their potential real-life struggles to connect with characters in the text; literature also helps discover thematic truths within society. Eagleton argues that regardless of what is happening in one's personal life, both positive and negative events, literature gives students an escape from their personal issues. Literature gives students a chance to think about someone else's troubles and tribulations. For example, many students today deal with mental illness, a family emergency, peer pressure or even suicidal thoughts. Literature offers students a platform to discover characters they can relate to, and characters who are experiences events/thoughts similar to their own. Reading and analyzing literature also help students understand what other people go through from all walks of life. To continue, literature then gives teachers a platform for students to think further on these issues and offer resources to those students who need it. Furthermore, literature develops opportunities for students to feel emotion toward another human being, even if that human is a fictional character. Students finding meaning through this literature is crucial because students can then take this knowledge to apply it to their own personal lives. When Eagleton states that literature conveys "timeless" truths, he means that there are common themes within literature that generation after generation of people can relate to on an everyday basis. The discussion of these "timeless" themes again helps to connect the past to the present by relating to one another and having ideas to discuss, analyze and reflect on.

To continue, Richter cites "Why We Read" where he argues literature allows the reader to connect to diverse groups of people. He says:

Traditional texts are to be kept in the curriculum but read critically, with an eye toward exposing the internal contradictions and false consciousness they contain. New texts by

women and minorities- texts of liberation- are to be added to the curriculum and read in such a way as to help minority students find their own voice. (Richter 23)

Teachers must incorporate both contemporary texts and texts that would be considered in the literary canon into their curriculum. Teachers need to offer a wide range of literatures because it allows readers to read and think critically, and even more importantly, it encourages students to read and comprehend a variety of author's perspectives including women and minorities. If students are encouraged to read a wide range of literature and authors then those texts will connect to all different types of students regardless of race, gender, religion, or ethnicity. For example, even if a student is a white male, that does not mean he cannot relate to women or African American literature. By allowing students to read literature different than their own personal experiences allows student to work hard to truly listen to the text to appreciate a new perspective. Students must not only read literature, but also be able to analyze, reflect and discuss the text. These strategies are most important because it allows students to relate to author and characters different from themselves. The variety of literature encourage students to develop connections and relationships with a variety of people. Furthermore, when Richter states, "New texts by women and minorities- texts of liberation- are to be added to the curriculum and read in such a way as to help minority students find their own voice," it is important because reading different types of literature allows students to discover their own voices. For example, in any literature course students should be exposed to both nonfiction and fiction from varying time periods. To be more specific, students could study the theme of Women's' suffrage by reading *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood then compare it to shorter works like "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin or the "Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gillman. To be more specific, in Atwood's novel, women are characterized by one characteristic: if they can have a

baby or not. Women are treated poorly and frequently raped by men then forced to give the child away. While Chopin's work focuses on a woman who finally feels free at the death of her husband. She reflects on how happy and free she will be until he shockingly walks through the front door. The main character dies at the shock of her husband because she had a weak heart. Lastly, Charlotte Perkins Gillman's short story, an unnamed narrator writes about her daily struggle confined in a room where she can only focus on the women in the wallpaper; the narrator begins to tear down all the wallpaper in order to free the women. All of the examples listed could be included in a women's suffrage unit. Women are treated differently in each story; therefore, it gives students a variety of historical context. The idea of expanding a teacher's curriculum again relates Maya Angelou's quote because everyone has a story to tell; the worst thing a student can do is stay quiet and not let his/her voice be heard. These different types of literature influences students in a powerful way; it asserts that everyone's voice deserves to be heard, and the Language Arts classroom is the ideal place for that. Therefore, it is a professor's job to teach students how to close read in order to develop their own thoughts and opinions. This relates back to the student's development of their own voice and their ability to connect to diverse voices.

In addition, not only does literature appeal to one's emotional self, literature can help students access the past so society as a whole does not make the same mistakes again. For example, Eagleton writes:

The 'health' and 'vitality' of such language was the product of a 'sane' citizen: it embodied a creative wholeness which had been historically lost, and to read literature was thus to regain vital touch with the roots of one's own being. Literature was in a sense

an organic society all of its own: it was important because it was nothing less than a whole social ideology. (Eagleton 59)

Eagleton supports two impactful points; first, literature gives students a creative outlet. Because at times students are studying writers who are no longer living, the interpretation may vary based on the reader. Giving students the opportunity to develop their own interpretation allows the reader to use textual evidence to think creatively. Creativity is something that is lost in other subjects; however, analyzing both nonfiction and fiction text supports this skill. Teachers can encourage students to find certain themes based on the time period and author, but students are also free to navigate the text itself to find individual meaning. Next, Eagleton states that literature connects students to the “roots of one’s own being” (59). Literature allows students to study a time period that they could not see or live first hand. Understanding where one comes from and what that historical society embodied contributes to how a student can live today, and also what one will embrace in the future.

Continuing with Eagleton’s idea, he would argue reading literature develops necessary critical thinking skills. In “The Rise of English” he argues, “Literature would be at once solace and reaffirmation, a familiar ground on which Englishmen could regroup to explore, and to find some alternative to, the nightmare of history” (54). This quote means that literature creates a platform for all groups of people to think critically about the past. Eagleton refers to the “nightmare of history”, meaning society has too many impactful texts to read; therefore, the same problems from the past should not persist into the future. For example, if students were to read *The Diary of Anne Frank*, they would read a first-hand account about the Holocaust time period, and the overall suppression of the Jewish race. Students would close read and analyze how Jewish people were being treated based on a character trait such as religious persecution;

the diary itself should teach students how to treat people, but also how to react when someone is treated poorly. Another example is *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The novel gives insight into a specific time period where African American people were not treated equally and lacked many rights that they have today. Again, students did not live through the Civil Rights time period; however, when students can read literature from a specific era, they will be able to better understand the people of the time period, and the dilemmas they faced.

Lastly, and just as important, literature expands one's critical thinking skills through close reading skills such as studying vocabulary, syntax, and writing. One example of this is represented through Richter's writings; he says, "She puts her faith in the methodology of history as a discipline, which requires one to seek out evidence against one's thesis with the same energy one seeks evidence in its favor, to present the actual words of one's sources rather than slanting them by paraphrase, and to cite evidence so that others can check the dates for themselves" (23). Richter addresses several important skills that young adults must have in order to be successful in any career path. Students must be able to develop a strong opinion in the form of a thesis statement. In addition, scholars must be able to research both sides of an issue, declaring their specific argument with the counterclaims as well. Students must learn the importance of research and how to incorporate research into an argument while not "slanting" the paraphrase or direct quote. These specific writing and thinking skills can be applied in cross-curricular subjects; these skills can help students in any other class which leads to their passion/career path. In addition to Richter, Helen Vendler addresses the benefits of teaching writing in "What We have Loved, Others Will Love". Vendler first discusses how difficult it is to teach both writing and literature to students who are uninterested. She poses the argument that not every freshman student will compose music, nor will every student learn how to paint (33). However, her main points focus

on the impact reading literature has on one's writing capabilities. For example, she states, "Writers-easy and natural writers-have always been, first of all, readers. Just as spoken language has to be learned from the pages of writers- from writers who wrote for the love of the art" (33). Vendler would argue that students who read from writers who are passionate about the topic at hand will benefit by incorporating their own writing styles. Effective writing gives students a reference points on what the basis for writing should look like; from there, students can revise and reflect on their own work. Once again, reading literature encourages to not only to think critically about a text, but also to write and respond to a text. This allows students to cite and support their own opinions, discuss them with classmates, and create an argument/thesis. In addition, Vendler discusses a variety of topics that can be covered through both writing and literature. For example, she claims, "We love, we must recall, two things centrally: one is literature, but the other, equally powerful is language" (35). The ability to write and speak correlate to one's reading abilities. Literature classes develop curriculum to cover a wide variety of topics, authors, and eras in order to create well-rounded students who are knowledgeable about both language and literature. For example, Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech proves how writing and speaking relates to reading abilities. Often students read this speech, but they also may listen to it as well. However, this speech is extremely powerful through either model. MLK reaches the reader through both the text and him empowering voice. Therefore, students who can analyze, discuss, and interpret this type of text makes students more effective writers and readers.

In conclusion, the ability to read, interpret, and discuss literature is a valuable skill to have in multiple facets of a student's life. First, literature allows one to develop relationships with other people and to be able to comprehend other people's feelings better. Secondly,

literature helps students to understand the past. It is important to understand not only the historical past, but also how society lived during the time period and why certain authors wrote specific ways. This connection to the past allows readers to develop their own themes and lessons to connect to the modern world today. Lastly, reading literature advances other vital skills like writing and vocabulary. Literature is the foundation of student voice; by understanding and interpreting literature in one's own way, this allows students to become more creative and to have a voice within society. Therefore, let one's individual story be heard; do not keep it to oneself.

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