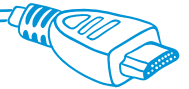


3

Laying the Groundwork for Research Writing

*Developing Close Reading Skills
and Organizing Digital Spaces*



*Books are mirrors: you only see in them
what you already have inside you.*

—Carlos Ruiz Zafón,
The Shadow of the Wind



As students engage with a text, we want them to use close, careful reading strategies to enrich their reading experience. One of the strategies to promote higher-order thinking involves reading through different lenses (Appleman, 2009; Beach & Myers, 2001; Beach, Thein, & Webb, 2012; Smagorinsky, 2007). For instance, we can ask students to develop critical approaches to reading through the use of these lenses: differential feminist, differential race, new criticism, archetypal, socioeconomic, sociocultural, and reader response theories, among others. Dawn's students applied some of these lenses, as well as their cultural lens, to their reading of their literature circle books and the various media sources we presented in the inquiry unit "Reading Our World and Exploring Perspectives: Identity and Culture." Through questioning and exploring different perspectives based on reading through a critical lens, they were able to critique and analyze texts in new ways, often making connections that were otherwise not apparent. As shown in previous chapters (see the handout for Lesson 8, page 76), the students also used dialectical journals as well as a culture log to note both cultural artifacts and broader characteristics in their book, and as a result, they came to the literature circle meetings with many ideas for discussion and analysis.

Close reading affords students the opportunity to explore elements in literature that might not immediately be aspects of a novel they would otherwise gravitate toward analyzing.

Close reading affords students the opportunity to explore elements in literature that might not immediately be aspects of a novel they would otherwise gravitate toward analyzing. For instance, Zoya and Allison, who were in the literature circle team reading Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, read the same book in a very different way. Zoya was intrigued by the way the gypsy Esmeralda was treated and how other characters were drawn to her beauty. This led her to explore the way in which various cultures have different standards for beauty. Allison was curious about the way in which violence was used as a form of entertainment in this novel. This idea piqued her interest, and she ended up exploring entertainment trends and cultural influence on entertainment over the years.

Through questioning, both Zoya and Allison were able to look closely at elements of the novel and extend the connection between Paris, France, in 1482 and their lives in the United States today. Zoya also ended up exploring her topic through a differential feminist critical lens in her analysis of beauty expectations for women. While these ninth graders would not be formally introduced to lenses of literary criticism until their junior year, we found it interesting and valuable that they began to analyze their texts through literary theory. We will explore both Zoya's and Allison's projects in Chapter 5.

Beverly and Raywa both read *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon (2004) and analyzed the work with a close reading on culture. Through her reflections, Beverly explored the main character Christopher's life living with Asperger's syndrome, and she extended her reflection

to explore how our culture responds to people with Asperger's syndrome. In one of her reflections, Beverly wrote, "And even if Christopher likes being alone, should he just stay cut off from everyone else? In what ways can we help these people to learn how to connect with others?" Like several students, Raywa found her close reading through careful analysis of cultural details in the text. Her work in the culture log focused on finding cultural markers, which allowed her to recognize the cultural setting of the book (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Example Culture Log From Raywa

Culture Characteristics and Artifacts of Culture	Why It Matters and Impacts the Story and Reader
"I put the dog down on the lawn and moved back 2 meters" p. 4	This is an artifact of culture. Everywhere other than the U.S. uses the metric system. This sets up and gives a clue to the location of the story. The metric system is a specific representation of culture.
"lose my rag" p. 9 " . . . wee on the clothes . . ." p. 14 "It's a bloody dog" p. 20	The way we talk is also a direct representation of what culture we belong to. We have developed slang and ways to say things that differ from culture to culture. These are words/sayings that they say over in the U.K. but we never hear.
p. 13 = uses Euro sign " . . . cost billions of pounds" p. 25	Currency is also a way culture defines where we come from. Nowhere in this book does it say where this book takes place, but we can figure it out due to these little culture clues.
" . . . wore a fleece with a zip down the front which was pink and it had a tiny label which said <i>Berghaus</i> on the left bosom" p. 19	<i>Berghaus</i> is a U.K. outdoor clothing brand. This also shows locational and cultural belonging with clothing. We in the U.S. also have certain brands we wear a lot, just like in the British culture.
"Scooby Doo" p. 25	This isn't such a defined aspect of culture. There are some things that we can all relate to. <i>Scooby Doo</i> is the entertainment that most people have seen and watched. This is part of a world culture that binds and connects us.

George also created a high-quality reflection as one of his Youth Voices blog posts (see the prompt described in Lesson 11 on page 86) during this part of the inquiry unit. It is clear that the literature circle work with dialectic journals and the culture log has afforded him the opportunity to collect notes on his thinking as demonstrated in this reflection. Additionally, this piece reflects George's use of reading strategies for careful analysis, such as predicting, while also exploring cultural elements throughout his reflection.

Ender's Game is a book about a boy named Ender Wiggin who is a genius. I think the book is very well written and thought out. The culture aspects in the book are very interesting due to the book being written in the 1970s. This influenced the book even though the actual book takes place in the future. I really love how everything is put almost into the future with desks, spaceships, and even the people. The way they talk, the book's setting is almost a new world with different cultures from ours today. Some parts of the book are confusing including how Peter is always angry and even chokes Ender but apologizes in the end. It doesn't clarify that.

The 14th chapter of *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card might leave a reader feeling shocked because Mazer, a character in the book, manipulates Ender in a way nobody would ever guess and it shocks you. An example of this is on page 296. Mazer laughed, a loud laugh that filled the room. "Ender you never played me. You never played a game since I became your enemy." This is shocking because Mazer admits that Ender has been commanding the fleets in the "games" to actually destroy the buggers. Mazer when he first meets Ender even admits that he thinks it's due to a miscommunication that they are fighting the buggers, and now he is laughing that Ender destroyed them.

So far, the culture in *Ender's Game* might remind a reader of the story in another book, *Among the Brave*, because both governments are almost run by military powers. Both are set in the future. They have a common child control law only allowing a certain number of children to be born in a family. If families have extra children, they are often looked at as a minority in both books. *Among the Brave*, though, is more strict on extra children.

After this part of the book, most readers probably will be looking forward to reading the rest of this book because you have to wonder what Ender is thinking and what he will do to react to this news. I wouldn't think he would be very happy to hear what he has done. The government was only scared of Ender not cooperating due to him being the savior of the world, but now the government doesn't need him. What will happen? What's probably going to happen next is that Ender might either leave because he is so mad and have mixed emotions or maybe even rebel against what the government is doing.

You have to wonder what Ender is going to do after the book ends. I wonder what people will think of what Ender did and how he kept the Queen to repopulate the buggers.

In addition to supporting the close reading focus for this week of lessons, we asked students to pull their ideas together by organizing their material in digital spaces. Up to this point, students had worked on several ideas related to inquiry and culture, so this week we wanted to move them a step forward to help them see what they had done, focusing their ideas related to culture and inquiry in connection with their literature circle book. As a class, we reflected on past work, and we also began the intentional process of teaching research skills, including reading a variety of texts to inform their thinking.

To help students monitor comprehension of their reading of their literature circle book, as well as to encourage them to dig deeper in their literature circle reading, we asked them to work in small groups to discuss their reading. In this way, students also served as models for one another as they shared their skills in reading, reflecting upon reading practices, and listening.

LESSON 12. LITERATURE CIRCLE MEETING 1: ENGAGING IN ACTIVE DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this lesson is to help students

- Practice discussion skills and better understand literature circle books through careful, thoughtful discussion

- Analyze their literature circle text through close reading of passages, developing and discussing questions, and exploring culture artifacts and characteristics
- Establish shared space for notes on the class wiki to see examples of others' work and collaboratively build knowledge

Digital Spaces for Group Discussion

Before jumping into the literature circle group conversations, we established a space for students to post notes for discussion. Each group had their own page within our class wiki for taking notes about their literature circle book. This was especially helpful for two reasons:

1. Groups with similar texts could read each other's ideas.
2. All students could use the work of other groups as a model.

After we reviewed discussion skills as a class, including the specific behaviors highlighted on the Lesson 12 handout (see page 97), students were ready to engage in the group conversation. Dawn monitored groups by walking around, observing, and taking notes on group conversations and student comments related to the text, as well as students' work with discussion skills, including engaging all members of their team. When groups appeared to be done with their discussion and notes, we asked them to make sure they had thoroughly discussed their work with questions, dialectic journals, and culture logs. If they discovered that they had not, then we expected them to engage in further conversations.

Most groups took the entire class period to discuss their reading and prepared materials. If groups were indeed thorough in their discussion and completed their notes, they returned to Youth Voices to respond to discussion posts from members of their group. Since students wrote discussion posts prior to this meeting (for full description of this writing reflection exercise, see Chapter 2 (Lesson 11, page 86), all students had plenty to read and respond to from their peer work. George's reflection on page 94 is one such Youth Voices post that his peers could comment on. Additionally, we coached students to check their team notes for accuracy based on their discussion, as well as to make sure each team member knew how to access and add to the digital space. In this way, all team members were required to review the notes that represented the discussion. This ensured that all students practiced use of the wiki and understood the tech skill, although the main focus remained on the discussion itself and not the technology.

Lesson 12. Literature Circle Meeting 1: Engaging in Active Discussions

Discuss the assigned pages of reading with your group. Active discussions involve every member of your group, and they require you to hone your discussion skills. Remember to practice the following:

Body Language

- Visibly show you are listening through leaning in, looking at the speaker, and nodding your head.
- Demonstrate engagement by using your notes and book as reference points.
- Use the computer to type notes, but tip the screen down when talking with your classmates to engage in the dialogue with your fellow readers, not the screen.
- Engage with each person in the team.
- Monitor your own “airtime” so that everyone is able to discuss and share equally.
- Share collective leadership by taking turns within the team.

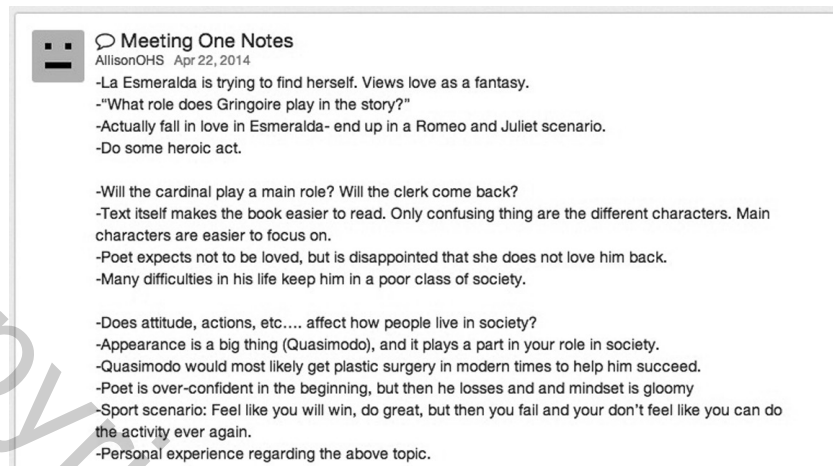
Demonstrate Knowledge About the Reading Through Your Discussion and Notes

- Engage in conversation related to the book and big ideas in the reading.
- Use sticky notes to mark passages to discuss.
- Use your discussion questions that you prepared for this meeting (Lesson 8).
- Give clear responses and use the materials you prepared for the meeting, including your thinking from the dialectic journal and culture log (Lesson 8).
- Explore the essential questions for our “Reading Our World and Exploring Perspectives: Identity and Culture” inquiry unit.
- Take collective notes on our online class space.



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Meeting One Notes
AllisonOHS Apr 22, 2014

- La Esmeralda is trying to find herself. Views love as a fantasy.
- “What role does Gringoire play in the story?”
- Actually fall in love in Esmeralda- end up in a Romeo and Juliet scenario.
- Do some heroic act.

- Will the cardinal play a main role? Will the clerk come back?
- Text itself makes the book easier to read. Only confusing thing are the different characters. Main characters are easier to focus on.
- Poet expects not to be loved, but is disappointed that she does not love him back.
- Many difficulties in his life keep him in a poor class of society.

- Does attitude, actions, etc.... affect how people live in society?
- Appearance is a big thing (Quasimodo), and it plays a part in your role in society.
- Quasimodo would most likely get plastic surgery in modern times to help him succeed.
- Poet is over-confident in the beginning, but then he losses and and mindset is gloomy
- Sport scenario: Feel like you will win, do great, but then you fail and your don't feel like you can do the activity ever again.
- Personal experience regarding the above topic.

Allison's Notes From Her Group's First Literature Circle Discussion

Source: Screenshot courtesy of Wikispaces.

The image above shows an example of how one group of students managed their literature circle discussion and notes by developing categories and questions surrounding their topics and offering specific content to address questions.

Extensions and Adaptations for Lesson 12

There are many ways to establish discussion in the classroom, from Socratic questioning techniques, to whole-class and small-group discussions, to pair sharing. Depending upon your placement for this inquiry unit, the discussion work you have already done, and your students' needs, you may need to take different steps with your students. If students decide to designate specific note takers for their literature circle discussions, remember to keep each person accountable for the information in the notes. Students can use many different spaces to take notes, from Wikispaces to Google Drive to a pencil and paper. Each medium has a different feel, setup, and focus. Teachers may find it particularly helpful to explore these different capabilities with students to meet the purposes and needs of different classrooms.

LESSON 13. SELF-ASSESSMENT AND REFLECTION

The purpose of this lesson is to help students

- Reflect through self-assessment on their journal process work (dialectic journals and culture logs) and preparation (careful critical reading, note taking, writing of discussion questions) prior to the literature circle meeting

- Identify quality work and areas that need improvement in their work
- Reflect on skills used in discussion
- Practice supporting their self-assessment with evidence and explanation of their work (practice argument skills)
- Review individual journaling and collective notes from literature circle discussion
- Reiterate expectations for work with journaling and close reading of literature circle books
- Use student self-assessment reflections to establish improvement goals as they continue to improve on journaling, close reading, and discussing
- Provide the teacher with valuable feedback related to students' progress and assessment of their own work

Scaled Questions and Written Reflections

Lesson 13 focuses on self-assessment. As students engage in learning, it is important to help them reflect and find ways to monitor their own learning and goals (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Setting goals and monitoring learning are important moves for students to take ownership of their learning and become aware of their own progress. Self-assessment is also important to support students' reading, writing, and reflecting, so that students are monitoring their comprehension, writing development, and growth as learners. It additionally honors students' voice and perspectives on their work.

After our first literature circle meeting, we designed a set of scaled questions to help students assess themselves and reflect upon their work to prepare for and participate in literature circle discussions (see the handout on page 102). We also included three written response questions in this self-assessment to encourage students to use evidence to support the accuracy of their scaled responses. This self-assessment approach not only offered opportunity for reflection and self-assessment but also supported practice with argument skills, as students had to explain with evidence why they scored themselves in a particular way. This not only served as a clear explanation or proof of the preparation work they did for the literature circle, but also reinforced argument skills practiced during the school year; as they would also need these skills for their inquiry-based research essay (see Chapter 4), it provided opportunity for continual writing practice.

Before we asked students to complete the self-assessment, we reminded them to think about the goals they had established for their reading, as well

as the reading activities they were engaging in with their literature circle assignment (Lesson 8). We also discussed how self-assessment is an important part of monitoring their learning. Moreover, we invited students to be honest and identify both ways in which they were successful with their work and ways in which they could improve. Sometimes students want to rate themselves high to show that they are doing well and to make sure the teacher also rates them high. This is a fair consideration on the part of students, as some teachers do rate students based on how they rate themselves, and there are times and places where this may make sense. However, in this case, we truly wanted students to be honest with themselves and us and to use this self-assessment as a reflection and opportunity to think about how to improve. To address this, we explained the need for honesty and evaluation based on improvement. Since students understood their audience and the purpose for the assessment, they were more honest and clear in their responses for reflection and learning.

Reflecting on their work after the first literature circle meeting allowed students to think about the effectiveness of their preparation and their work within the discussion team. These reflections also gave students the opportunity to consider ways to improve future meetings.

For instance, Raywa, who read *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, reflected on her experience: “The lit circles were very enjoyable and fun, which is good because sometimes I find them to be boring. I was prepared well, and since our group works well together, we were able to share and discuss our thinking during it. The hardest part was figuring out how to organize our notes, but we figured it out so next time will be even better.” In this instance, Raywa shared what was going well in her group, but she also took away ideas for organizing notes, which is important to her improvement.

Beverly, who also read *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, wrote, “I thought that I prepared pretty well for the first meeting. My culture log mostly included some dialogue (difference between American English and British English) and aspects of British education (A-level exams). The first literature circle meeting went extremely well. We all came prepared and worked well together, and we all very much enjoyed reading the book. I think, for next time, we could write more notes instead of fangirling so much. :)” While these reflections demonstrate that the literature circle went well—and honestly, most students noted their meetings went well because, in fact, they did—Beverly did recognize that improvements can always be made, such as challenging her team to go beyond merely “fangirling,” or appreciating the text and one another, and to go even further in depth with note taking.

The majority of the student self-assessment responses were positive like these examples. Still, some noted honestly, “I just didn’t get my work done”

or “I budgeted my time poorly and took weak notes for the culture log.” Others shared where struggles with content were an issue, which was helpful for individualizing instruction in one-on-one meetings with the teacher to help students with comprehension and develop strategies to approach reading and writing.

Student Ownership of Note Taking

It is important to note that we made the deliberate decision to allow students the chance to select how they would take notes. Instead of requiring everyone to use Google Drive (or a notebook or sticky notes), we wanted to honor students’ individual goals and give them responsibility over their application of reading strategies that worked for them.

Prior to this inquiry unit, Dawn had provided students with opportunities to try out various reading and note-taking strategies, such as use of graphic organizers to chart thinking or monitoring predictions, questions, and observations with a two-column chart, noting “what happened in the text” and “my response to the text,” to determine how they might best compile their notes. As part of the self-assessment for this lesson, we asked students to provide information about how they approached this work and where they were keeping their materials as noted in the Lesson 13 handout (page 102). We also asked students to briefly explain why they were making choices to keep notes in a specific way. In this way, we were honoring student decisions, but also prompting reflection of their note-taking process. In response to this question, students wrote about trying out different approaches and appreciating the opportunity to try different ways to take notes. Some wrote that they read their book at home each night and didn’t have a computer beside them; thus, writing their notes was a helpful practice. Others noted that they remembered more when they wrote ideas down. Still others said they felt more organized with the digital notes. All of these responses made sense and reflected purposeful decision making and ownership on the part of students. Yet, it is important to note that some students struggled with setting up this work, and we needed to engage in one-on-one review with these students and help them set up their journals (like the example in Lesson 8 on page 79). This self-assessment and review of student notes directed us to know which students to meet with in order to support in this approach to the reading.

Assessment of Literature Circles

To encourage students to expand upon their reading and reflecting, Dawn did not physically collect their work after each literature circle meeting; rather, she specifically collected work half of the time to review it more closely. She did look at each student’s work during each literature circle

HAND OUT

Lesson 13. Self-Assessment and Reflection

Self-assessment and reflection are an important part of the learning process. For this self-assessment, be honest with yourself and with your audience—your teacher. The purpose of this assessment is to reflect on your work and think about how to continue improving your close reading and journaling skills so that you can enhance your reading skills.

Please respond to the following questions using the Likert scale of 1 (*low*) to 5 (*high*):

	Low High				
	1	2	3	4	5
How prepared were you for literature circle meeting 1? Be sure to think about how closely you read your book and prepared discussion questions. Also, think about your work with the dialectic journal and culture log as you consider preparation.					
How well did you participate in discussion? Were you actively engaged? Did you participate in nonverbal cues of discussion? Did you ask follow-up questions and use the text for specific references?					
Discussion questions: Rate your quality of discussion questions. Remember that quality questions encourage strong, sophisticated discussion and prompt exploration.					
Dialectic journal: Rate the quality of your journal. Does your journal thoroughly record your thinking about passages from the novel? Do the responses to the passage show analysis of the passage, including the significance of the passage?					
Culture log: Rate the quality of your work with your cultural log. Does your log include both artifacts and characteristics of culture? Does it analyze these artifacts and characteristics of culture?					

(Continued)

(Continued)

In writing, reflect upon and defend your responses to the focus areas, explaining each of your ratings.

Also, reflect on your experience in literature circle meeting 1. What worked well? What would you improve for next time? Why?

Review how you decided to set up your notes. Where did you complete your journal (Google Drive, the online class space, in a notebook, with sticky notes, etc.)? Why did you decide to set up your journal in this way? What worked about this setup? Why? What didn't work? Why? In what ways does this setup support your reading? Why?



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meeting. Moreover, students said that they wanted to keep their notes to review their ideas as they read. This step made sense for two reasons:

- It encouraged students to take ownership over their work.
- It reduced the amount of grading required between literature circle meetings.

Throughout the work with literature circles, Dawn briefly met with student groups and individuals at different intervals to check thinking, look at notes, review materials, and discuss their progress. Since it can be tricky for teachers to find classroom time to talk with each student individually, sometimes Dawn met with a few students each day during other class activities. Additionally, in some cases, she was able to read parts of student work before the student meetings (particularly with notes shared via Google Drive). These strategies helped her with time management.

These mini-conferences were quite positive as students were honest with themselves and Dawn about their progress. In some cases, students didn't realize what they were missing or how they could improve, which was the exact purpose of the conference. In this way, assessment honored student self-assessment and student growth, as well as monitoring instruction to support student learning. Additionally, if students were not doing their work or being honest about their progress, they were open to reviewing this with Dawn.

Extensions and Adaptations for Lesson 13

Teachers can help students focus on self-assessment and reflection in many ways. They can prompt student writing and reflection, such as through discussion and writing. Students can discuss their progress with peers (if the lesson and community of collaboration are constructed clearly and purposefully so they feel comfortable with this type of sharing) and receive feedback from each other about ways to improve. Additionally, students can discuss improvement with the teacher in short conferences. Written self-assessment and reflection can be collected in a different manner too. We used Google Forms, but the handout for Lesson 13 (page 102) would work as well.

To support student thinking and work with analysis, make sure to ask students to justify why they scored themselves in a specific way; this may also be an important conversational point in a mini-conference. Within an English language arts classroom, it can be helpful for students to directly identify what they are doing in their writing and reading, as well as the impact that their reading and reflecting in writing have on their learning.

LESSON 14. LANGUAGE IN AMERICAN CULTURE

The purpose of this lesson is to help students

- Analyze an artifact of culture with a video commercial focused on Americans' use of language
- Explore different ways to learn information, such as through a jigsaw reading and researching on social media
 - Reflect upon the changing ways in which people retrieve information and how research is impacted by a society-mediated culture

Activating Prior Knowledge and Building Knowledge With a Jigsaw Reading

A focus on language can clearly take many different forms. Providing numerous opportunities for students to engage in reading strategies, as well as to hone their discussion skills and collaboratively read and pull out key ideas from a text, is a valuable way for teachers to help students develop reading skills. To introduce this lesson, we asked students to view a controversial commercial (*Official Coca-Cola "Big Game" Commercial*, 2014) to activate ideas related to language in the United States, and then engage in a jigsaw reading of an article from the PBS series website "Do You Speak American?" (www.pbs.org/speak). The documentary of the same name (MacNeil, 2005) originally aired in 2005, the series features Americans speaking a variety of English dialects from various regions of the country, and the website offers articles focusing on various aspects of American language.

During the 2014 Super Bowl, a new Coca-Cola commercial aired that highlighted the song "America the Beautiful" (*Official Coca-Cola "Big Game" Commercial*, 2014). In various U.S. landscapes, people with different backgrounds are highlighted engaging in activities they appreciate as part of their culture, from playing sports to eating traditional ethnic food. Additionally, "America the Beautiful" is sung in various languages, while people of different ethnicities are shown. This commercial aired with some appreciation and some controversy (Killough, 2014). We pulled up some of these conversations for students by exploring hashtags such as #Cokecommercial and #SpeakAmerican. The controversy prompted a vigorous whole-class discussion ranging in analysis of the ways the commercial seems to appreciate diversity to the reaction of those upset by the manner in which America is represented, including that the song is performed in many different languages. This discussion served as an effective way for students to begin to

look at contemporary conversations and activate their own prior knowledge and opinions surrounding a text or a cultural artifact.

We then extended the students' conversations through a jigsaw reading strategy that involved selecting and reading a text from PBS's "Do You Speak American?" A jigsaw reading is set up much like a literature circle. In this case, students read different articles in small groups, discuss the articles, and then (this is the jigsaw piece) share information from the articles with other students who have read a different text. We designed this jigsaw reading to support student reading development, as well as discussion, and to support students in learning more about language in the United States. The purpose of a jigsaw reading is to disseminate knowledge from a variety of texts. Instead of reading ten articles, students read one and learn about nine others through discussion with the original reader of each selected text. Through the discussion with peers about the text they studied, students will learn if they would like to or should read one of the texts that others read. For our purposes, they did not need to read about each text in order to learn something new about American language. In this way, students were exposed to a variety of issues related to American English and its dialects.

At times, the topic of American language can be quite controversial. Depending on their location within the country, as well as their background experiences, students may or may not have ever considered the many factors involved. The PBS series offers several texts for consideration. Whether you select from this set or offer others, asking students to explore various issues related to language builds context for basic knowledge on this topic and helps students practice close reading and analysis skills.

Research Methods in Our Socially Mediated Society

Our discussions focused on analysis of the PBS text and reactions to the commercial as shared via social networks and reported in opinion and news sources. This allowed us to discuss issues related to language that students had heard about in the news and that were relevant to current conversations. We also used the commercial as a springboard into discussing how people do research in contemporary society. This led to a conversation about social media, including using Twitter and following hashtags as a form of research.

For instance, students noted that researchers who wanted to learn about various reactions to the commercial might use Twitter to find comments in this social media platform. The use of hashtags or #—though sometimes dismissed as simple Internet memes—also can serve the purpose of identifying trends online and finding information through tagging. Tagging, which is essentially providing a descriptor word for a text, is helpful for various

Lesson 14. Language in American Culture

Language is a major part of cultural identity. It is a part of our lives and may vary based on if we are at home or in a work (or school) setting and our audience. Many countries have named a national language. In the United States of America, we currently do not have a national language.

Activity 1: Reading a Commercial

- View “America Is Beautiful” (<http://youtu.be/RiMMpFcy-HU>), a Coca-Cola commercial from February 2014.
- Share reactions to the commercial in a pair share, then in a whole-class discussion.
- Explore reactions to the commercial (available from <http://cnn.it/1fSRbOM>).

Activity 2: Sacred Writing Time

- Write about your reaction to the commercial, as well as the reactions of others.
- What does the commercial suggest about American culture and language in the United States?
- What do the reactions to the commercial teach us about American culture?

Activity 3: Jigsaw Reading

- In teams, select one of the articles from “Do You Speak American?” (www.pbs.org/speak).
- Read the article, mark it up using reading strategies we have studied this year (such as questioning the text, making connections, writing your reactions next to the text), and discuss it. Remember that you can put the article in a Google Doc and comment on the text (see the Tech Tip in Chapter 1, page 41).
- Identify at least five key ideas from the reading to share with the class. After our reading, you will be sharing your information with other groups, so be sure to take good notes about the article to share with others.
- In small groups, break into new teams, with each person discussing a different article. Take notes on each article.

(Continued)

(Continued)

Article Name: _____

What are the major points of the article?

Article Name: _____

What are the major points of the article?

Article Name: _____

What are the major points of the article?

Activity 4: Reflection Time

- What ideas did you learn about language in the United States? What reaction do you have to the reading or the commercial?
- What purpose does controversy have in a culture? How do we learn about controversy in American culture?
- In what various ways do we learn about popular topics? How is research changing in our world today?



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searches for information. Students recognized that even for people who are not involved with Twitter, understanding the role of hashtags in a culture is important because tagging provides opportunities to participate in online conversations related to pertinent topics.

We know that research is changing in a socially mediated society. Still, researching in databases and finding reliable sources are essential (we will explore this work in Chapter 4), but the shift in learning through social media platforms is now a reality. We need to teach students to search what is trending, as much as we also need to teach them that not everything they read in such platforms is true. Through this brief point of recognizing hashtags, our students began those types of conversations.

This is why we introduced this conversation before we started to discuss the inquiry-based research essay. We knew that the work for the final essay would require more research, which might include following hashtags, but at this point in the inquiry unit, we wanted students to think about various ways in which people gain information in society—and how we choose to gain information in different ways depending on why we need it and how we plan to use it.

Extensions and Adaptations for Lesson 14

This work could be extended to cover a few days. Teachers might ask students to engage in a focused study of language issues within their community, including being ethnographers or interviewing people about issues related to language. In terms of language articles, there are many you might select to use with your students. Others to consider include

- “Mother Tongue” by Amy Tan (1999)
- “The Struggle to Be an All-American Girl” by Elizabeth Wong (n.d.)
- “A Nation Divided by One Language” from *The Guardian* (Crawford, 2001)
- Resources from PBS’s “Do You Speak American?” including “Hooked on Ebonics” (Baron, 2005) and “The Midwest Accent” (Gordon, 2005)

As you select articles to share with students, be sure to read and understand them and think carefully about the implications of the content with students. Some of the language texts noted above are narratives, and others are articles. Some are biased and one-sided. Depending on the article, it is important to think about supporting student learning by scaffolding ideas and offering texts that deal with various sides of an issue. Additionally, it is important to use reading strategies to help students

understand the content, as well as to provide context for information that may be related to the argument of the text.

You will also want to identify cultural artifacts to explore what will interest your students. As part of our class collaborative researching, we started a resources tab on our class Wikispace to share articles and other resources related to each topic. Teachers may also wish to integrate other social media tools into the inquiry unit, such as Twitter, to help students become more active researchers and search for and follow noted experts or timely and relevant hashtag conversations from leading thinkers. Students might also use curation tools such as Pinterest or Scoop to take on the roles of active curators themselves and to follow existing collections from hobbyists and experts alike.

Other options, such as RSS (really simple syndication) and search alerts, can also allow students to stay on top of their inquiry. RSS is a technology that “pushes” content out to websites and the apps on phones and tablets. Rather than having to visit a specific URL to find information, students can use a tool such as Feedly, Feedspot, Flipboard, or NewsBlur to organize news feeds, blogs, photos, videos, and other web content. All offer free and premium accounts, so getting started is relatively easy. Once students identify key topics, news sources, and bloggers, they can check their RSS reader regularly for the most recent information related to their topic.

Finally, search engines, most notably Google, offer a variety of options to customize searches. Advanced Search allows users to search with specific queries, such as “all these words,” “this exact word or phrase,” or “with any of these words.” Searching can also happen within a specific domain name, and by file type. Google also offers custom search alerts, allowing users to customize search terms and conditions, such as to look through everything on the web, or only the latest news. These custom search alerts can then be saved into RSS feeds, and added to a reader, or they can be delivered as an automatic e-mail. Last, for students later in their high school careers and into college, Google Scholar offers links directly to academic research articles.

LESSON 15. LITERATURE CIRCLE MEETING 2: CLOSE READING OF PASSAGES

The purpose of this lesson is to help students

- Refine discussion skills
- Collaboratively clarify and extend thinking related to a common text
- Critically review passages of a text for close reading and improvement of comprehension

- Refine personal inquiry related to literature circle reading
- Practice making thinking visible through collaboratively sharing ideas and notations
- Identify passages related to big ideas or culture connections
- Practice analysis skills of explaining a passage and thinking about that text
- Hone close reading skills

Close Reading: Text Exploration and Analysis

This second literature circle meeting built upon skills (close reading, purposeful journaling to talk back to the text, question writing, etc.) students were practicing through their preparation for the meetings; it also built upon their discussion skills. While we expected students to continue to explore their discussion questions as they moved forward, here we gave them a specific additional goal of analyzing a few specific passages.

First, we asked students to select five quotes from their literature circle book that they felt mattered to the text and to their thinking. We invited students to reread and discuss these passages together, as well as to share ideas related to why the passages related to the text. In this way, students engaged in a close reading of a text, breaking down a part of the text to analyze the bigger picture. Additionally, this activity built upon inquiry work as students debated which passages were relevant and shared why they found specific passages to be relevant. They also had to determine relevant passages as a team, which required them to explore the text carefully.

This activity added to the foundation we wanted students to build prior to launching into the inquiry for the actual research essay. In particular, we knew that developing students' close reading skills and their ability to select relevant points in the text would set them up for success with their research. Through the literature circle teams' work, students had opportunities to practice the skills they would employ for reading research.

In Video 3.1, you will see Dawn remind students about skills they are practicing through literature circle discussions, such as how we engage in discussion in face-to-face meetings and in digital spaces.

Extensions and Adaptations for Lesson 15

Structuring close reading opportunities for students can take different forms through journaling, marking up a text, and analyzing passages they determine or you determine, as well as publishing discussions online.

We knew that developing students' close reading skills and their ability to select relevant points in the text would set them up for success with their research.

watch it here



Video 3.1

<http://resources.corwin.com/writingrewired>

**HAND
OUT****Lesson 15. Literature Circle Meeting 2: Close Reading of Passages**

In addition to preparing the journal required for each meeting, for this second meeting, focus on close reading by completing the following. In both your dialectic journal and your culture log, record at least five passages from your book to analyze in your meeting.

Activity 1: Discussion in Literature Circle Teams

Discuss the questions that your team members prepared for this meeting. You should also share insights from your dialectic journal and culture log.

Activity 2: Collaborative Close Reading

Select a few passages to read closely as a team. Mark the text using Google Drive and embed your work in our online space. To get the text in your document, either find an excerpt online, such as from Google Books or Amazon; take a picture; or type the excerpt. Make comments that note specific insights from your reading, including cultural references that explore either artifacts or characteristics of culture.

After your initial close reading of the passage, prepare to share your ideas with others and reread the passage and analyze it again. In review, to create a presentation of close reading related to your book, use the following steps as a guide:

- Start a Google presentation and share it with your literature circle team.
- Record the passage either by taking a picture of the text or by finding the excerpt online.
- Add the passage to a Google presentation.
- Respond to the text with comment features on Google Drive.
- Embed your presentation on your project page of our online class space.

Activity 3: Review Close Reading Passages From Other Literature Circle Groups

Share today's notes and close reading on your online literature circle space. Then visit at least one other literature circle team's notes and close reading. When you read the work of other teams, consider how the team analyzed the passage for insights, connections to essential questions, and cultural references. You should see a variety of approaches to this work; however, you should also see careful and thoughtful connections relevant to our essential questions for study in the unit "Reading Our World and Exploring Perspectives: Identity and Culture."



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Integrating this skill throughout the school year was helpful for us because students recognized this as a common class practice and understood our expectations for close careful reading and the importance of extending their understanding beyond plot.

We know students cannot always mark up a school book, so sticky notes can be helpful. Additionally, we had students take a picture of the text, then mark it up within a digital space. Students could also find the passage online or type it out. Additionally, copying articles for students to mark up can be helpful to practice the skill of close reading. Nearly all e-book formats, including Kindle and ePub, have annotation tools students can use for close reading. Even digital books checked out from libraries allow readers to mark up a text, and often those annotations stay in the version of your digital text for the next time you check out that book.

It is important to provide students with opportunities for more than one literature circle discussion. Based on student experience with discussion and potential need for more practice, you might even offer guides for discussion and question strategies, such as sentence starters like “This passage makes me think of ___ because ___” or “This text related to ___ text because ___.” In our case, students built their skills through discussion and question writing the entire year. Exploring different types of questions from closed-ended to open-ended, from world connections to literary analysis, can be quite helpful for students. Many resources are available online from various disciplines that support work with student questioning and Socratic discussion. Additionally, several books are available to explore on this topic, such as Matt Copeland’s *Socratic Circles: Fostering Critical and Creative Thinking in Middle and High School* (2005).

LESSON 16. QUESTIONING AND SPECULATING

The purpose of this lesson is to help students

- Reflect on reading and cultural questions
- Narrow inquiry questions

Guiding Students to Narrow Inquiry Questions

Guiding students to narrow inquiry questions involves careful coaching through opportunities to write and reflect, as well as to share ideas with classmates and the teacher. Lesson 16 focuses entirely on student reflection as a means for students to write their way into narrowing their inquiry questions, which will ultimately become the focus for their inquiry-based research essay.

HAND OUT

Lesson 16. Questioning and Speculating

Today, you will be writing about your book in connection to your personal inquiry question(s). Think about it: How does your literature circle book guide your thinking about bigger inquiry questions and culture?

Activity 1: Review the Questioning and Speculating Guide From Youth Voices

- In this guide (<http://youthvoices.net/node/36247>), you are prompted to free write about your book and ask questions based on a close reading of passages and various story lines in your text. Additionally, using quotes from your book can help explain your thinking.
- This guide offers ways to approach this writing, but you may extend beyond the guide in your writing. Think carefully about how your novel of study inspires your questioning and inquiry.

Activity 2: Questioning and Speculating Blog Post

- Brainstorm: How does your literature circle book guide your thinking about bigger inquiry questions and culture?
- Compose your blog post. Remember to include your book and inquiry questions.
- Post your discussion blog on Youth Voices. Don't forget to add an image to your post as this is digital writing and a requirement for posts on Youth Voices.

Activity 3: Respond to Your Peers

Read other blog discussion posts from our class—you might even find posts from other schools!—and respond to your peers. For a few ideas on how to respond to posts, check out the Youth Voices guide at <http://youthvoices.net/node/23265>. Use the following considerations for responding to peers:

- Address the author by name.
- Be specific in your response. Reference an idea or line from the author's text to celebrate, question, or wonder about.
- Offer constructive responses related to big ideas in the post and raise questions to spark further exploration.
- Keep in mind that this response is designed to share ideas and develop thinking and questioning related to each person's inquiry question.

Activity 4: Narrow Inquiry Questions

After writing and responding to others, explore comments that you received. You might find it appropriate to respond to your responses. In most cases, it is common and expected that you respond to the responses you receive.

Think about your own inquiry questions and start to narrow your focus to one topic or question. Explore resources related to this topic. In this way, you are working on idea generating, gathering resources, and narrowing your inquiry.



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So far, students have been engaged in thoughtful questioning for discussion and built connections through reviewing passages, as well as noting cultural references, in their literature circle text. They have speculated related to essential cultural questions through whole-class text analysis from a variety of media focused on different artifacts of culture. As students continue to explore questions, it is also time for them to narrow their topics for further specific research.

The following example of a questioning and speculating blog post is from Allison. In this post, she connects her literature circle novel to her inquiry questions. Allison was exploring the role of entertainment throughout history during the reading and journaling process, and here her ideas for inquiry and research begin to solidify. We appreciate the specificity of Allison's ideas and examples. She weaves her literature circle book in with her inquiry question in smart moves with examples from the text and questions that follow. Additionally, Allison makes her ideas relevant to today as she turns a critical eye to analyze entertainment in contemporary society.

Guiding students to narrow inquiry questions involves careful coaching through opportunities to write and reflect, as well as to share ideas with classmates and the teacher.

As I read *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* by Victor Hugo (1892), I notice that there are many cultural aspects that differ from our own culture, but other aspects that are very similar. One question that has popped out at me because of my reading is about entertainment, and it asks: How does the entertainment people have available to them affect their lifestyle and attitudes?

In the book, the people of Paris have to entertain themselves on a daily basis, and when a public event comes up that provides entertainment, everyone seems to flock to that point in order to add some variety to a life that is fairly monotonous. A big event that draws many people is public torture. Like a moth to a flame, the people of Paris all turn out for a display of punishment. They have become so desensitized to public punishment that they make almost no move to stop the action and even partake in punishing the criminal. The author states, "The people, accustomed to waiting for public punishments and executions, did not manifest too much impatience." This cultural aspect of public torture can be recognized by people all over the world as being French, because it is well known that a lot of Western European countries used to publicly torture criminals.

The citizens of Victor Hugo's Paris, however, are not just influenced by public torture, but also enjoy viewing entertainment that is new and different. When the gypsies come to town, everyone is surprised by their acrobatic skills and exotic attitude. La Esmeralda is probably the most attractive to the citizens, drawing big crowds each time she performs in public. The author describes the audience as having their eyes fixed on her, with their mouths hung open. They are fascinated by the unusual, and this makes them curious. This characteristic is something only a Parisian could notice. No one person could say that this aspect is strictly French, so it is not immediately recognizable to the casual visitor.

In our modern-day society, we have many more options available to keep us entertained, such as television, iPads, and desktop computers. This makes us continue to demand to receive information faster, because we have these technologies that allow us to communicate almost instantly. We are also all able to view different categories of entertainment, such as horror, comedies, and romance stories. This alters us individually, whereas the people in Hugo's story have access to the same forms of entertainment, and people were affected together, instead of individually. Entertainment is a big cultural aspect that can affect people in many ways, and with it constantly changing, it is impossible to predict where it will take us next.

As students write questioning and speculating reflections, they start to refine their thinking about their inquiry questions. Some students may need to visit the guide for how to approach this writing more than others, and still others may benefit from looking at a mentor text together. One student may offer his or her blog post writing for discussion for this purpose. When exploring a student text with the class, students could discuss the following questions:

- *What do you appreciate about the ideas in this blog post? How does the author connect his literature circle novel with his inquiry question?*
- *In what way does this author's thinking inspire inquiry? What do you think about her ideas? How does the author make this inquiry relevant to both her novel and the world today?*
- *How would you respond to this author?*

Class discussion such as this would also help foster student examples for how to respond to peers' questioning and speculating ideas.

Extensions and Adaptations for Lesson 16

Structuring students' blogging can happen in different ways, as can formatting responses. One low-tech way to prepare students to use blogs involves setting up chart paper on the walls of your classroom. Identify topics or questions for the chart paper, such as literature circle book titles or major inquiry focus areas. Then pass out sticky notes of a single color and invite students to write about one of the topics. Ask students to place their completed sticky notes on the chart paper. Then pass out sticky notes of a different color. This time, invite students to respond to a post on a topic that they did not originally write about.

This discussion mimics what happens on blogs in how people write and respond to others. You might consider asking students to conduct this activity as a silent discussion, as that is what happens in online spaces, where the written response shows thinking or the voice of the discussion. After students make posts, they will likely want to read responses they have received from others. This exercise can prepare students to move their work with blogging into a fostered discussion for collaboration and support of ideas.

As students start to create their own personal learning networks, they can create their own blogs too. Blogs can also connect with other blogs through a blogroll or a list of links to other blogs.

REFLECTIONS ON DEVELOPING CLOSE READING SKILLS AND ORGANIZING DIGITAL SPACES

The focus of this week of lessons was close, careful, critical reading and reading through a cultural lens. This week also began to lay groundwork for research reading and synthesis through skill development and practice for careful reading, which is important for reading literature as well as researching. Additionally, students focused on gathering resources, exploring learning opportunities in a socially mediated culture and contemporary world, and narrowing the focus on an inquiry question with thoughtful, reflective writing. Integrating research skills into the reading opportunities offered students a chance not only to practice their skills but also to refine their thinking on their topic. This additionally reflected the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, as students engaged in habits of mind, such as curiosity, engagement, and creativity (Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English, & National Writing Project,

2011). Moreover, students continued to construct thinking through collaboration with peers and teachers and interaction with various texts, as well as writing for various opportunities and purposes.

Rewiring research makes the move of practicing research skills and finding relevant texts for analysis and support of ideas, not only for one paper but also as a way to develop and construct knowledge, explore curiosities, and even enter conversations in socially mediated contexts. We also established this process as a collaborative one, which helped students begin to form learning networks with one another. In this way, students were helping each other as they began to find resources and share ideas related to their inquiry questions.

As students wrestled with various ideas, they constructed knowledge, enhanced their analysis skills, and practiced persistence. This work is no easy task, and we took steps to challenge students so that they would begin to ask important questions. While students can sometimes be overwhelmed by ideas from others in class or from the teacher, we knew that our approach and constant questioning would also help them learn to embrace the messiness of learning, even when some of their questions and responses did not make sense.

We designed the activities in the lessons in this part of the inquiry unit to encourage students to explore as they figured things out and were challenged, such as through a “wobble.” At the same time, we were priming students for their next steps of research and writing, which we explore in the following chapters. Students were clearly ready for the next step.