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A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE APPROACH TO SHARED READING

by

Elizabeth A. Procida

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Education
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Reading Education
at
Rowan University
December 6, 2017

Thesis Chair: Dr. Susan Browne

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my amazing students who are forever teaching me something new. Without your permission, I would not be able to teach at all. Thank you for allowing me to bear witness and be a part of your daily literary experiences.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my appreciation to the students and administration at the study site for allowing this research to take place. To my professors who opened my eyes to the many facets of literacy, my students and I will be forever grateful. Also, thanks to my classmates in the MA in Reading Program, especially Michelle Cohen, Bianca Rouse, and Kasey Stevens. I will never forget the endless emotional support we gave each other throughout this experience. Finally, thanks to my husband, Matt and children, Samantha, Matthew and Luke, family and friends, for their patience through my late-night study sessions, who all share in this accomplishment.

Abstract

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A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE APPROACH TO SHARED READING
2017-2018

Dr. Susan Browne
Master of Arts in Reading Education

The purpose of this research study was to investigate and document changes in the motivation and engagement of basic skills students. The specific goal was to determine whether or not the replacement of purchased traditional intervention texts with authentic multicultural texts affected motivation in a basic skills classroom.

The intervention group of students during enrichment period demonstrated motivation to read and enhanced the way they saw themselves as readers. There was a renewed interest in literacy when experienced as an active activity. The implications discussed were for a culturally responsive shared reading environment.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“I am not a teacher, but an awakener.”
-Robert Frost

Imagine a student that came to class, only to fall asleep as soon as the textbook opened. This same student was just full of life and surrounded by many friends around school only moments ago. He has participated actively during gym class, he socialized and is full of ideas during a collaborative art course, and was a leader among his peers when he prepared information or worked with peers for a play involving the African American program.

Unfortunately, many students that came from diverse backgrounds found themselves in a similar predicament in this literacy classroom. They were expected to participate whether or not they came to class with the skills they needed to succeed. They were assumed to have unsupportive parents, behaviors that hindered learning or lacked background knowledge. Are these students doomed to fall further behind and become part of a basic skills population? What responsibility did the teacher have? How could students have stayed motivated when they cannot relate to what they are expected to read?

While trying to find solutions, administrators and teachers attempt to use other methods that worked for other schools. But without taking the time to conduct teacher research studies, the methods adopted may not work for their school. There was no one-size-fits-all method found that allowed all students to succeed.

However, another teacher seemed to find success with her students. She takes a balanced approach using available testing data and collects a personal profile of each of

the students and their families. The teacher was able to meet students at their ability level and created lessons that bridge gaps in their learning if there are any. Lessons are interactive and differentiated. Through the use of interviews and surveys, she spends time getting to know her students and their lives outside of school. Students responded to a culturally responsive teacher that allowed them to discuss and explore social issues in a safe environment. The teacher demonstrated communication with students and families, she genuinely cared and took time to understand her students' day to day lives. She held each student to a high level of expectation and was honest with them about their behavior and achievement levels. The preparation and time invested in providing resources to support students afforded them an opportunity to elevate achievement in her classroom.

Now picture a classroom of students that actively participated in a reader's theatre activity. Some students practiced literacy skills with novels they selected in small groups. Other students watched and listened to the teacher read and model strategies using an authentic multicultural text. Students understood and were fully engaged in all of these situations. They were talking exploring and freely discussing what they read or notice. This teaching method was the effect of using a culturally responsive approach to shared reading, and no one sleeps.

Purpose Statement

As schools look for ways to increase student achievement, one growing area of concern in some schools is the approach for interventions. In my middle school, there was a flexible approach to the intervention classes for the school and the curriculum based on the *i-Ready* diagnostic program. Although the program provides data and lessons, there was no professional development on how to implement the curriculum with

the intervention classes other than using the program itself. Additionally, once a student became ready to address comprehension, the suggested text was not available for use. Subsequently, since I was a part of creating and sharing the lessons for the interventions, my goal was to address not only the underachievement of our students but their lack of motivation and engagement around literacy.

Other aspects I planned to incorporate in my study are factors such as "ethnicity, culture, gender, social class, historical experiences, and linguistic capabilities" (Gay, 2012) which all play a part in what is interesting to students and how teachers might begin to learn how to motivate and engage them. For several decades some student groups have felt a disconnect with school and therefore deprioritized the role of literacy and education in their lives. A large percentage of the basic skills students in intervention classes faced additional personal challenges. My research explored how a culturally responsive approach using critical literacy affected these students' motivation and engagement with literature.

It was essential to reach these students, so they reconnected with the school community, teachers needed to consider the role of cultural responsiveness and critical literacy in their practice and how it directly correlated with motivation and engagement, especially with adolescents. In most school districts some students dealt with the daily "complexity of the work as families grapple with effects of poverty. These manifest in the schoolyard and classrooms as high levels of illness, stress, tiredness, absences, and outbreaks of violence" (Comber, 2015, pg. 364). Also, "merely belaboring the disproportionately poor academic performance of certain students of color, or blaming their families and social class backgrounds is not very helpful in implementing reforms to

reverse achievement trends" (Gay, 2012). Therefore, I hoped to effect change in teachers' approach to interventions and possibly in their daily practice.

The purpose of this research study was to examine how a culturally responsive approach to shared reading motivated and engaged basic skills students. More specifically, an investigation of how seventh-grade basic skills students responded critically to text and how a culturally responsive approach to a shared reading experience affected their motivation and engagement towards literacy.

Statement of Research Problem and Question

Students at Campbell Middle School were not engaged or motivated to read in their intervention class where they were to develop gaps in foundational skills. When students shared a culturally responsive reading experience, students became more aware of their culture and were able to begin to relate to and critically read a novel. A benefit to this response was that these basic skills students might become more proficient readers.

Additionally, a deeper understanding of children's motivation and engagement while reading, in turn, improved an understanding of reading instruction development for 7th-grade basic skills students. Therefore, this approach to literacy needed further exploration and prompted this study. The research question that evolved from this was: How does using a culturally responsive approach to shared reading motivate and engage 7th-grade students in a basic skills class?

Story of the Question

As the demographics shifted in the school district and became more diverse, the number of 'basic skills' students seemed to have risen quite dramatically. If there were somewhere between 40% to 60% per grade level in the middle school before the last two

or three years, I am not sure because there was no shared analysis done, but there are now.

When I first offered to be a basic skills teacher, I went in blind. There was no job description, no supplies, no lab, not a thing. We were creating a pilot for a push-in or pull-out model. The teachers who had taken the position the year before complained of not having had enough direction or directives from anyone and felt it was a waste. I cried a lot the first year, not for myself but for my students who had somehow made it to 7th-grade and were reading on the 2nd and 3rd grade reading levels. These children had struggled for four or five years. It hurt to think about it, and what was worse is when I heard their other teachers become frustrated with them. I worked with more vigor to help teachers understand how long and how much they had struggled, but it was difficult to explain let alone comprehend the situation.

Deep down I knew I was going to help change things. I began by meeting with the new curriculum director and asked for Chromebooks so students could listen to the readings until we were able to teach them to read. With the support of my principals, I changed over a classroom designated for storage and made it a Literacy Lab. It was exciting, and everything I had been learning in my Reading Specialist coursework was validated. I started getting questions from my colleagues because the strategies I was learning and applying in the classroom was working with our students. I was amazed each day at the students' progress, but I wanted to do more.

I found myself more aware of the need to address this growing challenge. I knew I was not looking for a quick fix or a temporary solution. I wanted to be a part of the change my district needed to improve our practice in the classroom, especially in the

literacy intervention classrooms. Through reading textbooks and articles, I came across the writings of Geneva Gay. She stated, “good intentions and awareness are not enough to bring about the changes needed in educational programs and procedures to prevent academic inequities among diverse students” (Gay, 2012, pg. 14). This idea resonated with me. I realized *knowing* there is a growing trend of underachievement and a shift in demographics in my school was not enough. In the past, Professional Development brought with good intentions to my district were not useful to me or beneficial to my students. It was not because the presenters did not provide valid information, the information just was not relevant to my students. The presenters often were from affluent schools and had unrealistic expectations and assumptions. All of Pine Cliff’s students do not have computers, cell phones, go on vacations, and so much more on a long list of presumptions made by more than one presenter. It was frustrating to listen. After my coursework and now research, I was excited to think about sharing my findings with teachers to produce and present something meaningful to effect change. This study is where I had begun to incorporate culturally responsive teaching into my classroom. If I had my way and could bring more teachers on board, it would ripple through the district and eventually change our practice and hopefully our students’ lives.

Although initially I felt overwhelmed with my first official research project, the time spent preparing alleviated a lot of my concerns. I feel well informed and supported. As I learned more about my students and how they were interpreting text, I felt the need to reread articles and text to understand how and why they reacted the way they did. I wondered about the natural responses of the students and their reactions to one another during a discussion. Ultimately, I wanted to complete a study that would help shape our

Basic Skills curriculum for our diverse student population and create a few lifetime readers along the way. I looked forward to getting started.

Organization of the Paper

The subsequent chapters provide a more complete and detailed report of the study. Chapter two is composed of the research around the elements of the study using a review of current literature. This section includes researched areas of motivation in middle school, shared reading strategy, culturally responsive teaching, and response to critical literacy. This chapter was used to provide insight into the purpose and implementation of the study. Chapter three contains two parts: the context of the study and the research design. Chapter four analyzes the collected data and discusses the finding from the study. Chapter five concludes and evaluates the limitations of the study. There was also consideration given to future implications and possible influences in the intervention classroom for future implications.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

“This is what colored my thinking about literature and led to my becoming involved with education, with trying to understand how schools can contribute to the growth of people able to preserve and carry into greater fulfillment the democratic society, imperfect as it may be, that we are now benefiting from.”

(Karolides & Rosenblatt 1999, p. 160)

Introduction

Many middle school students have found themselves in Basic Skills classes reviewing phonics and building vocabulary. Once this work ended, however, students still had to transition to independence successfully. Some basic skills students are minorities faced with the additional challenge of being part of the student population in a low socio-economic group as well.

In response to these challenges with struggling readers in school, the first section of this chapter considered past reading assessments in the past and the factors that increased or interfered with motivation and engagement. The next section discussed the importance of using shared reading strategies with intervention classrooms. After, there is an examination of studies that incorporated culturally responsive teaching and critical literacy in reading instruction. Finally, the chapter ends having created purpose for this research and how it contributed to the curriculum of the 7th-grade basic skills classroom. In this review, components of research related to motivation and the strategy of shared reading with a culturally responsive approach used novels that are both multicultural and critical text for these students is evaluated.

Motivation in Middle School

“Motivation can be described as a willingness to engage in an activity and a willingness to persist in that activity, even when it becomes difficult” (Malloy, Marinak, Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2013, p. 23).

In their 2013 article Malloy, Marinak, Gambrell, and Mazzoni recognized the fundamental importance of motivation through Guthrie and Wigfield's Motivation and Engagement Theory and revisited the Motivation to Read Profile. "As the original Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) ...developed in 1996, a revision that would reflect the cultural and linguistic changes that occurred in the ensuing decade was needed" (Malloy, Marinak, Gambrell, and Mazzoni, 2013, p. 274). This new lens the assessment was looked through also incorporated "Bandura's (1977) work on self-efficacy, which he described as self-judgment of a domain-specific ability to perform a specific task successfully" (Malloy, Marinak, Gambrell, and Mazzoni, 2013, p. 274). This point is important because self-efficacy in literacy is what many Title I and Basic Skills students lack. Furthermore, they noted “the research literature provides strong support for the tie between reading motivation and reading achievement” (Malloy, Marinak, Gambrell, and Mazzoni, 2013, p. 273).

A 2006 study by Schlackman and Unrau focused on the “effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on reading achievement for urban middle school students.” (Schlackman & Unrau, 2006, p. 81). This research design used structural equation models providing qualitative data and the Gates-MacGinitie reading assessment providing quantitative data as well. The participants in this study were students in “Grades 6, 7, and 8 who attended the urban middle school.” (Schlackman & Unrau, 2006, p. 85). Surveys

and tests were given at the beginning of a two-year period and again at the end of the research period. The 2006 study collected data across two academic years. "The Motivation to Read Questionnaire...administered in the fall of Year 1 and again in the fall of Year 2, ... established two grade cohorts" (Schlackman & Unrau, 2006, p. 86).

According to Schlackman and Unrau's observations, results suggested intrinsic motivation seemed to have a positive effect on reading achievement for Hispanic and Asian middle school students, and extrinsic motivation appeared to have a negative impact on achievement in literacy.

The implication of this research was discovering the need to investigate the apparent worsening of students' attitudes toward reading. In "grades 1-8 (the finding) further suggested educators face relentless challenges to students' reading engagement" (Schlackman & Unrau, 2006, p. 100). Having discovered the factors contributing to students' reading motivation, especially for students in the middle school years, and "the means to deepen engagement in reading and learning could promote the transformation of many classrooms and the lives of many students" (Schlackman & Unrau, 2006, p. 100). One conclusion "researchers have repeatedly found students' motivation declines as they progress from elementary school through high school" (Schlackman & Unrau, 2006, p. 82).

"Many educators have speculated about the reasons for the weakening of school-related motivation including the notion that efforts to motivate students through various reward systems undermine their interests and natural curiosity" (Schlackman & Unrau, 2006, p. 82). These rewards seemed to ultimately work to diminish a student's ability to develop their sense of self and identity.

Francois' research in 2013 focused on literacy as a "project not just of reading but also of identity, and that the contexts that surround readers delineate who is and who is not a reader, the purpose of reading, the texts that are valued, and even what counts as reading" (p. 142). Overall it revealed the urban adolescents' experience with and "attitudes towards reading in school, using sociocultural perspectives on literacy" (Francois, 2013, p. 142).

"This study sought to describe urban adolescents' experiences with and attitudes toward reading in school, using sociocultural perspectives on literacy" (Francois, 2013, p. 142). The type of research design was qualitative and data-driven. Interviews, conferences, and surveys were performed and collected. The study contained two 7th graders with the older students being in 10th and 11th grades. There was a total of 17 student participants, and there was an approximation that 79% of the students were economically disadvantaged.

The 2013 study showed "Latino and black youths living in poverty were labeled as struggling readers who have difficulty achieving proficiency in school literacy tasks." (Francois, 2013, p. 142). In the classroom, the participating students' priority was asked to attend focus groups for interviews. They also responded to questions about their reading achievement. The researcher observed that when teachers used a combination of strategies for literacy. Reading workshops, teaching whole class novels, and some time for independent reading. The researchers found that the reading event was about relating to the text, interaction with classmates, and between the student and the text.

The findings indicated were 'relating' in all ways while presenting literacy instruction. The concept of 'relating' included while engaged in discussion, the use of

common language, routines, and beliefs about reading. An emphasis was also placed on the teachers' recognition of the importance to enable students to explore their interests and facilitate social engagement through reading. Also, time spent reading was shared with students and demonstrated by adults. In the end, this study found "students explained they wanted to read books that allowed them to connect characters' experiences to their real lives or to the experiences of other youths they knew" (Francois, 2013, p. 146). The students' reactions to the reading experience support Rosenblatt's theory and the importance of aesthetic reading. Through this study, it seems clear that adolescent motivation and engagement in reading relies heavily on the aesthetic experience of writing to sustain interest in the text and reading experience so other literacy skills can be introduced and practiced. Francois' (2013) commentary also incorporated and referenced Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration* 1995 publication stating that "a frame of thinking that envisions readers' personal interpretations of text as central to analytic thinking" (p. 142). This effectively blended the concept of aesthetic reading with critical response in her study. In a final observation Francois (2013) concluded: "sociocultural perspectives also tell us that texts are much more than words on a page; their significance includes how readers interact with them and why readers in a particular context value certain texts more than others" (p. 142). Rosenblatt's Reader Response Theory was again reflected here in the transactions between the reader and text during the reading event. If it is an aesthetic and culturally relatable experience, then motivation and engagement will increase.

Shared Reading Strategy

“One of the most common forms of teacher modeling of text processing is shared reading” (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2008, p. 548) which by design incorporates Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development. The study conducted by Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2008) suggested: “expert teachers focus their modeling during shared reading on four categories: comprehension, vocabulary, text structures, and text features” (p. 548).

This qualitative research had 25 teacher participants that were from 25 different schools. The teachers that were selected were considered expert teachers in modeling and shared reading to students. The chosen method for collecting the data was to make observation notes during lessons and record teacher interviews to transcribe them later to compare teacher responses accurately. The study validated the use of components of shared reading and think-aloud strategies. Additionally, Fisher, Frey, and Lapp noted authenticity was an essential part of the modeling throughout the reading to each of the teachers. The text guided the teachers towards particular discussion and reading strategies during the sessions with students.

Teacher participants explained that it is difficult to maintain authenticity at times, however through the practice of shared reading teachers were able to build the necessary skills to accomplish this. Through observation and practice, researchers recognized teachers modeled "multiple ways of thinking about texts instead of just focusing on one strategy in each lesson" (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2008, p. 550).

A more current study by Chandler (2013) described and documented primary grade teachers’ practice of shared reading as a strategy to build vocabulary and comprehension during literacy instruction in a southeastern urban school system. Primary

grade teachers' instructional practice during shared reading may help close gaps contributing to comprehension difficulties.

The qualitative research design had seven primary grade teachers as participants in the study. Participating teachers were responsible for documenting how they performed shared reading lessons and teaching vocabulary to support comprehension. The method of data collection for this study was from interviews, classroom observations, and accompanying lesson plans. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher to provide a useable data set for analysis. The researchers found that overall, six of the seven teachers defined shared reading as an instructional reading strategy that involved the teacher and student reading from the same text. The implications for the findings were to understand teachers' practice of shared reading better to build vocabulary and comprehension and to help them make informed instructional decisions during literacy instruction in primary grades as well as explicit instruction on performing a shared reading.

Schmitt's (1990) discussed the importance of a student's ability to use metacomprehension strategies. Because it had "shown that awareness of metacognitive strategies is characteristic of good comprehension, it would be useful...to evaluate...students' awareness of those strategies." (Schmitt, 1990, p. 454). However, there were some shortcomings of the Metacomprehension Strategies Index. "For example, one cannot tell from the instrument alone whether or not children do what they say they do...Teacher observation is required to verify the say/do relationship" (Schmitt, 1990, p. 457).

Additionally, “as with any assessment instrument, the MSI should not be used in isolation. Rather, teachers should consider it as one source of information about students’ reading abilities that must be viewed in conjunction with other sources of information” (Schmitt, 1990, p. 457). “This information may be useful to teachers in designing a comprehensive reading program that fosters metacomprehension strategy awareness and competence” (Schmitt, 1990, p. 458).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Au's 2007 article reviewed research noting on page 85, "the phrase culturally responsive instruction refers to teaching that reflects the values and standards for behavior students' home cultures." In one study conducted by Au and Mason in 1981, the teacher followed the rules for folk talk-story, a typical speech event in Hawaiian culture that allowed students to collaborate to respond to the teacher's questioning. Collaboration is a highly valued trait among Hawaiian families.

Au also indicated other culturally responsive strategies in her review. "Teachers will want to develop a repertoire of strategies for student participation, having students work as a whole class, in small groups, in pairs, and as individuals." (p. 85-86).

Another research study Au included was conducted by Ladson-Billings from 1995.

African American students were found to have difficulty negotiating culture with academic expectations. “The teachers in her study were adept at reducing this conflict by bridging the gap or making links between the students’ culture and academic learning” (Preparing reading professionals Au, 2007, p. 86). An example of this is when one teacher used rap music to teach elements in poetry.

Au also concludes that teachers need to establish a positive relationship and create open communication with diverse students and identified as respected role models to those students. "Teachers must show students, on a daily basis, how reading can be rewarding... ownership [of literacy] is promoted as teachers develop classrooms as a community of readers" (Au, 2007, p. 81).

Response to Critical Literacy

Kurki's (2015) research focused on understanding what texts students would critically engage and observed when, how, and with which texts youths engage critically. The type of research design was qualitative research and an ethnographic case study.

The participants in this study were 12 youth students in two Grade 9 English and Social Studies classes, between the ages of 14 and 16, and attending an alternative high school in an urban center in Western Canada. Additionally, "these students were deemed at risk of failing in a regular high school setting because of various issues, such as academic abilities, substance abuse, emotional and/or physical health, or bullying from other students in their previous high school." (Kurki, 2015, p. 17).

In the class, the priority of the participating students' learning was on building literacy skills and exposure to a variety of texts. They completed assignments related to current events and had a "voice in how they got to demonstrate their learning." (Kurki, 2015, p. 18). The teacher's "pedagogical philosophy of promoting new literacies, critical literacies, and student questioning was also in line with the students developing a critical literacy approach" (Kurki, 2015, p. 18) towards texts. Kurki made observations to collect insight on how the participants engaged with texts and which texts they considered

necessary. Taking time to make these observations allowed the researcher to better relate to the students. There were several relevant findings.

When a few participants made comments related to social justice during Kurki's 2015 study, the researcher noticed they were more emotional when this occurred. Students expressed their dislike for oppression and were upset and concerned that texts' messages focused on such unjust actions. (p. 26).

Kurki (2015) also found sharing texts with others and using books to communicate allowed students to engage with texts critically. The students used books to enhance her interactions with their family. The students were forthright in what they had to say by speaking freely and openly expressing their opinions. They appeared to feel comfortable and safe in their learning environment, and, because of this, they offered insightful information about texts and text use, primarily since they used a variety of text sources and media as part of their "day-to-day learning activities and social interactions" (p. 18).

Kurki (2015) realized some students recognized that some people could take texts too seriously and the meanings people impose on texts can often be misunderstood. They would like people to be less judgmental and more forgiving, for instance, not judging "the homeless," because you do not know the whole story (p. 27). The students were engaging and questioning what information was missing when they evaluate a text. Interestingly, not one of the participants mentioned any action they had taken related to social justice issue. The implications of this research demonstrated that a critical literacies approach by both students and teachers could lead to the awareness for the need of social change, empathy, and understanding of others' perspectives. A step further

would be to investigate how the students could take action that addressed some of their societal concerns (Kurki, 2015, p. 31).

Dressel (2005) studied students' enjoyment of multicultural literature. The type of research design was primarily observational, and the participants in this study were over 100, 8th-grade students who worked on a multicultural unit in literacy. The students were observed for enjoyment while reading and understanding multicultural novels and as they learned about the norms and values of a culture different from their own, understand themselves and their cultural norms and values more clearly (p. 750).

The method used for this examination observed students who completed surveys about cultural understanding, and analysis of student writing. Dressel also found that students did not increase their understanding of other cultures although they enjoyed the novels. This research found the way teachers presented books to the students in the classroom and how the teacher leads the discussions played a vital role in addressing cultural and social responsibilities. One neglected aspect of the study was if the goal was to enjoy reading, then there was no guarantee critical thinking or reflection would take place. This puts the responsibility on the teacher to make sure this happens (p. 758-759).

Verden's (2012) qualitative study focused on the idea that through literature, the teacher would understand students and the difficulties they lived with on a daily basis. The participants in this study were in a self-contained classroom with eight students. In Verden's study, students were expected to complete surveys as well as pre- and post-reading interest surveys, student interviews, personal student journals, and a problem-solving questionnaire over 15 weeks. The methods the teacher used was shared reading using a read-aloud strategy.

The researchers found the students were able to identify with the characters and storylines through discussions followed by reflective journal entries.

Delaney (2007) concentrated on exploring the experiences of adolescents as they began to develop critical literacy skills. The type of research was a qualitative case study using twenty-three participants in 7th and 8th grade. Students were interviewed and completed questions after the completion of the history project.

An inquiry-based project in an integrated language arts and social studies class, Delaney found students' literacy was enhanced and developed a deeper understanding of bias in texts. The implications were that students had begun to question and wonder about the status quo of society. Students also had begun to construct knowledge about the world independently and explore other avenues for information.

Summary

Through the review of available literature, it became clear how the themes complemented each other in this proposed study. Motivation, shared reading strategies, culturally responsive teaching, and critical response to text was blended efficiently in the basic skills classroom.

A clear indicator of success in achieving literacy was found to be a students' motivation. Therefore, the study used a relatable text. This text was an authentic multicultural text, *Forged by Fire* (Draper, 1998). A high-interest authentic multicultural novel nurtured and increased overall motivation and engagement towards literature. Using this novel enabled the incorporation of social issues that students responded to with a critical eye. Additionally, during the study, the cultural responsiveness of the school was examined through a survey that focused on students' feelings about open

communication between teachers and diverse students, creation of a school with a culture of caring and understanding, and by maintenance of a structured and safe environment. These four components of culturally responsive teaching helped support planning for the shared reading strategies and discussions that took place during the study.

This study also used shared reading strategies that allowed the integration of students' culture into discussions and responses. The teachers that were interviewed and observed for their shared reading strategies struggled with modeling. This was especially true when the teachers modeled a think-aloud and critical thinking. Advanced plans for discussion questions, read-aloud and think-aloud strategies was important. These strategies blended with different aspects of the study and were modeled as habits of a motivated reader, as well as contributed to developing a reading habit among diverse, basic skills students attending middle school.

Several of the schools from the various studies had student participants from “economically disadvantaged families; over 90% of students participated in the free or reduced-price lunches program” (Schlackman & Unrau, 2006, p. 85). This was a similar trait to one of Campbell Middle School’s demographics and basic skills students. As a teacher-researcher, it was necessary to know and have respect for social issues that students found important.

New research on methods and strategies needed to be explored to integrate these practices in various literacy classroom settings. For this study, it was essential to support the shared reading through a caring environment to facilitate honest discussion and increase motivation creating a positive attitude towards literacy.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Part I: Context of the Study

Community and demographics. In the neighborhood where the school resides across the street from the school was a church where they had a daycare and playground. On one side of the church there was an abandoned home and on the other side of the church were newly constructed condos and next to those was a golf course. The neighborhood that surrounds the school was near a highway that led to a neighboring town and in the other direction the main road that led into another smaller town. The campus itself was almost at the convergence of the three towns on the Eastern Coast of the United States.

The Campbell Middle School Campus consisted of two separate buildings. One was an Intermediate School that contained 5th and 6th grades, and the other houses the 7th and 8th grades. There was a total of eleven schools in the district. The site used for this Research Study was the Campbell Middle School located in Pine Cliff and categorized as “a large suburban school district by the state” (NCES, 2017, np).

The demographics of the town’s population were as follows: “As of the census GR2 of 2000, there are 35,737 people, 12,389 households, and 9,093 families residing in the township. The population density was 1,310.4/km² (3,392.4/mi²). There are 12,945 housing units at an average density of 474.7/km² (1,228.8/mi²). The racial makeup of the township was 60.10% White, 24.18% African American, 0.35% Native American, 4.58% Asian, 0.02% Pacific Islander, 8.27% from other races, and 2.51% from two or more races. 14.34% of the population were Hispanic or Latino of any race” (Pennsauken, CDP, 2000, p.4).

“The median income for a household in the township was \$47,538, and the median income for a family is \$52,760. Males had a median income of \$37,652 versus \$30,100 for females. The per capita income for the township is \$19,004. 8.0% of the population and 6.1% of families were below the poverty line. Out of the total population, 10.1% of those under the age of 18 and 8.0% of those 65 and older were living below the poverty line” (Pennsauken, CDP, p.4).

School student population and faculty. In the 2015-2016 school year, the district reported the Campbell Middle School consisted of 7th and 8th grade and had “776 students” (NCES, 2017, np). This total was made up of 359 students in 7th-grade, 328 students in 8th-grade, and 89 students that were ungraded (NCES, 2017, np). The demographics of students in the middle school of the 2015-2016 school year were 43.8% Hispanic, 32.2% Black, 11.7% white, 11.3% Asian, 0.3% Pacific Islander, 0.6% of students with 2 or more races, and 0 American Indian/Alaskan students. During the 2015-2016 school year, there were 52% male and 48% female students (NCES, 2017, np).

The report noted that although approximately 60% of the town registered as white living in the town, however, only 7.75% of the students attending the middle school were white.

Student absences in 2015-2016 were as follows: 7% had 0 absences, 34% had 1-5 absences, 29% had 6-10 absences, 17% had 11-15 absences and 13% had 15 or more absences (NCES, 2016, np).

There were 515 students eligible for free lunch and breakfast and 62 students eligible to receive reduced breakfast and lunch reported in 2014-2015 (NCES, 2017, np).

These numbers showed that 74.45% of the students attending 7th and 8th grade qualify for free/reduced meals.

On the 7th-grade PARCC in 2016, of the 391 valid scores: 17.1% did not meet expectations, 23.8% partially met expectations, 26.1% met expectations, and 4.9% exceeded expectations for the Language Arts portion.

Of the 418 8th grade students that registered to take the test, there were 379 valid scored and 39 students not tested. 16.1% did not meet expectations, 24% met partial expectations, 31.9% were approaching expectations, 26.6% met expectations and 1.3% exceeded expectations in Language Arts (2016PARCC, 2017, np).

In the middle school during the 2014-15 school year, there were 14 (1.8%) students that were English Language Learners and 151 (19.5%) students with Individualized Education Plans (NJDOE, 2016, np.).

At the time of the study, the faculty consisted of 13 black teachers, three were Hispanic or other race, and 48 were white. There were two guidance counselors, one white and one Hispanic, and three administrators. Two administrators were white, and one was Hispanic. Of the 72 staff in the middle school, 19 were male, and 50 were female. Additionally, the student/teacher ratio was 10.76 to 1 (NCES, 2017, np). The Campbell Middle School was a Title I School, but the district had not maintained a Title I school-wide program at the time of the study.

Parents/Parental involvement had varied from year to year. Overall, the parents responded when contacted. For back to school night in 7th-grade, approximately one-third of the parents had come to the event.

Classroom for study and participants. In this study, I recruited participants using a classroom student announcement, letter, and parent email. The size of the sample was the average size of a seventh-grade basic skills intervention class at the research site, Campbell Middle School in Pine Cliff, on the East Coast of the United States. An estimated ten to twenty participants were in this study. Participants were required to be seventh-grade students eligible for Basic Skills Intervention as determined by the administrators of Campbell Middle School. Participation was strictly voluntary.

This year with the help of the principal there was a designated classroom for a Literacy Lab and Interventions. This literacy study had a dedicated room for its duration. The school and district had also recently applied for district-wide Title I status, but it is not recognized as such yet. The Basic Skills Intervention Program that was in its third year, and the computer diagnostic program, *i-Ready*, PARCC scores, and past grades in Language Arts assisted in determining students in need of remediation. Students that were receiving English as a Second Language instruction had a separate program, as did students with Individual Education Plans and were currently not included in these intervention classes.

The assigned teachers to work as Basic Skills support in the classroom and during interventions had no written curriculum other than partially individualized *i-Ready* lessons that for this site's students. There was also no ongoing professional development for the BSIP teachers at this time.

Students receiving interventions were 2 or more grade levels below their current 7th-grade assignment. Students typically assigned to interventions attended the class two to three times each week during a Period of Intervention and Enrichment.

Students who were assigned intervention received instruction in phonics, vocabulary, or comprehension strategies using fiction and non-fiction texts. The texts provided by the district for the middle school to use were from a guided reading package initially purchased for the Fountas and Pinnell elementary curriculum. Grades for this class were either pass or fail based on progress, engagement, and participation of the individual student.

The classroom seated up to 20 students however the intervention sections are typically limited to 12 students. For this research, approximately 50 students received the opportunity to join the study. Ultimately, 16 students were interested and scheduled to participate because several requested consent forms went unreturned.

There were five boys with the following identified races and cultural background: 3 Hispanic students and 2 African American students. There were 11 girls with the following identified races: 6 Hispanic students, 4 African American students, and 1 Vietnamese student. All 16 of these participating students were in 7th-grade Basic Skills English Language Arts Class. Additionally, using the guidelines of the school, they all qualified to receive English Language Arts Interventions twice each week.

Part 2: Research Design/Methodology

Qualitative research approach. Yilmaz (2013) defined qualitative research “as an emergent, inductive, interpretive and naturalistic approach to the study of people, cases, phenomena, social situations and processes in their natural settings in order to reveal in descriptive terms the meanings that people attach to their experiences of the world” (p. 312). When observing students in a learning environment, where they were encouraged to think critically and share experiences freely, qualitative research design

was most appropriate. Yilmaz (2013) further explained that “for instance, qualitative methods are especially effective to study a highly individualized program in which learners who have different abilities, needs, goals, and interests proceed at their own pace” (p. 315). The students identified for this study were eligible for interventions and Basic Skills, so qualitative methods worked best.

Teacher research and rationale. Reading Specialists reflection on teaching was a big part of this. To further reflection on teaching, the specialists used coaching experiences to support and demonstrate best practices to teachers. This reflection was where research sprouted into questions and concerns about the effectiveness of our practice. This was when, as educators, we needed to take our reflections on practice further to conduct formal research. Teacher research involved “collecting and analyzing data as well as presenting it to others in a systematic way” (Power & Shagoury, 2012, pg. 3). The goal of the research was to ultimately, “create the best possible learning environment for students (Power & Shagoury, 2012, pg. 3). Knowing there were multiple ways of doing any one thing, gave teacher researchers reasons to observe other educators and read about different methods and practices that schools and teachers were using across the nation and around the world. There was a particular timetable for the research. However, several components allowed the teacher to explore their concerns and questions about classroom practice fully.

Additionally, teachers worked in isolation. Although they may have felt they reflected on their practice, they lacked exposure to other methods of teaching. Research, therefore, allowed the teacher to see what others in the field were doing to become more efficient and in turn, better support their students’ learning. Knowing that many variables

appeared in a classroom and at school that affect student learning, research would also work to validate what teachers were doing in the classroom. This formal way of exploring teacher practice justified how to teach lessons to different groups of students. The teacher-researcher was an interesting proposition because the teacher must play both parts. "Duality of roles enables the classroom teacher...to participate in the inquiry process as researchers, working from the inside" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, pg. 41). The opportunity to have seen different points of view in research had been very beneficial to the teaching community to provide insight and affect change. Also, "the unique feature of the questions that prompt practitioners' inquiry is that they emanate from neither theory nor practice alone but from critical reflection on the intersections of the two" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, pg. 42).

One cannot help but agree "that in order to improve the schools and close the persistent achievement gaps, reform efforts need to focus on the collective learning capacity of teachers (as well as) pre-service education, non-school-based professional development, restructuring initiatives, or standards-based initiatives- as the critical unit of change" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, pg. 51). It is essential that teacher research was conducted separately from social and political agendas. Although, we could not be naïve because it was apparent that social and political constructs could influence the research to justify their conclusions about education.

Therefore, teacher research was the best approach for this study so that insight was gained to effect change in the interventions curriculum for the basic skills students learning at this study site.

Data collection. Before reading the data collected was compiled from the Motivation to Read Profile -Revised Survey and a Cultural Responsiveness of School to Students Questionnaire. Next, during reading, Discussion and Reflection Question responses from students written and recorded were photographed and gathered from students. An Observation Journal was used to record student reactions or authentic ideas during reading to collect additional data. An initial attempt to videotape and record student behavior and discussion was so disruptive the data collected from observations of behavior and discussion continued in the Observational Journal. Finally, students completed the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised Survey's Conversational Interview.

Data analysis. First, the 'before reading' responses were read to gather background information on students' past reading experiences. Once students discussed and shared their responses, a discussion took place to examine how they felt about the culture of the school. Response and observation collection continued during this discussion using recordings and written responses. Next, patterns and themes in students' responses provided an opportunity to analyze answers to the Cultural Responsiveness of School to Students Questionnaire.

In part of another observed reading session, students discussed and shared their responses. Short one-on-one interviews with students were also conducted to complete the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised. Once completed, the novel was read together as a group. The discussion during and after reading utilized some of the Discussion and Reflection Questions. Other conversations erupted from authentic inquiry and reactions. Additional observations conducted noted authentic reactions, responses, and questions

that were logged in a journal or recorded. As data collection concluded, themes and patterns among the data collected emerged to formulate findings.

Procedure of the study. This study required consent to the researcher. Participants signed an Assent Form, and parents signed a Parental Consent Form that acknowledged there was complete confidentiality in data collection, analysis, and reporting. Minors, participants under 18, had their parents or guardians sign the consent form.

The number of students, once the assent and parental consent are signed, was an independent variable provided no student decided to leave the research study. Also, the Motivation to Read Profile questions, Cultural Responsiveness of School to Students survey questions, and the Discussion and Reflection Questions remained independent.

The students participated in shared reading using *Forged by Fire* (Draper, 1998). All participants experienced reading the same novel. The shared reading consisted of read-aloud and think-aloud strategies modeled for the class. The class slowly began to participate and eventually broke themselves into small groups within the classroom to read and discuss the book.

The timeline for this study was during the Fall 2017 semester from October until mid-December. It began by asking the students to take a motivation-to-read survey. We then shared our thoughts with each other. The second meeting the students were asked to complete the cultural responsiveness survey that was created based on the literacy review readings after which students discussed their responses. An introduction to the selected novel followed the surveys and initial discussions.

Each subsequent meeting was approximately 35-minutes for at least twice a week. The class spent time reading for 20-minutes and discussed and wrote to prepared questions or authentic questions the students had. Depending on the need to clarify ideas for students or reactions from students the reading was broken up into two 10-minute readings or several 5-minute readings. The goal was to share reading for at least 20 minutes each class. The attempted recordings of discussions and written responses were also part of the data collection.

Support available during the study was Dr. Susan Browne, a Rowan University professor, and advisor. Additionally, fellow, teachers, coaches, principals, and classmates served as forms of support as well as textbooks used in prior coursework, other professional texts, articles, and studies. The author of the selected novel, Sharon Draper's website <http://sharondraper.com/> was also available for reference. Additional resources included surveys, questions, novels, notebooks, pens or pencils, and a recorder or camera.

The purpose of this research was to investigate how a culturally responsive approach to shared reading motivated and engaged basic skills students. Therefore, students needed "to be reflective and thoughtful not only about books and ideas but also about how they view the world and their place in it" (Miller, 2013, p. 44). Shared reading strategies, discussions, and written responses were incorporated in addition to modeled and shared student "ethnic and cultural identity as well as about their role in advocating for cultural diversity in teaching and learning" (Gay, 2010, 233).

Several factors were also considered to work towards increased motivation and engagement. First, "students perform much better in environments where they feel

comfortable and valued” (Gay, 2010, 232). Next, “only in an authentic setting will students be encouraged to open up and engage. Then “when students self-reflect, track, and share their learning, long-term retention and motivation (will) increase (Chappuis 2009, 13)” (Miller, p.73). This is especially true with adolescents in middle school. Through modeling of shared reading strategies, students learned to find and use their voice as they wondered and asked “questions (which) gives reticent and struggling readers control over their learning” (Tovanni, 2000, p. 85). This study was conducted by incorporating a culturally responsive teaching approach to shared reading and observed as to how it affects 7th-grade basic skills students’ motivation and engagement.

Culturally relevant pedagogy according to Ladson-Billings (1995) “rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (p. 160).

Students observed and practiced shared reading through read-aloud and think-aloud teaching strategies. There were several shared reading strategies modeled for this research. One was that students made personal connections to characters, events, decisions or settings. “Once readers connect aspects of the story to their own lives, and to the lives of friends and family, the story hooks them, compelling them to read on” (Robb, 2010, p. 185). The text raised questions that students posed in discussion to each other. "This shows students that acting on curiosity is an important part of reading and learning" (Robb, 2010, p. 186). Formulation of predictions and finding support created “anticipation, and students continue reading to test their predictions against the unfolding

story” (Robb, 2010, p. 186). Finally, students attempted to make inferences “while reading dialogue or a character’s inner thoughts or actions” reveal...personality and motivation” (Robb, 2010, p. 186) of characters.

Trustworthiness. This study utilized a qualitative research designed with triangulated data sources. First, participants were given a survey to complete evaluating motivation and engagement while reading at the beginning of the study. Then students completed the cultural responsiveness survey. Next, observations of motivation and engagement through discussions, while engaged in a shared reading setting, that included the practice of reading strategies. A third data source, the reader’s response requested that participants shared reflections on the shared reading experiences using select questions from a list of prompts. The participants will respond to discussions or in writing through a reader’s reflective response journal entry. Critical thinking inspired by the reading was determined using these responses.

The completion of this study was during the Fall 2017 semester over approximately nine weeks. There was a 35-minute intervention two times per week. Each session was approximately 20-minutes of shared reading and 15-minutes for reflections and discussion. The reading was in increments of either two 10-minute readings or four 5-minute readings depending on students’ authentic reactions and questions.

The completion of survey questionnaire data, recorded observations, discussions, and reader’s responses were at Campbell Middle School in rooms numbered B13 and B15, during English Language Arts and Intervention Class.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

As stated before, the purpose of this research was to investigate how a culturally responsive approach to shared reading motivated and engaged basic skills students.

Therefore, students needed "to be reflective and thoughtful not only about books and ideas but also about how they view the world and their place in it" (Miller, 2013, p. 44).

An analysis of data collected demonstrating motivation, shared reading strategies, discussions, and written responses to critical literacy were all incorporated in addition to modeled and shared student "ethnic and cultural identity as well as about their role in advocating for cultural diversity in teaching and learning" (Gay, 2010, 233). This chapter is an analysis of the data in response to a question that asked: how does using a culturally responsive approach to shared reading motivate and engage 7th-grade students in a basic skills class?

For this study, 7th-grade Basic Skills students that were eligible for intervention classes and all were performing two or more levels below their assigned grade were recruited. Sixteen participants who consented and ranged in age from 11 to 14 years old. Of the sixteen participants, there were five males and eleven females. The students recruited were across three 7th-grade ELA classes taught each day. Table 1 below, showed that each of the ELA classes contained study participants. This became important because observations revealed that study sessions affected class discussions as well demonstrating implications going forward.

Table 1

7th-grade Basic Skills Intervention Class Distribution of Students

7 th -grade Basic Skills Intervention Class Distribution of Students			
Class	Number of students	Males	Females
Study Group	16	5	11
Participants from ELA -A	6	2	4
Participants from ELA-B	5	1	4
Participants from ELA-C	5	2	3

Note: ELA-A, ELA-B, and ELA-C were ELA classes that had a portion of participants from the study in each.

Qualitative Findings

This study was conducted to ultimately increase the motivation and engagement of students enrolled in basic skills intervention classes. The findings presented here are organized by the themes of student motivation, response to shared reading, cultural responsiveness, and response to critical literacy that combined to support the study.

Responses collected at the onset of the study and the discussions were on the first theme of student motivation. These were compared several weeks later to a conversational interview which was part of the Motivation and Engagement Survey and Questionnaire conducted as the study came to a close to gain additional insight. Then, a data theme emerged that supported the response to shared reading. As the study progressed, noted moments of change or difficulty for students were recognized in more detail. Also, during the study, observations were made of students after the sessions when the participants rejoined their English Language Arts Class. Next, cultural responsiveness developed as a theme for students' past and current experiences in an educational setting. The data collected was from the questionnaire as well as written responses or discussion. Finally, the students' responses to critical literacy and reactions to specific social issues presented in the novel were noted.

Motivation at onset. The initial activity required students to complete the Motivation and Engagement Survey and Questionnaire by MRP-R Malloy Gambrell, & Mazzone (2013) (see Appendix A). This first survey was uneventful, and several students expressed to me that they did not want to waste time on completing the 20 multiple choice questions because they ‘just don’t read.’ However, this survey gave insight on the students’ self-concept as a reader and measured the value students placed on reading.

Thus, the Motivation and Engagement Survey and Questionnaire data were compiled to gauge the participants’ Self-Concept and Value for reading. In Table 2 the data shows the response point values and the number of students that selected each response to questions numbered 1 through 20.

Table 2

Motivation and Engagement Survey Class Results

Item Number	1 st response points (number of students)	2 nd response points (number of students)	3 rd response points (number of students)	4 th response points (number of students)
1-SC	4 (0)	3 (5)	2 (7)	1 (1)
2-V	1 (5)	2 (1)	3 (8)	4 (0)
3-SC	4 (2)	3 (11)	2 (0)	1 (0)
4-V	4 (0)	3 (0)	2 (7)	1 (6)
5-SC	1 (3)	2 (6)	3 (2)	4 (1)
6-V	1 (4)	2 (3)	3 (4)	4 (2)
7-SC	4 (3)	3 (7)	2 (2)	1 (1)
8-V	4 (4)	3 (3)	2 (2)	1 (3)
9-SC	1 (1)	2 (7)	3 (4)	4 (0)
10-V	4 (2)	3 (4)	2 (4)	1 (2)
11-SC	1 (3)	2 (3)	3 (1)	4 (6)
12-V	1 (1)	2 (4)	3 (1)	4 (7)
13-SC	1 (1)	2 (0)	3 (9)	4 (2)
14-V	1 (2)	2 (6)	3(4)	4 (1)
15-SC	4 (3)	3 (5)	2 (4)	1 (0)
16-V	4 (3)	3 (5)	2 (3)	1 (2)
17-SC	1 (1)	2 (4)	3 (7)	4 (1)
18-V	1 (8)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (0)
19-SC	1 (3)	2 (7)	3 (3)	4 (0)
20-V	4 (0)	3 (5)	2 (3)	1 (4)

Two students did not take the survey due to absences, and a few did not respond to every question because they felt unsure about themselves as a reader or what the importance of reading was in their life. Odd numbered questions reflected Self-Concept and even numbered questions reflected Value of reading. Questions that had items with a low point value but a high number of students were a cause for closer examination.

“Understanding a student’s self-concept as a reader prepares the teacher to provide the support required for engaged reading” (Malloy Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2013, pg. 279). Question number 19, “When I read out loud” had nine students that received 1 or 2 points. This question revealed that many students do not see themselves as fluent readers. One student even wrote the word “frustrating” next to question 19. It was important to recognize this to engage students with the novel initially and validated the use of shared reading by modeling fluent reading of a shared novel. Another question that made me realize that discussion emerged as an important aspect and played a key role in this study was number 17, “When I am in a group talking about books I have read” scored high points. The majority of the students wanted the opportunity to talk.

One question that reflected remediation that had already taken place was question number 3, “When I come to a word I don’t know, I can.” All students that responded to that question felt that they could sometimes or always figure it out. For the first several months of school and established interventions, these students learned word study strategies. Self-efficacy in this area was apparent.

“The value of participating in a reading task is related to how personally interesting it is, how important the task is deemed to be, and how the successful completing of the task serves future needs” (Malloy Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2013, pg.

279). Question 18 “When I have free time, I spend,” the majority of participants, ten received 1 or 2 points indicating they spend none or very little of their time reading. This was no surprise considering that the participants had entered 7th-grade even though they lacked fundamental reading skills. Question 4, “My friends think reading is,” had responses from all participants that answered the question reply that reading was “OK to do” or “no fun at all.” This was important because the social aspect of reading had not been an aesthetic experience for these students.

Response to shared reading. Data were collected before, during, and after the shared reading sessions. The Discussion and Reflection Questions obtained at <http://sharondraper.com/> by the author of *Forged by Fire* (Draper, 1998) provided additional support for creating questions about the text if necessary. A journal or a written reader response memorialized the majority of discussions.

The notes recorded in a teacher journal after the session was over, on the first day of reading *Forged by Fire* (Draper, 1998) were also telling. The class began with several students complaining about having to read. I was concerned about this because the novel had been carefully selected for the study and was meant to engage students. Two students, Tupac and Kanye apparently did not want to have any part of the novel, and we had not even opened the book. Kanye declared, “I don’t read.” Tupac chimed in and stated, “Yeah, we don’t do this.” I had initially decided to look over the book and have a conversation about the novel’s context.

However, the best-laid plans were not going to work on this day. It became clear that their previous resistance to completing the questionnaire and survey in the first two sessions had made them feel vulnerable and they now began our session with a defensive

stance. This is the second book in Draper's Hazelwood High Trilogy, and I knew they were going to enjoy it if they gave it a chance. I announced to the class that I was going to jump right in and start. Most of the students were already reading the back cover and quietly discussing it with each other. A few wanted to talk about it before we started, I knew this was the traditional route, but I was losing the students that I most wanted to engage. They were also getting up out of their seats now, and they seemed to feel trapped. Almost a fight or flight response, the fight did not work when they initially complained, and now they wanted out of the room. The feeling of 'wanting out of here' started to spread to a few more students, Simone, Bruno, and Mariah asked to leave.

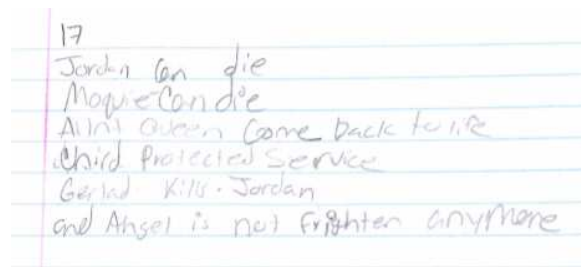
The classroom charts and whiteboards were used by student request and were permitted to allow student involvement and choice in shared reading activities to encourage the continuation of motivation to read and to encourage students to document responses and reactions to the reading. Students requested to write with markers on the chart paper and whiteboards as Beyonce' said, "to change it up."

Student choice in how they learned gave them a sense of ownership in their responses and increased engagement. Several students also began to take a lead role in shared reading and asked, "What are we doing today with our reading today?" When I explained to Selena that we were evaluating an important event in the next chapter, she stayed at lunch to read the chapter ahead of time and asked me if she could help me teach the lesson.

Below are two examples from students' reader's response discussion and questions that emerged from reading *Forged by Fire* (Draper, 1998).

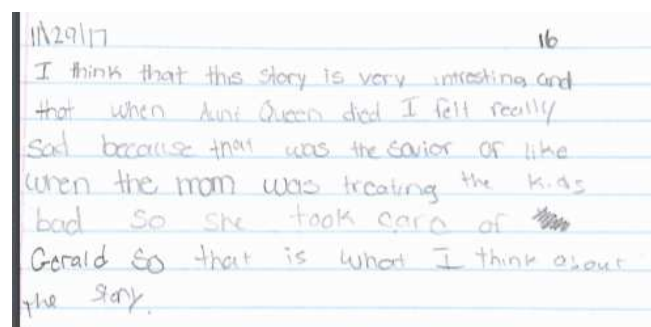
Figure 1 was a response from a student who saw events and injustices in the book as either right or wrong. This student's response was very simplistic in how they made judgments and decided what the consequences should be in a given situation. The student's primary concern was that the little girl was safe. I found it interesting that the student also wanted Aunt Queen to come back to life.

The second entry, Figure 2, demonstrates the understanding of the matriarch of the family. When Aunt Queen dies of a heart attack, it affected many of the students. They did not feel that Monique and Jordan were capable of being parents yet. In a discussion, students knew that Monique, Gerald and Angel's mother, was not done learning how to act or grow up herself.



17
Jordan can die
Mopie can die
Aunt Queen come back to life
Child Protected Service
Gerald kills Jordan
and Angel is not frightened anymore

Figure 1. Reader Response to Conflict



11/29/17 16
I think that this story is very interesting and
that when Aunt Queen died I felt really
sad because that was the savior of like
when the mom was treating the kids
bad so she took care of Gerald
so that is what I think about
the story.

Figure 2. Reader Response to Death of Character

Cultural responsiveness. At the second session, students completed a questionnaire created for the study, titled Cultural Responsiveness of School to Students (see Appendix B). This questionnaire evaluated three important areas of Culturally Responsive Teaching: Communication, Caring and Understanding, and Structured Environment. Through the responses to this questionnaire, students started to reveal themselves.

Below are the results of the *Cultural Responsiveness of Schools to Students* questionnaire created for the study. It presented three aspects of culturally responsive teaching. Students answered fourteen questions that considered Caring and Understanding, Structured Environment, and Communication within the school. The first bar graph considers each question and the responses collected. The second a pie chart considered the overall feelings about the three areas.

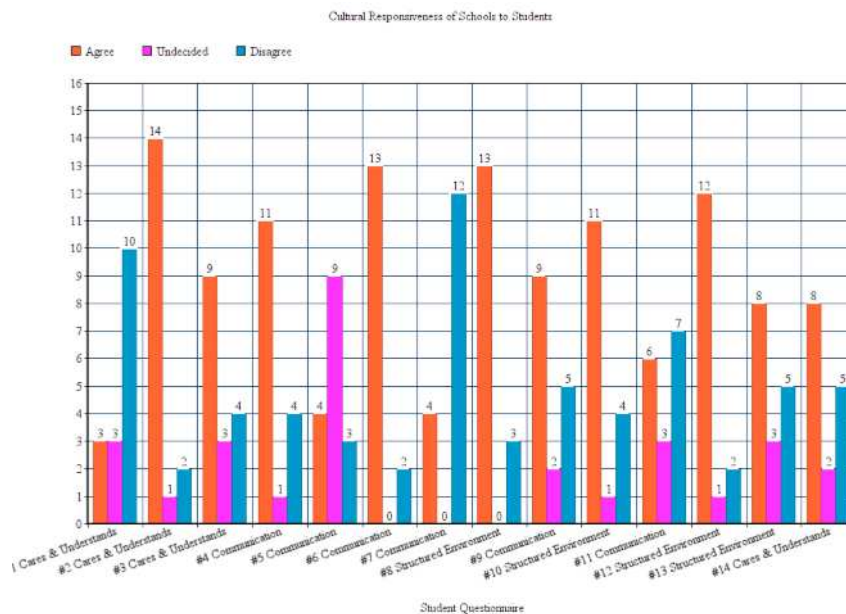


Figure 3. Cultural Responsiveness of Schools to Students Item Analysis

In Figure 3, several questions indicated students did not always feel that teachers listened to what they had to say. Students also felt as if the teachers did not enjoy teaching what they were doing in their classrooms. The first question responses revealed that there are not enough teachers taking the time to allow for student input in class or outside of class to get to know them in a personal and caring way. The other question responses indicated that the students were aware that there was a lack of enthusiasm presented by the teachers when they taught their lessons. Both of these themes could determine whether or not students would be motivated to approach a teacher or engaged in their classwork.

In Figure 4, examining the data allowed me to see that the school was not perceived to communicate with families and the community as well as the participants would like. This is another important area for students and can affect motivation or a sense of belonging to a school community.

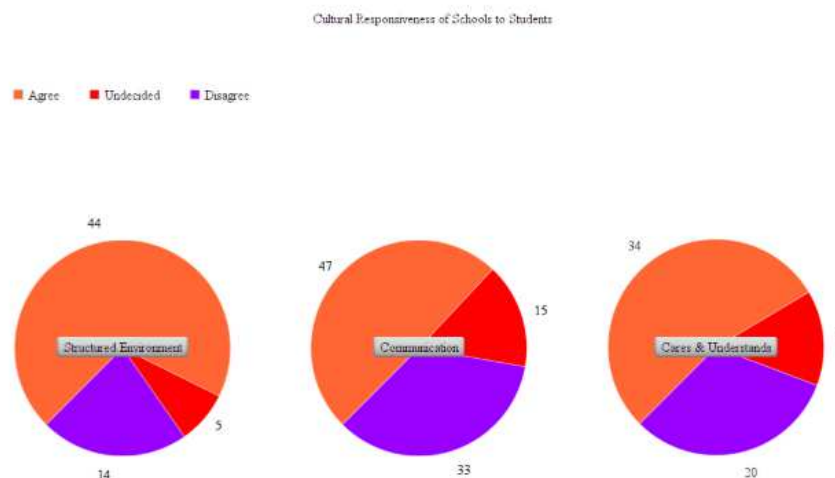


Figure 4. Cultural Responsiveness of Schools to Students by Aspect

The results of this questionnaire prompted emotionally charged discussions. To begin with, students collectively decided to circle the slash separating the choices Agree/Disagree. They informed me it was because they were Undecided on certain questions. I initially hesitated to allow this alteration and asked students to explain why they felt it was necessary to have ‘Undecided’ as a choice. Tupac and Kanye expressed concern about “gettin’ in trouble or suspended if they were found out.” I assured them that our surveys and conversations were private and no individual student would be able to be identified or tied to a particular response. They were not convinced. Several other students, Beyonce’ Selena, Bruno, and Demi, voiced their concerns about hurting other teachers’ feelings if they were honest about what they thought. More than half of the questionnaires were left blank or incomplete explanations about how they felt. I was able to persuade many of the students to sit with me in a small group during their ELA class to discuss their feelings about several of the questions. Reluctantly, seven students completed their explanations, two partially completed their explanations and seven students refused to complete any explanations and would only discuss questions that they marked ‘agreed’ to protect the teacher’s or their feelings. There was a lot of distrust and hesitation. Several students were adamant about their perception that teachers did not care about them after school hours because as Mariah put it, “they have their own lives and families to worry about” and “because they are just doing it for the money.”

For years, these students were told by different teachers that they are angry with them or aggravated and frustrated. This feeling was closely related to question #5 – “My teachers listen to me and what I have to say.”

Students also revealed that teachers say, “I don’t want to hear it” or when they do ask what a student thinks the teacher moves on to another student before they even get their ideas out.

Determining the level of motivation before reading the novel as well as the students’ perception of the cultural response of their school helped develop a springboard for this study.

Response to critical literacy. Students were very resistant to reading on our first day. In desperation, I held up my book, and I began to read in what I refer to is my ‘mom voice’, “IF YOU DON’T sit your stinkin’, useless butt back down in that shopping cart, I swear I’ll bust your greasy face in!” she screamed at the three-year-old in front of her. He studied her face, decided she was serious, and put his leg back inside the cart” (pg. 1).

The powerful opening line immediately caught the attention of almost every student in the classroom. They were not sure who I was speaking to at first. Several students who were following along with me laughed at the other students’ reactions. I continued reading over some of the initial confusion. When I stopped reading, I demonstrated a think-aloud. This began a wave of student conversations about parents who abuse their children and who do not take care of their babies.

During the very first read-aloud, modeling of a reaction to Monique’s abuse and neglect of her son Gerald elicited a response from the students at page one. The students immediately broke out into a discussion and wanted to address the situation. Many comments were made trying to explain what a mother should do and solutions for how the mother should stop her behavior. As the modeling continued, there were several discussions around character development, making predictions, and drawing conclusions

about other characters. Students engaged almost immediately, and students were motivated to read this novel as often as they were permitted.

Very few students had an idea of how to best handle or correct any of these situations other than that certain characters should go to jail. They were only in 7th-grade, and Kesha noted in discussion that these were “grown problems that children shouldn’t know about yet.”

Over several sessions, students discussed and recorded understanding of the social issues that the family was dealing with in the novel. They also voiced opinions about how they felt about what was happening. Many students expressed disappointment in Gerald and Angel’s mother for her lack of strength and how she was “a lie” and “a fool” that she was going from one bad situation to another one.

One student, Bruno, at one point told me, and then we shared it with his mother at conferences this past week, “I am woke now.” A very telling statement. He is participating in class now. He loves discussion and is looking for openings to ask questions about every injustice and social problem he recognizes. This is unique to being a teacher and researcher because I can conduct the research during one period and then see the impact in class separately. It is difficult not to notice the change that is happening with a few students.

Cultural link to motivation. The Conversational Interview from the Motivation and Engagement Survey and Questionnaire was administered at the study’s conclusion. “The conversational interview is a valuable tool for discovering a student’s personal and professional interests such that targeted reading activities can be developed that would support interest in reading as an activity as well as a valued achievement goal” (Malloy

Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2013, pg. 281). This interview elicited a more personal response from participants than at the beginning of the study. I attribute this in part as a result of the open discussions and establishment of allowing students to have some choice and voice in how we read and what we discussed to some degree.

It was amazing to see students change their attitudes about reading in such a short time. Number 5 on the self-concept interview number 5, “how could teachers help you become a better reader?” and on the Value of Reading Interview number 6, “What could teachers do to make reading more enjoyable?” seemed to get a similar response from most of the participants. Students responded with similar answers. One, “they read with us,” was particularly intriguing because the students initially stated several times in discussion, “read for us.” I was now reading with them. This was a small shift in perception but very significant. Students also felt “making it sound funny or interesting,” “making funny voices for characters,” and “sing and make it a catchy song” would keep them more engaged and motivated to read with me. As I modeled reading the dialogue for the students, they recognized the difference between dialogue and narrative writing. Bruno also asked me why other teachers read to “make me sleep and I am woke?” He is finding the motivation to listen and read now. Several other students noted in the same interview questions that teachers should “pick books I like” and “no more childish books more mature books.” This experience has made the participants recognize the difference in the texts they had exposure to compared to the multicultural text we are reading now. They are ready to learn about the world and read authentic texts that they can share. One final but important response that more than half the students wrote was that teachers need to teach me more “skills,” “strategies” or “tips.” This showed that the participants

recognized the importance of the shared reading strategies I had modeled in connection with their success as readers.

Another question, number 4 on the self-concept interview, “What do you have to do to become a better reader?” returned three common responses from every student. These were “read more.” “practice more,” and “keep practicing.” There had been a shift in thinking and that students were also accountable for their growth in literacy and that we were working together to achieve success.

Chapter 5

Summary

Conclusions

There were several conclusions I drew from this research overall. First, I realized that some students were aware of social injustice but did not feel empowered to change anything. They were only able to offer jail to resolve challenges in a family but did not see past the immediate concern. There are others that do not even recognize that within a system there are biases that may be present even when one of the character's point it out. So many students were naïve about the world and had difficulty deciding what happened when the prison released family members or a plausible alternative resolution.

Second, the process of discussion was not methodical but messy. I realized that establishing a culturally responsive approach in the classroom forced teachers to break-down the traditional roles of the teacher-student relationship to rebuild a new classroom order and expectation. The teacher had to be willing to give up some control and allow students to contribute to the tone of the classroom. There was a lot of risk in this undertaking for students and teachers alike. However, the open discussion was critical to the progression of the study in that it motivated and opened students to learning about critical literacy and shared reading strategies.

Another conclusion I found was that students were ready to learn about the real world. However, they needed guidance through the biases and prejudices presented in the novel. They needed to be taught to read critically, and they did not seem to have appreciated it initially, but most responded after modeling thinking over time. If there were a mutual respect between student and teacher motivation and engagement would

come. Students have waited to become part of a classroom community where they have a voice, teachers listen, and where they can learn in a safe and accepting environment. Their excitement and insistence on reading demonstrated their readiness through increased motivation to read and learn.

Limitations

There were always potential areas that could prevent a program's success. For instance, the willingness of a district's administration to provide time for adequate preparation and training of their teachers before implementation of the changes. It is also important that the selection and authentication of texts for the classroom include teachers in the process. The teachers would then have an investment in the success of their students.

Teachers would also need time and space to struggle with executing shared reading strategies. This can be a messy undertaking initially when working with resistant students. The opportunity for teachers to practice read-aloud and think-aloud strategies to develop skills and also draw students into the literacy lesson by engaging them in discussion is paramount. Motivation comes through several components of the classroom experience. Students and teachers need to invest in the literacy experience. Today's students want to be directly involved in the learning process. They will not accept being a passive learner and notetaker; they want to be a part of something. Creating ideas and sharing their reactions. Educators that do not allow students to see them as 'real people' that have similar experiences can seem uncaring. There is no room to keep every facet of your private life private. Human beings share experiences and feelings about social issues and listen to other people's opinions. Creating safe spaces for students to express feelings

and consider other points of view without judgment is essential to preserve democracy. Teachers viewed as imperfect human beings who struggle and make mistakes earn the empathy and respect of their students. Students will feel safe to be themselves and express honest responses to reading.

This study's findings would need to be supported by ongoing professional development and reevaluations to stay current with changes in the culture of the school and needs of the students to respond to students appropriately.

Educators need to be careful about how we may send mixed messages to students by allowing them to think that they read well enough and do not have to value reading. These two concepts go hand in hand and when you begin to uncover the realize that students think they are better readers than they are. Someone needs to tell them the truth at some point.

Implications

The changing face of the classroom is no longer teacher-centered or even the teacher as a facilitator, but a communal classroom. Aspects of social learning, aesthetic reading experiences, and cultural responsive reading experiences can nurture motivation towards literacy. All participants want to have a voice in how they learn and choice in what they read. Social media, if it has not shown us anything, has shown the world that the next generation is open about who they are, how they feel and that they have important ideas to share. Educators need to listen and within reason, join the movement. Discussion requires engagement, and for students to become motivated, the discussion must have purpose for its participants. To further the study's understandings and conclusions, to find specific themes in discussion around the cultural responsiveness of

schools to students across different small groups of student participants to examine trends or themes that affect student responses to teachers, learning, and literacy would be beneficial.

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Appendix A

Motivation and Engagement Survey and Questionnaire

MRP-R Malloy, Gambrell, & Mazzone (2013)

Figure 3 Reading Survey

MOTIVATION TO READ PROFILE - R

Name: _____ Date: _____

Teacher: _____

A. I am in _____

2nd grade
 3rd grade
 4th grade
 5th grade
 6th grade

B. I am a _____

boy
 girl

1. My friends think I am _____

a very good reader
 a good reader
 an OK reader
 a poor reader

2. Reading a book is something I like to do.

never
 almost never
 sometimes
 often

3. When I come to a word I don't know, I can _____

almost always figure it out
 sometimes figure it out
 almost never figure it out
 never figure it out

4. My friends think reading is _____

really fun
 fun
 OK to do
 no fun at all

5. I read _____

not as well as my friends
 about the same as my friends
 a little better than my friends
 a lot better than my friends

6. I tell my friends about good books I read.

I never do this
 I almost never do this
 I do this some of the time
 I do this a lot

7. When I am reading by myself, I understand _____

everything I read
 almost everything I read
 almost none of what I read
 none of what I read

8. People who read a lot are _____

very interesting
 sort of interesting
 sort of boring
 very boring

9. I am _____

a poor reader
 an OK reader
 a good reader
 a very good reader

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Figure 3 Reading Survey Continued

10. I think libraries are _____
- a really great place to spend time
 - a great place to spend time
 - a boring place to spend time
 - a really boring place to spend time
11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading _____
- a lot
 - sometimes
 - almost never
 - never
12. I think becoming a good reader is _____
- not very important
 - sort of important
 - important
 - very important
13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read _____
- I can never think of an answer
 - I almost never think of an answer
 - I sometimes think of an answer
 - I can always think of an answer
14. I think spending time reading is _____
- really boring
 - boring
 - great
 - really great
15. Reading is _____
- very easy for me
 - kind of easy for me
 - kind of hard for me
 - very hard for me
16. When my teacher reads books out loud, I think it is _____
- really great
 - great
 - boring
 - really boring
17. When I am in a group talking about books I have read, _____
- I hate to talk about my ideas
 - I don't like to talk about my ideas.
 - I like to talk about my ideas
 - I love to talk about my ideas
18. When I have free time, I spend _____
- none of my time reading
 - very little of my time reading
 - some of my time reading
 - a lot of my time reading
19. When I read out loud, I am a _____
- poor reader
 - OK reader
 - good reader
 - very good reader
20. When someone gives me a book for a present, _____
- I am very happy
 - I am happy
 - I am unhappy
 - I am very unhappy

Version #2 Date: 10/05/2017

Figure 5 Conversational Interview

**Motivation to Read Profile-Revised:
Conversational Interview**

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Reading Survey Scores: SC = ____/40 V = ____/40 Total = ____/80

Self-Concept as a Reader	1. What kind of reader are you?	
	2. What's the easiest thing about reading?	
	3. What's hard about reading?	
	4. What do you have to do to become a better reader?	
	5. How could teachers help you become a better reader?	

Comments:
Plan:

Value of Reading	1. What kinds of books do you like to read? • Tell me about them (topics/genres/information and/or narrative?)	
	2. Do you read different things at home than at school?	
	3. What kinds of things <i>other than books</i> do you read at home? (pause for students to respond) • eBooks (Kindle, Nook, iPad, etc) • Computer/laptop/iPad, etc • Internet (what do you do online?) • Communication? (e.g. email, IM, Blog, Twitter, Facebook, post, chat)	
	4. How do you find out about books you might like to read?	
	5. What books do you want to read now?	
	6. What could teachers do to make reading more enjoyable?	
	7. Is it important to learn to read well?	
	8. What kind of reading will you do when you're an adult?	

Comments:
Plan:

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Appendix B

Cultural Responsiveness Survey and Data Chart with Narrative

Name/Student# _____ Date: _____

Cultural Responsiveness of School to Students

Student Questionnaire

1. I feel that I have teachers that care about me after the school day is over.	Agree / Disagree	Explain
2. I have teachers that are involved in school activities like sports and clubs.	Agree / Disagree	Explain
3. I never feel uncomfortable by teachers about my hairstyle, manner of speaking, movement, clothes. (this does not include uniform violations)	Agree / Disagree	Explain
4. I have teachers that believe in me and that I can do the work.	Agree / Disagree	Explain
5. My teachers listen to me and what I have to say.	Agree / Disagree	Explain
6. My teachers encourage me to take risks when learning something new.	Agree / Disagree	Explain
7. My teachers are involved with the students in my community and family.	Agree / Disagree	Explain
8. My teachers use: technology, music, drama, art, debate, presentations, rap, current events and poetry in their lessons.	Agree / Disagree	Explain
9. My teachers have a sense of humor and a pleasant tone of voice.	Agree / Disagree	Explain
10. My teacher is interested in what they are teaching.	Agree / Disagree	Explain
11. I understand the way my teacher explains things to the class.	Agree / Disagree	Explain
12. My teacher challenges me to do my best and has high expectations.	Agree / Disagree	Explain
13. My teachers set limits and do not seem afraid to do so.	Agree / Disagree	Explain
14. I feel a connection to my school and that I belong.	Agree / Disagree	Explain

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Cultural Responsive Aspect	St #	St #	St #	St #	St #	St #	St #	St #	St #	St #
Communication #4,5,6,7										
Caring/Understanding 1, 2, 3, 14										
Structured Environment 10, 12, 13										

Summary and Narrative:

Version #1 Date: 09/30/2017

Appendix C

Discussion and Reflection Questions

<http://sharondraper.com/>

<i>Forged By Fire</i> Study Guide	
The following questions could be used for small group discussions, whole class discussions, or short answer written questions.	Common Core Standard(s)
1. The first chapter of <i>Forged by Fire</i> was originally written and published as a short story. What textual elements enable this chapter to stand alone as a complete story? What textual elements in the story become thematically developed themes in the novel?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.5 RL.6-12.7
2. What is the effect of seeing the events of chapter one develop through the point of view of a child? How does this method of telling the story affect the reader's response?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.6
3. At the end of chapter one, what assumptions or predictions might be made about Gerald? His future? His mother? Support your answer with details from the text.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3
4. Would those predictions be the same if chapter one is read only as a short story that ends with Gerald, curled up behind the sofa, and seeing "colors with his eyes closed?"	RL.6-12.2 RL.6-12.5 RL.6-12.7
5. Discuss the use of color and music as images in the story. Give specific examples from the text that help explain how the images are used.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 RL.6-12.4
6. How is music laced into the lives of Gerald and Angel, and how does music allow Angel moments of release from her pain?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.2
7. Many young people live in homes where abuse is a secret, silent pain. Discuss how realistic the lives of Gerald and Angel are portrayed and how they can become a voice for young readers who are afraid to speak out. Support your answer with details from the text.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.1
8. Discuss the socio-economic level at which the family lives. Discuss abuse as a family problem, not merely as a problem of a certain level of society.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.1
9. How might the story have included a broader base of society to demonstrate that the problem of abuse is found in all social and economic levels?	RL.6-12.1 W.6-12.1
10. How are Gerald and Angel like many young people today? How are they different? What strengths are found in them that help them to survive the situation in which they live? What explicit and implicit details led you to that answer?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 RL.6-12.4 W.6-12.1
11. Describe the relationship between the friends in the book. Support your answer with specifics from the text. Discuss whether you think friendship is enough when situations become monumental and overwhelming to young people.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.1
12. Gerald's mother Monique had numerous problems. She loved him, but seemed to be consumed with the problems in her own life. Why was Monique not willing or able to see Jordan's abuse of Angel? How realistic do you think Monique's reaction is?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3

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13. Monique is abused as well--physically and emotionally. What do you think is the relationship between domestic violence and child abuse? Why do you think this relationship exists?	RL.6-12.1 W.6-12.1
14. How can families learn to cope effectively with tragedy, pain, and difficulties? When is it necessary to seek assistance from someone from outside the family?	W.6-12.1
15. Why did Angel let Jordan's abuse continue? Why didn't she tell? What effect did Jordan's abuse have on Angel's life? What long-range effects might develop? Support your answer with specific details.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3
16. What are the problems created by discussing the problem of physical and sexual abuse in a novel for young adults? What positive influences can result from a discussion of these problems?	W.6-12.1
17. Discuss the character of Jordan Sparks using specific details from the text. Does he have any redeeming qualities or is he purely a negative character? What might have made Jordan the person he is?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3
18. Discuss the character of Aunt Queen using specific details from the text. What are her limitations? What are her strengths? How does the memory of the strength of Aunt Queen affect and influence the rest of Gerald's life?	RL.6-12.2 RL.6-12.3
19. Discuss the character of Angel using specific details from the text. What are her strengths? What does Angel's love of ballet reflect about her life, her pain, and her personality?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3
20. How does the death of Robert Washington affect Gerald and Angel? What advantages did Robbie have that Gerald wished for? Support your answer.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3
21. Describe the gradual buildup over the course of the plot to the final confrontation between Jordan and Gerald. What makes this confrontation inevitable?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3
22. Explain how is fire an important image in the novel using specific examples from the text, starting with the first chapter and ending with the concluding action between Jordan and Gerald. How is fire an image of pain as well as release for Gerald and Angel?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.2 RL.6-12.4
23. Discuss the death of Jordan and whether it was necessary for him to die in order to bring the plot to a logical conclusion.	RL.6-12.2 RL.6-12.3
24. Why is dancing an easy way to explain complicated feelings? How can self-expression be used as a tool for helping or healing?	W.6-12.1
25. Explain the title of the novel. Define the word "forged." Why does the title have one than one possible interpretation?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 RL.6-12.4
The following questions are designed to be individual writing projects or small group writing projects depending upon the needs of your classroom.	Common Core Standard(s)
Narrative Write a narrative paper about something interesting or exciting or dangerous that happened in your life, or you can invent an adventure. Your reader should be able to picture the scene.	RL.6-12.5 W.6-12.3 W.6-12.4

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