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WHAT STRATEGIES DO RESISTIVE READERS USE TO FAKE THEIR WAY THROUGH SCHOOL ASSIGNED TEXTS?

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WHAT STRATEGIES DO RESISTIVE READERS USE TO FAKE THEIR WAY THROUGH SCHOOL ASSIGNED TEXTS?

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
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ABSTRACT

A trend among adolescent readers is the practice of fake-reading. Fake-reading occurs when students who can read choose not to, and develop strategies to fake their way through school-assigned texts to earn good grades. This study examines four resistive readers, or fake-readers, assigned to read Neal Shusterman's *Unwind* (2007) and complete an *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project related to the book. Resistive readers admit to using four main strategies: skimming (scanning in lieu of reading), ripping (using online summaries as test and essay preparation), mooching (getting information needed through conversations with friends), and schmoozing (getting information needed through informal chats with the teacher and in-class discussion). Implications for promoting reading engagement among fake readers are discussed.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

"There is a huge difference between knowing how to read and having an interest in doing so." - Eisner, 2003, p. 650

Chapter one explains my interest in students' reading habits as well as strategies that I have discovered students use to fake their way through school-assigned texts. I explain my struggles over the last four years as an English teacher working to motivate capable readers to read. I also share insights that previous nonreaders have shared concerning their perspectives of reading school-assigned texts, which have led to the phenomenon of *fake readers,* also referred to as *resistive readers* or *aliterate readers.* After discussing research that I consulted in an effort to find solutions to fake reading, I explain some of the negative consequences of fake reading, or skimming-only, habits. I also address challenges that college English professors encounter in teaching resistive readers as well as the push for educators to implement multiliteracy instruction into the curriculum to make learning more meaningful. The chapter closes with the research question: *what strategies do resistive readers use to fake their way through school-assigned texts?* Because I sought to identify fake-reading strategies in an effort to modify my teaching practices to engage fake readers, the research question informed the following sub question: *What strategies might English teachers use to promote close reading among fake readers?*

Readers Who Won't Read

Since beginning a career as an English instructor in 2008, and teaching over sixty sections of undergraduate composition and literature courses between two private

universities, I discovered a glaring commonality among students: the majority didn't read. It was not that my students *couldn't* read; I was faced with a majority of capable readers who *chose* not to read. Some critics of standardized testing such as Gallagher (2009) believe that students' disinterest in reading is conditioned throughout their secondary schooling by "high interest reading being squeezed out in favor of more test preparation practice" (p. 4).

Broz (2011), who teaches pre-service English teachers, claims that nonreading is a strategy that students learn in high school.

> *Not reading*, even for many good students, has become a mode of operation with respect to book-length texts assigned in school. Many students enter our secondary and postsecondary literature classes *intending* to *not read* the books we assign…Many students have admitted to me and to their classmates that in high school they did not read any of the assigned books. (p. 15, original italics)

Like Broz's students, my students, from day one, intended not to read the assigned texts. Not only could they Google the text and read any number of summaries and analytical essays outlining its major points, but they could rely on online sources such as Sparknotes, Cliffsnotes, and Wikipedia to fill in the gaps. Ironically, even online sources meant to create time-saving summaries and analyses for nonreaders are currently creating visual reenactments of texts to meet the demand of resistive readers who refuse to take the time to read summaries. In addition to the plethora of online resources, students often confided that teachers often promoted fake reading by providing all of the information through detailed lectures and in-class discussions. By listening to what classmates said during class discussions; gauging the importance based upon the teacher's response; noting specific passages pointed out by the teacher; and repeating all of the information on the final exam, they could pass with flying colors.

Among the courses that I have taught, which range from freshman composition to senior British Literature, fake reading strategies seem particularly prevalent among freshmen English Composition I students. Every semester, I struggled to motivate students to read *anything*. They refused to read their textbooks (most refused to purchase one). They refused to read academic articles (even when required to implement them in research papers). They refused to read assigned short stories (even when allotted class time). My initial professional and educated solution was to lecture students about the importance of completing reading assignments; punish them with zeros for failed reading quizzes; beg them to, at least, skim the material; and, finally, admit defeat by lecturing on the material so that they might have a shot at passing. Broz (2011) articulates my dismay with students, and myself, when he explains,

> *If students do not read the assigned text, nothing important is happening in your literary classroom* – nothing very important to develop your students' reading and interpretive abilities is happening no matter how many lectures you deliver, vocabulary words students "learn," elements of fiction students define, quizzes students take , essay test answers students write, or films you show. Nothing important is happening because students' development of reading and interpretive abilities require engaged reading. (p. 15, original italics)

I knew that I had failed when I was handing out reading quizzes as a last-ditch effort to "motivate" my students to read. Adler (1982) explains, "All genuine learning is active, not passive. It involves the use of the mind, not just memory" (p. 50).

Students' Reasons for Not Reading

During the fall of 2008, while struggling with English Composition I resistive readers, I was also completing the graduate program at the University of Oklahoma. One of the classes that I was enrolled in centered on the teaching of Young Adult Literature in the secondary English classroom. Donelson and Nilsen (1989) define

Young Adult Literature (YAL) as "anything that readers between the approximate ages of twelve and twenty choose to read (as opposed to what they may be coerced to read for class assignments)." Herz and Gallo (1996) go into more detail by explaining that

> YAL deals with many universal themes, including the external questions *Who am I?* and *Where do I fit in?* Some of the themes are: alienation from one's society or group, survival or meeting a challenge; social and/or political concerns about AIDS, teenage pregnancy, divorce, substance abuse, family conflicts, dealing with death, and political injustice. (p. 11, original italics)

As part of the final requirements for completing the graduate course, I had to create, distribute, and analyze responses to an informal teen readers' survey that focused on the reading habits of young adults. I took the opportunity to survey my freshmen English Composition I classes about their perceptions of reading.

At the conclusion of the fall 2008 semester, when asked to describe their personal reading habits, the majority of the fifteen students surveyed said that they read if required for homework, and rarely read for pleasure. Two male students claimed that they never read for pleasure while two female students admitted that they regularly read romance novels, but didn't consider that "real" reading since the books weren't academic texts. Overwhelmingly, students blamed their lack of interest of reading on their high school English classes; they felt that they were forced to read "boring, insignificant texts that were irrelevant to their lives." Gallagher (2009) calls this teaching strategy *readicide:* "noun, the systematic killing of the love of reading, often exacerbated by the inane, mind-numbing practices found in schools" (p. 2). Because students failed to create connections with books, they associated their negative feelings with reading in general, which influenced their reading habits in college.

Many students feel a disconnect towards books, which keeps them from being motivated to read. If they do not feel as though a text pertains to their lives, they see no reason to participate in the conversation. For example, one student, who contributed to the informal teen readers' survey, specifically blamed Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* for his dislike of reading because he said that it only confused and frustrated him, which he believed was the purpose of reading as a whole: "It's just stupid. I mean, we're supposed to find a bunch of hidden meanings that aren't really there." Reading to discover "hidden meanings" has been consistently reiterated by others throughout each semester of my English Composition I classes since administering the informal survey in 2008.

In an effort to combat negativity towards reading page-bound texts, educators, such as Burke (2010), urges teachers to place literature in the context of students' lives. Burke (2010) warns that students "will always wonder what a play like [*Romeo and Juliet]* has to do with them, a question they will never be able to answer unless [teachers] build in room for them to ask and respond to it based on their own experience" (p. 99). By connecting events, characters, and struggles in the text to students' lives, teachers create validity for that text that helps students "buy-in" and invest the time to transact with it, even if it's a canonical work that seems completely foreign at first-glance (Wilhelm, 2007; Smith and Wilhelm, 2002; Guthrie and Wigfield, 1997).

Ultimately, however, when I have asked past and present students if they might be willing to give reading a chance if they found an interesting book, the general consensus is, "No way, Mrs. Krieger! See, reading, it's boring. We can think of a

hundred other things we'd rather be doing." Unfortunately, the anti-reading consensus has been one of the most constant findings in my teaching.

Need For the Study

A trend among young adults is their avoidance to read texts. This avoidance is not limited to school-assigned texts; it includes all forms of reading. According to Mikulecky (1978), *aliteracy* is a term used to describe students who have the ability to read but choose not to (p. 3). Other terms used interchangeably with *aliteracy* are *reluctant readers*, *nonreaders*, and *struggling readers.* However, connotations already exist with the terms *reluctant readers* and *struggling readers* in that they often refer to students who lack basic literacy skills to decode words. A*literacy*, instead, refers to readers who consistently have strong reading fluency, comprehension skills, and high passing scores on standardized reading and writing assessments; although, even this term has been debated. Because of their strong literacy abilities, Beers (1990) argues that the term *aliteracy* doesn't quite capture the phenomenon:

> The word literally means without, or lacking, literacy . . . . A student called aliterate, then, would be one lacking in some dimension of literacy; however, this may not be true. One could be literate at all levels and still choose not to be a reader. Not reading does not necessarily imply not being literate. (p. 11)

Beers (1990) makes an important observation about the characteristics of aliteracy since nonreaders actively engage in reading text messages, update Facebook statuses, and participate in various forms of digital media. Not only do they actively read the world around them, they actively participate by maintaining and following blogs, commenting on each other's statuses, updating Twitter accounts, and posting pictures and videos to social networking websites. Hence, these students are not aliterate; they are *resistive*

readers (Tovani, 2000, p. 14). They are more than capable of reading items of interest; they simply aren't interested in reading school-assigned texts.

After identifying characteristics of resistive readers and finding consistencies among students' avoidance of assigned texts, I began paying closer attention to their responses (or non-responses) to texts that I introduced. Probst (2003) addresses the importance of teachers' roles in selecting texts when he writes,

> …selection of texts cannot be based solely on a conception of literary merit without taking into account the age, gender, interests, and abilities of the readers and that curriculum cannot be satisfactorily planned without considering the range of response that we hope to encourage or allow. (p. 816)

Although I expected students to resist reading the course textbook because the content was mostly informational and dull – even though it set up the context for the entire course, I could not understand why they avoided *Unwind* (2007), a dystopian young adult novel that addressed a futuristic version of abortion. I chose *Unwind* (2007) because, each semester, abortion was consistently students' favorite topic to debate and write about in research papers. I incorporated *Unwind* (2007) in hopes of facilitating more meaningful discussions by tapping directly into students' interests.

Young Adult Literature advocates often claim that "Young Adult Literature (YAL) is a powerful tool to help students realize that reading is a pleasurable activity" that might "help them develop into confident, critical readers" (Herz and Gallo, 1996, p. xv). Unfortunately, I learned very quickly that students' reliance upon fake-reading was too powerful of a habit to break by simply introducing YAL. Although I felt confident that the content of the novel could connect to students' lives, I couldn't get them to read the first page. Each day, they would arrive to class and wait for me to tell them what they need to know. After several class periods of having a conversation with the two

students who actually read the book, I dismissed class and started pondering how I might get students to transact more effectively with the text.

Teachers are encouraged to incorporate more meaningful assignments by making them relevant to students' lives (Cornaby, 1975; Corcoran, 1979; Zaharias, 1986). Gustavson (2007) says, "If we are to create, support, and sustain schools that are meaningful and rigorous learning spaces for youth, we – teachers, administration, and parents – need to cultivate genuine interests in the ways youth work and learn in their everyday lives" (p. 7). Kajder (2006) explains that 'newer' literacies are ways that can allow teachers "to reach, engage, and move those students who weren't finding success" (p. 3). The assumption among educators is that since students interact with multiple literacies on a daily basis, teachers should build off of students' interests and strengths to add validity to assignments while promoting intrinsic motivation to complete them (Kohn, 2010) .

Research Purpose and Question

The purpose of this study is to discover what fake-reading strategies four college freshmen employ in an effort to pass classes without doing much reading. This study also seeks to explore the effects of incorporating multiple literacy, or multiliteracy, teaching strategies to promote deep reading of the assigned novel *Unwind* (2007) with the same four resistive readers. Knowing that students live in a society where fast-paced, instant gratification is a part of the culture, and many have developed reading habits that "eschew a slow and deliberate pace" (Bauerlein, 2010, p. 30), my study is guided by the following research question: **what strategies do resistive readers use to fake their way through school-assigned texts?** The purpose of this study is to

discover fake-reading strategies implemented by resistive readers; however, this is done with the intention of using gleaning information to modify my teaching practices. As a result, a closely linked sub question is: **What strategies might English teachers use to promote close reading among resistive readers?**

Definition of Terms

Reading. Traditionally, the term *reading* has been limited to "page-bound, official, standard forms of the national language" that are "restricted to formalized, monolingual, monocultural, and rule-governed forms of language" (The New London Group, 1996, p. 61). According to Langer and Applebee (1986), "If we start with development, it is quite clear that the skills that individuals learn are constrained (or fostered) by the particular culture and educational contexts within which individuals grow up" (p. 171). *Reading* is based in language and contexts that evolve into a series of decoding skills that lead to comprehension and interpretation (Au, 1980; Heath, 1983; McDermott, 1977; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Tannen, 1984). People can "read," or interpret, many things, such as images, music, and digital media. For the purposes of this study, however, *reading* refers to decoding words and transacting with texts (i.e. books), in page-bound or electronic format.

Literacy. According to Botzakis and Hall (2011), literacy is defined as "the ability to speak and sing, to orate publically, to sign one's name, and to read a sentence" (p. 129). Although literacy has traditionally been associated with print-based texts, Warscharuer and Ware (2008) explain that

> technology, literacy, culture, and society are viewed as being completely intertwined. From this perspective, technologies do not impact literacy, society, or culture, but rather are seen as embodiments of social and cultural relations that, in turn, structure social and cultural futures. (p. 222)

As a result, *literacy* not only refers to reading and writing page-bound texts, but also encompasses the way that individuals interact with and interpret the world around them. Barton and Hamilton (1998) clarify the distinction:

> Literacy is primarily something people do; it is an activity, located in the space between thought and text. Literacy does not just reside in people's heads as a set of skills to be learned, and it does not just reside on paper, captured as texts to be analyzed. Like all human activity, literacy is essentially social, and is located in the interaction between people. (p. 3)

Literacy is multifaceted. As a result, relegating literacy to traditional reading and writing negates the importance of transacting, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating multiple arguments found throughout society. Langer and Applebee (1986) explain that *literacy* is used "as encouraging the kinds of thinking and reasoning that can support higher levels of cognitive development" (p. 173). True *literacy* encompasses multiple literacies since they provide multiple perspectives so that a person can develop a holistic interpretation of people, events, and ideologies in the world around them (Vygotsky, 1962/1978; Bruner, 1966).

Multiliteracies. Multiliteracies is a term that was coined by the New London Group (1996) when it convened to discuss the impact of technology on literacy. With the implementation of technology, an emerging cultural, institutional, and global order needed to be acknowledged, which "creates a different kind of pedagogy, one in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes" (p. 64). With approximately one-sixth of the world's inhabitants accessing the Internet (Coiro et al., 2011, p. 3), the New London Group recognized the need for a reconceptualized definition of literacy to adapt to the new reality of a global society.

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (2008) affirms an extended conception of literacy:

> Literacy has always been a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does literacy. Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, the twenty-first century demands that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies, many literacies. These literacies—from reading online newspapers to participating in virtual classrooms—are multiple, dynamic, and malleable. As in the past, they are inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities and social trajectories of individuals and groups.

According to many New Literacy experts, such as Cioro (2011) and Gee (1991), the definition of literacy must continually evolve with growing global demands. *Literacy* encompasses more than page-bound texts; it includes images as well as auditory and oral communication, digital media, and much, much more. As a result, students are constantly reading and interpreting the world around them, just not in the traditional sense.

Resistive Readers/Fake Readers. The term *aliteracy* has been used to refer to individuals who have the cognitive and mechanical skills to read, but choose not to (Chambers, 1969; Lenox, 1984; Jones, 1998; Beers, 1996). The term *resistive reader* (Tovani, 2000), or *fake reader*, refers to those who can read, but don't. *Resistive/fake readers* lack the motivation to read certain texts (i.e. books) even though they may actively read other kinds of text (i.e. text messages).

Transactional Theory. Rosenblatt (1978/1938) explains that people make meaning with texts based upon their experiences and culture. What proves meaningful to one student may not be meaningful to another because each approaches the text from different perspectives:

> The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination determine his response to the particular contribution of the text. (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 30-31)

Depending upon the transaction, readers assign value and purpose to the messages they "receive" from texts. Messages can take on various functions based upon the experiences and predispositions of the reader.

Rosenblatt (1938/1978) believes readers approach a text from a particular vantage point that influences the way they interpret information. According to Rosenblatt (1994/2005), the efferent stance "designates the kind of reading in which attention is centered predominantly on what is to be extracted and retained after the reading event" (p. 11). To clarify, she gives the example of a man who drinks a poisonous liquid, and rapidly reads the bottle's label to find the cure. This style of reading is information-seeking, learning something that was previously unknown. On the other hand, an aesthetic stance occurs when "the reader adopts an attitude of readiness to focus attention on what is being lived through during the reading event" (Rosenblatt, 1994/2005, p. 11). With an aesthetic perspective, readers approach the text through their senses, feelings, and intuitions (p. 11). The aesthetic experience allows readers to "connect" with a plot and character, which may make the reading more engaging.

Regardless of the stance that readers take, it is important to note that no two readings are ever the same. To Rosenblatt, perceptions change over time due to experiences that unfailingly influence a person's transaction with a text. "Reader and text are involved in a complex, nonlinear, recursive, self-correcting transaction" that is ongoing (Rosenblatt, 1994/2005, p. 9) despite the motives behind approaching a text.

Close Reading. Complex texts are those texts that cannot be deciphered with a single, superficial skimming, or reading. According to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (2011), text complexity is "the inherent difficulty of reading and comprehending a text combined with consideration of reader and task variables" (p. 31). Adams (2009) states that complex texts "offer new language, new knowledge, and new modes of thought" (p. 182). They challenge readers to read closely through multifaceted levels of meaning, multiple forms of structure (i.e. flashbacks, multiple perspectives), and figurative language. Close reading may require readers to re-read passages several times to gain genuine understanding.

Summary

By time students reach my freshman English Composition I course, they have successfully practiced fake reading strategies throughout their secondary careers. I recently had a student inform me that he never read a single book in high school, and he planned to maintain his record in college. With a cocky grin, he explained, "Sure, professors tell me that I won't pass if I don't read, but I haven't failed yet." Beers (1996) claims that "the group of people who can read but do not is large and growing" (p. 30). Some resistive readers can be motivated by grades, and some can be motivated by specific books, but many are not motivated by either.

When students avoid reading read, there can be no transaction (Rosenblatt, 1978/1938). According to Botzakis and Hall (2011), "Reading is a practice where people use texts to explore experiences, question, and gain advantages in their social worlds" (p. 129). When students rely on teachers to disseminate all of the information

so that they can simply regurgitate it for a passing grade on a test, do they still "explore experiences, question, and gain advantages? Wolf (2007) explains,

> It is not simply a matter of the number of words unheard and unlearned. When words are not heard, concepts are not learned. When syntactic forms are never encountered, there is less knowledge about the relationship of events in a story. When story forms are never known, there is less ability to infer and predict. When cultural traditions and the feelings of others are never experienced, there is less understanding of what other people feel. (p. 102).

Sometimes reading requires slow and deliberate transactions. Reading helps hone a student's ability to infer, analyze, and synthesize information in a text. By not reading, resistive readers may handicap themselves when they skim for short snip-its of information. The purpose of this study is to understand strategies that fake-readers use as well as discover ways for teachers to encourage close reading.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"The path of a reader is not a runway but more a hack through a forest, with individual twists and turns, entanglements and moments of surprise." - Holden, 2004, p. 32

Teachers throughout all stages of the profession (teacher candidates, "newbies", and veterans) are facing the phenomenon of resistive readers. Throughout the last three years of teaching, the number one complaint among my colleagues from all disciplines has been that students avoid reading assigned material. They shake their heads in wonder because they are not referring to remedial courses that focus on struggling and reluctant readers who can barely decode words; instead, they are referring to students who participate in honors and AP classes throughout high school who are fully capable of reading, but choose not to do so. Some teachers dismiss this phenomenon as laziness, some combat it with reading quizzes, and some give in to resistive readers' fake-reading strategies by lecturing on the material that must be covered. None of these methods are effective in making resistive readers accountable for their learning. As a result, to better understand the importance of reading as well as effective strategies that encourage fake-readers to read, the review of the literature discusses literary theory, pedagogical approaches, and learning behaviors of Generation M, which all influence the teaching of literature.

Reader Response Theory

Richards introduced reader-response theory to the educational community in 1929 when he collected students' responses to assigned poems (after he removed identifying markers such as author names and titles), and learned that students'

interpretations varied significantly from the poems' accepted meanings. Instead of relying solely on context clues, participants based responses on prior experience, knowledge, and culture. Richards is the first theorist to acknowledge that students create responses to poems based upon previous experiences and knowledge, which he records in his book *Practical Criticism* (1929). Although he recognizes the impact that prior knowledge plays in the role of initial interpretations of poems, he also acknowledges that poems have certain absolute truths that can be identified through close reading, analysis, and proper instruction. Richards emphasizes close reading of the work itself, and "examines the relationships between a text's ideas and its form, between what a text says and the way it says it" (Delahoyde, 1999). Richards (1929) also asserts that "value cannot be demonstrated except through the communication of what is valuable" (Berthoff, 1991, p. 30). While Richards views the interpretation of a text as separate from an individual's race, gender, and background, Rosenblatt (1978/1938) believes that each of those factors must be considered when formulating an interpretation, which belongs to the reader.

As early as 1938, with the publication of *Literature as Exploration* - and expanded upon in the 1978 publication of *The Reader, The Text, The Poem* – Louise M. Rosenblatt challenged the formalist view of literary analysis by questioning the assumption of objectivity, which originally came under discussion after Einstein's theory revealed that "the observer is part of the observation – human beings are a part of nature" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 2). If such a claim was true, she argues, then, the poem is not an object – as formalists profess - and the reader is not its passive recipient; instead, "a text, once it leaves its author's hands, is simply paper and ink until a reader evokes

from it a literary work" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. ix). Words are simply ink blots on paper until the reader gives them meaning, and the meaning is derived from the individual's background knowledge and culture. She does not negate the fact that there are universal truths throughout texts; however, she does acknowledge that responses vary based upon an individual's point-of-reference. Therefore, texts gain meaning because the reader performs the key function of interpreting the text, or transacting with it.

The concept of transacting with literature is grounded in pragmatism (Connell, 2008, p. 103), and comes from the idea that people possess perspectives created by their individual environments. According to pragmatists, since environments and experiences differ, to assume that every person approaches a text the same way, and comes to the same conclusion about its meaning, is a gross misconception. Dewey and Bentley (1949), who were contemporaries of Rosenblatt, offered the term *transaction* to offset the implications of *interaction* with the positivistic notion that each event is separate and self-contained (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 2). Although she never advocates complete freedom in interpretation while transacting with a text, she challenges the idea of pure objectivity. She shies away from the push for one "correct" answer because such an approach reinforces "the implicit pressure to treat literature as a body of knowledge rather than potential experiences" (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. xxviii). She sees this "objective" approach to literature dangerous because it undermines the role of literature: "To see man as separate from his environment, being affected by it, or affecting it, does not do justice to the ecological process, in which man and his environment are part of a total situation, to use Dewey's earlier term, each conditioned by and conditioning the

other" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 18). For Rosenblatt, the reader is the key element in the transactional process because a text does not really exist until the reader begins to read.

Literature Instruction

President Barack Obama states the importance of education within the preface of *A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (2010), "A world-class education is also a moral imperative – the key to securing a more equal, fair, and just society" (p. 1). In many ways, literature instruction has more implications because it allows readers to "develop the imaginative capacity to put themselves in the place of others," which is "a capacity essential in a democracy" (Karolides, 1999, p. xxxiii). Literary experiences expose readers to cultures, prejudices, and inconsistencies within society. By using literature to challenge cultural boundaries, social mores, or political mindsets, the experience can foster critical thinking, problem-solving, empathy, and proactive learning. By incorporating literature that addresses real world issues, teachers allow students to seek real-world solutions that act in the interest of society as a whole.

Readers approach literature based upon predispositions. If they need to acquire knowledge or information to study for a test, they seek the proper text, read it, and file the information away so that they can reiterate it at the proper time. If they need to read for pleasure, or entertainment, then they find a text that allows them to interact and connect on a personal level. Regardless of the purpose, in *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (1978), Rosenblatt is quick to point out that "the reader's creation of a poem out of a text must be an active, self-ordering and self-corrective process" (p. 11). Readers are not passive, and they develop individual meaning based on context and culture. In

addition, viewing students as "active participants in their own experiential learning as opposed to being passive recipients of meaning from external sources" helps them learn how to function within society (Ellis & Fouts, 2001, p. 24). By contributing ideas and making choices in their learning, they are proactive in the approach to attain knowledge.

Throughout the history of school, the role of the learner, or reader, has been a sponge, waiting for the teacher to fill the mind with knowledge (Pearson, 2000). The formalist approach to literature instruction remains – either subtly or blatantly – embedded throughout secondary English classrooms through teacher manuals, sample lesson plans, and workbooks (Pearson, 2000, p. 6). Elliot et al. (2009) criticize that "[s]chool teaches that literacy is about a set of skills, not a way to engage a part of the world…Consequently, many young people come to associate reading with schooling rather than with learning more about what interests them" (p. 522). Skills-based schooling relies heavily on lectures, drills, worksheets, and memorization, which Smagorinsky (2007) claims is detrimental to literature instruction:

> The formality valued in school is not conducive to encouraging students to think on their own. Rather, their role is reduced to filling in the gaps of teachers' interpretations – gaps that the teacher leaves open for predetermined information. And, so the formal nature of the ways in which literature tends to be discussed in school – the speech genre governing school discussions – actually works against students' willingness to engage with literature inspired by the enthusiasm and interests that motivate adults when they read voluntarily on their own time. (p. 65)

Even teachers who implement discussions may have preset lists of questions and answers that they want students to address. When students fail to answer the discussion questions properly, the teacher typically leads them to the "correct" conclusion through a series of follow-up points. Unfortunately, the discussion may transform into mini lectures meant to lead students to a uniform, textbook-based interpretation. As a result,

a skills based approach to literature instruction often does not consider Rosenblatt's (1938/1978) transactional theory of literature instruction.

If one acknowledges that a reader's background might influence his or her transaction with a text, then students will not always arrive at an identical, preconceived, "correct" answer when analyzing literature. Church (1997) reinforces the malleability of meaning by explaining that:

> rather than emphasize formalist analysis of a text, the primary goal of instruction from a transactional perspective is to foster students' trust in the expression of their individual experience with a text; thus, teachers of literature play a pivotal role in influencing how students perform in response to a text. (p. 73)

Teachers play a pivotal role in the development of individual literacy skills because their responses to students' transactions have a significant impact in how students perceive a text. Elliot et al. (2009) lament, however, that:

> The problem is that the life-to-text and text-to-life cycle is not addressed in most schools because it runs counter to the prevailing notions about what should read, when, and how. By and large, schools ignore the power of students' interests to provide the motivation to read and fail to exploit the experience-to reading-to-experience cycle. (p. 522).

In a test happy environment, some English teachers may focus on efferent readings of a text in neglect of aesthetic. Instead of encouraging students to experience aesthetic reading, texts are often approached from the standpoint that "meaning [is] somehow assumed to be already there 'in' the text, the kernel of a nut waiting to be pried out" (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. xxii). The consequences of such a single-minded approach to teaching literature are illuminated in my former student's comments about Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* when he bitterly announces that he despissd reading because teachers always wanted him to find hidden meanings that simply weren't there. Right or wrong, the obsession with hidden meanings killed any enjoyment he might

have experienced with Shakespeare's classic, and reinforced his beliefs that reading was boring and pointless.

Bushman and Haas (2006) argue that one of the main reasons that students dislike reading is because they cannot relate to the school-assigned texts. If English teachers are to make literature instruction more meaningful, they argue, schools need to incorporate texts that challenge students socially, morally, religiously, and politically; however, these texts must also reflect students' lives. Gwynn and Zani (2007) claim, "Meaning in literature is rarely spelled out for us; thus, we often are asked to delve deep into a text – whether a story, poem, play, or essay – to question, discuss, and formulate an interpretive response to it; in other words, to craft an argument" (p. 1). Literature should engage students with ideas; unfortunately, many times, the literature teachers choose is not age-appropriate nor cognitively appropriate, and makes students bored and resistive.

Young Adult Literature

In order to combat students' growing apathy with school-assigned texts, many English teachers use Young Adult Literature. Donelson and Nilsen (1989) define Young Adult Literature (YAL) as "anything that readers between the approximate ages of twelve and twenty choose to read (as opposed to what they may be coerced to read for class assignments)." Herz and Gallo (1996) go into more detail by explaining that

> YAL deals with many universal themes, including the external questions *Who am I?* and *Where do I fit in?* Some of the themes are: alienation from one's society or group, survival or meeting a challenge; social and/or political concerns about AIDS, teenage pregnancy, divorce, substance abuse, family conflicts, dealing with death, and political injustice. (p. 11, original italics)

Young adult literature addresses issues that adolescents face on a daily basis. One of the

main arguments for implementing Young Adult Literature in the English curriculum is not only its ability to connect with readers, but also its ability to be more reflective of the diverse society in which we live. Coats (2011) argues that although there was a time that its limited perspective was acceptable, the needs of society have changed in an effort to become more inclusive and tolerant of gender, race, culture, and sexuality. Wartski (2005) communicates the importance of diversity when she writes,

> To truly be able to trust and care for each other, clear sight is necessary. A 20/20 sight of the spirit, this clear-eyed sight recognizes that skin color, unfamiliar speech, or the belief that a different creed matter simply as information. What truly counts is not what but *who* a person is. (p. 50, original italics)

YA exposes students to different perspectives. During a study conducted by Moje et al. (2008) that focused on adolescent literacy of urban youth, one student was asked why her favorite novel was *The Skin I'm In* (Flake, 1998), a novel depicting the internal struggles that a seventh-grade African American girl has concerning her dark skin. The student's response was very simple: "I could learn how they feel 'cause sometimes I don't feel like I like the skin I'm in" (Moje et al., 2008, p. 140). The student's response reflects adolescents' desire to read texts that relate to them.

Herz and Gallo (1996) compare various canonical works with current YA and find that Hawthorne's (1850) *The Scarlet Letter* and Anderson's (1999) *Speak* both contain similar themes and female protagonists who are punished with isolation for their "sins." While Hawthorne uses colonial, Puritanical society to pass judgment on Hester Prynne, Anderson chooses a more current, vicious backdrop for Melinda: high school. Coats (2011) explains the importance of using contemporary YA compared to canonical works when initially trying to engage young adult readers:

> Considering these prejudices in secondary and post-secondary classrooms through the "classics" or through works that feature adult protagonists from times past allows for the possibility that students may distance themselves from what they are reading . . . Contemporary YA literature, on the other hand, stages an up-to-the-minute confrontation with a mirror they can't look away from, and thus makes moral, social, and cultural problems both accessible and urgent. (p. 318)

Because most readers can relate to high school, Anderson (1999) uses the social hierarchy and hypocrisy of friendships and cliques to create a connection between the reader and the contexts that deal with Melinda's "sin." The feelings of not belonging, self-absorbed parents consumed with their lives, and trying to find a voice may seem more pertinent than an adulterous woman forced to live in the woods.

Fake-Readers

According to the *Washington Post* (2011), SAT reading scores for 2011 graduating seniors were the lowest since 1972. Chandler (2011) laments that the poor scores reflect "a steady decline in performance in that subject on the college admissions test". Many blame the point decline on teachers teaching to the test and neglecting to teach more complex skills while others blame a more diverse test-taking population (i.e. ESL students); however, academics such as Bauerlein (2010) claim that students who are eighteen-years-old "have grooved for many years a reading habit that races through texts, as in the case with texting, email, Twitter, and other exchanges" (p. 30). With technology, digital media, Internet, and hand-held devices at their fingertips, students "have grown so accustomed to multiple inputs and steady stimuli that the prospect of two hours alone with one book and no connectivity would most likely strike them as a depleted occasion" (Bauerlein, 2010, p. 31). Students seem programmed to function in snip-its. Therefore, not only do adolescents avoid reading school assignments, but many

also avoid reading books outside of class. The National Endowment for the Arts publication *To Read or Not to Read* (2007) documents that "nearly half of all Americans ages 18 to 24 read no books for pleasure" (p. 7). Table 2.1 identifies the percentage of young adults who read for pleasure in 2002 as compared to 1992. Not only has the percentage of young adult readers dropped 7% within ten years, 48% of those surveyed do not read for pleasure.

Figure 2.1

Percentage of Young Adults Who Read Books Outside of Class and Work

Age Group	1992	2002	Change
18-24	**59%**	**52%**	**-7 % decline**

Source: National Endowment for the Arts (2007)

In addition to this data, NAEP administered questionnaires to seventeen-year-olds from 1984-2008 that asked: "How often do you read for fun?" Figure 2.2 shows responses are placed in three categories: Nonreaders, Inactive, or Active. *Nonreaders* refer to those who never read; *inactive* refers to those who can read, but choose not to; and *active* refers to those who consistently engage with reading.

Figure 2.2

Group	1984	2008	Change
Nonreaders	**9**	**24**	**15 increase**
Inactive	**10**	**16**	**6 increase**
Active	**81**	**59**	**22 decrease**

According to Figure 2.2, within a twenty-four-year span, the number of nonreaders increased fifteen points and the number of inactive readers increased by six points, while the number of active readers dropped by twenty-two points from 1984 to 2008. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 reflect the decline of reading that has seeped into classrooms. Just like my students confided that they could think of a hundred other things that they would rather be doing than reading, young adults throughout the United States seem to share their opinion. In fact, in a more recent study conducted by the U.S. Bureau of

Labor Statistics (2010), adolescents between the ages of fifteen and nineteen reported the average number of hours that they spend with particular leisure and sports activities. Figure 2.3 breaks down the amount of time young adults report spending for each activity as well as the percentages in comparison to one another.

Figure 2.3 **Average Hours per Day Spent in Leisure and Sports Activities Ages 15-19**

Total	Sports	Social	TV	Read	Relax	Video Games, Internet
5 hours	0.8 hours	0.8 hours	2.3 hours	0.1 hours	0.1 hours	0.9 hours
100%	16%	16%	46%	2%	2%	18%

Source: 2010 *Time-use survey, Table 11,* by U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Statistics show the decline of reading print-based texts (i.e. novels) in favor of less complex forms of media such as television, Internet, and video games. Baines (2008) sums up the decline when he states, "The bottom line is that students are reading less and plugging in more" (pp. 9-10). This claim is reinforced by a study conducted by the Center on Media and Human Development (2011), "There is no other activity that young people devote as much of their daily life to as they do media, and its place in their lives is still growing" (p. 10). With the introduction of technology, many young adults are opting out of time reading books.

The infrequency of engaging with texts – either assigned in school or for pleasure – means that students are not using certain literacy skills such as close reading. Close reading strategies and critical thinking are acquired skills that require experience and practice (Langer and Applebee, 1986). Bauerlein (2010) argues the less individuals read complex texts, the more literacy skills (i.e., comprehension, critical thinking)

diminish. ACT (2010) advocates that "the more students are exposed to complex texts, the more they realize that they can't complete their studies through a single superficial reading" (p. 24).

Superficial reading has become the norm among many resistive readers. For instance, even complex issues outlined in articles posted to the Internet by reputable sources such as *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* are no longer than two pages. Furthermore, these articles are often accompanied with video clips so that readers, who don't want to take the time to read and discern information for themselves, don't have to. In addition to news media, instruction manuals can be found online that are titled "Assembly for Aliterates" that include only images since people no longer take the time to read. Students who have been immersed in the midst of the current "data smog" are being groomed to think in bullet points instead of complete sentences.

Literacy is like playing a sport. In order to perfect a skill, athletes must practice. If they do not practice, they progressively get worse. Athleticism is not static, nor is literacy: "Reading engagement is also important to the maintenance and further development of reading skills beyond the age of 15. The International Adult Literacy Survey found that "reading skills can deteriorate after the completion of initial education if they are not used" (OECD & Statistics Canada, 1995).

As early as 1647 the importance of reading was linked to "a well-ordered society," "the moral welfare of the individual," and democratic values (Morrow, 2003, p. 857) due to reading's role in building critical thinking. Purves (1968) concludes, "Response to literature is a learned behavior" (pp. 314-315); students learn to develop apathy towards reading. Students who consistently read experience greater academic

achievement (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007; Morrow, 2003; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1996; Taylor, Frye, & Marugama, 1990). Baroody (1984) asserts,

> Aliteracy reflects a change in cultural values and a loss of skills, both of which threaten the process of a free and democratic society. Literacy . . . knits people together, giving them common culture . . . and provides people with the intellectual tools used to question, challenge, understand, disagree, and arrive at consensus . . . it allows people to participate in an exchange of ideas . . . Aliteracy leads inexorably to a two-tiered society: the knowledgeable elite and the masses. It makes a common culture illusory or impossible; it erodes the basis for effective decision making and participation in the democratic process. (p. ix)

If literature's function is to "humanize ideas and issues" (Dakin, 2010, p. 19), students may not be learning to analyze and explore issues past the surface.

Prensky (2001), the founder of Games2train, which develops educational software, explains that "our students have changed radically. Today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach" (p. 1). Prensky asserts that these "students have been born into a world filled with gadgets and online community, and to most of them it's a way of life." Students live in a "flat" world (Friedman, 2007) – the connection of "all the knowledge centers on the planet together into a single global network" (p.8) – and experience the world in multiple contexts. Since more and more students interact with multiple literacies, or multiliteracies, on a daily basis - Internet, cell phones, ipods, music, art, and television – they experience a new way of transacting (Rosenblatt, 1978/1938), or interacting, with the world around them, which inevitably impacts the way that they approach learning.

Generation M

Generation M includes young adults born in the early 1980s through the late 1990s. For these young adults, technology is no longer a part of the culture; it *is* their

culture. According to Lackie, LeMasney, and Pierce (2009), the "M" stands for "M(edia), M(illennials), M(obile), M(ultitaskers), M(ultisensory)" (p. 3). A common assumption is that Generation M students are techno-savvy multitaskers who readily implement technology into their daily lives. D'Angelo (2009) describes them as "particularly good at teamwork, experiential activities, and incorporating technology into their learning" since most of their schooling involves multiple forms of group work (p. 99). Because they have been "connected" throughout most of their lives, conducting individual learning tasks are difficult for many of them.

Generation M seems disinterested in accumulating knowledge. With unlimited information at their fingertips, most students are used to immediate results to inquiries; they dislike wading through pages of information. They want to skip to the end result. D'Angelo explains that Generation M is more "results-oriented" and "place less value on knowledge for knowledge's sake and engage in trial and error programming" (p. 100). Dawson and Campbell (2009) claim these students often lack critical thinking and analytical skills:

> They consider themselves quite expert in finding any information because they can "Google" anything and "get lots of hits." Yet, many cannot find information easily on a scholarly topic or evaluate the information they do uncover. Frequently when they cannot find information, they assume that the information does not exist. (p. 34)

When Generation M students must complete simple problem-solving strategies, such as identifying other terms to search to gain information on a topic, or forced to use a source other than Wikipedia, they do not know how to do it, nor are they interested. Because they are result-oriented instead of knowledge oriented, they lack the ability to evaluate the credibility of sources - if something is published on the Internet, it must be true.

An assumption about Generation M is that all of its members are techno-savvy multitaskers who readily implement technology into their daily lives. Some technology experts like Zimmerman (2007) claim that technology has made multitasking, or metatasking, a way of life, and advocates that teachers embrace this new form of mass information gathering:

> It's wrong to assume automatically that today's metatasking Millennials are unfocused. They're just optimizing…It shouldn't surprise anyone that they try to get the best results in the least amount of time or with the least amount of effort.

While Zimmerman (2007) promotes these characteristics as efficient, D'Angelo (2009) refutes his stance:

> Decades of research point out that an individual's output and critical thinking abilities dissipate as more tasks are engaged. Technology has not created super students but more like *diluted* students because the human brain cannot handle true multitasking. The brain actually orders the tasks and switches back and forth between them. It cannot simultaneously process separate tasks. (p. 104, original italics)

When students multitask, or "metatask," they are actually practicing sequential processing, which is not the same skill. Instead of creating critical thinking, this method of "learning" creates ineffective, superficial learning, adding to Generation M's knowledge deficit. During a recent classroom discussion with Generation M students, I introduced the opposing views of multitasking:

Me: I was reading some research this week that said that your generation is heralded as "multitaskers," but that's actually not true. According to the research, you guys are really good at doing a lot of things, but you aren't able to focus long enough to really master anything. What do you think about that?

Student 1: I agree with that.

Me: Really?! (surprised)

Student 1: Yeah, I mean, I feel like I don't *know* anything; I just kind of skim to get an idea.

Student 2: I know that it shouldn't be hard, but I just don't know how to *think*.

These students admit that they need to spend time engaged with a specific activity in order to master it; however, they do not possess the patience to do so.

New Literacy Theory

Although *literacy* has traditionally been associated with print-based texts, New Literacy advocates seek to expand the definition. Warscharuer and Ware (2008) explain,

> technology, literacy, culture, and society are viewed as being completely intertwined. From this perspective, technologies do not impact literacy, society, or culture, but rather are seen as embodiments of social and cultural relations that, in turn, structure social and cultural futures. (p. 222)

Generation M students have grown up with cell phones, ipods, high-speed Internet access, social networking sites, itunes, digital radio, digital satellite, and many other forms of technology that are staples of everyday life. Even those students living in homes without computers still have access to technology through local libraries and schools. Generation M has grown up "reading the world" (Freire and Macedo, 1987) by interacting among multiple contexts and digital spaces by being exposed to multiple forms of verbal, visual, and technological literacies.

The New London Group (1996) recognized the impact of technology and collaborated to create a theoretical overview to deal with changes impacting the educational system and students' needs. Group members acknowledged that the Internet changed the landscape of students' social, cultural, and linguistical environments by allowing them to interact with unlimited information and diverse individuals: "The fundamental purpose [of education] is to ensure that all students

benefit from learning in ways that allows them to participate fully in public, community, and economic life" (p. 60). To attain these goals, the group advocated that school curriculums implement multiliteracy instruction to prepare students for the world in which they live.

The group recognized that many students already functioned within a multiliterate society, but it advocated for schools to recognize educational benefits of incorporating technology as well. Coiro et al. (2008) address concerns voiced by teachers when they ask: "Was there really anything new to literacy when the tools change and we simply read and write on a screen instead of on paper?" (p. 2). Gee (2008) proclaims an unequivocal affirmation by explaining that the inception of technology demands more from literacy than changing the mode of access: "'Digital literacies' can deepen learning both inside and outside school as we know it, especially our current skill-and-drill sorting system" (p. 1023). He also states, "Today, young people sometimes seem to engage in deeper learning in their popular culture than they do in school, especially schools devoted to skill-and-drill in the service of passing standardized tests" (Gee, 2008, p. 1024).

Multiliteracy advocates such as Gee (2008), Kajder (2006), Kist (2010), Richardson (2006), and Krueger and Christel (2001) advocate new literacies in the curriculum because they represent students' background knowledge. As Richards (1929) and Rosenblatt (1978/1938) discovered, individuals' backgrounds and cultures have a direct impact on how they approach a text. It is the job of the teacher to implement strategies that help students use these experiences to: "1. enter the story world, 2. practice close reading, 3. understand far-reaching social, cultural, and

historical contexts, and 4. respond to the text" (Rozema and Webb, 2008, p. xiii). Kist (2010) reasons that "there can be no doubt that communicating in the new century is going to be different than communicating in the old century – not necessarily better or worse but different" (p. 7). Generation M students are multiliterate, or multimodal, and new advances in digital media directly impact ways they learn and interact with texts.

Some may argue that multiliteracy teaching strategies are simply the latest fad in a long line of tricks and gimmicks used to entertain students without actually teaching them anything. Kadjer (2008) explains refutes this criticism:

> Teaching with Web 2.0 tools and twenty-first-century literacies isn't the latest in the long succession of fads or pendulum swings that so often mark our profession. This is teaching that values our students and the literacies they need to engage with and be successful in communicating in an increasingly wired, connective world… (Rozema & Webb, 2008, p. ix)

Like any learning activity, it's not how much technology is incorporated; it's how *effectively* it's incorporated. For instance, O'Dwyer, Russell, Bebell, and Tucker-Seeley (2005) discovered the following findings concerning effective technology use after analyzing reading and writing test scores of 986 fourth-graders in Massachusetts:

> The study found that it was not so critical as to whether students used computers, but how they used them; usage for editing of papers was positively correlated with both reading and writing test scores, for example, whereas usage for making multimedia presentations at school or for recreational purposes at home was negatively correlated with both reading and writing test scores. (Warschauer and Ware, 2008, p. 218)

New Literacy does not advocate mindless activities based in entertainment because students enjoy "playing on the Internet" or making Power Point Presentations. Conversely, research by Fuchs and Woessmann (2004), O'Dwyer et al. (2005), and Goldberg et al. (2004) show that standardized test scores rise when technology is implemented meaningfully within the learning environment.

Russell and Abrams (2004) show a positive correlation between meaningful technology implementation and learning. Their research also shows that if technology isn't measured on standardized tests, then teachers don't implement it. Many argue that this refusal to adapt denies students the ability to develop skills needed within the global market (Friedman 2007; Coiro et al., 2008; Beers et al., 2007; Burke, 2010), which is harmful to society as a whole: "…the person who lacks information literacy risks being undervalued by or excluded from an increasingly competitive, information-oriented labor market" (Livingstone et al., 2008, p. 110). While professional organizations (i.e., National Council of Teachers of English), professional literature (i.e., *A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act*), and educational policy (i.e., Common Core State Standards) recognize the importance of technology, it's still struggling to find its way into classrooms across America.

Multiliteracy Approach

Reading and writing are interconnected literacy activities based upon their use of language and communication. One of the first studies linking the two is Loban (1963), who claims that "students who wrote well also read well, and that the converse was true" (Langer and Flihan, 2000, p. 115). Building off of this study, Stotsky (1983) asserted that "better writers tend to be better readers (of their own writing as well as of other reading material), that better writers tend to read more than poorer writers, and that better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers" (p. 636). While reading, learners assimilate vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, and word choice. The more students read, the more they are exposed to syntax, composition styles, and forms. Tierney and Pearson (1983) view acts of

composing such as “planning, drafting, aligning, revising, and monitoring” as “involving continuous, recurring, and recursive transactions among readers and writers” (p. 578). When students conduct rhetorical thinking within literary processes, they transact with texts and think critically about them. Langer and Flihan (2000) extend the importance of intertwining literature and composition when they state, “When reading and writing, students’ dominant concern was found to be with the meanings they were developing” (p. 117). Applebee and Langer (2011) assert that social contexts, including technology, shape learners’ development; therefore, in order for teachers of all disciplines to be effective, they must acknowledge and address the impact these (multiple) contexts have on students ability to transact.

Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, and Leu (2008) compiled data showing the main users of the Internet are adolescents between the ages twelve and seventeen. As of 2005, 87% of these users (approximately eleven million) reported using the Internet on a daily basis (The Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2008). By implementing multiliteracy approaches to literature and composition, teachers bring the real-world into their classrooms, adding validity and meaning to texts. Stripling (2010) explains that the role of meaningful digital literacy includes connecting ideas to personal interests and a desire to know, asking questions that probe beyond “simple fact gathering, investigating answers from multiple perspectives, constructing new understandings, expressing the new ideas through a variety of formats, and reflecting on both the process and product of learning.” Stripling (2010) explains that technology isn’t simply a “toy” meant to entertain students; it’s a tool for critical thinking if implemented with purpose. One of the benefits of multiliteracy instruction is “rather

than merely being consumers of information, [students] can now be producers and collaborators as well" (Sweeny, 2010, p. 122).

Conclusion

Whether asked to read for efferent or aesthetic purposes, resistive readers avoid reading school-assigned texts. Weigel, Straughn, Gardner, and James' (2009) explain that "[g]reater demands on student attention (whether more activities or more distractions) and the rise and pressure of multitasking also pose challenges to students' capacity to sustain attention and to engage in reflection" (p. 9). Generation M students cite busy schedules for not reading, but they also view it as "boring" and "irrelevant." National Endowment for the Arts (2007) claims, "Among high school seniors, the average score has declined for virtually all levels of reading" (p. 13) and that "[l]ittle more than one-third of high school seniors now read proficiently (score of 302 or greater out of 500)" (p. 13).

Figure 2.4

12^{th}-Graders Reading at or Above the Proficient Level

1992	2005	Change
40%	35%	-5 % decline

Source: (2004) U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Figure 2.4 shows that 40% of students tested proficiently in 1992 whereas only 35% tested proficiently in 2005, resulting in a 5% decline. In a recent report by Hart Research Associates (2011), one-fourth of freshmen entering college the fall 2011 semester had to complete zero level, remedial reading and writing courses because they were not proficient.

Reading is more than a series of test scores measuring proficiency. Paul (2012) explains,

> Brain scans are revealing what happens in our heads when we read a detailed description, an evocative metaphor or an emotional exchange between characters. Stories, this research is showing, stimulate the brain and even change how we act in life… The brain, it seems, does not make much of a distinction between reading about an experience and encountering it in real life; in each case, the same neurological regions are stimulated (Paul, 2012)

Reading has the ability to inform, to communicate, to create empathy, to promote critical thinking and problem-solving, and to foster cultural diversity. Olufowobi and Makinde (2011) discuss the effects on students who avoid reading: "In schools, students do not find reading and writing interesting and this affects their academic performance. Most of the students cannot analyse (sic) and comprehend facts and interprete (sic) examination questions accurately" (p. 825). Many students believe implementing fake reading strategies allows them to receive the same learning experiences with minimal effort. Unfortunately, fake reading strategies are short-term solutions with long-term consequences.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

"*Pedagogy is a teaching and learning relationship that creates the potential for building learning conditions leading to full and equitable social participation.*"

- The New London Group, 1996, p. 60

This chapter describes the embedded case study research methods used to explore the following research question: what strategies do resistive readers use to fake their way through school-assigned texts? First, I explain why I chose embedded case study before I set it in context by describing the college's demographics and English Composition I curriculum. I then explain the methods used to select participants, the multiple methods of data collection, and the role of the participant researcher. I close the chapter by addressing the trustworthiness of the study as well as its strengths and limitations.

Research Design

A case study was chosen to explore the research question. I relied on Merriam's (2009) description of case study research methods and Yin's (2008) more in-depth explanation of embedded case study methods. Both forms provide "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Yin, 2008, p. 18); however, embedded case study allows the researcher to "look at sub-units that are situated within a larger case" (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 550). The benefit of a single embedded case study design is that it allowed me to explore the holistic case while

focusing on the subunit of fake-readers. The case study took place within a bound system of the 2012 spring semester.

A case study requires a unit of focus and analysis within a bounded system. Merriam (2009) explains, "For it to be a case study, *one* particular program or *one* particular classroom of learners (a bounded system)…would be the unit of analysis" (p. 41, original italics). Miles and Huberman (1994) clarify when they explain that the case, not the topic of analysis, is the heart of the study, and clear boundaries exist for "the edge of the case: what will not be studied" (p. 25). The unit of analysis for this case study included students who were enrolled in the course and participated in the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project (see Appendix A). The study was bound, or "fenced in" (Smith, 1978), by the implementation and completion of the five -week *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project.

Setting

The study was situated in a small, private college in the Midwest. The county where the college is situated is 558 square miles and spreads over multiple municipalities with a population density of 477 residents per square mile. The college is located on a 41-acre campus within this county. Based on the 2010 Census, it has a per capita income of $25,427 with 11.6% of the population living below the poverty line.

The college is located in a medium sized city, and is the smallest four-year higher education institution located within the county. It is a faith-based institution whose mission promotes a "higher education committed to the intellectual, spiritual, social, moral, and physical development of its students." The college is governed by the Oklahoma Association of Free Will Baptists and maintains accreditation through the

Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools. It offers associates and baccalaureate degrees as well as a graduate degree in ministry. The college employs approximately fifty full-time and part-time faculty who have earned a masters or Ph.D. in their respective fields. The student to teacher ratio remains consistent at 15:1.

The college is a private, non-profit institution that serves suburban, urban, and rural populations. The student body consists of approximately 225 students, which include traditional, non-traditional, and online students. Ethnic demographics among the student body consist of the following: 71% European-American, 16% African American, 9% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 3% Hispanic, and 1% Unknown. The average tuition per student (in-state or out-of-state) is $9,900. The average ACT score for students enrolled at the college is 20, a point below the national average.

English Composition I is a general degree requirement of all students unless they CLEP out (or earn a 26 on the English portion of their ACT) and move directly to English Composition II. In 2009, the English department chair designed the program to ensure that one instructor consistently taught all sections of English Composition I while another instructor taught English Composition II. He did this to promote continuity among curriculums. As a result, I have been the only English Composition I instructor (traditional and online) since the fall 2009 semester.

The Context for English Composition I

English Composition I is a required undergraduate, freshman level English class that focuses on composition skills such as grammar, sentence structure, style, and research as well as communicating topics in a logical, concise manner. In addition, the course seeks to introduce students to a volume of readings to promote analysis and

critical thinking. Based upon the criteria articulated within the course description, I developed the curriculum, selected the texts, and mapped out specific learning goals. Each semester, I teach students whose reading and writing abilities range from remedial to those who participated in Advance Placement (AP) programs throughout high school.

The English Composition I curriculum centers on Lunsford, Ruszkiewicz, and Walters' 5th Edition of *Everything's an Argument* (2010). Lunsford et al. (2010) explain that the purpose of argument is not necessarily to dispute or attack but, instead, "to invite others to enter a space of mutual regard and exploration" (p. 5). Within the text, various forms of argument are introduced and discussed, which range from traditional page-bound essays to visual, oral, and multi-media representations. As society progresses through the 21st century, students are bombarded with arguments presented through multiple modes (print, digital, visual, and audio). As consumers of information, the course seeks to develop an awareness of arguments that surround students on a daily basis. Through analysis students learn to identify various techniques (logos, ethos, and pathos) used to convey particular issues and their overall effectiveness. In addition to the textbook, this course relies on current events (i.e. political cartoons, newspaper articles, commercials, and billboards) as well as novels, music, and drama to address different forms of argument, the importance of audience, and the necessity for rhetorical analysis.

The duration of the course is sixteen weeks. During the first ten weeks, students use Lunsford et al.'s (2010) text to study the formal elements that make up various styles of arguments. The focus during this time is geared toward students learning to analyze and compose arguments on a deeper, more critical level in order to emulate

certain techniques in their expository writing. Once they experience the formal aspect of arguments, they use this knowledge to practice the many modes in which a single argument can be portrayed (i.e. orally, visually, multi-media). Approaching a single argument from multiple perspectives helps promote rhetorical analysis and evaluation.

During the final six weeks of the semester, the class uses analytical devices addressed throughout the first ten weeks to focus on arguments found within literary fiction. Students read Neal Shusterman's dystopian young adult novel *Unwind* (2007), which deals with current controversial topics such as abortion, euthanasia, organ donation, bio-ethics, and religious manipulation. Through teacher-directed and student-directed online and in-class discussions, formal writing assignments, and creative assignments (i.e. poetry, memory map, book trailers, etc.), students use the novel as a catalyst to explore real life events that inspired sections of the novel. Students must conduct close reading, rhetorical analysis, and reference contextual evidence to discover multiple standpoints concerning themes, characterization, and inferences. At the conclusion of the project, they must also evaluate the effectiveness of presenting arguments through works of fiction, and the many ways that authors weave their purposes throughout. Through an analytical essay, students synthesize themes within the novel by connecting them with arguments plaguing real-life society.

Participant Selection

Case study design relies on sample selection to represent the unit of analysis. Two basic types of sampling exist within case study: probability and nonprobability sampling (Merrian, 2009; Yin, 2009; Punch, 2005; Schwandt, 2001). Probability sampling relies on random sampling while nonprobability uses either purposive or

purposeful strategies. According to Honigmann (1982), nonprobability sampling methods “are logical as long as the fieldworker expects mainly to use his data not to answer questions like ‘how much’ and ‘how often’ but to solve qualitative problems, such as discovering what occurs, the implications of what occurs, and the relationships linking occurrences” (p. 84). Nonprobability sampling met the needs of this study more effectively since the sample was derived from students enrolled in my English Composition I course during the spring 2012 semester. In addition, since participants needed to meet specific criteria to be considered resistive readers, I conducted purposive sampling.

Because previous research identifies certain characteristics consistent among resistive readers, each participant had to meet the following criteria to be considered for the study:

- Have not participated in any remedial reading courses.
- Good/Excellent reading and comprehension skills.
- Refusal to read school-assigned texts.
- Pretend to read school assignments to receive good grades.
- Dislike for reading in general.
- Claim that reading is “boring.” (Beers, 1998/1996/1990; Mikulecky, 1978)

Students who had to enroll in remedial reading courses due to a composite score of 18 or lower on their ACT were purposefully removed from the study because they were classified as reluctant, or struggling, readers. The main distinction between reluctant readers and resistive readers is their level of proficiency. Reluctant readers often struggle with decoding: “they can decode the words but don’t understand or remember

what they've read" (Tovani, 2000, p. 14). Resistive readers often have "the ability to read without any mechanical problems but have little or no inclination to except what is required by way of work or normal everyday life" (Chambers, 1969, p. 4). They are usually the students who have been enrolled in Honors or AP English classes throughout secondary school due to their excellent reading and comprehension skills. Even if resistive readers were enrolled in mainstream, or on-level, English classes, they often earned good grades. A common denominator among resistive readers is that they avoid school assigned texts while remaining motivated by grades. Therefore, they pretend to read school-assigned texts by developing fake reading strategies so that they can receive good grades with little to no effort.

The initial method used to identify resistive readers enrolled in the English Composition I course was a reading questionnaire (see Appendix B) that I distributed to all students as a part of my regular classroom instruction. This survey consisted of eight statements with varying levels of responses (strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree) that students could circle that best reflected their beliefs and attitudes about reading. Because most resistive readers find reading "boring," they usually express a strong dislike for it. In addition, when given the opportunity to participate in other events, they often rank "reading a book" very low on their preferences. Therefore, I specifically took note of students' responses to questions 1, 5, and 6 – which addressed their attitudes toward reading – as well as how they ranked the activities in the final question of the questionnaire. Respondents who labeled question 1 with "strongly agree," question 5 with "strongly agree," question 6 with "strongly disagree," and

ranked “read a book” 5 or 6 on the final question were identified as potential participants.

Once I had a tentative list of thirteen students who shared prominent characteristics with resistive readers, I sought to further narrow the sample by cross-referencing this information with previous academic performances to see who met the minimum criteria. As the instructor and researcher, I had access to students’ academic records, and I reviewed ACT scores, coursework, and learning abilities. Because the study relied on students who had all of the cognitive and physical capabilities to read school-assigned texts, any student who scored less than 19 on the reading portion of the ACT, completed a college remedial reading course, or had a documented IEP or learning disability were automatically removed from the sample. At the conclusion of this step, my list of potential participants lessened to seven.

Because I needed to ensure that participants in the study were resistive readers who were more than capable to read but simply chose not to, I conducted informal conversations with each of the seven to clarify their beliefs and attitudes about reading school-assigned texts. The final phase of the purposive sampling was conducted through informal conversations with each of the seven potential participants. These informal interviews occurred during the first four weeks of the semester before class began. Within the natural ebb and flow of discussing their coursework and homework load, I made sure to ask each potential participant the following questions:

1. Do you like to read books? Why or why not?
2. Do you read anything for fun – internet, blogs, magazines, etc.?

3. What kind of materials are you reading for other classes? Are you keeping up with your reading assignments?
4. Have you ever pretended to read an assignment when you didn't?
5. How did you get away with not reading?
6. How often have you done this?

Specific characteristics of resistive readers include: 1) Dislike reading for fun or school, 2) Avoidance of reading school-assigned texts (i.e., skim, at best), 3) Pretending to read assignments to earn good grades, and 4) Employing fake-reading strategies on a regular basis. Students who expressed all four characteristics in their responses were identified as resistive readers; hence, three students were eliminated and the final four (one boy and three girls) resistive reader participants were identified. The reason that three students were removed from the sample was because, during these conversations, they explained that they were so worried about making good grades in college that they were reading every assignment, even if they hated it. As a result, they did not meet the minimum criteria of the purposive sampling.

Since every student signed a consent form to participate in the study at the beginning of the spring 2012 semester, I did not notify these students that they were the embedded unit because I wanted to document authentic responses to completing school-assigned reading. If participants knew I had identified them as resistive readers, and I was tracking their behavior, reading habits, and fake reading strategies, I feared they would alter their behavior , either by suspending fake reading strategies, or providing dishonest responses, which might taint the data. As a result, to keep the four participants unaware of my focus, I informally interviewed, surveyed, and collected artifacts from

all thirty students enrolled during the spring 2012 semester. At the conclusion of the semester, after grades were locked, I approached participants and informed them that I had identified them as resistive readers. I invited each one to an in-depth, semi-structured interview to learn specific information concerning fake reading strategies (see Appendix C) and their reasons for them. All four participants agreed, and the four audio-recorded interviews took place in my office at the college and lasted approximately twenty-five to forty-five minutes.

All four participants (Jenny, David, Bree, and Betty – pseudonyms to protect participants' identities) were true freshmen, completing their first year of college. Three of the participants graduated from public schools while one graduated from a private school. One participant (Jenny) attended a large-size public school 9-12 while one participant (Bree) attended a small-size public school 9-12. One participant (David) attended private school 9-12. One participant (Betty) completed 9th grade at a private school before transferring to a medium-sized public school where she completed 10-12th grades. Two of the four participants (Jenny and Betty) participated in Pre-AP and AP English classes throughout secondary school; one (David) opted to participate in regular English courses to have more success in keeping his grades up to play sports; and one (Bree) attended a school that did not offer advance placement or honors courses. The participants' ages ranged between 18-19 at the time of the study, and their ethnic diversity was homogenous – all white.

Jenny. Jenny participated and excelled in Pre-AP and AP English courses throughout her high school career, and she scored a 20 on the reading portion of her ACT. She chose to attend the college to play volleyball and be near her long-time

boyfriend who played football at a larger state school in the area. She was a very outgoing, friendly, and intelligent student who arrived to class early so that she could talk to me about her boyfriend, volleyball, and course load. Jenny was a strong student who attended every class and turned in every homework assignment. I often referred to her as my "go-to" student with colleagues because she would always speak up when no one else in class would participate. Jenny had perfected her fake-reading skills so well that she could actively participate in an in-depth discussion about a text without the teacher ever suspecting, including me, that she had never read it. In fact, I did not know that Jenny was a fake-reader until she openly confided that she "hated reading" and that she had not read anything all of the way through since elementary school.

David. David attended a private high school 9-12th grades, participated in regular English courses throughout secondary school, and scored a 21 on the reading portion of his ACT. He chose to attend the college to play soccer. While David was aggressive on the soccer field, he was very quiet and reserved in the classroom. He always spoke respectfully and answered direct inquiries about class work, but he never volunteered and rarely participated in classroom discussions unless specifically called upon. Once he started talking, however, he had very pertinent and intelligent points to add, especially if it was a topic of interest. He always sat on the back row and preferred to work independently. He was a "good" student who attended most class sessions and turned in every homework assignment. Many times, David used his quiet demeanor in an attempt to blend in with his surroundings so that teachers would not call on him. Because he consistently submitted quality work, teachers assumed he completed reading assignments and simply was too shy to speak in class. His dislike of reading

school-assigned texts was less obvious because he never complained and always seemed knowledgeable of the material; however, he confided that he often skimmed material right before class so that he knew what he needed to discuss.

Bree. Bree attended a small public school, participated in regular English courses throughout her high school career, and scored a 23 on the reading portion of her ACT. She chose to attend the college because it promoted a Christian education. Like David, Bree was extremely quiet and introverted; however, she was not as antisocial as he was. Throughout the semester, she slowly gained confidence and made friends among her peers; however, she never reached the level of comfort with me that Jenny did. Instead, when I spoke with Bree in informal settings and inquired about her activities, classes, and goals, she seemed intimidated by the fact that I was her instructor. As a result, her demeanor was more reserved than the others. Where Betty and Jenny were strong personalities who were very open and honest in their responses to my inquiries, Bree was more guarded and seemed to be searching for the "right" response. The only time, other than the semi-structured interview following the conclusion of the semester, that I found her to be completely open was on surveys where she was allowed to turn them in without discussing comments with me.

Bree was diligent in completing her coursework; however, the quality wasn't very strong or in depth. She rarely spoke in class, even when specifically called upon, and her responses often consisted of shrugged shoulders coupled with an, "Um, I don't know." Bree later confided that she liked to read certain things on her own time, but she refused to read "boring," school-assigned texts. Instead, she would listen to the teacher – and students who had read – discuss the material so that she could glean enough

information to complete assignments. Ironically, Bree and Betty became good friends throughout the course of the semester and worked together on most of the assignments within the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project.

Betty. Betty attended a small private school K-9 before her parents transferred her to a medium-sized public school for grades 10-12. She participated in AP English courses once she enrolled in public school, and scored a 21 on the reading portion of her ACT. She attended the college because it reflected her religious beliefs and she also received reduced tuition. Betty was very intelligent and direct. She was reserved, but not shy. She often sat on the back row, and did not participate in classroom discussions unless specifically called upon. Even then, like Bree, she often repeated what other students said, modifying it a little, in an effort to respond to the teacher. She consistently submitted homework, but it was at an average level – what I call "just enough to get by." Because one parent was a reading teacher, she learned how to read before she attended kindergarten and knew effective skimming strategies to save time on reading assigned texts. She hated to read anything because she found it extremely "boring" and time consuming. In fact, even though she had Facebook and Twitter accounts, she said that even those posts were too long to read.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study was designed with the intent of comparing and contrasting participants' beliefs and experiences with reading school-assigned texts as well as strategies they employed to fake their way through assignments. In addition to comparing and contrasting resistive readers' fake reading strategies, I wanted to study their responses to the teaching strategies introduced throughout the *Unwind*

Multiliteracy Project. I wanted to know if the teaching strategies offset fake reading strategies. To do this, I relied on multiple data sources to provide triangulation of the data (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Through collecting multiple data sets, I was able to explore the research question through multiple lenses to gain a more holistic understanding of the unit and subunit.

Instrumentation

Data collection for this study involved five general approaches: (1) interviews (informal and semi-structured), (2) surveys, (3) observation field notes, (4) reflections, (5) project grades. According to Yin (2009), multiple sources of data provide multiple sources of evidence that "converge in a triangulating fashion" (p. 18) and provide a more holistic view of a phenomenon. By using multiple lens, a deeper understanding can exist for motives behind fake reading strategies, ways that students implement strategies (either consciously or unconsciously), and strategies teachers might employ to encourage reading. In addition, each data source was collected at different points throughout the study to provide "snapshots" of students as they progressed through the study.

Informal Interviews

Informal interviews were conducted during each class period to gauge whether or not students were completing the assigned reading. Even though the interviews were unstructured, they were still "conversation[s] with a purpose" (Dexter, 1970, p. 136). Patton (2002) goes on to note, "We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. . . . The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (pp. 340-341). Many times, I had my

suspicions as to which students were completing assigned reading and which were not, but I did not have any concrete evidence; as a result, I asked each student during each class session if they completed the reading assignment. Students who had not completed the assigned reading were unable to complete multiliteracy activities because these activities required contextual evidence and personal interpretation. Through these informal interviews, I learned which students were ahead of schedule, which students were right on schedule, and which students were "a little behind," but had full intentions to "catch up" as soon as they had free time.

Because resistive readers rely on strategies to fake their way through assignments, I used these informal interviews to track whether or not the four participants were completing reading assignments. If they were not, I wanted to document how often as well as the reasons that they gave the teacher to excuse themselves from the responsibility of completing assigned reading. Many times, the excuses that resistive readers gave for failing to complete assigned reading were part of their strategies. Providing legitimate excuses, and leaning on their reputations as "good students," allowed them to request extensions for complete multiliteracy assignments so that they did not earn zeros for that day's work. As a result, the informal interviews often allowed me to know whether or not resistive readers were completing reading assignments on schedule, and the types of strategies that they were employing.

Semi-Structured Interviews

A list of questions (see Appendix C) was designed to explore participants' reading histories, educational reading habits and attitudes, perceptions of school assigned texts, reasons for practicing fake reading strategies, and strategies that each has

used to avoid completing assigned reading. The questions for this interview were derived from on-site observations and informal discussions with resistive readers during regular class time as they completed the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project. According to Merriam (2009),

> Usually, specific information is desired from all the respondents, in which case there is a more structured section to the interview. But the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. (p. 90)

Since participants and I had worked together throughout the project, I developed interpretive questions to clarify my understanding of their attitudes and strategies while completing the project as well as gain additional "information, opinions, and feelings" (Merriam, 2009, p. 98) I was unable to observe. The same list of questions was used for each participant to add consistency to the data collection process. Even though a list of questions existed, the interviews were structured in such a way that emerging themes and topics were explored.

Although I designed the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project with the intention to promote deep reading, I knew that some of the resistive readers were still able to avoid the work. Therefore, my focus for the semi-structured interviews was to learn reasons for their avoidance of school assigned texts, strategies that they employ to fake read through courses to earn good grades, and what teaching strategies might counteract their nonreading habits. Each audio recorded interview lasted between twenty-five and forty-five minutes. I transcribed the interviews and coded each one. According to Merriam (2009), "Coding is nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of data" (p. 173). While Merriam (2009) suggests that the researcher remove portions of interviews

to place in thematic piles, I color-coded participants' responses so that I could recognize patterns and regularities more easily to construct categories. For example, each reason participants gave for refusing to complete school-assigned reading was assigned a specific color, which was applied to the analysis of each interview transcript.

Observations

Direct observations were conducted to document relevant behaviors and environmental conditions within "the natural setting" (Yin, 2009). During the seven class periods that reading assignments were due, I used field notes to document students' attitudes and behaviors toward multiliteracy activities, students' comments about reading (or not reading) the novel, and students' discussions about the novel. According to Merriam (2009), "Observation is the best technique to use when an activity, event, or situation can be observed firsthand, when a fresh perspective is desired…" (p. 119). Observations provided additional information and evidence about the case by documenting attitudes and behaviors that informed the research questions.

Because I was the teacher-researcher, Yin (2009) warns that this can be a drawback because "the participant-observer may not have sufficient time to take notes or raise questions about events from different perspectives, as a good observer might" (p. 113). To offset this potential problem, I used short-hand notes in a notebook to record observations as they occurred. I was able to do this by structuring my class time in such a way that we spent the first 20-25 minutes in teacher-led or whole class discussion before students used the rest of the session to work independently, or in a group, on multiliteracy activities. Such a structure allowed me the flexibility to interact with all of the students while affording me the time to document notes when needed.

Therefore, as soon as each class ended, I used my notes to audio record observations in detail. Audio recordings were transcribed to keep a running record of classroom events while students completed assigned reading.

Reading Behaviors and Attitudes Survey

Latty Goodwin (1996) conducted a study among college students to identify resistive readers' reading habits. While surveying seven participants, she noted that five out seven admitted that they never planned to open the assigned text, but they fully expected to earn As in the course. Therefore, I used this survey (see Appendix D) to compare the grades that resistive readers' expected to earn versus the grades that they received at the completion of the project. Students completed the survey during the class session immediately following the final assigned reading (approximately three-and-a-half-weeks into the six-week project). Because I had not revealed the four embedded cases at this point in the study, I administered the survey to all thirty students enrolled in the class.

Since the class was in the process of completing the remaining phases of the project, I feared students would be hesitant to answer the questions honestly if they had to submit the survey directly to me because it could negatively impact their grades. As a result, I instructed students to place completed surveys in a designated folder and to elect a classmate to take the folder to the President's office where it remained under his supervision until a week after grades were posted. I left the room and returned to my office so that I did not see who the representative was. To lessen miscommunication, I notified the President's office prior to that class session, and explained the procedure for keeping the contents private for the allotted time. The administrative assistant in charge

of the folder complied with my instructions, and I received the folder one week after grades were locked.

Because I wanted to document whether or not resistive readers completed reading assignments during the *Unwind* project, I focused on the first question:

1. How frequently do you read the assignments from *Unwind* (2007)?

NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES USUALLY ALWAYS

I used students' responses to this question to cross-reference my observation notes concerning what they told me about completing reading assignments. I compared responses on surveys to responses to classroom inquiries for consistencies. (The survey also allowed me to know the number of students who completed the reading as a whole versus focusing solely on resistive readers. The multiliteracy project was designed to promote deep reading; therefore, it needed to be beneficial to all students, even though my focus for this study was resistive readers.)

One trait of resistive readers is that they expect to earn good grades without doing the work. After I reviewed question two of the survey, I noted students' responses to question six:

6. What grade do you expect in this class?

F D C B A

Like Goodwin (1996), I specifically wanted to know the perceived grades that resistive readers anticipated receiving if their response to question two implied that they did not read the assigned text. The purpose of documenting these perceived grades was to compare them with the actual grades that students earned to measure whether or not students' fake reading strategies worked.

Reflective Survey

A reflective survey using Likert scale items was administered on the final day of the project to all students who completed the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project (see Appendix E). The survey inquired about students' reading habits, reading behaviors, and overall impressions of the project. The reflective survey also allowed students to rate each classroom activity on a scale from one (strongly dislike) to five (strongly like) with the option to include comments for clarification of their ratings. The creation of this attitude survey was based on steps for constructing a measuring instrument outlined in Punch's (2005) *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches.*

1. Define what is being measured.
2. Select a Likert-type measuring technique.
3. Include as many items for each dimension as a respondent can respond validly.
4. Conduct a trial-run of the measuring instrument to make needed modifications (interpretations, easily respond to items, and clarity)
5. Pre-test a second draft scale more formerly with a group of 25 or more and analyze their responses in light of the criteria.
6. Modify and reduce the scale in light of the results of this analysis, selecting the best items for each dimension. (pp. 92-93)

The reflective survey was revised several times before the final survey was administered to study participants. The first survey draft was completed during the spring 2011 semester for a graduate level mixed methods research course project at the University of Oklahoma. As part of the project requirements, I submitted copies of the

initial survey to classmates, doctoral students who represented multiple educational departments, as well as the professor. During one class session, peers and professor spent twenty-five minutes critiquing and advising ways to add reliability and validity to the survey. At the conclusion of the session, each person gave me their copies of the survey, including notes, which I used to make modifications.

At the conclusion of the mixed methods research project, I submitted the second draft of the survey to the professor as part of the project grade. She returned the survey with handwritten feedback that offered suggestions for more precise language, more focused information, and an option for students to make clarifying comments. I used the feedback to modify the survey a third time before its pre-test at the conclusion of the spring 2011 semester.

The pre-test for the third draft of the reflective survey was administered to twenty students enrolled in English Composition I during the spring 2011 semester who had completed the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project. As I analyzed the survey responses from these students, I noted information that I failed to include, questions that had no relevance to my focus, and ambiguities that made responses difficult to place on a scale. In addition to reviewing the structure of the survey, I also asked students for feedback for ways to make it more concise and straightforward. Students suggested fewer items (I had approximately 36 items); less short-answer responses, more close-ended responses; and provide options to certain questions that they could circle rather than articulate themselves. According to students, when they were asked to give examples, their "minds went blank." Based upon this feedback, I revised the survey a fourth time and conducted another pretest with twenty-five students enrolled in my fall 2011 English

Composition I class who had completed the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project. After comparing students' responses on the survey with comments made in the individual reflections and observation notes, responses among all three were consistent.

This survey was completed after all phases of the project were submitted. While individual reflections expressed what students liked, disliked, struggled with, overall impressions, and ways the assignment could be improved, they rarely went into detail about each classroom activity. Most of the reflections consisted of general statements that encompassed the project as a whole rather than each individual assignment. As a result, this survey, coupled with observation notes and reflections, provided students the opportunity to give specific feedback, and add a more holistic perspective of their reading attitudes and behaviors.

This survey helped me explore the level of learning for each phase of the project as it was perceived by students. Guzzetti et al. (2010) assert that "effective instruction is student-centered, acknowledges the complexity of the individual, and incorporates students' backgrounds and interests" (p. 10). One of the main reasons that I designed the multiliteracy project was due to New Literacy advocates claiming that students were "changing." They claim that 21rst century students are more engaged with literacy activities that they experience throughout everyday life; therefore, 21rst century teachers need to evolve with students' needs:

> Literacy is now more widely recognized as a social activity and process, particularly with the growth of digital technologies. For many stakeholders in education, literacy should no longer be defined as one individual student cognitively engaging in a particular writing or reading event, but rather as a complex social act that involves collaboration…Thus, literacy involves social collaboration and interaction and a large skill and knowledge set that requires understanding, experiencing, and engaging collaboratively with many multimodal tasks in meaningful ways. (DeCosta et al., 2010, p. 17)

My goal as an instructor is to design a curriculum that is meaningful to students and meets their educational needs. Even though I focus on resistive readers, I want to make sure that I am teaching all students enrolled in English Composition I. As a result, responses to the survey evaluate the effectiveness of each mutliliteracy activity in relation to learning goals.

Artifacts

The primary artifact used for this study was student reflections. One of the required components of the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project was for every student to compose a reflection of their experience with the project, outlining their likes, dislikes, struggles, overall impressions, and ways the assignment might be improved. I used the student reflections to obtain feedback from students so that I might modify my approach for future courses. Although they were required to address each aspect of the assignment – outlining their likes, dislikes, struggles, overall impressions, and ways the assignment might be improved – they were not graded on organization, grammar, sentence structure, or any other formal writing techniques. The reflection was an informal writing assignment that was for my information only, and the grade was either pass or fail – either they submitted a reflection or they did not. Merriam (2009) states that artifacts such as the reflection are "usually nonreactive and nonobtrusive" since "they are applied after behavior has occurred" and "do not modify the behavior" being studied (p. 148). The reflections were due at the completion of the project. By examining students' reflections about the novel and project as a whole, I was able to develop a different perspective for their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors over the length

of the project, a perspective that I could not gain through direct observations during class sessions.

Project Grades

The entire *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project (see Appendix A) consisted of six phases: online discussion posts, ten multiliteracy compositions, a ten-minute presentation, individual book trailers, student reflections, and a final analytical essay. Each phase was assigned a specific amount of points and designed to promote close reading of the assigned novel by requiring students to incorporate analysis, inference, interpretation, and contextual evidence to complete assignments. Each phase was also designed so that students relied on personal interpretations and transactions with the novel to complete assignments. Throughout the project, I differentiated instruction so that each style of learner (audio, visual, and kinetic) could benefit from the activities that were assigned. I also designed activities so that students could express a certain amount of autonomy while remaining true to the context of the novel. By designating specific criteria for each multiliteracy assignment, students were less able to throw something "creative" together to pass it off as an acceptable submission. The six different phases address the novel from six different perspectives, which made skimming, or fake reading, more difficult. As one student mentioned in her reflection during a previous semester, "This project is designed so that you can't pass if you don't read." Therefore, the purpose of using grades as a data source was to show whether or not resistive readers were able to practice nonreading strategies successfully with this project.

Resistive readers rely on fake reading strategies (i.e. skimming, listening to lectures, online summaries) to earn As and Bs on assignments because they are usually required to repeat information rather than synthesize it. The goal of the multiliteracy project was to diminish these strategies by implementing assignments that required close reading and interpretation. Therefore, comparing participants' actual grades with perceived grades that they recorded on the Reading Habits Survey (see Appendix D) allowed me to analyze whether or not the project reached it goal in any way. By comparing students' perceptions of their grades versus the grades they earned, I identified aspects of the project that needed to be modified for more effectiveness.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2007) outlines three basic steps to case study data analysis: 1) describe the case and its context, 2) use categorical aggregation to establish themes or patterns, and 3) use direct interpretation (pp. 156-157). In order to set the embedded case study in context, the case and its setting are described in detail. While describing the case and its setting, the restrictions of time and place are discusses, which make this study a bounded system. Through multiple data sources, the study provides a "rich, thick description" (Merriam, 2009) that shows the conclusions "make sense" (Firestone, 1987, p. 19). These multiple data sources provide triangulation of the data, which add to the validity of findings.

According to Yin (2009), case study allows researchers "to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth, but such understanding encompassed important contextual conditions – because they were highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study" (p. 18; Yin & Davis, 2007). As a result, case study relies on deep descriptions of the case

within its real-life, bound context so that meaning can emerge. Within this study, the phenomenon consists of the fake-reading strategies among four resistive readers and how those strategies developed. In addition, the study explores these same four resistive readers' reading habits and behaviors while completing a multiliteracy project designed to promote close reading of an assigned text. According to Merriam (2009), the "collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process in qualitative research" (p. 169); therefore, the case entails the phenomenon as it evolved for each of the four resistive reader. Themes and categories that emerged across participants were then coded, described, and analyzed.

Researcher's Role

In this case study, I am the participant-researcher. Teachers cannot help but rely on their "beliefs, feelings, and assumptions" to construct the learning environment (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 33). Walker and Soltis (2009) explain that "[a]ll educators have aims that motivate them and guide what they do" (p. 13). As a result, my bias as a researcher was based in my personal teaching ideology as well as the relationships that I had already forged with the majority of English Composition I students through various campus events prior to the beginning of the spring 2012 semester.

My theoretical ideology is based in social constructivism, which centers on the view that the teacher serves as "a colleague or companion whom students can look up to rather than as an authority who has control over them" (Schiro, 2008, p. 166). I feel that it is important for students to work together to construct knowledge as well as connect it with the world in which they live; therefore, curriculum content and learning goals need

to be relevant to society. By humanizing certain social issues within the novel, students provided the opportunity to develop empathy, which promotes change – cognitive, moral, political, or social. Giroux (1992) claims that the role of schools should be "to provide students with knowledge, character, and moral vision" (p. 18) that encourages "the principles and practices of human dignity, liberty, and social justice" (p. 8). Ultimately, I believe schools should promote good citizenship, which hinges upon knowledge and awareness. As the teacher, my job is to facilitate the information and discussions about certain issues, but refrain from taking on the role of "authority." This aspect of teaching is very important because it forces students to work together to construct knowledge as well as connect it with the world in which they live. By encouraging students to think critically and problem-solve rather than rely on the teacher for all of the answers, they become agents of their own learning.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study

One strength of the study is that I have taught the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project at the same college for six consecutive semesters, implementing most of the data collection sources throughout each semester. At the conclusion of each of those semesters, I made adjustments to the curriculum, assignments, and reading schedules to reflect the needs of students and address consistent problems (i.e. students cheating on discussion posts). As a result, this study has gone through five pilot studies to increase reliability and validity.

One of the weaknesses of this study is that the number of participants was small and homogenous, and the strategies employed by these four participants cannot be generalized as representative of all college-level resistive readers. Because of the size of

the college's student body (225 students total), I only have approximately thirty students enroll in my English Composition I course each semester. As a result, I am limited to the number of participants as well as the diversity of participants. For instance, most students who attend the college are from white, middle-class backgrounds and were raised with the similar religious beliefs that the college promotes. As a result, many of those students come from either private or home-schooled backgrounds while the students who attend public school are mostly represented throughout the student athlete population on campus. Although the sample is small, however, these participants' reading habits and behaviors can provide English teachers with insight for ways to modify instruction to maximize learning among all students.

My role as participant-researcher might be construed as a limitation since student participants may feel compelled to tell me "how they are 'supposed' to feel or how they are 'expected' to interpret and react to an experience" (Grover, 2004, pp. 86-87). I worked diligently to diminish this limitation by interacting with students in multiple social settings throughout the semester so that they might feel comfortable discussing reading habits and behaviors.

Conclusion

Chapter three discusses the case study research methods used to explore the reading habits and behaviors of four resistive readers as they completed the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project. I explain the rationale for conducting purposive sampling, the criteria for selecting participants, and the steps taken to identify the five resistive

readers. I also address the school setting, English Composition I curriculum, data sources and analysis, role of the researcher, and strengths and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them." -Mark Twain

Interviews, observations, surveys, reflections, and course grades gathered throughout the spring 2012 semester were used to inform resistive readers' fake-reading practices. This chapter integrates the results of each data source and analyzes its significance. More specifically, these results address the following research question: *what strategies do resistive readers use to fake their way through school-assigned texts?* Because the ultimate goal was to use findings from the research question to inform my practice, I also explored the following sub question in relation to fake-reading strategies: *What strategies might English teachers use to promote close reading among resistive readers?*

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frame for this study of resistive readers is grounded in Richards' Reader Response Theory as discussed in *Practical Criticism* (1929), which states that readers respond to literature based on prior experiences and knowledge. Although Richards recognizes that such things as background, gender, and culture impact students' initial interpretations of poems, he also explains that "…the stability of the meaning of a word comes from the constancy of the contexts that give it its meaning. Stability in a word's meaning is not something to be assumed, but always something to be explained" (Richards, 1965, p. 11). He argues that texts contain specific themes and overarching elements that can only be deciphered through close reading and analysis,

isolating a text from cultural and historical contexts. Although this study ascribes to Richards' belief in the importance of close reading, analysis, and certain universal truths, this frame also incorporates the importance of students' backgrounds and experiences when interacting, or transacting, with a text. The framework combines Richards' stress for close reading and analysis with Rosenblatt's (1978/1938) transactional theory, which claims that words are just markings on a page until the reader gives them meaning.

Rosenblatt's theory that knowledge, learning, and instruction include the reciprocal relationship between a text and its reader builds from Richards's response theory. Rosenblatt (1978/1938) asserts that "the reader carries on a dynamic, personal, and unique activity" with a text (p. 15). Bruner (1996), Vygotsky (1978/1962), and Langer and Applebee (1986) claim that knowledge is socially constructed, whereas formalists claim that a text can be analyzed objectively, dismissing personal (unconscious) biases that play into that interpretation. A transactional perspective recognizes that individual cultures cannot be divorced from interpretation of texts, nor should they be, since readers provide richness to a text through multiple perspectives. Church (1997) reinforces the Rosenblatt's theory by explaining that the primary goal of instruction from a transactional perspective is to foster students' trust in the expression of their individual experience with a text. Through close reading, analysis, and transacting, students become active participants in their own experiential learning as opposed to being passive recipients of meaning from external sources (i.e. the teacher).

Participants' Reading Histories

One of the most powerful indicators of proficient readers is the amount of literacy in the home (Flouri and Buchanan, 2004). Clark and Rumbold (2006) reinforce this by stating, "Parents and the home environment are essential to the early teaching of reading and the fostering of a love of reading" (p. 24). Children whose parents actively read to them from a young age learn to read more efficiently because they are exposed to more vocabulary and positive experiences. As a result, these children learn more specific concepts, encounter more syntactic forms that build background knowledge, develop better comprehension, and acquire a better ability to predict and infer, resulting in stronger cognitive development (Wolf, 2007, p. 102). Based upon this information, it was important to explore the four participants' early experiences and attitudes concerning reading so that it might explain their current reading habits and attitudes.

All four participants experienced similar backgrounds when learning to read at an early age. Three out of four regularly attended library story times from the time they could remember until kindergarten. Jenny, Bree, and Betty learned to read before kindergarten because parents or siblings felt that it was important, while David learned in kindergarten with the rest of his classmates. None of the participants struggled with learning to read:

> Like, I went to the library all the time. And, reading was, like, really easy for me to learn. I did Hooked on Phonics ® when I was little. [My mom] made me do it before I went to school. It was okay [laughing self-consciously]. My mom's, like, obsessed with reading. But, yeah, I learned that before I could go to school. (Betty)

> I think it was actually about the time I was five-years-old is when I first started learning, like, how to properly pronounce throughout the alphabet, then learn how to read. Whenever I would have trouble pronouncing stuff when I was reading, I would ask [my sister] because, I mean, she's two years older than me, but that was about it. But, [my parents] did help me to read, too. (David)

> I learned to read in preschool. My mom would always read me the Dr. Seuss books and Bible stories, and, so, like, she'd read those to me every single night. And by kindergarten, I didn't want her to read them to me because I wanted to read them to her. (Bree)
>
> My sister used to read to me at night. She taught me to read from showing me how she did it. (Jenny)

Each of these students learned to read seamlessly with the help and support of parents and siblings. According to Clark and Rumbold (2006), "Parental involvement in their child's literacy practices is a more powerful force than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental education" (p. 24). Betty, David, and Bree cited their parents as important influences to their early development of reading while Jenny mostly looked up to her older sister. For instance, Betty came from a strong reading environment. Her mother was a reading teacher who taught both of her children to read early in hopes to develop their love of reading. Her father was a pastor who often read biographies and motivational literature during his spare time. Both of David's parents "read quite a bit" (David) for information and recreation, so he associated reading with pleasure as well as learning. Bree's main reading influence was her mother, who made sure that she was immersed in a print-rich environment from an early age by buying her books and reading with her every night. Bree found reading so enjoyable that she taught her younger brother to read, and she often pretended to be a librarian so that she could loan him books. Finally, Jenny's sister modeled a positive attitude towards reading by reading with Jenny everyday throughout their childhood. Reading before bedtime was a special time that the sisters shared together. From the beginning, however, Jenny maintained a negative attitude about reading, "My sister always liked reading, and she had read forever, and I was, like, I hated reading. Like, I would try to read, but I couldn't get into books" (Jenny).

Like Jenny, despite the efforts of Betty's parents, she, too, disliked reading from the beginning because she found it extremely "tedious and boring."

Reading Habits in Secondary School

Throughout secondary school, participants failed to see the value in reading school-assigned texts. Instead of viewing assignments as opportunities to develop and increase general knowledge, better understanding of other cultures, and greater insight into human nature and decision-making (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998; Meek, 1991; Bus, van Ijzendoorm and Pellegrini, 1995; Bruner, 1996), they viewed school-assigned texts as boring and pointless. In order to maximize grade point averages (GPAs) with minimal effort, resistive readers typically developed fake-reading strategies. Broz (2011) claims,

> *Not reading*, even for many good students, has become a mode of operation with respect to book-length texts assigned in school. Many students enter our secondary and postsecondary literature classes *intending* to *not read* the books we assign…Many students have admitted to [teachers] and to their classmates that in high school they did not read any of the assigned books. (p. 15, original italics)

Ironically, many of these students excelled in secondary English Language Arts classes because they are intelligent enough to develop strategies to work around the curriculum and assessments.

In order to understand their reading habits and behaviors while completing the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project, it was important to understand participants' fake reading strategies throughout secondary school. In response to the question "What kind of student were you in middle and high school?" the four participants replied with the following:

> Um, yeah, I was always in honors. I mean, first I went to a Christian school my junior high years, and part of my freshman year, and went to public school my sophomore year. I was in their AP classes [re: public school]. But, in private school, they're all basically honors because they're pretty intense. Like, equivalent to AP. Then, I went to [public school], and I was in all AP. (Betty)
>
> Middle school was pretty good. I guess, I was an average student. I had made As and Bs, and then, the first semester of my freshman and first semester of my sophomore year were kind of rocky. I actually got threatened by my parents that I would get transferred to another school if I didn't get my grades up. That usually worked, and I ended up finishing high school with a 3.6. (David)
>
> We didn't have AP classes in my HS but I was pretty good in English compared to other classes. It's just average… We still had to have our set AR [Accelerated Reader] points, and I know no one liked that. It didn't really bother me because I could just take tests on books that I read in the past. (Bree)
>
> My sister…my sister would always pick my classes. And, she made me take AP classes. And, she already read all of the books. So, I didn't read anything. She told me, "This is what you need to know, and this is what's going to be on your test," because she'd taken the same teachers that I did. (Jenny)

Although Betty and Jenny were the only ones enrolled in Advance Placement (AP) English courses, David had the opportunity to enroll in them throughout high school; however, he opted to remain in regular English courses so that he could maintain his grade point average more easily. In addition, even though Bree was not afforded the opportunity to enroll in AP courses because her public school did not offer them, she excelled in her English classes with minimal effort. It is important to note that all four students were always college-bound. Each set of parents and family members instilled the importance of an education, and pushed them to excel and earn good grades to help prepare them for college.

Even when describing themselves as students in secondary school, part of that description included fake-reading strategies that were either purposefully (Jenny) or tacitly (Bree) evolving to avoid school-assigned texts. For instance, Jenny confessed that she copied her older sister's homework throughout high school to fake-read her

way through secondary AP English classes. Jenny justified her actions by claiming, "I always saw it as homework to get over with"; she confided that she never learned the benefits of investing in the literature being taught. Bree's fake-reading strategies, however, were more covert than Jenny's. Because she believed that her school valued Accelerated Reader (AR) points above all other forms of reading, Bree preferred to recycle books that she had already read. For example, she believed that the quality of books on her school's AR list was poor; therefore, she refused to read them. Instead, she worked with her teachers to take AR tests over books that she had previously read for pleasure so that she would earn the necessary AR points to pass her English classes.

Betty learned skimming techniques from her mother who is a reading teacher: "And, my mom, she always tells me to read the first sentence on every paragraph if I don't have time to read all of it so that I know what's going on" (Betty). With a nervous laugh, Betty qualified her statement by admitting that her mother introduced her to those techniques for studying purposes only, not for faking her way through school-assigned texts. David, on the other hand, became obsessed with his grades because he was a student athlete who had to remain eligible to play along with the emphasis that his parents placed on them (i.e. threatening to transfer him if he earned bad grades). As a result, he employed fake-reading strategies when he was "slammed with homework" and simply did not have the time to do it all.

The Curriculum that Never Changes

Jenny attended a large, suburban, public school that boasts rigorous academics and college-readiness. Jenny realized early during her secondary career, that the same teachers taught the same AP English classes every year, and they rarely changed their

curriculum. As a result, Jenny's sister purposefully kept all of her notes, homework, essays, tests, and quizzes so that she could pass them down to Jenny. Because Jenny perceived that teachers failed to put forth the effort to modify their curriculum, she refused to put forth the effort to read any of the material. During the course of one of our interviews, I confided in Jenny that I mislabeled her a reader because she was so good at faking.

> Me: I pegged you early on as a reader because you were in AP classes, right?
>
> Jenny: (laughs) Yes.
>
> Me: And, so, then you told me that you don't read. Ever. So, I was, like, "Wow, I totally missed that one!"
>
> Jenny: My sister would always pick my classes. And, she made me take AP classes. And, she already read all of the books. So, I didn't read anything. She told me, "This is what you need to know, and this is what's going to be on your test," because she'd taken the same teachers that I did.
>
> Me: And, the teachers never changed any of their stuff?
>
> Jenny: No, and it had been 3 ½ years.

Jenny was able to recycle every piece of work that her sister gave her, and none of her AP teachers caught her; none of them even mentioned similarities. According to Jenny, the following ineffective teaching practices fostered her fake reading throughout secondary school: 1) she believed her teachers were too lazy to formulate or implement effective curriculum, 2) she believed that her teachers didn't care enough about her to invest in what she liked, 3) she developed the attitude that "If they don't care enough to notice that everyone is cheating, then why should I try?", and 4) she viewed the reading as an arbitrary assignment that teachers were no more interested in reading than she was.

Annotation

Betty attended a large, suburban, public school from 10^{th} – 12^{th} grades that promoted "avenues to success." According to Betty, her AP language and literature classes at the public school were more rigorous and intense than any of her classes at the Christian school she had attended. One of the main techniques that AP English teachers used at her high school to teach literature was annotation. For instance, students were assigned to read a section of text. When they arrived to class, the teacher led a brief discussion about the assigned reading to see who was and was not reading. If someone did not know the answer to the teacher's inquiry, the teacher asked another student to provide the answer. Once the brief discussion concluded, the teacher made annotate a preset number of elements within the assigned text while an audio version played in the background. While listening to the narrator read, students were supposed to underline significant passages, highlight literary elements, and write rhetorical analyses in the margins. The teacher stopped the audio after each chapter to allow students to complete annotations for that section before starting the audio again for the remaining chapters. Once the in-class reading had been completed for the day, students were to share their annotations with others sitting in their cluster (a table of four students). The teacher would approach each desk to check annotations, keep conversations on task, and ask leading questions if clusters were struggling to complete the assignment. Approximately five minutes before the class ended, the teacher stood at the front of the room and lectured about writing style, literary elements, and important passages that students needed to note.

Betty enjoyed the annotation activity because it didn't force her to do much reading because most of it was completed in class through the audio version. Betty

compared the activity to a scavenger hunt. For her, the challenge became finding passages that met her teacher's criteria rather than focus on the content of the text.

> Me: So, did the teacher, expect you guys to keep up with the reading?
>
> Betty: Well, a lot of it my junior year we would; it was a lot of plays and we would read stuff out loud. And then we would have homework assignments where we had to annotate a whole passage. And, then, he would come by and check it.
>
> Me: Did people take the annotation seriously, or did they just randomly mark stuff?
>
> Betty: The annotation? Yeah, I liked it. The first couple of assignments, he would go through the assignments with us.
>
> Me: So, he modeled, but he didn't do it for you? (Betty nods affirmatively.) So, did you keep up with the reading in his class?
>
> Betty: No (we both laugh, and I shake my head in disbelief). Cause there was so much. I'm kind of slow at reading sometimes because I think about other stuff while I read, and so then I forget what I'm reading and I have to start over. There are just so many chapters, and we had homework every single day, and it was just too much to keep up. Then, I'd get behind.
>
> Me: So, what grade did you end up making in his class?
>
> Betty: I think that I barely made an A. It was like a 90.8.
>
> Me: Still, though, you made an A. But, out of all of the stuff that he had you read, how much did you actually read? Let's say out of 10, how many did you read from cover to cover?
>
> Betty: (laughing) Probably three.
>
> Me: And, even when you were required to annotate, how many did you read?
>
> Betty: I wouldn't read the whole passage. We'd have to do like six pages and I would just skim them to figure out what to annotate.
>
> Me: How does someone not read and still make an A in the class, especially when the teacher isn't giving you the answers?
>
> Betty: Some of them, he would talk about before we read them, or whatever, before it was due he would talk about "we're gonna be reading," and then I would just mark it. And, my mom, she always tells me to read the first sentence on every paragraph if I don't have time to read all of it so that I know what's going on.

Although annotating the text was meant to promote close reading and analysis, it seemed to have the opposite effect on Betty. Instead, she admitted that it promoted an impersonal connection with the literature so that she was more focused on completing the assignment than investing in the story. In addition, homework assignments like these reinforced Betty's belief that reading was simply something that teachers assigned for homework; it was meant for busywork and nothing more.

Quizzes and Worksheets

All four participants' attributed the development of fake-reading strategies to reading quizzes and worksheets designed by secondary teachers to prove that they completed assigned reading. Participants explained that they became so focused on reading the text for correct answers that they usually ignored the content all together. As a result, when participants' teachers used quizzes that consistently focused on lower-order thinking skills, they admitted that no inference, no interpretation, and no critical thinking took place. According to Jenny, they were too busy "cramming for the test to get anything out of the book."

Bree specifically criticized the constant, superficial quizzing over school-assigned reading through Accelerated Reader (AR), which, in her mind, devalued the reading process. In Bree's school district, students were required to participate in AR throughout high school, with their scores impacting overall English grades. When asked how the AR quizzes affected her views on reading school-assigned texts, Bree said the following:

> Yeah, the quality of books weren't good, and they wanted us to read off that list sometimes and that was more work. I didn't like them so much. . . . I don't think our school system really emphasized reading.

When asked to explain what she meant by saying, “I don’t think our school system really emphasized reading,” Bree said that she felt like her school district relied too heavily on AR to promote reading rather than teachers “drawing students into a book” to talk about more important themes. She believed that, by simply requiring students to read for AR, the district felt as though it had accomplished its duty in promoting literacy; when, Bree felt that it had accomplished the opposite effect. She expressed a deep concern for the negative feelings AR evoked in her, and her classmates, throughout elementary and secondary school. Because she loved to read for pleasure during her personal time, AR did not de-motivate her from reading overall; however, Bree said that it did create a wide chasm between her value of reading for pleasure and reading school-assigned texts. Jenny articulated the chasm between taking a quiz over a book versus investing time to connect with it when she explained,

> I think it does make a difference because we [want to do more than] answer questions about the book. Because sometimes there’s a question and it’s either hit or miss [right or wrong]. Well, if we have to interpret it in our lives, there isn’t really a miss. It’s either one way or the other; it’s not missing the question. Then, you see, if I think something is one way, then someone else thinks it’s another way, then we get to see both sides and it might change my view on it. (Jenny)

All four participants felt as though they never really had the opportunity to interpret books into their lives throughout secondary school. Instead, reading seemed consistently linked to some kind of check-point, which they placed little value.

In addition to quizzes, another check-point that participants identified as a staple of their secondary English classrooms was worksheets. For example, one of Betty’s teachers assigned literary term sheets (See Figure 4.1) for students to complete while reading each piece of literature. The goal of this assignment was to have students independently recognize literary elements within the assigned text.

Figure 4.1

Term	Definition	Passage in Story	Explanation of Significance
Allegory			
Alliteration			

Each term sheet consisted of approximated twenty-five literary terms, and students were supposed to define the term, document the passage where this term was used, and then explain how the passage fit the term. According to Betty, the teacher never discussed the terms or term sheets in class and never set their importance in context. As a result, she viewed it as a pointless activity but an easy A.

> We had to do a lit terms sheet. You don't have to read for that because you just have to find examples. I would just skim through and find the terms. (Betty)

Out of the five books that the class was assigned to read, Betty only read one without skimming, and she made a 99 in the class.

David's secondary English teachers also relied on worksheets to teach school-assigned texts. Although the structure of the worksheets differed from those Betty was required to complete, they often promoted the same lower-order thinking skills. According to David, the worksheets had

> …questions on them, and it said, "read from this page to this page and answer the questions." And, then, whenever we would come into class the next time, we would go over the questions and discuss how it applies to different literary terms, like pathos, logos, ethos. (David)

David further explained that the questions were very concrete, and didn't require any interpretation; mostly, they addressed themes and analysis that were commonly discussed in numerous online sources such as Sparknotes. He admitted that students

"just Spark-noted it, literally, the morning of class, and then they would go in there and read the Sparknotes off." According to him, teachers rarely caught students who used Sparknotes; as a result, it was the main strategy for fake reading. Because he was so self-conscious about his grades, however, David said that he only used Sparknotes to complete worksheets when he was overwhelmed:

> Like, whenever I was loaded down with other homework and stuff and didn't have time to read, I'd read the quick summary of it and try to fill them out the best that I can, then [I'd] get help from my friends. I mean, that was the last resort. (David)

When teachers occasionally asked interpretive questions (i.e., What do you think is going on with this character?) on worksheets, David, like the other three participants, relied on classmates who had read the assignment to fill in the gaps.

All four participants admitted to using Sparknotes or friends to cram for quizzes and complete worksheets at some point in their educational careers to help them fake their way through school-assigned texts. While David and Bree expressed embarrassment for admitting this strategy because they felt that it was cheating, Betty and Jenny admitted their strategies without apology because they disliked teachers "wasting their time."

No connection

All four participants lacked developing a connection with school-assigned texts, which contributed to the development of fake-reading strategies. Each viewed reading as "homework," a series of quizzes and worksheets, instead of meaningful learning opportunities. Although none of the participants used the term *formalism* to describe their literature instruction throughout secondary school, they each described English classrooms that incorporated New Critical approaches to teaching literature. By

eliminating, or devaluing, their personal interpretations from classroom discussion, participants felt as though their English teachers contributed to their development as resistive readers.

> Yeah, like we didn't get to discuss anything in high school. Like abortion and stuff, we just didn't talk about that in high school. Everything's [referring to books read in class] not like real life…We read *The Scarlett Letter* and, I mean, we acted like there weren't actually girls out there like that. It was like, "Oh, this was a really long time ago, and everyone shunned her, and they did it for a good reason." And, I felt like it wasn't really for a good reason, and I wanted to talk about, like, people now that are doing that. Well, you can't do that. You're not allowed to actually talk about it. So, it made it seem like it wasn't real. (Jenny)

For Jenny, she was engaged enough with *The Scarlet Letter* (Hawthorne, 1850) that she made a personal connection (on her own) between Puritan society shunning an adulteress and current society shunning young girls for pre-marital sex and abortion. Jenny wanted to explore this connection, but she said that her teachers would never allow it because it was "too uncomfortable" and "someone might get mad." Instead, her teachers discouraged personal interpretations and connections by keeping discussions and assignments focused on set themes, literary devices, and historical context. As a result, Jenny felt as though her opinion didn't matter, and she further lost interest in reading school-assigned texts.

Jenny's criticism was not isolated. Betty, Bree and David shared her frustration when they claimed that the literature they were assigned to read did not reflect any real-life relevance. While they understood the importance of discussing specific themes and literary elements ("because it was on the test") within school-assigned texts, they felt as though teachers put too much emphasis on those elements. As a result, they lost interest and sought ways to avoid reading.

> Some of the stuff was good, but I remember my senior year we read *The Poisonwood Bible* and it was really boring. It was our summer assignment and we had to write a paper over it when we came back. It was awful. And we read *Lord of the Flies*. That was boring, too. I mean, it's just so old. I don't like old stories. (Betty)

Interestingly, Betty's father, like the pastor in *The Poisonwood Bible* (Kingsolver, 1998), was a Baptist pastor whose job was transient until she reached middle school. Betty recalled that, for this novel, her teacher required an analytical essay where students were supposed to discuss specific themes and literary. While Betty read, she focused on scavenging for examples of literary elements and pre-set themes that she knew her teacher wanted discussed in the analysis rather than developing a connection with the content. The teaching approach that Betty experienced with *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998) and *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1954) mirrored the same teaching style experienced by Jenny, Bree and David throughout their secondary English classrooms..

Boredom

All four participants claim they dislike reading school-assigned texts because they are "boring." They felt that teachers (or school districts) selected books that were poor quality or tedious. Even when they tried to relate to some aspect in assigned texts, teachers diminished their interest either by refusing to let them explore personal connections or by assigning "meaningless" homework. Olufobi and Makinde (2011) articulate the consensus of participants when they explain, "In other words, a literate person now sees reading and writing as a chore or a task rather than as a pleasure. It implies the ability to read but an indifference and boredom with reading for academic and enrichment purposes" (p. 825). Even though all of the participants expressed negative feelings concerning school-assigned texts, Jenny seemed to have the most extreme reaction:

> Jenny: When I sit down to read, I'm just thinking all of these thoughts of things that I could be doing, like something else. I don't even realize it, and I'm just turning pages. I'm reading words and the book's not in my head.
>
> Me: Is it the sitting still and the quiet? What do you think it is?
>
> Jenny: I mean, I can sit still and literally sit in a room and be bored and do nothing.
>
> Me: Would you choose that over reading?
>
> Jenny: Yes.

Although Jenny had expressed that she found reading boring in her primary years, her extreme dislike for reading school-assigned texts had intensified as she moved through each grade-level. She admitted that because of this extreme dislike stemming from boredom, she had not read a book all of the way through since first grade.

While Jenny currently refused to read anything longer than Facebook statuses, Betty viewed reading as a necessary evil to make good grades. She completed assignments when she had to, which was rare.

> Betty: It's just boring. I don't know. I just feel like I have better things to do. I just think it's boring.
>
> Me: When you read to yourself, do you lose interest?
>
> Betty: Yeah. It's like, well, just like some books are super slow starting and I just get bored…But, I think that English is really boring, but I've always been good at it.

Betty acknowledged that she had been able to excel in English classes because of the reading strategies that her mother had taught her (i.e., read the topic sentence to know the focus of the paragraph), but she didn't feel as though she was really learning anything. As a result, she didn't bother reading more than she had to in order to earn the desired grade. Unlike Jenny, however, Betty didn't dislike reading to the point that she

would never engage in the activity. She periodically read books during her free time when she felt that they were interesting or that she had the time.

Brozo et al. (2008) document that reading interest among adolescents usually begins to drop around fourth grade (p. 307). Gallagher (2007), Burke (2010), and Beers (2007) have conjectured the reasons for this drop, such as the introduction of standardized testing, transitioning to more academic reading, and changing interests of youth as they move into adolescence. Bree and David, unfortunately, were no exception to this drop. Both of these participants began associating boredom with reading school-assigned texts in approximately the fourth grade. When asked to pin-point one of the causes of boredom, Bree cited Accelerated Reader (AR):

> Me: So, AR. When did you guys have to start doing that?
>
> Bree: I want to say about 4th grade. You have to have 15 points for the fall semester and spring semester.
>
> Me: Do you remember if that made reading fun for you or not?
>
> Bree: No, it was just read-test-read-test.

According to Bree, her school district placed such a strong emphasis on AR points that her English teachers developed their curriculum around the approved texts and based grades off of the test scores. Because she felt that the quality of books was poor and none of them were discussed outside of the AR test, she gradually lost interest in completing reading assignments. David, on the other hand, explained that he lost interest in reading about the fourth grade because his hobbies and interests began shifting away from school.

> I just got tired of [reading], and I didn't really read at all after that. And I didn't like to read. I think it had to do with what was around me at the time. . . And , I think that this atmosphere of "schools not the only thing there," like, I had other interests. I was dirt-bike riding and other things like that, so I think it was kind of like I quit reading because it wasn't as much fun as doing all of that. (David)

David admitted that length of books had a big influence on whether or not he wanted to take the time to read them. Until the fourth grade, he had been reading the *Harry Potter* series, but lost interest once the books became "too long." The more active David became with sports and hobbies, the less time he devoted to school-assigned, and pleasure, reading.

Fake-Reading Strategies

The four main strategies participants used to fake-read school-assigned texts were skimming (scanning in lieu of reading), ripping (using online summaries as test and essay preparation), mooching (getting information needed through conversations with friends), and schmoozing (getting information needed through informal chats with the teacher and in-class discussion). The most prominent strategy among three of the four participants (Betty, Jenny, and David) was skimming the text. Bree did not practice skimming because of the following: "I know a lot people can just skim through it and they do really well, but for me I can't do it. I have to understand it as a whole." The goal of skimming was to know just enough about what was going on in the story to answer teachers' questions effectively. Betty explained that for skimming to work, however, she had to complete the first two assigned readings so that she could learn the teaching and grading style of the teacher. Once she learned the type of information the teacher expected students to express in discussions, the elements of the novel that the teacher reinforced, the types of homework assigned, and how closely he or she graded,

Betty used that information to implement skimming techniques to fake her way through the rest of the class.

> Betty: Well, for [this teacher's] class, we had to read portions of a book and have quizzes. The quizzes are really easy because they're multiple choice based on the reading. I don't read that. I just skim through it. I made a 90 in the class.
>
> Me: And, how much did you actually read in there? And, we're going to say that skimming is not reading- even though it's a reading technique.
>
> Betty: I've probably read one page.

Like Betty, David used the first few assignments in a class to gauge which assignments he could skim and which he couldn't. He paid attention to the types of questions teachers asked about the text, the nature of assignments, and how closely teachers graded work. Jenny, too, incorporated the same skimming techniques throughout her English classrooms.

> Jenny: I mean, I'd read what I had to. Like, if I knew that I had to read Chapter 1, I'd read the first page, the middle page, and the last page. That way, at least I got something about the details. As long as I knew what happened in the beginning what happened in the end and what kind of happened in the middle.
>
> Me: What happened if your teacher asked you something specific?
>
> Jenny: I just pretended that I couldn't remember the details. He'd be like, "Then what happened then?" I'd be, like, "Uh, I can't remember. I didn't know."

Because Jenny knew just enough details from skimming, she said that she was able to trick the teacher into giving her the correct answers because she made him assume that she'd innocently forgotten the information.

When students didn't have enough time to skim the text, they often relied on other sources of information. Somewhat surprisingly, David was the only one who consulted online resources such as Sparknotes. Because the quizzes and worksheets that his teachers made him complete reflected literary analysis found among most online sources, he didn't see the need in reading the actual book. Bree and Jenny never

mentioned using online sources to fake-read, and Betty disliked using Sparknotes because “it’s too long, too!” She felt that if she as going to take the time to read Sparknotes, she might as well read the actual book. Instead, when skimming failed to work, she, like all of the other participants, relied on friends to fill in the gaps. For instance, each resistive reader identified classmates who consistently completed all of the reading assignments. They would befriend that student, if they weren’t friends already, and ask him or her to help them with assignments. If the class was conducting a discussion, then they would approach the classmate earlier in the day to ask him or her to tell them all of the details that they missed from not reading. As a result, relying on friends had become the most successful strategy because participants were able to work with someone who’d actually completed the reading and could answer the questions (even interpretive ones) effectively.

The fourth fake-reading strategy that all four participants capitalized on was teacher-led lectures and discussions. According to participants, when teachers lectured, they usually told students everything they needed to know about the text – significant passages, overarching themes, historical and cultural contexts, to name a few. Students simply wrote this information down so that they could repeat it on a test, or in an essay, meant to assess their knowledge of the book. David admitted that he preferred this kind of teaching strategy because it was extremely easy and it didn’t require much work on his part: “I’m not going to lie, I think that I could get by without reading because we talk about it, but don’t really do any other work with it.” When teachers led a whole class discussion, participants felt that each discussion point had preconceived answers that their teachers wanted them to formulate. As a result, they knew that if they

remained silent, the teacher would either slip into a lecture that was meant to guide them to the desired response or call on another student: "[resistive readers] wait for people in front of them to go, then they can just reword what the other person said. I think that happens quite a bit" (Bree).

What Motivates Resistive Readers?

When asked, "What motivates you to read school-assigned texts?", all four participants replied, "Grades." According to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), "Reading motivation is defined as 'the individual's personal goals, values and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading'" (p. 3). Because most of her high school English grades were based on AR points, Bree associated reading for school with passing tests. Jenny admitted that her obsession with good grades was thrust upon her by her parents because she was always compared to her older sister: "I wasn't allowed to get a C because my sister graduated with a four-point-whatever, so of course I had to be like she was" (Jenny). As a result, Jenny was expected to enroll in the same AP classes that her sister took in high school and make the same, if not better, grades. Betty, too, expressed that grades motivated her "more than anything" (Betty). Although Betty's parents placed importance on grades, she didn't feel the pressure to be perfect that Jenny did. Betty's desire to earn good grades mostly came from the knowledge that she was capable and she felt that the work was so easy that it would be an embarrassment not to earn As – even if she didn't actually complete all of the work. David's desire to earn good grades, however, stemmed from two sources: his parents and his sense of responsibility to teammates.

> I played sports and I knew that if I wasn't eligible then…I mean, I don't like letting people down…and if I was ineligible, then I wouldn't get to help the team. That was the main motivation. One: not to upset my parents, and two: not to let down people who needed me. (David)

When his grades faltered at the beginning of his freshman and sophomore years of high school, his parents threatened to transfer him to another school. Because he felt that they would follow through on their threat, he developed strategies to ensure that he maintained an acceptable GPA.

Unwind Multiliteracy Project Results

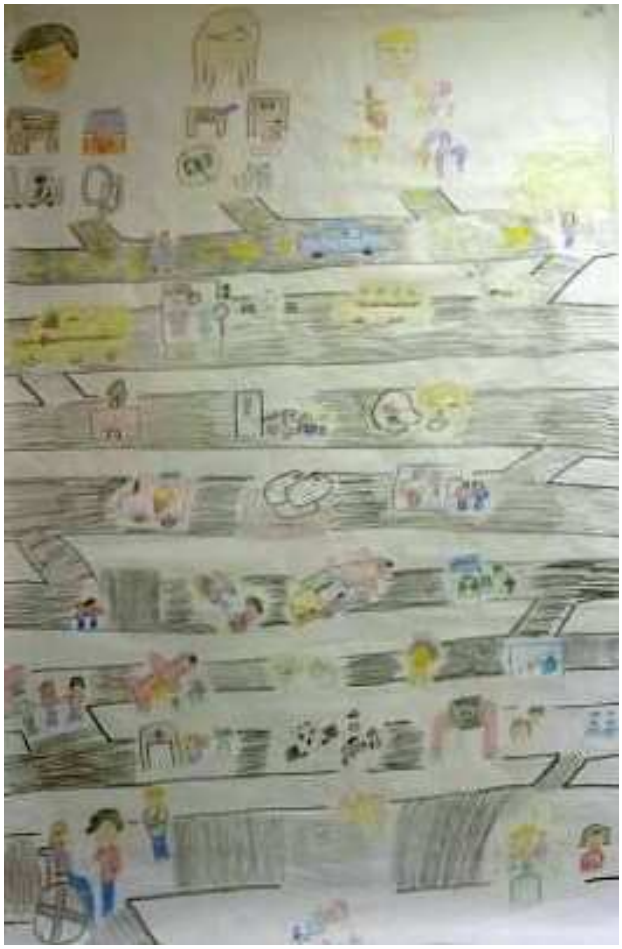
Because the English Composition I curriculum centered on Lunsford, Ruszkiewicz, and Walters' 5th Edition of *Everything's an Argument* (2010), the goal of the course was to explore various forms of real-life arguments as they were presented through various forms of media. One of those forms was through the novel *Unwind* (2007). We used the novel as a catalyst to explore real life debates (civil law versus moral law; the first partial-facial transplant in France in 2005; euthanasia; bio-ethics) that were depicted throughout sections of the novel. While reading the novel, students completed a series of assignments meant to promote close reading and personal transaction with the text (See Appendix A). Of the four participants, Jenny and David read the entire novel ahead of schedule and completed all of the assignments while Betty and Bree did not read the novel and were unable to complete all of the assignments.

Jenny

When given the Latty Goodwin Survey (see Appendix D), Jenny anticipated earning an A on the *Unwind* project. At the conclusion of the project, she completed each phase of the *Unwind* project to earn a 97%. On a scale from one to five (one

representing “strongly dislike” and five representing “strongly like”), she gave each phase of the *Unwind* project a five-and-a-half (for survey see Appendix E). Her favorite multiliteracy activity was the memory map. The memory map was inspired by Dunning and Stafford’s (1992) *Getting the Knack; Poetry Writing Exercises.* To complete the memory map, students worked with a partner, selected significant scenes from each reading section of the novel, and depicted the journey of each main character by mapping out those scenes from the beginning of the novel to the end. In order to promote visual literacy, students were only allowed to use images to convey the scenes that they chose, and the images had to incorporate contextual evidence.

Figure 4.2



Jenny used the map to help her remember the plot and mentally organize characters and events to keep her engaged with the text.

> I'm hands-on. I want to be able to touch whatever I'm going to do, and not just flip a page and read it. I want to actually go see this is what's going to happen and visualize. Maybe I can draw it out. That helps me 10x more because I actually am paying attention, I actually want to know what's happening, and I can see what's happening instead of, "Okay, the dog ran down the street." I can actually draw the street and know what kind of street it was. Cause, then I remember all of the details. (Jenny)

While completing the *Unwind* project, Jenny often came to class thirty minutes early to work on her memory map and other genres. She also used this time to talk about the book, ask questions, and discuss things that confused her. When asked what motivated her to read the novel, she responded,

> Doing all the work as we went along in the book made me want to read what happens next, and made me want to see what I got to do next. As well as the fact that I actually remembered details about the book when I did things step by step. All the different genres made me want to see what all I could do. Another thing I like about the genres is that I had a choice of what to do. That made me really actually want to do the work as well because instead of [the teacher] telling me what I had to do, I actually got a choice of what to do; it felt like I was doing the work because I wanted to, not because it was mandatory. It made it feel like it wasn't really an assignment, which made me relax about it. (Jenny)

Jenny was very proud of herself for reading the novel because she had not read an entire book since *Green Eggs and Ham* (Seuss, 1960) in elementary school. In fact, she wrote the following in her personal reflection concerning the novel:

> I'm so glad that you made us read that book because it opened my eyes to so many other things that are happening in this world. It made me see things that were outside my norm and it made me realize that my wants aren't what needs to go first. I feel that more people in the world need to read this book. (Jenny)

Jenny enjoyed this novel and project so much that she planned to read the sequel *Unwholly* (2012) as soon as it came out. Part of the reason that Jenny enjoyed the project so much was because she spent considerable time online, and gravitated to

assignments that allowed her to use computer literacy and technology skills. She consistently posted to online discussion boards more than the three-post minimum, and she created two additional book trailers about *Unwind* (2007) "just for fun."

David

When given the Latty Goodwin Survey (see Appendix D), David anticipated earning an A on the project. At the completion of the project, he had completed each phase of the *Unwind* project to earn a 98%. On a scale from one to five (one representing "strongly dislike" and five representing "strongly like"), he gave each phase of the *Unwind* project a three (indifferent) with the book trailer and literary analysis receiving twos while the memory map and personal reflection earned fours (like). In fact, when allowed to place comments along with ratings, all of the ratings with threes gave the following reason: "It was for a grade"; the book trailer comments said, "I didn't know how to use the website well, and it was difficult," while the literary analysis read, "Papers are papers"; and the memory map comments said, "It was fun to do," and the personal reflection was, "I like voicing my opinion." Even though he was indifferent to most aspects of the project, he did state that he appreciated the autonomy that students were given throughout the process:

> I liked how we were able to choose what we wanted to do instead of having a strict outline of "you have to do this, this, and this." Having the freedom to do what I felt like made the project easier. (David)

He went on to say that completing different genre assignments while reading the novel helped him to slow down and pay closer attention to the text when, usually, he simply "skims through it, not really caring what's going on as long as I get the main picture for what's going on in each section." He went on to say in his personal reflection that

> I enjoyed the book a lot; it's one of the most entertaining ones I've ever read. By doing this assignment, I have looked deeper into the book than I normally would have. Having a creative look onto a book's characters and plot really shows a bigger picture and I found that pretty cool. (David)

However, even though David appreciated the ability to choose which genre he wanted to create throughout the project, and the assignments helped him connect to the book, his biggest motivator always remained grades.

When asked what motivated him to read *Unwind* (2007), he cited the required discussion posts because they were for a grade. Even then, they made him apprehensive:

> David: I mean, I like doing discussions, but I don't really like to voice my opinion very much because I'm really shy; I'm not outspoken or anything. So, I feel like if I say anything then it might be the same way that someone else interprets it, and I don't want to be put on that spot.
>
> Me: So, even with the online discussion boards, did you feel like you were putting yourself out there, waiting for someone to pick you apart?
>
> David: Yeah, I really felt like that. And, like, I don't know why I'm so self-conscious about stuff like that. It's just I just don't really voice my opinion that often.

Instead of viewing the discussion posts as a positive, non-threatening compliment to in-class discussions like Jenny did (where she had time to think about and articulate her responses), David dreaded them. He worried about other students disagreeing with him in such a public forum, and having his ideas and opinions exposed for everyone to criticize. Because of this apprehension, he made sure that he kept up with the reading assignments so that he would not get embarrassed by making incorrect comments or interpretations.

Unlike Jenny, David did not enjoy assignments that required technology or computer skills. He was so active with sports that he rarely got online and was ignorant

when it came to using various forms of media (i.e. moviemaker, onetruemedia, etc.). His computer usage before my class was limited to typing research papers on Microsoft Word and hitting "print"; therefore, assignments that required computer and technology skills were more frustrating to him than motivating. In addition, he only completed the reading assignments to earn a good grade on the project.

> I only read books when they are assigned because I'm either too busy to actually read one or I can think of something more active and exciting to do at the time. I like being up and moving around, so sitting somewhere and reading just doesn't really suit me. (David)

David reads when it's required to earn good grades. Even though he enjoyed *Unwind* (2007) because this project motivated him to read the assigned text, it did not motivate him to read of his own volition.

Betty

According to the Reflective Survey (Appendix E), Betty did not read *Unwind* (2007) because she "didn't have time." Even though she did not read the text, she still anticipated earning an A on the project; however, she earned a 76%. She was unable to complete most of the assignments effectively because they required close reading, contextual evidence, and parenthetical notation whereas her skimming only provided a superficial summary of events. As a result, Betty often completed in-class assignments as homework so that she could get help from classmates who read, which was the only way that she was able to complete all of the phases to earn a C. When asked to rate the various aspects of the project on a scale from one to five (one representing "strongly dislike" and five representing "strongly like"), Betty rated everything with either a one or two. Although she did not provide comments for each rating, she did make the following criticism in her personal reflection:

> I did not really like doing all of the genres for this novel. I felt like some of it was unnecessary and a bit childish. Although I did not like doing all the genres, I did like the fact that the project was very diverse. However, I wish that the genres could be more sophisticated. (Betty)

She immediately followed this criticism, however, by saying that

> Although I did not like doing all the genres, I did like the fact that this project was very diverse. I feel like it was a lot more enjoyable than writing a really long paper, for example. As a whole, I did enjoy the project more than any others because it was completely different, to mix it up a bit. (Betty)

And, when asked to discuss her thoughts on the novel on the final discussion forum, she made the following post:

> I really liked the book. I will most likely read the next one. I really don't like reading, and rarely finish any books. I finished this one because it was just really good and it always kept me entertained. It was never boring, and it didn't really have a slow start. That's the main reason that I never finish books, because I feel like it takes forever to get into the story. (Betty)

Conversely, when asked about reading *Unwind* (2007) during the personal interview after grades were posted, Betty said that she couldn't get into the book because it had such a slow start, which is why she didn't read it.

Throughout the project, Betty gave conflicting information depending on how she perceived that it might affect her grade. For instance, while the project was taking place, she never admitted that she was not reading. At the beginning of each class, when I asked each student to tell me where they were in the reading and what they thought about the book, she always said that she was "a little behind," but that she "planned to catch up over the weekend." She also consistently repeated what most of the students before her said concerning her thoughts on the book as well as pretended to forget details so that I would move on to the next student. After the third class where she gave the same response, she started arriving late so that she did not have to participate in these discussions.

Betty and Bree worked together throughout the project. In fact, they chose each other as partners to complete the memory map. Each class period, while she was supposed to be working on aspects of the project, she sat with Bree talking. When I approached them to ask if they needed help, both girls always said that they knew what they wanted to do, but they couldn't draw – even though drawing was only required for one assignment (memory map) out of twenty (seven discussion forums, ten creative pieces of their choice, one book trailer, one personal reflection, and one literary analysis). When I advised them to draw stick figures, they told me that they were taking their time to decide which scenes were the best to depict. By the end of the project, the paper remained blank and they were unable to complete the map.

One of the assignments that Betty especially despised was discussion forums about the novel; this was also one of the main ways that she cheated.

> Betty: I hate doing those. And, I would just read it and copy off of what other people said.
>
> Me: I think that a lot of people do that. I mean, it's the same as in the classroom. They're hearing what everyone else is saying so that when they take the test, or even the essay exam, and teacher is like "yeah, that's a great point," you're like *write it down* because that's the answer.
>
> Betty: Right.

Betty did not spend much time online, and when she did, she wanted to be checking out Facebook, not completing discussion posts about a book. Betty's admission to cheating on discussion forums was no surprise to me. In fact, my biggest frustration with discussion forums were that they were simply electronic versions of in-class discussions where resistive readers are able to obtain all of the information without doing any of the work. Even though I tried to incorporate interpretation and personal opinion within each forum, Betty always waited until everyone had posted so that she could read their posts

and formulate a logical response. After reading several discussion forums where her responses were too general and repetitive of what other students said, and she was always one of the last to post, I suspected that she wasn't reading, but I wasn't sure how to confront her without knowing for sure. In order to make sure that Betty's responses were based on her personal thoughts and literary analysis, and curb cheating, I instituted a new policy for the final three discussion forums for the project. I posted clarifying questions to each student's initial response asking for specific examples from the text to back up claims – I didn't want anyone to feel singled-out. Students were then required to respond to my posts within twenty-fours to earn credit for the assignment. If they did not respond, they did not earn credit for posting. Although Betty continued to post last and repeat what other students communicated, she never responded to my posts.

Betty disliked the entire *Unwind* (2007) project. Throughout the project she seemed bored and disengaged. Although her reflective survey (Appendix E) stated that connecting events in the novel with real-world issues (via articles posted as part of the discussion forums) made the book more interesting, she admitted that she didn't read any of the articles because they were "too long" (approximately a page-and-a-half). In order to complete the project, Betty relied heavily on friends and discussion posts when her skimming techniques failed.

Bree

According to the reflective survey (Appendix E), Bree read parts of *Unwind* (2007) so that she could complete the assignments, but did not read all of it because she "didn't have time" and the plot "was boring." Interestingly, when I met with her for the interview, she repeatedly pretended as though she read the entire novel. Even after

asking her directly, she said that she read it. Assuming she felt more comfortable expressing her thoughts via email rather than face-to-face, I emailed her the following message after the interview to seek clarification:

Figure 4.3

Hey Bree,

Okay, I just double-checked the surveys you guys completed and your survey said that you did not read all of UNWIND? So, can you answer the following for me?
1. How far did you get in UNWIND?
2. What were your reasons for not reading it?
3. Tell me about the strategies you used to complete the project assignments without reading the novel.
4. Why do you think your response to the survey was different than the face to face interview where you said you've read all of your assignments?

Thanks so much, Bree! Your responses have been really helpful.

Bree never responded. As a result, I do not know definitively why she felt compelled to lie.

Even though Bree did not read the entire text, she anticipated earning a B on the project. She earned a 79%. Because she is a journalism major, Bree enjoyed completing assignments that incorporated composition; however, she did not like assignments that required computer or visual literacy because it was "too hard" and she didn't consider herself creative. When asked to rate the various aspects of the project on a scale from one to five (one representing "strongly dislike" and five representing "strongly like"), she rated written assignments with fives (because "they were easy") while anything she considered a challenge earned ones. She also rated the discussion forums with a three (indifferent). Her main criticism was that the project needed to focus more on composition than "making up crafts."

> I somewhat felt overwhelmed by the project. I think it would have been a lot easier if we would have done more writing instead of finding our inner artist. . . Some people really do enjoy being creative and unique with their artistic talents, but for people like me who can't even draw a circle very well it can be really challenging and very stressful.

When we met for the interview, I asked her what she thought teachers might do to motivate resistive readers to read, and she replied: "I thought what you did last semester was a pretty good system, like the mini projects. Like, what you did was motivation, not just read, read, read" (Bree). Based upon Bree's conflicting responses, and refusal to provide clarification, I do not know her actual impressions of the *Unwind* project. I do not know if she disliked the project because she disliked the multiliteracy activities or if she disliked the project because it challenged her ability to fake-read.

Bree did share with me during a class that she didn't like reading the novel because it was science fiction, which she hated. In addition, when students were assigned to work on self-selected creative pieces, Bree and Betty used the class time to skim the text or read specific passages or scenes mentioned by other students during the whole class discussion. Both girls regularly requested to complete assignments as homework. When Bree submitted her assignments, they were usually similar to Betty's, and both usually represented the same scene mentioned earlier by classmates.

Teacher Reflection

Prior to beginning the project, I explained to students the research basis for linking multiliteracy activities to reading the novel *Unwind* (2007). I also explained how the project fit within the context of the theme of our course: Everything's an Argument. Throughout the project, however, I struggled with helping students see the value in multiliteracy activities. The general consensus was, "I'm not creative."

Students grew frustrated with assignments because they did not have clear-cut guidelines that assured a certain letter grade. As a result, I consistently heard the exasperated request, “Just tell me what you want.” While my goal was to use multiliteracy activities to promote deep reading and critical thinking, students’ goals were grades. Unless I assigned daily homework points, the majority of students wouldn’t do the activities, even when allotted class time. Instead, they preferred reading quizzes, straightforward homework assignments, and teacher lectures. While some students eventually gravitated to being creative, and told me that they were glad that I allowed them to express themselves, I was never able to convince others who saw little value in the learning experience.

As the project progressed, I was able to identify students who were not reading the book at all – either through conversations or their inability to complete assignments. In addition, I knew that many of these students were using friends to fake their way through assignments because I would hear them explain the plot to each other as they tried to complete memory maps. In an effort to curb this, I modified assignment requirements to rely more heavily on contextual evidence to back up personal interpretations, thinking that they might be forced to read in order to complete the assignments. Although this strategy motivated some to read a particular section so that they could meet the minimum requirements to earn a good grade, many continued to rely on friends to fill in the gaps. Unfortunately, I never discovered a strategy to offset this fake-reading strategy. In fact, I do not know if a strategy exists that can override students’ willingness to help each other cheat..

Many students claimed that they struggled to complete reading because they didn't have time. Most of the students were enrolled in fifteen credit hours or more and participated in athletics. To aid students, I incorporated more silent sustained reading (SSR) time into my curriculum to promote more meaningful literacy. By affording class time that allowed students to read slowly and deliberately, they practiced longer periods of engagement with the text. In fact, several students used this time to find a quiet location and read the text out loud to each other so that they could stop and discuss events and confusion as they emerged. Ultimately, students who had fallen considerably behind in their reading expressed appreciation that they were given time to complete the work rather than a lecture on how they didn't.

Conclusion

This chapter presented fake-reading strategies that four resistive readers practiced to fake their way through school-assigned texts and the reasons for them. Participants claimed that skimming (scanning in lieu of reading), ripping (using online summaries as test and essay preparation), mooching (getting information needed through conversations with friends), and schmoozing (getting information needed through informal chats with the teacher and in-class discussion) were the dominant strategies, and grades were their most powerful motivator. As a result, Ryan and Deci (2000) claim, "*because many tasks that educators want their students to perform are not inherently interesting or enjoyable, knowing how to promote more active and volitional . . . . forms of extrinsic motivation becomes an essential strategy for successful teaching"* (p. 55, original italics). Therefore, this chapter also discusses the four participants' reactions to the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project, which was designed to promote deep reading. At the project's completion, participants' reactions were mixed

with two completing the reading while two continued to implement fake-reading strategies.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

"You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them." – Ray Bradbury

The goal of this study was to discover fake-reading strategies resistive readers use to fake their way through school-assigned texts. Since NCTE promotes a multiliteracy approach to meet students' needs, I wanted to explore resistive readers' fake reading strategies in relation to the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project. I wanted to know if the multiliteracy activities throughout the project motivated resistive readers to engage with the school assigned text or if they chose to modify their strategies to overcome new obstacles. I used participant feedback to explore the effectiveness of assignments as well as feedback for what teachers can do to promote reading to future resistive readers.

Statement of Problem and Study Objectives

While attending NCTE conferences during the past four years, a seemingly growing complaint among English teachers from all levels is that students avoid reading assigned texts. Previously, this complaint mostly referred to reluctant readers, readers who struggled with decoding print text. The complaint, however, has recently surfaced among teachers who teach proficient readers, readers who typically excel at decoding print text. These are students known for good grades, academic focus, college-readiness, and classroom engagement. In reality, these are students who are bored with the curriculum, disengaged in the classroom, and fake their way through school-assigned texts to earn good grades. To fake readers, reading is not associated with

learning; it's associated with quizzes, worksheets, tests, and lectures where they are passive bystanders going through the motions.

For many resistive readers, grades are the only motivator. They purposefully develop fake-reading strategies so that they can earn good grades without doing any of the work. Broz (2011) hypothesizes that fake reading strategies develop in secondary classrooms with the help of teachers. David Pearson (2000) explains that a New Critical approach to literature instruction has remained a dominant force despite the efforts of Rosenblatt's (1978/1938) transactional theory to add value to the reader's background knowledge and interpretation of the text. Kohn (2010) claims that this style of teaching is potentially dangerous because it can reinforce nonreading practices:

> When parents ask, "What did you do in school today?", kids often respond, "Nothing." Howard Gardner (1991) pointed out that they're probably right, because "typically school is *done to* students." This sort of enforced passivity is particularly characteristic of classrooms where students are excluded from shaping the curriculum, where they're on the receiving end of lecturing and questions, assignments and assessments. One result is a conspicuous absence of critical, creative thinking – something that (irony alert!) the most controlling teachers are likely to blame on the students themselves, who are said to be irresponsible, unmotivated, apathetic, immature, and so on. (pp. 19-20)

Many resistive readers do not find reading material in school interesting or relevant; as a result, they avoid doing it. The main concern with this practice is the knowledge that literacy skills can deplete over time if they are not used. Hence, this study sought to identify strategies that resistive readers used to fake their way through school-assigned texts.

Study Setting, Participants, and Design

Since 2008, I have experienced a growing population of resistive readers in English Composition I courses. The purpose of this study was to discover fake-reading strategies four college freshmen employed to pass English Composition I. The study

also sought to explore resistive readers' reaction to multiliteracy teaching strategies to promote close reading of an assigned text.

This embedded case study was qualitative in design and attempted to describe and explore issues and themes that emerged throughout the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project (see Appendix A). These issues and themes focused on participants' beliefs about reading, ways that those beliefs informed their reading habits in relation to school-assigned texts, types of secondary school literature instruction each experienced, the impact that secondary school literature instruction had on their beliefs, and reactions to the multiliteracy project. The study involved four resistive readers in a common setting where they worked in close proximity of one another as they completed the project.

Throughout the data collection process, semi-structured and informal interviews were used to clarify statements, behaviors, and survey responses of each participant. Each data source allowed for a deeper understanding of the rationale behind participants' beliefs about reading in the context of literature instruction, which influenced fake-reading strategies. Triangulation of data collection for this study involved five general approaches: (1) interviews (informal and semi-structured), (2) surveys, (3) observation field notes, (4) reflections, (5) project grades. By observing resistive readers' reading habits in conjunction with multiliteracy teaching strategies through multiple lens, a deeper understanding existed for motives behind fake reading strategies, ways that students implemented fake reading strategies (either consciously or subconsciously), and strategies teachers might employ to encourage fake-readers to read. Each data source was collected at different points throughout the study to provide "snapshots" of resistive readers as they progressed through the study.

Limitations of the Study

There were a number of limitations to the design of this study. The number of freshmen enrolled in English Composition I during the spring 2012 was thirty, which yielded only four study participants. Although this number of students was reflective of the average population for the College, it did not represent an adequate population of freshmen, or resistive readers, enrolled in English Composition I courses throughout higher education institutions. Another limitation was that the teacher was the researcher, resulting in the possibility that participants might not provide honest feedback for fear of negative repercussions. Because I was the teacher-researcher, the opportunity for bias to influence interpretation was greater. The strength in being the teacher-researcher, however, was that I was able to interact with participants each day inside and outside of the classroom, which provided a more holistic knowledge of students' beliefs and study habits. Because of my role as teacher, students often let their guards down and spoke candidly during informal interviews whereas they might not do the same with another researcher.

Implications of Study's Findings

Participants interviewed in the embedded case study identified four main strategies they used to fake their way through school-assigned texts: skimming (scanning in lieu of reading), ripping (using online summaries as test and essay preparation), mooching (getting information needed through conversations with friends), and schmoozing (getting information needed through informal chats with the teacher and in-class discussion). These strategies stemmed from boredom and disengagement with learning experiences throughout secondary school. Because they

were so successful in secondary school, participants admitted they applied these strategies to reading assignments in college. In an effort to engage participants with an assigned text, I designed and implemented the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project. The assignments were designed to promote deep reading, autonomy, and personal transaction. The project motivated two resistive readers (Jenny and David) to read the assigned text. They enjoyed the assigned text so much that they finished it a week ahead of schedule, completed all of their assignments, and earned As on the entire project. Conversely, two resistive readers (Betty and Bree) simply modified their strategies to complete assignments to earn passing grades.

Skimming

Skimming was the predominant fake reading strategy used by participants. Participants skimmed school-assigned reading regardless of the topic, even if it dealt with their selected majors. David confided that, if he can get away with doing less reading and earning the same grade, he will. Betty and Jenny made similar comments. Regrettably, when students skim, they seek superficial, concrete information to file away into their short term memories. Elliot et al. (2009) challenges, "…we need to help our youth develop habits and ingrained — both tacit and explicit — practices of literacy that will stay with them for the long haul, not short-term 'measurable results' that do nothing for them in the long run" (p. 523). According to Betty, Jenny, and David, constantly incorporating skimming techniques has caused them to experience diminished comprehension skills. When they actually try to read a long, complex text, they struggle to remember details, understand vocabulary, and perform higher-level thinking.

Ripping

Dynamic learning environments allow students to construct knowledge. According to Reeve and Jang (2006),

> Empirical research has shown that students with autonomy-supportive teachers, compared with students with controlling teachers, experience not only greater perceived autonomy, but also more positive functioning in terms of their classroom engagement, emotionality, creativity, intrinsic motivation, psychological well-being, conceptual understanding, academic achievement, and persistence in school. (p. 210)

Sadly, Pearson (2000) claims that too many teachers believe literature instruction must religiously follow a teacher's manual steeped in preconceived, correct answers. Many times, information found in online resources (i.e., Cliffsnotes, Sparknotes, and Gradesaver) reflect this status quo of literature instruction. As a result, students like David capitalize on rote literature instruction by relying on online resources to do all of the work for them. Andrews (2011) claims that "…reading is, or should be, highly critical and conscious" (p. 93). To do this, teachers need to differentiate instruction and design learning activities that promote interpretation and personal connection.

Mooching

When none of the other fake reading strategies worked, each participant relied on friends, who had read the assigned text, to guide them through assignments so that they could pass. Before class, I almost always heard one student say to another, "Tell me what happened." Participants used this strategy to fake their way through class discussions. When students were asked a question about the text that their friend had not explained, they pretended to forget that section of the reading. Although this strategy helped fake readers pass quizzes or worksheets, it did not work as effectively

with interpretive or analytical assignments. Even so, Betty and Bree relied heavily on friends throughout the multiliteracy project, and they still earned high C averages.

Schmoozing

All four participants attended different secondary schools in different parts of the state with varying student body populations (small, medium, and large); however, they all seemed to experience the same form of rote literature instruction. Based upon their comments, English teachers rarely encouraged personal connections or interpretations with assigned texts. Their teachers taught literature as if it contained certain criteria that had to be addressed, checked off of a list, and then repeated through an essay to prove they had read it. Instead of setting texts within the contexts of students' lives, teachers taught each work as an isolated entity meant to be appreciated based upon its literary merit. Betty communicated that she liked her teachers' teaching style because it exempted her from putting forth much effort while it allowed her to earn straight As. Andrews (2011) criticizes a single-minded approach to literature instruction:

> What is particularly significant for the argument here is that formalist notions of literary identity (i.e. one equation for poetry, one for short story, one for the novel, etc.) "ignore the paradoxical status of the frame itself…and refuse to make the frame work except as a barrier between literature and its contexts" (Carroll, 1987, p. 145). That is to say, formalist approaches do not recognize the two-way traffic that a frame sets up, not the invigorating nature of that two-way traffic. (p. 11)

Rather than viewing these frames as an opportunity to explore and connect the text with real-life, participants' English teachers used the frame as a barrier between the text and students. Through lower-order activities (i.e, worksheets, quizzes, annotation, and lectures), their English teachers communicated the accepted meaning of the text so that students could repeat it on a test, or an essay, to prove that they had "learned" the

material; when, in fact, they had not even read it. Participants confided that this disconnected method of instruction was one of the main reasons that they associated boredom with reading assigned texts and developed fake-reading strategies.

Another aspect of literature instruction that emerged during the interviews was that David and Bree's English teachers rarely incorporated long, complex texts into the curriculum. The only novel that David remembered reading was *The Lord of the Flies* (1954), and the only full-length texts that Bree remembered reading were for AR tests. Instead, their teachers mostly taught significant scenes from canonical works (i.e., *Hamlet*) rather than assign the entire text so that students completed reading during class. According to Bree, "We read everything in class together, and the teacher explained it as we went." When asked why her teachers used this method, Bree explained, "They wanted to make sure we read." Refusal to incorporate long, complex texts – even those students may not like – robs students of the opportunity to create meaningful literary experiences in school. In addition, it diminishes the opportunity for students to foster prolonged concentration and work through confusion. David felt that only reading excerpts of literary works contributed to his boredom with novels because it conditioned him to have a short attention span when trying to read for prolonged periods of time. In addition, when Bree's teachers only conducted read-alouds, she developed a dependence on her teachers reading and explaining the text for her. Bree went on to explain that this teaching style "didn't value reading because we weren't required to do anything with it; we just sat and listened" (Bree). As a result, teaching mostly excerpts contributed to David and Bree's fake-reading strategies since they did

not feel as though they had the opportunity to learn how to engage with longer texts on their own.

Teachers' dispositions play an important role in the learning environment. Although Jenny was the only one to address this topic in her final reflection, she pointed out the impact of teachers' disposition on her motivation to learn:

> I also like that you open up to us and tell us some about you, instead of being distant and non-relatable. You weren't dry or rude. You actually cared about us. You gave us work that helps us understand, instead of just giving us busywork. Those things make me actually want to do my work because if you care enough about my grade and I, then I want to make you happy and actually please you as well as myself. (Jenny)

Not only do students want to know that teachers are invested in teaching the material, they also want to know that teachers are invested in their ideas and perspectives. Many times – before, during, and after class – Jenny and I shared informal conversations about *Unwind* (2007) that centered on our favorite scenes and how we thought it related to real-life. Jackson and Cooper (2007) argue that, to be effective, teachers must

> …switch their instruction focus from *what must be taught* to *what kinds of teaching will maximize learning.* Maximizing learning to reverse underachievement in literacy for our adolescents requires a change in the very definition of literacy itself; we must embrace a definition of literacy that:
>
> *fosters engagement of behaviors vital to adolescents (making connections, inquiring, giving personal perspective, critically evaluation situations)
> *incorporates authentic literacy – literacy relevant to students; and
> *recognizes the critical role of a student's frame of reference in literacy development, enabling them to feel smart again. (p. 248)

Students develop connections with literature more easily when ideas, inquiries, and comments are valued. Throughout my career, I have learned many interesting facts from students simply by inviting them to work as collaborators. For example, one of the main characters in *Unwind* (2007) is Levi. His parents were extremely religious and decided to tithe his body to the church (i.e., unwind him for monetary gain). During a

conversation with a student (who happened to be an extreme reluctant reader) about this character, he said, "Well, you know his name is symbolic of the chapter in the Bible about tithing, right? You know, Leviticus 27." Actually, I had not thought of that connection until that moment; I probably would not have thought of it had he not pointed it out. Richardson (2006) says that "by inviting students to become active participants in the design of their own learning, we teach them how to be active participants in their lives and future careers" (p. 129). Inquiry-based, socially constructive classrooms show students that teachers value their ideas, which can motivate them to engage with the learning environment more readily.

Materials that a teacher incorporates into the classroom also have a direct impact on the learning environment. All four participants stated that they developed fake reading strategies because assigned texts were boring and they were unable to connect with them. According to Gallagher (2009), however,

> [Students need to] recognize the difference between liking a text and gleaning value from a text…Students may or may not like the novel, but I want all of them to understand the value that comes from reading it – a value that will help them become smarter people long after they leave school. (p. 57)

Although Gallagher makes a valid point, it is not wise for teachers to dismiss the complaints of students when it comes to the materials used to promote learning. For instance, during our interview, Betty confided, almost embarrassed, that she had just read *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) – the whole book on her own. When I looked shocked, especially after we had just spent twenty minutes discussing her hatred for reading, she clarified by saying, "Like, it moves really fast. I'm not sitting there waiting for something to happen. Plus, it's interesting from the beginning." *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) is a young adult dystopian novel set in the future and parallels many of

the themes (i.e., “Big Brother,” caste system, and government control) found within Orwell’s *1984* (1949), a literary staple in many secondary English classrooms. *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) is also a literary phenomenon that has engaged readers of all ages, resulting in a multimillion dollar enterprise. If *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) and *1984* (Orwell, 1949) contain the same literary elements and themes, why not incorporate what students enjoy? Many may argue that Collin’s novel lacks the rich language and text complexity that Orwell’s novel contains. According to Hunt (1996/1997), however, a reader “who finds a really good book … that has ideas he truly wants to learn about, frequently will outdo his own instructional level of performance” (280). If this is true, then teachers who refuse to listen to the feedback from their students run the risk of stifling learning opportunities.

Multiliteracy Teaching Strategies

Since the publication of Friedman’s *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (2007), respected educators such as Beers, Probst, and Rief – and many others – have used Friedman’s work as the catalyst to push for English teachers to incorporate multiliteracy approaches so that students meet global demands. Since 2007, almost every NCTE Annual Convention has been inundated with ways to promote literacy through technology. In fact, it was at the 2008 NCTE Annual Convention, after sitting through many of these presentations, that the *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project was born. According to Andrews (2011), multiliteracy approaches create a ‘“rhetorical perspective” that “allows the production and analysis of different media alongside each other...It brings reading and composition closer together in the way that speaking and listening were in classical rhetoric” (p. 83). The general consensus communicated to

conference participants was that students *wanted* more technology in the classroom. By refusing to adapt to this demand, some believed that English teachers were denying students meaningful learning opportunities.

Even though all four participants were classified Generation M, and the assumption was that members of this generation were tech-savvy and eager to use it in school, this assumption was mostly false in relation to study participants. Although all four participants possessed hand-held devices with 24/7 access to the Internet and used iTunes, Facebook, and Twitter, three (Bree, Betty, and David) said that they disliked assignments that incorporated technology because they didn't know how to use it effectively. Instead of focusing on the content of assignments, they mostly spent their time working to figure out the system, which led to frustration and disengagement. All three admitted that they spent less than two hours a day on the Internet because they "had better things to do" (i.e., playing sports or hang out with friends face-to-face). The most technology that Bree, Betty, and David used was texting to make plans with their friends. Jenny, on the other hand, was admitted that she was addicted to the Internet and checked her social media every few minutes (if not seconds). She confessed that she spent well over ten hours a day on the Internet, and loved activities that had to do with technology. While other classmates struggled to create a single book trailer for the novel, Jenny created three "just for fun" to post to her Facebook and share with friends.

The *Unwind* Multiliteracy Project was designed to promote close reading of an assigned text by encouraging autonomy and personal transaction. The goal was to create authentic literature learning instead of a faux learning experience. Broz (2011) articulates my goal well:

> To avoid creating pretend classrooms in which students do not read, we may use teaching and learning strategies that make reading necessary and then reward those students who have engaged in the authentic ritual of reading with the opportunity for social construction of knowledge based on those readings. The social construction of knowledge will occur during peer-to-peer sharing of textual interpretations through informal and formal writing and other performances…If we plan our courses appropriately, *not reading* should mean that those students fail the course because they have no assignments to turn in (p. 16).

Although Jenny and David gravitated to the multiliteracy project because they enjoyed choosing their own genres based upon their strengths and preferences, Bree and Betty did not like the project at all. According to Bree, the assignments within the project were "too challenging" because she wasn't good at "crafts," while Betty thought that the genres were "too hard" to choose what to do. According to the Bree and Betty, they blamed the unsophisticated nature of the project ("arts and crafts" versus academic) for their lack of success with the project. Although they criticized the level of difficulty, I conjecture that the nature of project assignments actually made fake-reading more difficult since they required an even mix of contextual evidence and personal interpretation. Betty tried to skim sections of the novel during class so that she might complete assignments, but admitted that this fake reading strategy made interpretation almost impossible. Also, Betty and Bree were unable to complete the final literary analysis of the novel successfully, which was a purely academic assignment. Out of 100 possible points, Betty earned 45 and Bree earned 50. Even so, both girls were able to modify their fake-reading strategies enough to earn Cs on the project overall.

Motivation

According to participants, the main motivation they experienced when assigned quizzes, worksheets, and tests was the motivation to implement strategies to avoid the reading. If not used meaningfully, each of these teaching tools (lectures, quizzes,

worksheets, tests) become extrinsic motivation. According to Clark and Rumbold (2006),

> When children read to avoid punishment or to meet teachers' or parents' expectations, they are extrinsically motivated because their desire to read is controlled externally (Hidi, 2000)…Extrinsically motivated pupils may therefore not read because they are interested but because they want to attain certain outcomes (e.g. recognition from others or good grades). (p. 18)

All four participants fake read to earn good grades because of pressures and expectations from family, coaches, and teachers. While completing the multiliteracy project, Jenny and David suspended fake-reading strategies to engage with the assigned text. Although David's main motivator continued to be grades, he admitted that the kinds of books teachers incorporate make a big difference between whether or not he reads: "*Unwind* (2007), that was a good book, so I *wanted* to read it." Because he found the book interesting and the assignments engaging, he was motivated to read, and it became one of his favorite projects. Jenny's motivation came from her enjoyment of assignments because they helped her engage with the text. Although she wanted to earn good grades, too, her focus shifted from her GPA to completing the project because "it was fun" (Jenny). Both enjoyed the interaction among classmates as they discussed, manipulated, and created various aspects of the project. Andrews (2011) explains,

> the conversation that goes on between students as they sit…and manipulate/create text is probably the most valuable activity taking place. There is a renewed critical dialogue taking place, and it is about making things with words (and images) and/or interpreting words (and images. (p. 81)

By consulting classmates about the novel and genres, they were able to gain deeper insight into the book as well as forge friendships with peers with whom they might not otherwise interact.

Bree and Betty's motivation remained focused on attaining good grades without doing the assigned reading. Clark and Rumbold (2006) claim that "there is some indication in the literature that pupils who are extrinsically motivated readers are more likely to use strategies at surface level, such as guessing and memorisation [sic.]" (p. 19). Even though I noticed throughout the project that they were disengaged, I never discovered a way to motivate them to complete the reading. For instance, I spent every class period visiting with them to learn ways to modify the project to engage them with the reading. Bree enjoyed the writing assignments because she was a journalism major, but Betty told me during our interview that there was really nothing a teacher could do to motivate her unless it was a failing grade. She despised reading, and wasn't going to do it as long as she could pass a class without it. When I asked Bree what might motivate her to read assigned texts in the future, she cited tests and quizzes linked to heavily weighted grades.

At the conclusion of the study, both girls preferred the formalist approach to literature instruction because they viewed it as more legitimate teaching. In their minds, teachers were supposed to be ultimate authorities, and students were meant to be filled with their knowledge. Betty and Bree's attitude about school assigned texts conflicted with the assertion that students enjoy assignments that incorporate activities of choice (Atwell, 1987; Milner and Milner, 1993; Knoeller, 2003; Thomas, 2003; Walker, 2003) and various forms of literacy (Andrews, 2011; Kohn, 2010; Kist, 2010, 2005; Milner and Milner, 2003).

Suggestions for Future Research

One of the main concerns for fake-reading practices is that literacy skills can diminish over time without regular use. Olufowobi and Makinde (2011) claim that "[t]he main problem is that most [resistive readers] have poor reading ability and their writings are full of illogicality, ambiguity, and incoherence" (p. 825). Although this isn't necessarily true of all fake-readers, Jenny and Betty admitted that they were losing reading comprehension and interpretation abilities because of their fake reading. Betty and Jenny explained that one reason they disliked reading was because they struggled with retaining information found within a text. In addition, their reading scores on the ACT were one of the lowest that they had earned out of all of the subject areas tested. As a result, one of the recommendations for future research would be to explore the correlation between fake reading practices and performance on the reading portion of ACT exams. This might provide quantitative data to reinforce the contention that literacy skills lessen the longer that they go unused. In addition, it might address one of the reasons an increasing number of AP students need to enroll in remediation courses when entering college.

Because the sample size was so small, another recommendation for future research would be to conduct the study in multiple settings with a greater number of participants for greater generalizability. To do this, institutions would need to be identified, faculty would need to be trained to implement the same mutliliteracy approach, and researchers would need to be trained to recognize specific criteria and strategies associated with fake-readers to lessen the margin of error.

Although it was not the focus of this study, future research needs to be conducted to gauge the amount of influence that culture plays in the development of fake-reading. Whether students are "tech-savvy" or not, they are immersed in a technological culture that functions on instant gratification. DiPardo (2001) addresses the ebb and flow of culture in relation to literacy: "Literacy, then, is increasingly conceptualized in ecological terms, as embedded in social-cultural practices that must be continually interpreted and negotiated" (p. 146). Many debate the impact that this technological culture has on attention spans as well as the extension of adolescence, which directly impact students' ability to engage with long, complex texts. While this debate still rages among educational theorists, there is little empirical data (either quantitative or qualitative) to back up many of the theories.

Finally, a suggestion for future research is to conduct longitudinal studies to measure the impact of Accelerated Reader on fake-reading habits. Throughout the study, Bree continuously blamed AR for fake-reading in school. Many educators argue, "Intrinsic motivation has typically been related to learning that leads to conceptual understanding and higher level thinking skills (Kellaghan et al., 1996), while extrinsic motivation tends to lead to 'surface' rather than 'deep' learning" (Clark and Rumbold, 2006, p. 19; Crooks, 1988). Throughout my teaching career, I have come in contact with many students who admitted to fake-reading their way through AR. Not only did they fake-read through AR tests, but they specifically blamed it for their disinterest in reading all together. As a result, conducting longitudinal studies that measure AR's impact on reading habits will yield more in-depth results to inform the teaching of literacy throughout elementary and secondary schools.

Conclusion

Fake-reading is not a new phenomenon. In fact, as early as 1978, Mikulecky addressed the problem of nonreading by providing one of the first identifying terms and definitions (aliteracy: those who can read, but choose not to). While society has been focused on the disturbing illiteracy rates plaguing young people, it has mostly ignored the dangers of those who are fake-readers: "One thing you can say for illiteracy: It can be identified and combated. Aliteracy is like an invisible liquid, seeping through the culture, nigh impossible to defend against" (Weeks, 2001). With the realization that literacy is not static, and research that claims that those who were once proficient can become illiterate, the issue of fake-reading is serious. Unfortunately, American schools are entering a new era of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which promotes "a return to the kind of reading that was promoted in the thirties and forties through New Criticism…Objective, close, analytical reading is what is valued as deep comprehension and interpretation by the Common Core" (Calkins et. al, 2012, p. 26). According to Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012), Common Core simply "puts aside theories of reader response" (p. 26). Extracting personal connection, background knowledge, and personal responses from the reading experience can promote disengagement and boredom. As participants confided, disengagement and boredom were two main factors that led to their fake-reading strategies. In a world that demands innovative and creative thinkers, students are being taught to think in assembly line terms. They are fed information until they cannot, or will not, feed themselves. The unfortunate result is students who sadly confide, "I just don't know how to think." As this new era of "reform" is implemented in classrooms across the nation, educators must strive to

implement meaningful literature instruction by remaining cognizant of teaching practices that positively impact student learning.

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Appendix A

Unwind Project Requirements

1. **Unwind Discussions:** As the class reads the novel, students will post responses to discussion threads on mysaint. Each student must make an initial response (100 words or more) where he/she talks about his/her thoughts concerning the novel as well as respond to two other classmates' comments.

Discussion Post #1 (p. 1-46) – What is your stance on abortion?
Discussion Post #2 (p. 47-88) – Should people be allowed to commit euthanasia? What's your reasoning?
Discussion Post #3 (p. 89-140) – If something is an act of conscience, does that imply a choice? Do we get to choose whether or not we value certain lives? How does this relate to unwinding?
Discussion Post #4 (p. 140-185) – Should we be ruled by moral law or civil law? What can be the potential problems of both? How do you see this in Levi's religious convictions?
Discussion Post #5 (p. 185-230) – Are you an organ donor? What is your response to ethical issues discussed in the article about the man with Lou Gehrig's disease? Should he be allowed to die?
Discussion Post #6 (p. 231-274) – What are your thoughts of genocide? Do a little research. Does it happen today? If people are being murdered and treated inhumanely, does it really fall under the category of 'not my problem' even if it isn't directly impacting us?
Discussion Post #7 (p. 274-335) – What did you think about Roland getting unwound? How does his death reflect what happens when we put inmates to death? How do you feel about that?

2. Ten creative pieces that represent your topic through various genres. ***ALL PIECES MUST BE ORIGINAL!***

*Everyone must complete a soundtrack and memory map. These will count as two of your required genres. The same genre can only be used twice.

More Genres: (25 points/in-class assignment)

Newspaper article	Cartoon	Interview
Obituary	Book Jacket	Survey
Editorial/Commentary Essay	Scrapbook	Timeline
Personal Commentary	Acrostic Poem	Recipe
Letter to the Editor	DVD/CD Cover	Directions

Political cartoon	Lyrics to music	Family Tree
Advice Column	Diary or Journal Entry	Skit
Magazine Article	Picture/Photograph	Song
Advertisement	Graph	Poem
Poster	Letter	Short Story
Invitation	Collage	One Act Play
Brochure	Speech	Dialogue
Greeting Card	Video	Painting

2. **Book Trailer:** Students will create a book trailer for the novel and post them to the course populi site. They may use free sources such as <onetruemedia.com>, imovie, or another software with which they are familiar. Book trailers must be no less than two minutes in length, possess appropriate images with flowing slides, text, music, and a slide that gives credit to borrowed sources.
3. **Present** multiple genres to the class (10 minutes) and explain how they relate to the novel as well as discuss your writing process for each piece.
4. **Reflection:** One-and-a-half to **two page reflection** of your experience with the project outlining your likes, dislikes, struggles, overall impressions, and ways the assignment can be improved.
5. **Final Paper:** Select a specific argument addressed throughout the novel. Explain how the author uses literary elements to present his argument (i.e. symbolism, motifs, and characterization). What is his purpose? Who is the audience? What kind of appeal is he making (logos, ethos, pathos)? Evaluate whether or not it is effective. Papers should include a title page with a properly formatted header and page numbers and should be no less than three pages. Students should effectively incorporate quotes from the text to back up claims, which need to be properly cited in the text as well as on an APA formatted reference page.

Appendix B

Reading Questionnaire

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Complete the questionnaire honestly. Include information that describes how you really feel. This is not for a grade.

SA=STRONGLY AGREE **A=AGREE** **D=DISAGREE** **SD=STRONGLY DISAGREE**

1.	Reading is easy.	SA	A	D	SD
2.	I read only when I have to.	SA	A	D	SD
3.	I like talking about books with other people.	SA	A	D	SD
4.	I would be happy if someone gave me a book as a present.	SA	A	D	SD
5.	Reading is boring.	SA	A	D	SD
6.	I enjoy reading.	SA	A	D	SD

7. A recent book that I read was: _____
   It was about:

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. What do you like to do in your spare time? Rate the following activities in order 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (1=favorite, 6=least favorite).

   ____watch tv ____talk on phone/text

   ____play video games ____read a book

   ____get on the Internet ____play a sport/hang out outside

Appendix C

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. How did you learn to read? How old were you? Was it easy?
2. What do you remember your parents reading? How often would you see them read?
3. How did you feel about learning to read?
4. What do you remember feeling about reading in elementary school? Did you have positive or negative feelings? Did your opinion change as you got older? Why?
5. What was your high school like? How many students? What kind of classes did you take?
6. What were your English Language Arts classes like? How would you describe the way that your teacher taught literature? Did you read all of the assignments?
7. How would you describe yourself as a student in high school?
8. Out of all of the reading assignments that your English teacher assigned, how many did you actually complete from start to finish? What ways did you use to get away with not reading? Why wouldn't you read certain assignments?
9. How would you describe yourself as a student in college? Do you read assignments for your college classes? Why or why not? How do professors' teaching styles play into this?
10. What advice could you give to English teachers to motivate students like you to read assigned texts? What can they do to make it more enjoyable and hold students like you accountable?

Appendix D

Identifying Reading Behaviors & Attitudes

Designed by Latty Goodwin (1996)

Name: _____

Major: _____ Year/Classification: _____

2. How frequently do you read the textbook assignments for this class?

   (English Composition I by Courtney Krieger)

NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES USUALLY ALWAYS

3. How frequently do you read the assignments from *Unwind* (2007)?

NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES USUALLY ALWAYS

4. How often do you read the textbook assignments for other classes?

NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES USUALLY ALWAYS

5. How would you rate your reading abilities?

POOR FAIR GOOD EXCELLENT

6. How important are textbooks?

NOT AT ALL SOMEWHAT USEFUL HELPFUL VITAL

7. What grade do you expect in this class?

F D C B A

Appendix E

Unwind Reflective Survey

Name: _____

1. Did you read the entire novel *Unwind?* Yes No

2. If you answered no, circle each reason that applies:
    a. Do not like to read
    b. No time
    c. Heavy homework load from other classes
    d. Boring plot
    e. Prefer to do other things
    f. Other: (please list)_____

3. If you answered yes, did you finish the novel ahead of schedule? Yes No

4. What motivated you to read the novel? (Circle all that apply)
    a. Interesting plot
    b. Like to read
    c. Participation in discussion boards
    d. Grades
    e. Multiple literacy classroom activities (memory map, letter, newspaper article, etc.)
    f. Other: (please list) _____

5. Did you complete ALL of the requirements for the *Unwind* project (presentation, book trailer, book review, reflection, and discussion boards)? Yes No

6. If you did NOT complete all of the requirements, which did you not do?
    a. Discussion Boards
    b. Book Review
    c. Book Trailer
    d. Reflection
    e. Presentation

7. If you did NOT complete all of the requirements, circle all of the reasons that apply:
    a. Did not read the novel
    b. No time due to other responsibilities
    c. Procrastinated
    d. Workload from other classes
    e. Too few points assigned to care

f. Prefer to do other things
g. Other: (please list) _____

8. Did you like selecting your own creative pieces for the presentation? Yes No
   Comments:
   _____
   _____
   _____

9. Did the different creative activities help you complete reading assignments throughout the novel? Yes No

10. What motivates you to read a book?
    _____
    _____
    _____

11. Did connecting events in the novel (man with Lou Gherigs donating his organs, ethics of organ donation, Ukraine killing babies for stem cells) with real-world events make the book more interesting?
    Yes No

12. List all of the reasons you took the time to read *Unwind*?

13. Would you have read *Unwind* if the teacher had not assigned discussion posts and multiple genre assignments to coincide with the reading sections? Yes No

Rate each classroom activity based on your level of enjoyment from 1 (strongly dislike) to 5 (strongly like).

Board Posts

1	2	3	4	5
strongly dislike	dislike	indifferent	like	strongly like

Comments for rating:

_____

_____

Memory Map

1	2	3	4	5
strongly dislike	dislike	indifferent	like	strongly like

Comments for rating:

_____

_____

Soundtrack

1	2	3	4	5
strongly dislike	dislike	indifferent	like	strongly like

Comments for rating:

_____

_____

Found Poem

1	2	3	4	5
strongly dislike	dislike	indifferent	like	strongly like

Comments for rating:

_____

_____

Newspaper Article

1	2	3	4	5
strongly dislike	dislike	indifferent	like	strongly like

Comments for rating:

_____

_____

Political Cartoon

1	2	3	4	5
strongly dislike	dislike	indifferent	like	strongly like

Comments for rating:

_____

_____

Letter of Betrayal

1	2	3	4	5
strongly dislike	dislike	indifferent	like	strongly like

Comments for rating:

_____

_____

Recipe for Disaster

1	2	3	4	5
strongly dislike	dislike	indifferent	like	strongly like

Comments for rating:

_____

_____

Personal Choice

1	2	3	4	5
strongly dislike	dislike	indifferent	like	strongly like

Comments for rating:

_____

_____

Book Trailer

1	2	3	4	5
strongly dislike	dislike	indifferent	like	strongly like

Comments for rating:

_____

_____

Final Paper

1	2	3	4	5
strongly dislike	dislike	indifferent	like	strongly like

Comments for rating:

_____

_____

Reflection

1	2	3	4	5
strongly dislike	dislike	indifferent	like	strongly like

Comments for rating:

_____

_____

14. Do you think you will read more in the future? Yes No Maybe

15. Do you think that multiliteracy assignments motivate students to complete reading assignments? Yes No Makes no difference

Appendix F

University of Oklahoma
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: What strategies do resistive readers use to fake their way through school-assigned texts?
Principal Investigator: Courtney M. Krieger
Department: Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum

VERBAL RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Recruitment Discussion Leader (RDL): Hello, my name is Ms. Blackwell and I'm here to talk about a research study Ms. Krieger is conducting in order to complete her PhD with the University of Oklahoma. Before I begin, you will want to look over the first set of forms I've passed out. You should have two copies of the _white_ colored form. Please make sure you have two copies; then take a moment to skim the subtitles.

(RDL makes sure each student has a copy of Cover Letter and two copies of the Student Assent Form)

RDL: By now, most of you understand that the multiple literacy project is part of Ms. Krieger's regular classroom practice, and, whether or not you participate in the study, you are all still required to complete the multiple literacy project assignments. However, if you choose to participate, you will help Ms. Krieger improve how the multiple literacy project approach might work for all of her students. In order for you to understand this study more clearly, let's read aloud the Student Assent form. Feel free to make notations or write down your questions as we go. It is important that I answer all your questions and I will stop periodically to answer them and again, when we are through reading over the form.

RDL: Do any of you have questions before we begin?

(Take time to answer any anticipatory questions. Then begin reading aloud the questions and explanations on the Student Assent Form)

RDL: ***(After discussing the questions and explanations and answering student questions)*** If you would like to participate in Ms. Krieger's study, please sign and turn in one copy of the Assent form now. Keep the other for your records. If you would like to think about it, please return the signed Assent from by March 16, 2012.

RDL: Are there any questions about the Student Permission Forms or anything else we've discussed today?

RDL: (After answering questions) Thank you for your time.