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Student Engagement and Text Choice in the High School English Classroom

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STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND TEXT CHOICE IN THE HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH

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Abstract

Student book choice in the high school English classroom is often limited by curricular constraints, the pressure of statewide and national tests, and the personal reading preferences of the teacher or department, with a bias towards an established canon of white, male authors. However, student choice holds an important role in classroom engagement and learning, as can be seen through the studies examined in this literature review with application emphasis. The application portion includes a standalone unit for the incorporation of book choice into the high school English classroom designed to give educators the tools to utilize individual choice books for full class instruction.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

"I just don't like this book. Why do we have to read it?" As a starry-eyed new teacher with a meticulously arranged bookshelf of well-worn books and an eagerness to discuss the class novel, nothing is more disheartening or exhausting than hearing that phrase. How can a teacher combat dislike of the content matter? Where does one even begin to teach things like grit and growth mindset and perseverance through difficult reading when a student has already formed an opinion on the class novel the minute you hand it to them (and sometimes even before that moment)? There is a time when every teacher must feel like a circus performer, stage lights trained on you, your script completely unmemorized, and an overwhelming number of balls to juggle: IEPs, 504s, unanswered parent emails, a stack of grading a mile high, school initiatives, professional development goals, department expectations, the student who refuses to turn in any work, the student who was gone for a week, the student with an unhelpful social worker, the teenage gossip and angst, cell phones, broken technology, large class sizes in undersized classrooms...and the list goes on. Despite it all, doesn't that student have a point?

The High School English Classroom

A book is a deeply personal, immersive world with the power to transport to the reader to other realms and times, and even into the minds of others. Far from the structured world of the mathematics classroom, the English classroom is a uniquely individualized world based on personal interpretation just as much as it is based on skill building. Where equations immutably produce the same, singular solution, the skills and

interpretations of language and literature are ever-evolving. Why, then, is the English classroom often so rigidly structured?

Herein lies an old debate: where does the English teacher draw the line between skills and classics? What is the best way to develop a well-rounded student of English? Is it through initiation into the world of Steinbeck, Tolstoy, Shakespeare, a common culture of literature shared across generations and continents? Is it through the practice and accumulation of skills to identify the content and tools of literature, to analyze language and interpret theme and intent? Or is it, perhaps, some mixture of the two?

Historical Context

Nearly thirty years ago, Applebee (1992) published a study that concluded the literature taught in high school English classrooms across America had undergone little change over the course of several decades and suffered from a distinct lack of diversity. The same books highlighted in that study can still be found on classroom reading lists today.

Much has happened socially, historically, and pedagogically over the past thirty years. Over the past hundred years. Five years even, for that matter. Teachers have adapted their teaching styles and modes - why not the curriculum?

With a canon centered around works by white, male authors, the question of text selection arises: who decides what is classic literature, worthy of an English classroom, and what is meaningless drivel meant for a quick read at the beach? In an article for *Educational Leadership*, Gilmore (2011) poses that same question. The idea of "literary merit" becomes the deciding factor - it is "often used to justify prescribing student reading: it appears in the language arts standards of New York, Vermont, North Dakota,

Florida, and Minnesota" (Gilmore, 2011, p. 49-50). In the current English Language Arts standards for Minnesota, which follow Common Core, a note on the range and content of student reading indicates that assigned works should be "works of exceptional craft and thought" including "the classics of American literature and the timeless dramas of Shakespeare" in order for students to "gain a reservoir of literary and cultural knowledge, references, and images; the ability to evaluate intricate arguments; and the capacity to surmount the challenges posed by complex texts" (Minnesota Academic Standards: English Language Arts K-12, 2010, p. 49). However, that same note also places value on the importance of acquiring the "habits of reading independently and closely" which should be done "through motivation and engagement" (Minnesota Academic Standards: English Language Arts K-12, 2010, p. 49). Do these seminal works of literature have the power to motivate and engage students? Or does the motivation and engagement fall on the instructional strategies of the teacher?

Research Question and Rationale

Reading is a uniquely and intrinsically personal experience, invoking a synesthetic magic in the mind of the reader. Characters come alive, worlds grow to exploration, and history is rewritten – all in the span of a page. It seems obvious to note that all students "may not enjoy reading the same books" (Meier, 2015, p. 22). And yet, so many classrooms do require students to read the same book – classics, such as *Of Mice and Men, Romeo and Juliet,* and *To Kill a Mockingbird.* No English Language Arts teacher could possibly escape the collective groans and sighs that accompany a newly assigned class book. It is outright impossible to find a book suited to the interests and

reading abilities of every student in a classroom. And yet, students are still expected to read the same books in a typical secondary English Language Arts curriculum.

For every teacher and parent who is a staunch and unwavering supporter of the gilded and lofty canon, there is another rolling his or her eyes at the worn copies of books whose adoption into the curriculum predate the even the current students' parents. They are exasperated over the same list of "old, dead, white guys." How many times in my short career as a teacher have I heard a parent say, "Wow, I remember reading that book when I was in school," or heard a student say, "How is *Romeo and Juliet* relevant to my life 500 years later?" or heard a teacher say, "This is what we always teach"? Those comments and groans and eye rolls launched a wave of questions for me. Why do we always teach these canonical works? Who is in charge of selecting and narrowing the curriculum to a slim list of novels, essays, poems, and authors? And how does one make that sort of decision with new works being published every day?

I find that my interest does not lay in the how's and why's of the politics of the school system and its book selection process. I am more interested in the possibilities that exist beyond the canon, and beyond, even, that single classroom text read simultaneously. What happens when we allow students to select and study their own books? How can we teach core concepts and practice important skills in a classroom that does not confine or restrict students to a single book, but rather encourages interest and choice? Ultimately, how does book choice in English Language Arts at the high school level affect student learning and engagement?

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Current Literature Instruction Models and The Canon

In high school English classrooms across the nation, a pattern emerges in literature instruction: the same books are taught over and over again to generations of students, making up a clear canon. In a study of public, Catholic, and independent high schools across the nation, Applebee (1992) discovered that the top ten novels given as required reading were nearly identical in all three settings. Authors were predominantly white and male and included prominent literary figures such as Shakespeare, Steinbeck, and Dickens. Applebee (1992) analyzed lists of required reading submitted by English department chairs as well as required classroom reading lists submitted by English teachers themselves, which included additional titles the individual teachers required beyond the standards set by their departments. In this analysis, of the books required by English departments, a staggering 81% were written by male authors. Even more notable, 98% of these required texts were written by white authors. In comparison to a similar study done 25 years prior, Applebee (1992) notes that any changes in the canon were extremely marginal and hardly worthy of note. This stark dependence on an immutable and homogenous canon of texts hardly does credit to a wide variety of student readers who represent a multitude of genders, cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds. Especially in an increasingly digital age, where students have access to any number of texts and authors, the unchanging canon seems counterintuitive. Even the texts assigned by individual teachers followed this same pattern, with only 16% of the texts written by women and 7% by non white authors. When asked in the survey how

they selected literature to teach, while 5% of the teachers indicated that they had little or no choice in their curriculum, the vast majority surveyed "cited literary merit, personal familiarity with the selection, and likely appeal to students as the three most important influences. Departmental policies and possible community reaction to specific titles also played a part" (Applebee, 1992, p. 31). The former two items on the list, literary merit and personal familiarity, circle back to that established and unchanging canon. Though books may be tried and true, what barriers do teachers really have to breaking away from the canon in search of a more diverse array of literature? As Applebee (1992) recommends, "teachers need to find better ways to insure that programs are culturally relevant as well as culturally fair -- that no group is privileged while others are marginalized by the selections schools choose to teach" (p. 32).

Indeed, in a study done on the reading preferences and perceptions of eighth graders in an urban setting (Barry, 2013), students noted that they had difficulty connecting with and engaging in literature that was not relatable to them. While there is certainly something to be said about finding ways to make canonical literature relevant and relatable, it is also important to explore what types of literature these students do find engaging. In a survey of 148 eighth grade students, 29% of the boys and 38% of the girls reported that reading about characters of the same race or ethnicity would cause them to read more (Barry, 2013). Though the majority of students understood the importance of reading as indicated in their surveys, 52% of the boys and 32% of the girls indicated that they "never" or "not often" enjoyed reading. If those students were reading about a character they could relate to, rather than, say, Steinbeck's George and Lennie, the study suggests that students' reading and enjoyment would increase (Barry, 2013).

This again begs the question: what counts as literature worthy of a classroom, and what does not? The Common Core standards seem to fall in line with the idea of "literary merit" Gilmore (2011). In Minnesota, the standards demand a dose of "the classics" and "timeless dramas" (Minnesota Academic Standards: English Language Arts K-12, 2010, p. 49) as the medium for building students' reading and comprehension skills. And yet, those standards also seek to create independent book selection and reading skills "through motivation and engagement" (Minnesota Academic Standards: English Language Arts K-12, 2010, p. 49). Are students expected to pick up and enjoy classics independently?

Student Reading Preferences

While there very well may be students delighted to read Dostoevsky, Nabokov, Dickens, or Austen, it seems blindly optimistic to say that a young adult in a bookstore would gravitate towards the section filled with classics. Bright displays geared towards young adult readers advertise exciting new reads filled with suspense, romance, humor, and angst with characters who are, like themselves, navigating a world of smartphones, social media, and selfies. What types of books, after all, do students like to read? A study done by Kohn (2002) compiled the characteristics of books that high school boys enjoyed and sought to compare these traits to assigned books in the classroom. While a survey of 71 high school staff members indicated that teachers were aware that male students had different reading preferences than female students, the required reading for the general English classrooms did not appear to reflect this. Of the traits of books that appeal to boys as identified by Kohn (2002), none were apparent in more than one third of the assigned readings. For example, while Kohn cited research supporting the

appeal of books to boys that contained a plot or storyline that moved quickly, only 27% of the assigned books fell into that category. While these book traits may not be exclusive to the preferences of male readers, it is certainly important to be cognizant of these traits when assigning required reading. As Kohn (2002) suggests, "if we are trying to encourage young male students to read, particularly boys in a General English class, who don't like to read and are turned off to reading and perhaps even struggling with reading, we need to provide them with the types of books that we know they enjoy" (p. 38).

These concerns with catering to young male readers are not confined to the high school English classroom; research at the middle school level was done by Kendrick (1999) to study why boys were falling behind girls in reading and to compare their reading preferences to assigned reading in the classroom. During the study, 64 male seventh grade students were given a survey about their reading preferences and habits. Of those students, 56% of them reported that they did not enjoy reading while, in addition, 53% of the students reported that they read zero books per week. Additionally, only 11% of the students reported having time in class to read daily. Thus, the vast majority of the boys were not given class time to read; coupled with the fact that they did not like to read and chose not to read outside the classroom, it is no wonder that their reading scores and abilities were falling behind. Despite the fact that 75% of the students felt encouraged to read by their teachers and 61% by their parents, they will still choosing not to. When examining the types of books these boys enjoyed, both the students and their teachers ranked scary books, cartoons or comics, and sports books or magazines as the favorites. However, the assigned reading included young adult books about things that happen to people, biographies, poetry, encyclopedias, and animal

books. While the category of young adult books is fairly all-encompassing, it seems

obvious that no specific attempt has been made to cater to the interests of the male

readers. Kendrick's (1999) data make it clear that students were not reading unless

required to do so, and the required reading did not match up with what students

preferred to read.

Aliteracy

Whereas literacy is the ability to read and write and illiteracy is the lack of these

abilities, aliteracy is a relatively new concept. Put simply, aliteracy is the ability to read

but the choice not to do so. How many students fall into this category today? "Make

students into lifelong readers" seems to be the battlecry of English teachers everywhere;

it is only reasonable to assume that teachers must battle against aliteracy as well as

illiteracy. According to Chong (2016), alliterates demonstrate two traits: they "have

reasonable to excellent reading skills but demonstrate little motivation for reading in

some or many genres" and secondly, they "read intensively when external compulsion is

present but choose not to read or read only minimally when the compulsion is removed"

(Chong, 2016, p. 15). Chong describes that external compulsion as a negotiation with

the expectations of an external other: teacher or school expectations, self-expectations,

and past experiences of reading. In this understanding of aliteracy, it becomes apparent

that intrinsic or internal motivation is necessary to propel the young reader into chosen

and sustained literacy.

Engagement and Choice

Personalization and self-pacing seem to be the new buzzwords in education, and it's no surprise - the rise in technology use in and out of the classroom has given students a taste of an individualized approach, where they can seek out answers on their own, watch how-to videos, and discover games and applications to practice their skills. The use of choice in the classroom is one way educators work to incorporate personalization and self-pacing, all in an attempt to engage students and get them to invest in their own learning.

Affective Engagement vs. Cognitive Engagement

Schraw, Flowerday, & Reisetter conducted a study (1998) that sought to measure separately the effect of choice on both affective engagement and cognitive engagement. They defined the positive measures of affective engagement as "intrinsic motivation, feelings of satisfaction, and reduced anxiety" (Schraw, Flowerday, & Reisetter, 1998, p. 706). The positive measures of cognitive engagement, on the other hand, were defined as "strategy use, recalling main ideas, and generating inferences" (Schraw, Flowerday, & Reisetter, 1998, p. 706).

In their study on college level undergraduate students in an education psychology course, the researchers found that giving the participants a choice in text selection led to an increase in affective engagement over the participants with no choice in text selection. However, text selection choice had no effect on cognitive engagement. This was measured through interest surveys done before and after the reading, a

multiple choice test for text comprehension, an essay on their reaction to the text, and an attitudes survey on their participation in the study.

When conducting the study a second time with another group of undergraduate students, though the format and procedures were slightly altered to reduce bias, the results were the same, with an increase in affective engagement for the participants given a choice in text selection. Overall, the choice group showed more interest in the text, had more positive comments about their participation, and had more favorable comments about the choice format as well as more positive attitudes about the study in general.

Schraw, Flowerday, & Reisetter (1998) concluded that choice in text selection positively impacted students' affective engagement while having no impact on cognitive engagement. Thus, while test scores and recall may not be boosted by choice in text selection, this study indicates that the internal factors of affective engagement are certainly influenced.

Choice vs. Interest

In a follow up study to the one conducted in 1998, Flowerday, Schraw, & Stevens (2004) completed research to determine whether the positive effects of choice on reader engagement were due to choice itself or interest in the text that was chosen. Was the freedom of choice enough to increase engagement? Or was reading about a topic of interest as a result of that choice the true factor?

Participants were again undergraduate students in a psychology course. Half were assigned to the choice group and allowed to choose between two sealed packets containing reading materials, while the other half of participants were given one packet.

Student engagement was measured through a reading topic interest survey before and after the reading, a multiple choice comprehension test, an essay on the main ideas of the text, and an essay on their reaction to the reading. The experiment was conducted twice, with two different groups of students. From the results, the researchers were able to conclude that "situational interest has a robust effect on attitudes and a modest effect on engagement" (Flowerday, Schraw, & Stevens, 2004, p. 110). Further, "as situational interest increased, engagement increased and attitude became more positive" (Flowerday et al., 2004, p. 110). However, choice itself had no effect on engagement or attitudes. The researchers suggest that choice alone is not enough to influence student engagement positively but there must be situational interest as well, in which choice may play a part, if done correctly. The "implementation of choice...in a haphazard manner" (Flowerday et al., p. 111) is not likely, the researchers suggest, to provide the benefit of increased engagement.

To summarize, topic interest was not the main factor in increasing reader engagement, but neither was choice. Situational interest - that is, interest in the format of the reading assignment, the reading given, and the assignment combined - played the largest part in increasing reader engagement. Therefore, it may be argued that choice and topic interest are not enough, but rather educators must carefully construct situations in which both may benefit students.

An Engagement Model for High School

While research outlining best practices may be helpful as a starting point, what does an engagement model for reading look like at the high school level? Cantrell et al. (2017) investigated the engagement and reading growth of high school freshmen in a

supplemental literacy course through a series of interviews conducted over the course of the school year.

In these literacy intervention courses, the students interviewed indicated that they were "motivated by texts that they could relate to, that were linked to real-world issues, and that were connected to their own lives" (Cantrell et al., 2017, p. 64). Technology resources and digital texts were also perceived by the students to be engaging. Further, "students indicated not only that they grew more receptive to strategy instruction across the year but that their growing proficiency with comprehension influenced their motivation and motivation-related feelings about reading" (Cantrell et al., 2017, p. 65). How did the teachers achieve this increase in engagement, motivation, and self-efficacy? In this study, the classes did not involve teaching from a single textbook. Instructors sought out meaningful texts and provided text choice as well as reading time for the students. Engagement in reading was not left to chance but specifically targeted and catered to in order to grow students' skills and abilities as well as interest in reading.

Academic and Personal Choice Reading

Chong (2016) suggests that there exist two categories of reading: academic and personal choice. Academic reading is institutionally imposed, and according to Chong (2016), a student's perception of academic reading expectations shapes their reading choices. In this study, it was found that when students were uninterested in their courses - and thus, their assigned academic reading - a dichotomy emerged, wherein students either "surrendered or protected the space that is personal-choice reading" (Chong, 2016, p. 20). It is not shocking that students may find some subjects or reading materials uninteresting. It becomes a problem, however, as "the more the undergraduate's

personal-choice reading is perceived to be eclipsed or crowded out, the less the students will feel in control of the choice to read. Unsurprisingly then, some form of aliteracy takes shape" (Chong, 2016, p. 20). If students feels that they do not have balance between academic and personal choice reading, this study suggests that students may simply choose not to read. How, then, can educators ensure that a balance is maintained and work to keep academic reading engaging through the use of choice?

Text Choice in Practice

In examining the literature surrounding text choice in the classroom, it becomes apparent that it has been studied and put in place in a number of settings, including elementary, middle, and high school, as well as college. Considering critically the successful and less successful aspects of each implementation is important in determining best practices for a high school classroom setting.

Teacher Beliefs About the Use of Choice

Flowerday and Schraw (2000) conducted a study examining the choices teachers offer their students, how they decide to offer choice, and their perception of the effectiveness of choice. The study consisted of interviews with teachers from a range of grade levels, disciplines, and years of experience.

Overall, the study found that the participant teachers strongly agreed in the use of choice as a large factor in increasing student autonomy, ownership, interest, and creativity. Participants also agreed that improved student-teacher relationships were a result of choice in the classroom. The participants all held positive beliefs in terms of the

use of choice in the classroom; however, they also agreed that too much choice could be counterproductive if the choices were not equal - for example, if there was an easier route for unmotivated students. Most of the participants also agreed that choice should be limited to a teacher-selected list of options.

Flowerday and Schraw (2000) found that there were six areas of choice offered by the teacher participants: topics of study, reading materials, methods of assessment, activities, social arrangements, and procedural choices. Further, when interviewing the participants, researchers found that there were two main reasons teachers gave choices: enhancement of classroom experience and a reward of effort and good behavior.

Finally, Flowerday and Schraw (2000) found that the participants utilized choice differently depending on student-related and teacher-related variables. For students, variables included age, prior knowledge, and student achievement, with an increase in any of the areas leading to an increase in choice. For teachers, variables included teacher self-efficacy, experience, course content, and management styles. In terms of self-efficacy and experience, an increase in these led to an increase in choice. In terms of course content, certain areas, particularly arts and social sciences, were deemed more open to choice by the participants. And lastly, in terms of management style, teacher-centered participants offered fewer choices while student-centered participants offered more, though both styles still believed in the use of choice.

Through their research, Flowerday and Schraw (2000) concluded that teachers believe choice matters to their students. They found that teachers believed that choice should be utilized for all grade levels, but especially for older students who are more competent, more self-regulated, and more knowledgeable about a topic or task. They concluded that teachers believe that choice can be used in many different settings for

different tasks as well as for both academic and social activities. Finally, the researchers concluded that teachers believe choice should be used by offering simple choices first, helping students practice good decision-making, and then providing feedback about the choices made. For younger students, team choices may be implemented. They also found it important to provide clarification about the choices and offer choices within a task. Ultimately, Flowerday and Schraw (2000) found choice to be perceived as a useful instrument in the classroom by teachers when implemented carefully and strategically.

Student Selected vs. Teacher Selected Texts

When studying the effects of student selected versus teacher selected texts, Arguelles Alvarez (2012) sought to answer how and why both teachers and students selected books and, further, what impact these selections had on engagement and motivation. Using English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in a college setting, Arguelles Alvarez (2012) gave out questionnaires and conducted interviews of students and teachers in two settings: students in classes given a choice of texts from a list and students in classes assigned a compulsory text.

As a result of the questionnaires, it was found that teachers' criteria for selecting a book for the course relied on the title of the novel (especially those connected to a cultural movement, current affair, or has literary value), grammar and vocabulary difficulty, and book length. Additionally, 50% of the instructors indicated that they chose a specific book according to their own preferences. Meanwhile, Arguelles Alvarez (2012) found that students' criteria for selecting a book relied on title (including availability of a film version), grammar and vocabulary difficulty, and book length. Of the students given choice, 50% chose their book in a process of elimination, and the other 50% chose their

book upon first seeing it; further, roughly half of the students selected their book due to the availability of a film adaptation.

For the students who were assigned a teacher-imposed book, Arguelles Alvarez (2012) found that 60% indicated that they would prefer to choose their reading from 3-4 books, 25% would prefer to choose their reading without a teacher selected list, and 15% would prefer a teacher-assigned book. When interviewed informally, students who answered that they would prefer a teacher selected book indicated that they were less confident with their English, in which case a teacher selected text may seem like a safer choice.

Arguelles Alvarez (2012) concludes from the study that teachers might give students the choice of their own reading, if the main difference in the selection process for a book is in genre and topic. Because students are involved in this process – as was indicated in the questionnaires showing initial interest in the reading – students may become more involved in their learning and potentially gain motivation to learn.

A limitation of this study (Alvarez, 2012) of note is that this takes place both at a college level and in a foreign language. Though much of the research and opinions seem applicable universally, it is important to consider that it is not a perfect fit, though it may indicate interesting trends and patterns in student choice and preference in books. It was also interesting to note that student choice leaned towards books with a film adaptation, which may be an important consideration when presenting choices or evaluating texts - this hails back to Flowerday and Schraw's (2000) study on teacher beliefs about choice, in which teachers agreed that too much choice may be counterproductive if there was an easier option for less motivated students. A careful consideration of the choices offered should certainly be part of a best practices model.

Self Selected Texts in an Elementary Setting

Text choice has been brought into a variety of classrooms, from the elementary level to the postgraduate level. At the elementary level, research has been done by Angeletti (1990) to explore the impact of reading comprehension instruction that relied upon self-selected texts. Fifty students in two classrooms - fourth grade and fifth grade - had the opportunity to practice reading comprehension skills with their individual books. This was accomplished through a whole class lesson focused on skills followed by a mini lesson that asked students to respond to questions based on their own reading. Students were also given teacher and peer feedback.

The result of Angeletti's study (1990) was a significant increase in the reading comprehension skills being taught. Perhaps more significantly, both students and parents reported an increase in reading time and engagement. In attitude surveys, 73% of students reported an increase in reading time at home, 83% indicated an increase in their interest in reading, 73% said their excitement about reading had increased, and 89% believed their reading skills had increased. Further, in an attitude survey administered to parents, 73% of parents reported an increase in time spent on reading for pleasure, 79% noted an increased interest in books and reading abilities, and 88% remarked on a positive attitude towards reading overall. Additionally, over half of the parents surveyed directly indicated the reading instruction program, utilizing student text choice, as the catalyst for these changes. Angeletti summarized the results, saying, "The process of allowing self-selection of books for learning and demonstrating skills seems to help students feel more in control of their learning. Students also seemed to enjoy reading more, and as a result, read more. If our ultimate goal is to have students

become literate adults who choose to read, then this method seems to be an appropriate way for teaching skills, a way which will turn students on to reading instead of turning them off" (Angeletti, 1990, p. 22).

Especially at the elementary level, many students are still beginning to develop as readers and moving from learning to read into reading to learn. Meier (2015) conducted a study on nineteen fifth grade students, to assess their reader identities, seeking to discover how these identities changed over a six-week period. During this period of time, students were given time in class to read a book of their choice, rather than a teacher selected class book. During a six-week period, students were given fifteen to twenty minutes during each class period to read a book of their choice. Before they made their choices, students were given a lesson on selecting a best fit book based on interest and reading ability related to vocabulary recognition, where more than five unknown words within the span of two to three pages was too difficult and fewer than three was too easy. They were given no further guidance on book selection and were not told if they had to continue reading the same book the entire time. Students were given a weekly Google forms questionnaire, which Meier (2015) coded and analyzed.

Before the choice reading time, students who viewed themselves as readers based their identity on ability to read quickly or to read lengthy books. According to Meier (2015), of the nineteen students, five initially identified themselves as a "good reader." Seventeen of the students said they preferred reading a book of their choice while only two preferred a book selected by the teacher. Additionally, ten self-identified as readers and nine said they were not readers. After the study, these numbers changed dramatically: eighteen students identified as readers, while only one did not. Student answers about their reader identities changed as well, shifting away from answers about

speed of reading or length of books to answers about how reading made them feel and how they selected books that would be a good fit for them. Overall, the study showed a change in students' attitudes, becoming more positive about reading and about themselves as readers. From this study, Meier (2015) concluded that choice in reading in the classroom has a positive effect on students' reader identities.

While students in an elementary school setting are often still developing readers, it is clear from the studies conducted by Angeletti (1990) and Meier (2015) that access to text choice has a significant impact on students' attitudes towards reading. Furthermore, elementary school is arguably a pivotal time in a student's skill development, where student engagement, motivation, and attitudes towards reading might form lasting trends. Certainly this is a critical time period to foster strong reading habits, and student selected texts may be one approach to doing so.

Self Selected Texts in a Middle School Setting

The middle school environment seems to have generated the most interest in the study of text choice, perhaps as a direct result of middle school philosophy. Whatever the reasoning, several studies have measured the positive effects of text choice in the middle school setting, including studies done by Stairs and Burgos (2010), Worthy, Turner, and Moorman (1998), Ivey and Johnston (2013), and Whitney (1991).

Stairs and Burgos (2010) sought to examine the usage of student self-selected texts in a middle school classroom as a way to encourage students to be engaged, lifelong readers. The researchers argue that, "In earlier grades, when students are learning to read, they often choose their texts, but in later grades when the purpose of reading shifts to content literacy, the texts are mostly teacher (or district) selected,

leaving students with less voice in the direction of their school reading" (Stairs & Burgos, 2010, p. 43). The researchers studied eighth grade students in a reading workshop classroom at a public middle school in Maine. Fifty-three total students participated in the study, representing three different class periods. Proponents of Atwell and her peers may be familiar with the reading workshop style classroom; in this particular classroom, students were asked to write in a reading workshop journal regularly about a favorite book over the course of the year. Halfway through the academic year, the teacher asked students to direct their journaling to the focus of answering three questions: What is the best book you have read in class or on your own? How did it change your life or influence your thinking? Who else would like this book and why?. Students were also told that the audience of these journal entries would be English teachers and/or researchers. Stairs and Burgos (2010) then analyzed these journal entries.

Significantly, 92% of the the students chose a self-selected text over a whole-class text as their favorite or most influential book (Stairs & Burgos, 2010). Furthermore, three categories emerged in students' responses. First, students indicated that reading their favorite book altered their views of themselves and their personal decision making - these books acted as a reflective piece for the eighth grade students. Second, students indicated that reading their favorite book showed them the importance of developing and sustaining healthy interpersonal relationships, as they followed the relationships of the characters in their books. And third, many students who had previously indicated that they disliked or even hated reading now indicated an increased interest and enjoyment in reading. The last finding by Stairs and Burgos (2010), though not necessarily indicating causation, was an analysis of year-end state standardized test scores for ELA, showing that 49% of the students met the standards, 24% exceeded the

standards, 19% partially met the standards, and only 8% did not meet the standards. Again, though there may be some correlation between the reader's workshop format (including text choice) and the mastery of grade-level standards, causation is not necessarily implied nor can it be accurately linked without further studies. However, with two-thirds of the students meeting or exceeding the standards, this method of teaching cannot completely be set aside as a potential factor for student success.

Worthy et al. (1998) also investigated the usage of sustained independent reading of a self-selected text in middle school classrooms. These researchers sought to discover how often this practice was used, what the most important features of a self-selected reading program were, and what the roadblocks were to implementation in the classroom by interviewing teachers. They interviewed thirty-five sixth grade English Language Arts teachers representing nine different schools. What Worthy et al. (1998) found was that 57% of the teachers chose to base their instruction on a novel that the students selected from a specific topic or genre while 14% chose to base their instruction on a whole-class novel. They also found that the main reason teachers chose self-selected texts over whole class novels was because of a desire to incorporate student choice into their classroom. Furthermore, as time to read was considered an important facet of the practice, Worthy et al. (1998) found that twenty-five of the thirty-five teachers offered self-selected reading time at least once a week. Beyond the inclusion of regular reading time as an important aspect of implementation, the teachers interviewed also indicated the importance of listening to student preferences, the importance of modeling the enjoyment of reading, the importance of giving meaningful assignments connected to the reading without stifling the enjoyment of reading, and the importance of sharing and recommending books.

First and foremost, "respecting students' choices and allowing them to read personally interesting materials was seen as the most important feature of self-selected reading by many of the teachers" (Worthy et al., 1998, p. 298). It seems obvious to say, but there isn't much point in giving choice if that choice becomes extremely limited or restricted - the merits of choice reading are derived directly from the ideas of freedom and personal interest, not a narrow minded drive towards a rigid curriculum. Moreover, the message of the importance of reading is in danger of becoming lost if the daily or weekly time turns, for the teacher, into planning or grading time. Thus, 40% of the teachers interviewed indicated reading while their students were reading and several of the teachers also mentioned that they "read the novels that students read, introduced their students to books they thought they would like, and followed students' book recommendations" (Worthy et al., 1998, p. 299). This collaborative approach has the benefit of transforming reading time in the classroom into a guided exploration into an appreciation of reading.

Unfortunately, the teachers interviewed by Worthy et al. (1998) also reported many barriers to the inclusion of self-selected texts and sustained reading time in the classroom, reporting pressures from the outside. One major barrier reported by teachers was the perception of this reading time by parents and administrators, which ran the risk of being seen as enrichment, rather than instruction. Another barrier teachers faced was related to the importance of classroom instruction time, as many of the teachers reported feeling pressure to cover set curriculum and state standards by either cutting reading time in class or restricting the choices by students in order to guarantee that certains skills or standards would be covered in conjunction with the independent reading time. The third barrier was related to access to texts: teachers worried about finding books for

all skill levels that were still age-appropriate, lower income students didn't have access to books at home, school libraries had limited quantities of books, particularly popular new releases, and teachers were often forced to purchase classroom libraries with their own money. These barriers are not insurmountable, and in fact, several may find a fix with an appeal to the school board or to the general public. An educational campaign on the importance of sustained reading time for self-selected books might bolster such efforts and create momentum for change.

The engagement of middle school students in the curriculum is another important facet to examine when discussing self-selected texts. Ivey and Johnston (2013) conducted a study to to examine the engagement of middle school students given the opportunity to select "personally meaningful young adult literature" as well as the time and autonomy to read. They studied 71 eighth grade students in English classrooms taught by four different teachers. Through interviews with students at the end of the school year, the researchers sought to discover student perceptions of engagement and agency in reading as well as their perceptions of how their reading habits and attitudes had changed. All four classrooms utilized student-selected, self-paced reading rather than class assigned texts; students were able to select from books that were considered high interest texts such as young adult fiction. In addition, reading was "decriminalized" in a way - no assignments were given in conjunction with the reading and students were not assigned any additional English homework outside of the classroom. In this way, teachers sought to create a truly engagement-driven and enjoyable reading experience for their students. Over the course of the year, teachers rotated their classroom libraries, allowing for fresh enticements for the young readers; the teachers also started classes with a teacher read aloud and ended with student writing time (Ivey & Johnston, 2013).

Through the analysis of state test scores, year end interviews with the teachers, classroom visits, informal conversations with students, as well as video and audio recordings of small group book discussions, Ivey and Johnston (2013) concluded that their results offered "a strong rationale for revisiting the role of extended, intensive reading in English language arts classrooms" (Ivey & Johnston, 2013, p. 272). As a concrete measure of student success - and often the one teachers are most frequently held accountable for - student test scores year over year showed a significant increase. While students testing at the state level remained roughly the same, moving from 89% to 90%, students in the experiment saw an increase in passing scores, from 78% of the students to 85% of the students. Most importantly, students at the lowest testing level were moved out, showing a compelling change in test scores. Those students who most frequently find themselves overlooked or left behind experienced a boost in their scores: the passing rate of economically disadvantaged students moved from 69% to 81%, Hispanic students moved from 82% to 91%, African American students moved from 83% to 85% and males moved from 72% to 81% (Ivey & Johnston, 2013). So, while overall the test scores may have held out year over year, students across the board experienced the positive results of a reading program that seemed to effectively engage them while increasing their reading comprehension skills.

How did these teachers so effectively create a change in student engagement and learning? In their research, Ivey and Johnston (2013) noted that students credited their engagement to four factors: teacher behavior, choice, time to read, and the books themselves. The researchers found that "students reported increasingly purposeful and prolonged absorption in books, a strong sense of agency with respect to their reading, stretching themselves to their limits, and the deliberate use of the available scaffolds

(particularly peers) when encountering difficulty" (Ivey & Johnston, 2013, p. 270). By having a time and space to read, access to interesting and unrestricted books of their choosing, and teachers who modeled the importance of reading, reading became important to the students. Perhaps even more enlightening, researchers discovered that peer to peer collaboration increased as students "engaged in common conversations, even though there were only three or fewer copies of each text, and many read the same text, just not at the same time. Consequently, students experienced regular, expanding reviews of a text they had read...Common conversations are perhaps better viewed as the outcome of motivated social dispersal than of enforced transmission" (Ivey and Johnston, 2013, p. 272). What teacher could possible argue against the lasting value of a culture and social exchange centered around literature?

But what about when students are not given time to read, though still encouraged and motivated to do so? A study done by Whitney (1991) tracked reading as a choice that was external to the curriculum; that is, it showed how often students chose to spend time reading despite not being given classroom time to do so. This clearly indicated that despite internal or external motivating factors, students appear to *want* to read but they need to be given the time to do so.

Whitney began by administering the Children's Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Control Scale (CNSIE) to 53 sixth grade students to measure locus of control - that is, the degree to which an individual expects their behavior to be rewarded. Those with an internal locus of control expect their behavior will earn them the reward while those with an external locus of control see rewards as beyond their control. Next, a free reading library was set up in the students' classrooms and students were instructed that they were able to participate by their own choice in a study to discover what books

were popular with their age group, with no grades, prizes, or rewards given for participation. After reading a book (or even after starting and abandoning one) students were asked to fill out a book report form. Finally, Whitney (1991) collected data on student reading level, academic achievement, and reading speed through teacher evaluation, interviewed participating teachers, and gave all students (both those who participated and those who chose not to participate) a follow up questionnaire.

In total, 41% of students participated in the study. Based on number of pages read by students with either an internal or external locus as well as voluntary participation, Whitney (1991) found that there was no significant difference in intrinsic motivation between internal and external locus of control students, which meant that there was no evidence that locus of control affected reading motivation. However, based on student responses to the questionnaire, Whitney observed that students "were interested in looking at the books---84% viewed the books more than once---but 77% felt they were 'too busy' to read" (Whitney, 1991, p. 21). She postulated that "this perception of being "too busy" [is] a reflection of the pressures schools are under to accommodate the curriculum...Asking a student to operate on his or her own efforts, and giving time for this activity in the school curriculum, supports the theory that all intelligence should be respected."

It is clear through a survey of the literature that a number of middle schools are attempting to institute new and unique ways to engage emerging young readers in the world of literature. First and foremost is engagement through choice, followed closely by a curricular structure that gives time and flexibility. Reading is very obviously important for these young minds - how we choose to introduce them to lifelong skills may have a lasting impact.

Self Selected Texts in a High School Setting

At both the elementary and middle school level, curriculum often seems flexible enough to accommodate the experiments of English teachers in the realm of student book choice and engagement. At the highschool level, however, focus appears to shift to college and postgraduate preparation, when rules and test scores seem to be the peak of a students' academic achievement. How then can reading choice and engagement be incorporated into the high school English classroom? Morgan and Wagner (2013) sought to answer this question by conducting a study that examined how reading choice might better support student learning and to discover the instructional choices that support teaching using this method.

In this study, reading choice was introduced as a single unit in a sophomore English class, which lasted for three weeks. Of the students participating, it is important to note that study encompassed a wide range of reading abilities, interests, and access, reflective of many classrooms across the country. Of the 57 students, 14 students had an individual education plan (IEP) that gave reading accomodations, 10 students were found to be reading at least one grade level behind, and 8 students had participated in honors English the previous year. Moreover, at the start of the academic year, only 40% of these students had a library card, 51% reporting having access to books at home, and an astonishing 72% had read less than 2 books for pleasure over the previous school year (Morgan & Wagner, 2013). With students at both the high and low end of the reading spectrum as well as a range of access to books and interest in reading, engagement in reading was clearly an important focus for their English teacher.

The classroom format followed Atwell's (2007) reading workshop format. Students chose books independently, which then required both teacher and parent approval. Students read daily in class and kept a journal that was meant to monitor progress and make connections between their books and the concepts they were learning in class. According to Morgan and Wagner (2013), concepts were introduced through a series of minilessons and included conflict, plot, point of view, characterization, mood, tone, flashback, foreshadowing, and irony. Students were graded daily on participation and weekly on their journals. Furthermore, on Fridays the teacher used individual and small group instruction to give more guidance and support to those students who needed it. Finally, the teacher also worked individually with all of the students, having short conversations that were tracked on a clipboard and coded 0-5 to reflect student understanding of the concepts, meant to guide further instruction as needed (Morgan & Wagner, 2013). These individual conversations had a benefit for the quiet students as well, since "unlike class discussions, students could not hide behind other readers by not participating in the discussion" (Morgan & Wagner, 2013, p. 665).

Results in this study were mostly restricted to student feedback and grades at the end of the unit. Student response to the unit was noted as overall positive and throughout the unit the students read a total of 81 books, with 39% of students reading more than one book during the three week period - this is compared to only 28% reading two or more books for pleasure during the entire previous school year (Morgan & Wagner, 2013). Obviously, time given during the school day to read, rather than as an extracurricular activity, may be considered a factor in this achievement. The majority of students also did quite well academically during the unit, with 46 students receiving an A, 9 receiving a B, and 2 receiving a C. In addition, of the students with an IEP that

included a reading accommodation, all but one earned a B or higher and performed

better than on prior assessments (Morgan & Wagner, 2013). While grades, especially

limited to one classroom teacher, may be considered fairly subjective, it can at least be

reasonably assumed that this teacher is likely consistent in grading practices across

different units and assessments, where an improvement in student grades and

achievements would be considered progress on the students' part. However, it is also

fair to say that the study requires further longevity and application across multiple

classrooms with different teachers to prove scientifically beyond a doubt a solid

connection between the unit and student success and engagement. Yet, such a study is

not without merit, as it provides some ideas for actual implementation in the high school

classroom as well as a basis of information showing reading choice having a positive

impact on students. Anecdotally, "teachers in different subject areas commented on the

positive change they saw in students and the appearance of books in their classrooms,

along with having to address students 'sneaking' in reading during their classes"

(Morgan and Wagner, 2013, p. 666). When reading becomes so engaging and

interesting that it spills over into other classrooms and hours of the day, if even for just a

few students, it may be considered - at least to the English teacher's heart - a

resounding success.

Self Selected Texts in a Higher Education Setting

It is arguably the mandate of many schools and English classrooms to prepare

students for success in their futures, whether their path from high school leads them

directly to the working world or to a higher education setting. Thus, it may be the

argument of some that book choice does not provide students the same skills and

context as teaching the traditional literary canon does, and, moreover, may be harmful in introducing students to a way of learning that they will not experience in a college setting. And yet, student choice in reading has indeed made its way into some higher education classrooms. For example, a study conducted by Amicucci et al. (2015) surveyed the teachers of an undergraduate general literature course and analyzed student writing samples. The study's purpose was to find how students read literature and how professors facilitated that reading.

Teacher interviews and student written responses indicated that "both groups place value on giving students some freedom to choose the literary texts they read, and both make connections between this freedom and students' ability to perceive value in the reading they do" (Amicucci et al., 2015, p. 8). While students in the course were given some ability to choose what they read, teachers cited the importance of setting parameters. These parameters ranged from asking students to read a book from a particular genre, time period, or culture to pairing student selected works with classic literature. One teacher in an interview noted that he or she had determined that "continuing to force down their throat stuff that they'd already experienced wasn't very useful. … You're just repeating their prior experience, you're not really helping them to take a different look at things that they've been doing" (Amicucci et al., 2015, p.14). According to research gathered from the study, most of the students felt that the course - and particularly the style of the course - had made them into reader and encouraged the creation of lifelong reading habits. It is important to note that the course was limited to non-English major and non-honors students, so the population drawn in by the study was predominantly self-identified non-readers; thus, the impact of choice in literature instruction might be concluded as a strong factor in shaping and changing these

students' minds. Further, "many students highlight[ed] the fact that writing about what they read enhances the reading they do, including by prompting them to engage with what they read more deeply than they would otherwise" (Amicucci et al., 2015, p. 20). As a result, writing should certainly be considered as a key component of literature instruction. Finally, Amicucci et al. (2015) had three main recommendations as a result of the study. First, they recommended encouraging student autonomy for some text selection while keeping the boundaries and parameters of this reading clear and transparent. Secondly, they recommended that instructors facilitate critical thinking about their reading, which - while likely obvious to the average English teacher - is something to be carefully included in the curriculum; that is, reading should not be left alone but engaged through discussion and other critical thinking processes. And thirdly, the researchers recommended the use of reflective writing as a tool to develop student awareness of the transfer of skills learned through reading and the critical thinking process (Amicucci et al., 2015). Thus, it can be seen that self selection of texts can be applied at any level, from elementary grades through postsecondary work.

CHAPTER III: APPLICATION MATERIALS

Connection to Research

This unit plan was developed in an effort to incorporate best practices elements for student book choice and student motivation and engagement through a standalone unit. The items and processes included in the unit plan are based on research on student reading preference done by several researchers (Kohn, 2002; Kendrick,1999; Barry, 2013; Chong, 2016). It incorporates elements of student engagement and motivation through choice as outlined by the research of Schraw et al. 1998; Flowerday et al., 2004; Cantrell et al., 2017; Chong, 2016. Finally, it combined elements and best practices from a number of research studies and classroom models of text choice done by the following researchers: Flowerday and Schraw, 2000; Arguelles Alvarez, 2012; Wijnia et al., 2015; Angeletti, 1990; Meier, 2015; Stairs and Burgos, 2010; Worthy et al., 1998; Ivey and Johnston, 2013; Whitney, 1991; Morgan and Wagner, 2013; Amicucci et al., 2015. This unit plan also follows elements of Nancy Atwell's (1998) reading workshop, especially through the inclusion of conferencing with students, presenting mini lessons, and responding to literature through a reading journal.

Explanation of Appendices

This unit was designed as a turnkey unit; that is to say, it was designed to be implemented by educators with few or no additions. For that reason, Appendix A, B, and C serve as useful additions to the unit as a usable package, with a cover page, table of contents, and explanation of the unit. Appendix C, the unit explanation, is meant for teachers, serving as an overview of the unit goals.

Appendix D is a parent letter, meant to explain the unit to parents and engage them in the process while capturing buy-in to the goals of the unit. As found by Worthy et al. (1998), self selected reading may be viewed by some parents as enrichment, not curricular instruction, creating a barrier to the unit. A parent letter serves the purpose of combating this misconception while also providing timely and important communication to students' families.

Appendix E is the student contract. The contract was created in order to help create student buy-in by asking them to commit to a novel within the guidelines of the unit assignment - guidelines that could easily be adjusted or added to by the teacher implementing the unit, depending on their unique class needs and goals. According the study by Kohn (2002), the majority of English teachers surveyed preferred to provide guidelines for independent reading and student selected novels. This can help ensure that students are reading books they both enjoy and that challenge them and allow them to continue to build on their skills. Alternately, the open-ended nature of the contract and book selection allows students to become engaged in their books. As noted in the study by Chong (2016), when "personal-choice reading is perceived to be eclipsed or crowded out [by institutionally imposed reading], the less the students will feel in control of the choice to read. Unsurprisingly then, some form of aliteracy takes shape" (Chong, 2016, p. 20). Allowing students choice within just a few guidelines helps prevent them from feeling forced to read something they are not interested in. This is also encouraged by the research of Amicucci et al. (2015), as they found it was important to encourage student autonomy in some text selection with transparent boundaries. This contract makes those boundaries transparent. It also has the effect of engaging parents in their student's learning, as it requires parent approval on top of teacher approval. This serves

a similar purpose to the parent letter but also creates the mindset for students that it is a team effort, with encouragement for completing the reading and adhering to requirements coming from both within the classroom and at home. The teacher and parent approval also follows the research done by Morgan and Wagner (2013).

Appendix F is the unit calendar overview, providing a snapshot of the unit. This is intended for educators for planning purposes (a student friendly calendar follows later in Appendix H).

Appendix G is the detailed daily learning plans for the unit. For each day it includes the Minnesota state standards covered, daily learning targets, and a daily learning plan. The daily learning plan is an abbreviated version of a lesson plan, providing an overview of the day with ideas for implementation, especially in terms of mini lessons. These plans are meant to be used either as-is or with adjustments by the teacher in order to accomodate class size, period length, and student ability. There are several components of the research outlined in the literature review that align with the daily plans and activities found in Appendix G. As in the study done by Ivey and Johnston (2013), no homework is assigned throughout the unit - the reading is meant to be self-contained. Though students are not restricted from reading at home, this is meant to prevent reading from being a burden or a menial "extra" task that students have to complete outside of their school day. Additionally, as in the research done by Morgan and Wagner (2013), this unit plan utilizes the reading workshop model. Elements of this model can be seen throughout Appendix G, with the inclusion of a reading journal, the use of mini lessons to teach whole class skills that can be applied to individual books, small group and one-on-one conferences conducted by the teacher, and a tracking sheet for quick student check-ins to assess for understanding. The individual

conversations play a particularly important role in assessment, as "unlike class

discussions, students [can]not hide behind other readers by not participating in the

discussion" (Morgan & Wagner, 2013, p. 665). This allows the teacher to have an

authentic and accurate idea of the learning of each student, with time specifically

dedicated to this one-on-one engagement. The reading journal is also supported by the

research of Amicucci et al. (2015), which found that "writing about what they read

enhances the reading [students] do, including by prompting them to engage with what

they read more deeply than they would otherwise" (Amicucci et al., 2015, p.20). Perhaps

the most important item to be noticed in Appendix G is the provision of daily reading

time, with some class days dedicated entirely to this task. This reflects the research of

Worthy, Turner, & Moorman (1998), which emphasized the provision of regular reading

time as necessary for self-selected reading.

Appendix H is the student reading tracker, a student-friendly calendar meant for

students to use to keep track of daily tasks and deadlines while setting goals for their

reading. This gives students choice in the pace of their reading and allows them to set

goals that they are comfortable with but also push them to challenge themselves. It is not

a prescription for reading pace, but a tool to assist students in determining this pace on

their own. Appendix H ties to the research of Whitney (1991), the researcher concludes

that "asking a student to operate on his or her own efforts, and giving time for this activity

in the school curriculum, supports the theory that all intelligence should be respected"

(Whitney, 1991, p. 30).

Appendix I is the teacher discussion tracker, which is meant to provide space for

the teacher to track the learning and progress of each student. This again follows the

study done by Morgan and Wagner (2013). This is also meant to be customizable, as

teachers can add in their own elements to track in terms of skills being taught and curricular goals.

Appendix J is a list of book suggestions for reluctant readers. This is meant for the student who says "I don't know what to read" or "I don't like to read." This list is certainly not comprehensive, but it does draw from a variety of genres and themes. In the research done by Barry (2013), the results of the study indicated that students should be given access to books with cultural environments and main characters that are relatable to them. This list only encompasses ten different young adult novels, but contains characters from a number of different races, socioeconomic backgrounds, sexual identities, and struggles. The study done by Cantrell et al. (2017) also emphasized this exposure to texts students found interesting as important. While it seems small, helping students find a novel that is interesting and engaging to them is critical to the success of this unit, which is why this resource is provided.

Appendix K is the student reading journal. Again, as guided by the study done by Amicucci et al. (2015) and Ivey and Johnston (2013), this is a way for students to engage with their reading through writing. It also acts as a consolidated place for student notes and reflections on the mini lessons and discussions. Moreover, it assigns meaningful responses to reading while attempting to avoid stifling the fun of reading, as recommended by the research of Worthy et al.(1998). This piece could be graded as daily participation points or for completion at the ended as way to assess student participation and reflection throughout the unit.

Appendix L is a mini test on the figurative language introduced throughout the mini lessons and studied during the unit. Students are asked to know, understand, identify, and explain the purpose of figurative language, especially in conjunction with

the novel they are currently studying. This is an important element of the unit as it is able to summatively assess what students have learned and their abilities in regards to the learning targets surrounded figurative language. Though the research of Schraw et al. (1998) shows that choice does not appear to have an effect on cognitive engagement as may be reflected through test scores, it does positively affect an individual's perception of their engagement. This perception may be enough of a boost for students to feel more confident and prepared for the test, even without a significant cognitive difference.

Appendix M is the final project for the unit. It contains two parts, a book talk and a secondary project of the student's choice, selected from a list. The use of choice for the second part of the project reflects many studies, including Schraw et al., 1998; Flowerday et al., 2004; Cantrell et al., 2017; Chong, 2016; Flowerday and Schraw, 2000; Arguelles Alvarez, 2012; Wijnia et al., 2015; Angeletti, 1990; Meier, 2015; Stairs and Burgos, 2010; Worthy et al., 1998; Ivey and Johnston, 2013; Whitney, 1991; Morgan and Wagner, 2013; Amicucci et al., 2015. The book talk also allows other students in the class to be exposed to new books that may interest them and encourage students to talk about books and share recommendations and model enjoyment of reading for each other, as shown in the research of Worthy et al. (1998) and Ivey and Johnston (2013).

Reflection

This unit plan is by no means perfect, nor is it meant to be a catchall for student book choice and engagement. However, it can provide teachers with an excellent starting place for a unit that incorporates the necessary academic skills for an English

Language Arts classroom blended with the excitement and engagement of independent reading.

When introducing the unit, teachers should be prepared to present students with a wide range of book choice options, in order to tap into student reading preferences (Barry, 2013; Chong, 2016; Kendrick 1999; Kohn, 2002). A typical classroom library may not be sufficient, so access to a larger library is ideal. The included list of book suggestions for reluctant readers is meant to serve as a starting point to gain ideas for a wide variety of books that can be introduced to students to gain interest. This unit is designed as a fiction unit but could be easily adapted to include nonfiction with the adjustment of the skills being taught and standards being addressed. Choice, however, can and should be limited through the use of guidelines and book approval as demonstrated by the letter to parents and the student contract, following the research of Amicucci et al. (2015), Flowerday and Schraw, 2000; and Worthy et al., 1998. The guidelines should be clear but should not reduce the intent of the unit, as it should still be primarily student choice driven (Arguelles Alvarez, 2012; Wijnia et al., 2015).

Furthermore, as student engagement comes from both the implementation of choice as well as interest in the material (Flowerday et al., 2004; Schraw et al., 1998) the unit includes choice in assessment for the final project. Like students' interests in books, these project choices are meant to represent a variety of interests and talents, allowing students to choose the option that best highlights their learning.

Finally, I adapted elements from all of the studies on the incorporation of text choice in the classroom. The unit includes Angeletti's (1990) research on tying whole class mini lessons on skills to individual reading and seeks to improve students' reader identities (Meier, 2015). The unit includes the reader's workshop model of the research

done by Stairs and Burgos (2010) and attempts to give students the time and autonomy to read, as recommended by the research of Ivey and Johnston (2013), as well as the encouragement to do so as shown in the research of Whitney (1991).

This was created as a single unit, like the research done by Morgan and Wagner (2013) and most closely follows the format of the unit in their study, especially with the inclusion of Atwell's (1998) reading workshop strategies. As a study of a book choice unit in a high school English classroom, this research most closely resembled the line of inquiry pursued in this thesis. Some of this unit plan, however, strays from the format of the unit in the research study done by Morgan and Wagner (2013), simply in consideration of time, context, and the goals I wished to achieve through this unit.

Overall, this unit may not be easily implementable in every classroom immediately. However, smaller pieces could be utilized and incorporated into the classroom. Alternatively, this unit be easily expanded to create year-round choice. The goal of this unit plan was to create research-based options for teachers to effectively engage and motivate young readers in an attempt to create a lifelong readers with the necessary toolbox of skills.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Literature

In an increasingly fast-paced and Google-able world, it is imperative for English teachers to find ways to motivate students to stay engaged in reading while learning the requisite skills for success. That is why incorporating book choice into the classroom is important - "choice can be a positive, driving force for engagement with adolescent readers" (Morgan & Wagner, 2013, p. 660).

As defined by Applebee (1992), there exists a clear cannon in the modern day English classroom, a cannon that has faced little change over the course of many years. While many of these novels have what Gilmore (2011) calls "literary merit" they also have one other distinct feature in common: they reflect the choices and interests of teachers, administrations, school districts, and, in short, adults. They do not fully encapsulate the interests of our students, as demonstrated by the research of Kohn (2002); Kendrick (1999); and Barry (2013). Further, there exists a divide in student mindsets between required or forced reading and reading for pleasure (Chong, 2016). The idea of aliteracy, or the choice not to read despite the ability to do so, is an emerging issue in English classrooms. How do we marry required reading with pleasure reading?

The research strongly supports the use of book choice in the English classroom. Students want to read about characters they identify with (Barry, 2013), which is obviously difficult in a cannon overwhelmed by dead, white, male, Western authors (Applebee, 1992). Age, culture, native language, socioeconomic class, gender, sexuality - these are identities that matter deeply to our students. Bridging the gap between

student and text is important, and "engagement [serves] as a mediator between instructional context and achievement" (Ivey & Johnston, 2013, p. 271). When students are engaged, they learn. Both the opportunity for choice and interest in the topic provide engagement, as demonstrated by the research of Cantrell et al., 2017; Chong, 2016; Flowerday et al., 2004; and Schraw et al., 1998.

That is not to say that choice should be unlimited or that students should read texts exclusively for pleasure. Limitations and guidelines for choice should be put in place by the teacher in order to assist students in meeting instructional goals (Flowerday & Schraw, 2000; Arguelles Alvarez, 2012; Wijnia et al., 2015).

Book choice has been incorporated into instructional settings in every level, from elementary to higher education. Beyond text complexity and linked skills, there is little variation between the settings in terms of book choice. When book choice was incorporated into elementary classrooms, the result was increased reading skills and interest in being a reader (Angeletti, 1990; Meier, 2015). At the middle school level, studies on the incorporation of book choice in the classroom showed students preferred a self-selected text over a whole-class text (Stairs & Burgos, 2010). Teachers at the middle school level understand the importance of providing a time and space for student choice reading, though many barriers exist such as time in the curriculum, access to books, and perceptions by parents and administration (Worthy et al., 1998). Engagement is not exclusively dependent on book choice, however. Ivey and Johnston (2013) found that middle school students became engaged in reading due to four factors: teacher behavior, choice, time to read, and the books themselves. One factor alone was not sufficient. Something often lacking in classrooms today is time to read, as Whitney (1991) found - "asking a student to operate on his or her own efforts, and giving time for

this activity in the school curriculum, supports the theory that all intelligence should be respected," Whitney argues (1991, p. 30).

These results and recommendations are repeated in the research in book choice done at the high school level. When give time to read as well as book choice, students found engagement and academic success in the study done by Morgan and Wagner (2013). In fact, the merits of book choice in student success were even examined at the college level, with similar results. The study done by Amicucci et al. (2015) demonstrates the effectiveness of book choice in student engagement, rather than "continuing to force down their throat stuff that they'd already experienced" (Amicucci et al., 2015, p. 14).

Overall, a clear pattern emerges: book choice works. It need not be entirely at the exclusion of classic literature, but perhaps the key to success lies in some mix of cultural indoctrination and personal freedom to read.

Research Limitations

In examining the literature surrounding text choice, I intentionally limited my research to studies on the introduction and inclusion of text choice into the curriculum. The merits of teaching classic literature, though briefly touched upon, were not fully examined or included within the scope of my research. I also chose not to examine more closely the social and political ramifications of what books are included into the curriculum and why, as - though these are interesting and necessary questions - they are not directly applicable to the study of teaching English through student selected books. However, should an opportunity to extend the research arise, such factors may provide a fascinating insights and further ramifications for the inclusion of student choice books in the curriculum.

When examining the research, a major limitation would be the scope of the studies completed. Most of the research included lacked longevity, large sample sizes, or duplication. Indeed, many of the factors contingent upon the success of text choice, such as time and ability for incorporation into the curriculum and teacher instructional choices may be difficult to replicate successfully without error.

Moreover, many of the studies conducted on student choice reading are qualitative, rather than quantitative, making it difficult to measure against other studies or to compare research in a meaningful way. While many of the studies examined test scores and grades, all of the research also utilized interviews and subjective questions to measure success.

Finally, a major limitation of the research in terms of application to my guiding question was the lack of studies on book choice in a high school setting. While there were an abundance at the elementary and middle school levels, few studies appear to exist applying this concept at the high school level.

Implications for Future Research

Book choice in the English classroom is a topic that deserves further inquiry. More research needs to be done on book choice in the high school classroom as well as longer longitudinal studies on the impact of book choice, engagement, and student learning. Moreover, studies examining the relative impact of book choice as a single unit, short daily instruction, or year-long incorporation could have important implications in the inclusion of book choice in the English curriculum. What strategy is best? What are the best methods and practices for utilizing book choice for student engagement and academic success? And perhaps the most important question of all, ripe for study: how

do we change a longstanding culture and mindset of teaching the cannon, and what are best practices for approaching parents, administrations, and English departments with this new viewpoint?

Professional Application

The world is changing: technology has emerged to compete with everything and in its wake it has left a generation of students with short attention spans, a reliance on instant gratification, and high thresholds for entertainment and engagement. Can the, dare I say, pedantic, slow-paced, and verbose works of the likes of Dickens and Tolstoy hold a candle to the impressive and ever expanding world of stories emerging on the internet, on social media platforms, in video games? Change is painful and difficult to accept but it is arguably a necessary evil. And why would we even consider for a second restraining our students to imbibe singularly in our literary tastes and those of a high brow culture? I believe that a change in the way we teach English is not only necessary, it is inevitable. Now is the time to examine best practices and exchange ideas about how to create a culture of reading and learning that retains our students throughout their academic careers. Reading cannot simply be cultural indoctrination and skills building any longer - reading must become a movement.

Conclusion

Allowing students to choose what they read and to practice a common set of tools or skills through these books can be a successful and highly engaging way to teach English. There is a spectacular array of books out there - waiting on library shelves,

rolling off the printing presses, and sitting like a spark on the edge of the mind. To limit our students to one set of novels as the end-all-be-all of English literature is akin to limiting an astronomer to just our solar system when there is an entire universe to explore. As teachers, we cannot be this naive. We must find a balance between teaching what is culturally important and teaching students to think and discover for themselves. Life is not a prescribed reading list to check off, and our classrooms need to reflect that. If we want our students to think for themselves and to become engaged in their learning, it is crucial that we step back and give them the freedom to do so.

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Appendix A

Student Choice Novel Study Unit

English Language Arts Unit Plan for Grade 9-10 Students

Appendix B

Table of Contents

Appendix C

Unit Introduction

This unit is for 9th grade or 10th grade English Language Arts students focusing on developing critical reading and writing skills through the use of mini lessons, peer and teacher conferencing, and whole class discussions. Students will pair the skills and concepts they have learned with the independent study a novel of their own choice. The purpose of allowing students to select their own novels for this unit is to utilize choice to create active student engagement in the learning process.

While this unit has been created for students in grades 9 and 10, it can be adapted for any English Language Arts course for grades 6-12. Difficulty and focus should be adjusted according to student skills and abilities.

MN State Standards Addressed: CCSS 9.4.1.1, CCSS 9.4.2.2, CCSS 9.4.4.4, CCSS 9.4.5.5, CCSS 9.4.10.10, CCSS 9.7.9.9, CCSS 9.7.10.10, CCSS 9.9.1.1, CCSS 9.11.5.5, CCSS 9.11.6.6

Unit General Instructional Objectives
I. Students will understand how to self-select texts for personal enjoyment and interest.
II. Students will understand how to detect and analyze the purpose of literary techniques, such as figurative language, mood and tone, theme, and motif.
III. Students will understand how to engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions about a diverse array of literature.

Appendix D

Parent Letter

<div align="right">Month day, year</div>

Dear __th Grade ELA Families,

Hello! I have exciting news to share with you about your student's English Language Arts class. Next week we will be starting a new unit, a student choice novel study. During this unit, students will have the option to pick a book of their choice. They will have independent reading time daily and will be given a reading journal to help guide their reading. Additionally, we will also focus as a class on the big ideas in literature, including theme, motif, figurative language, mood, and tone.

I hope to get students engaged in reading by giving them a choice in what they read, something they are not often given in school. This unit also allows for individual and small group discussions with the teacher and encourages student-led inquiry, which leads to deeper thinking and active involvement. This unit will culminate in a two part final project, with one part allowing students to select how to represent their learning.

For their books, students are asked to select a book at their appropriate reading level which is challenging but not overwhelming. This must be a full length fiction novel, not a comic book, poetry book, or manga. Their selected novel must also be approved by both the teacher and the parent (please see the attached student contract).

Over the course of this unit, it is my goal that students will be able understand how to self-select texts for personal enjoyment and interest, that students will understand how to detect and analyze the purpose of literary techniques, and that students will understand how to engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions about a diverse array of literature.

I know your students are up to the challenge and I am excited to hear their insights and interpretations over the next month. I hope you will ask them to share what they are reading and learning with you as well! If you have any questions, please feel free to call or email me.

Sincerely,

Teacher name
Phone number
Email address

Appendix E

Choice Novel Study Unit: Student Contract

I promise to...

- ▸ Select a book at my appropriate reading level.
- ▸ Work hard during class and stay focused to get my work done.
- ▸ Set daily reading goals to stay on pace.
- ▸ Participate effectively in small group and one-on-one discussions.
- ▸ Never plagiarize or cheat.

The book I have chosen is: _____

The author of this book is: _____

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Student signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Teacher signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F
Unit Calendar Overview

Day 1	Introduction to Unit and Book Selection
Day 2	Mini Lesson: Figurative Language
Day 3	Reading Day & Teacher One-on-Ones
Day 4	Mini Lesson: Responding to Literature
Day 5	Journal Time & Reading Day
Day 6	Reading Day & Small Group Verbal Assessments
Day 7	Journal Time & Reading Day
Day 8	Mini Lesson: Mood and Tone
Day 9	Reading Day & Teacher One-on-Ones
Day 10	Reading Time & Speed Dating Discussion
Day 11	Mini Lesson: Theme and Motif
Day 12	Journal Time & Reading Day
Day 13	Reading Day & Teacher One-on-Ones
Day 14	Reading Time and Review Day
Day 15	Mini Test: Figurative Language
Day 16	Book Project Work Day
Day 17	Book Project Work Day
Day 18	Presentations
Day 19	Presentations
Day 20	Celebration & Reflection

Appendix G

Detailed Daily Learning Plans

Day 1	Introduction to the Unit and Book Selection
Standard	CCSS 8.5.10.10a *Self-select texts for personal enjoyment, interest, and academic tasks.*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT select a book at the appropriate reading and interest level for the choice novel unit.
Learning Plan	● Start by asking students to imagine a month of school where the only thing they were asked to do would be to choose a book or books and read and respond to their books - no homework, just the chance to enjoy a good book. ● Next introduce the unit, giving them the student reading tracker calendar to fill out. ● Introduce some potential books - either give your own recommendations, use the book suggestion list provided, or ask your media center specialist to give some book talks. ● Give students time to select a book and begin reading.

Day 2	Mini Lesson: Figurative Language
Standard	CCSS 9.5.4.4 *Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.* CCSS 9.11.5.5 *Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT to identify and describe figurative language in literature, including simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, allusion, idiom, imagery, and irony.
Learning Plan	● Start with a review of figurative language, like this short video "Literary Devices in Pop Culture" (5 minutes). ● Have students think/pair/share on an assigned figurative language device, then ask them to write on the board their

	definition of it and an example. This could be paired with a written note sheet if it works best for your students. ● Ask students to start thinking about figurative language in their own novels and give them the remaining time for reading time.

Day 3	Reading Day & Teacher One-on-Ones
Standard	CCSS 8.5.10.10a *Self-select texts for personal enjoyment, interest, and academic tasks.* CCSS 9.9.1.1 *Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led).*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT to read independently for personal enjoyment, tracking and monitoring their own understanding. SWBAT to make connections between the texts they are reading and elements of figurative language, articulated through one-on-one discussions with a teacher.
Learning Plan	● Students will be given the day to read while the teacher completes short check-ins with students using the teacher discussion tracker. 1-2 minutes per student, considering: ○ Book title and author ○ Why they chose it ○ If they feel it is an appropriate reading level and interest level ○ What to do if they don't like their current book

Day 4	Mini Lesson: Responding to Literature
Standard	CCSS 9.7.9.9 *Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT to understand how use a reading journal to monitor progress, track understanding, and analyze literature.
Learning Plan	● Start by passing out the journal (this can be handed out as printed copies or assigned electronically).

- Talk about how and why we read - I recommend showing "How and Why We Read: Crash Course English Literature #1" by John Green (7 minutes).
- Ask students to think/pair/share their reactions and opinions about why we read literature.
- Explain the goals and purpose of the journal and demonstrate how to fill it out.
- Give students the remaining time to read and begin working on their journals.

Day 5	Journal Time & Reading Day
Standard	CCSS 9.7.9.9 *Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.* CCSS 8.5.10.10a *Self-select texts for personal enjoyment, interest, and academic tasks.*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT to read independently for personal enjoyment, tracking and monitoring their own understanding. SWBAT to understand how use a reading journal to monitor progress, track understanding, and analyze literature.
Learning Plan	● Give students the hour to read and work on their journals. The teacher may use this time to follow up with students who switched books or check in with any struggling readers OR model reading by sitting and reading quietly with the students.

Day 6	Reading Day & Small Group Verbal Assessments
Standard	CCSS 8.5.10.10a *Self-select texts for personal enjoyment, interest, and academic tasks.* CCSS 9.11.5.5 *Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.*

Learning Target(s)	SWBAT to read independently for personal enjoyment, tracking and monitoring their own understanding. SWBAT to identify and describe figurative language in literature, including simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, allusion, idiom, imagery, and irony.

Learning Plan	● Students will be reading and journaling while the teacher calls groups of 4-5 students out into the hallway or another appropriate work space.
	● Using the teacher discussion tracker to make notes and mark progress, give each group short, informal verbal assessments. They should bring their books and journals with them for this activity. Consider:
	    ○ Ask for examples of figurative language that they have discovered in the books they are reading.
	    ○ Ask for a definition of each figurative language device.
	    ○ Using flashcards or examples from previous class reading, ask students to identify the type of figurative language being used.

Day 7	Journal Time & Reading Day
Standard	CCSS 9.7.9.9 *Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.* CCSS 8.5.10.10a *Self-select texts for personal enjoyment, interest, and academic tasks.*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT to read independently for personal enjoyment, tracking and monitoring their own understanding. SWBAT to understand how use a reading journal to monitor progress, track understanding, and analyze literature.
Learning Plan	● Give students the hour to read and work on their journals. The teacher may use this time to follow up with students who switched books or check in with any struggling readers OR model reading by sitting and reading quietly with the

	students.

Day 8	Mini Lesson: Mood and Tone
Standard	CCSS 9.4.4.4 *Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the test, including figurative and connotative means; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT describe and identify mood and tone in literature, analyzing the word choices made by the author.
Learning Plan	- Warm up with side by side movie trailers; for example, watch the original Frozen trailer and then watch the horror version. Have students think/pair/share the similarities and differences between the trailers and consider the feelings each trailer evokes. - Discuss the differences between mood (how readers are made to feel) and tone (how the author feels about the subject). On the board, brainstorm a list of ways an author might create mood (i.e. setting, empathetic characters, personal experiences) and tone (i.e. narrator, word choice, portrayal of characters/subject, etc). This could be paired with a written note sheet, depending on student needs. - Have students spend the remaining time reading their books and making notes in their journals on mood and tone.

Day 9	Reading Day & Teacher One-on-Ones
Standard	CCSS 8.5.10.10a *Self-select texts for personal enjoyment, interest, and academic tasks.* CCSS 9.9.1.1 *Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led).*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT to read independently for personal enjoyment, tracking and monitoring their own understanding. SWBAT to make connections between the texts they are reading and elements of figurative language, mood, and tone, articulated

	through one-on-one discussions with a teacher.
Learning Plan	● Students will be given the day to read while the teacher completes short check-ins with students using the teacher discussion tracker. 1-2 minutes per student, considering: 　○ Examples of mood or tone in their novel 　○ Examples of figurative language in their novel 　○ Reactions to their book so far 　○ Reading progress and goals

Day 10	**Reading Time & Speed Dating Discussion**
Standard	CCSS 8.5.10.10a *Self-select texts for personal enjoyment, interest, and academic tasks.* CCSS 9.9.1.1 *Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led).*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT to read independently for personal enjoyment, tracking and monitoring their own understanding. SWBAT to make connections between the texts they are reading and the skills of figurative language, mood, and tone they are learning, articulated with discussions with peers.
Learning Plan	● Introduce speed dating with this Gilmore Girls video clip. ● Students will then get into two lines (can be done standing or arrange rows of desks). Line A will remain where they are and Line B will rotate. They should use the speed dating discussion page in their journal - they will meet with a total of 5 different partners for about 3 minutes each time. They should discuss: 　○ What book they are reading, what it is about, and why they like it so far. 　○ An example of figurative language, mood, or tone in their book. 　○ Discuss the debate question given. 　○ After they have met with 5 different partners, give them 2-3 minutes to journal a reflection - it could be about what they learned, a book they would like to read, what went well during the discussions, what

did not go well, or anything else they would like to reflect on.
- Give students the remaining time to read.

Day 11	Mini Lesson: Theme and Motif
Standard	CCSS 9.4.1.1 *Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.* CCSS 9.4.2.2 *Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT identify and describe the use of motif in literature. SWBAT identify and describe the development of a theme throughout the course of a literary work.
Learning Plan	- Start by reading a picture book to the class, such as "The Man Who Walked Between the Towers" by Mordicai Gerstein. - Explain theme and motif - use this section in the journal. - On the board, ask students in pairs to come up and write a motif for the picture book on the board (i.e. bravery, persistence, freedom, etc.). - Then using these ideas/motifs, have students complete the theme portion in their journals. - Students may use any remaining time to read and journal independently.

Day 12	Journal Time & Reading Day
Standard	CCSS 9.7.9.9 *Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.* CCSS 8.5.10.10a *Self-select texts for personal enjoyment, interest, and academic tasks.*

Learning Target(s)	SWBAT to read independently for personal enjoyment, tracking and monitoring their own understanding. SWBAT to understand how use a reading journal to monitor progress, track understanding, and analyze literature.
Learning Plan	● Give students the hour to read and work on their journals. The teacher may use this time to follow up with students who switched books or check in with any struggling readers OR model reading by sitting and reading quietly with the students.

Day 13	Reading Day & Teacher One-on-Ones
Standard	CCSS 8.5.10.10a *Self-select texts for personal enjoyment, interest, and academic tasks.* CCSS 9.9.1.1 *Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led).*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT to read independently for personal enjoyment, tracking and monitoring their own understanding. SWBAT to make connections between the texts they are reading and elements of figurative language, mood, tone, motif, and theme, articulated through one-on-one discussions with a teacher.
Learning Plan	● Students will be given the day to read while the teacher completes short check-ins with students using the teacher discussion tracker. 1-2 minutes per student, considering: 　○ Examples of motif in their novel 　○ Potential themes in their novel 　○ Examples of mood or tone in their novel 　○ Examples of figurative language in their novel 　○ Reactions to their book so far 　○ Reading progress and goals ● NOTE: If students have demonstrated mastery of a concept, spend more time on review of the new items.

Day 14	Reading Time & Review Day

Standard	CCSS 8.5.10.10a *Self-select texts for personal enjoyment, interest, and academic tasks.* CCSS 9.11.5.5 *Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT to read independently for personal enjoyment, tracking and monitoring their own understanding. SWBAT to identify and describe figurative language in literature, including simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, allusion, idiom, imagery, and irony.
Learning Plan	● Remind students that this will be their last reading day in class, so some students may need to bring their books home with them. ● Give half of the time for reading and journal work and spend half of the time reviewing for the mini test on figurative language. ● Review could be done individually, in groups, or as a whole class, depending on student needs. Worksheets, flashcards, online review games, charades, Jeopardy, or Quizlet/Kahoot are some ideas for review.

Day 15	Mini Test: Figurative Language
Standard	CCSS 9.5.4.4 *Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.* CCSS 9.11.5.5 *Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT demonstrate their knowledge of figurative language in the context of literature through a summative assessment.
Learning Plan	● Start by showing "A Pep Talk from Kid President". ● Give students the mini test on figurative language, worth 20 points total. They should use their books and journals on this test (open note). Give reading time when they finish.

Day 16	Book Project Work Day
Standard	CCSS 9.4.1.1 *Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.* CCSS 9.4.2.2 *Provide an objective summary of the text.*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT create a book talk analyzing their individual novel using the tools of literary analysis practiced throughout their reading. SWBAT to provide a summary of their book that is engaging and captivating for a peer audience.
Learning Plan	● Explain the book talk project and hand out the rubric. ● Give the class hour for work time.

Day 17	Book Project Work Day
Standard	CCSS 9.4.1.1 *Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.* CCSS 9.4.2.2 *Provide an objective summary of the text.*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT create a book talk analyzing their individual novel using the tools of literary analysis practiced throughout their reading. SWBAT to provide a summary of their book that is engaging and captivating for a peer audience.
Learning Plan	● Have students sign up for presentation order. ● Give the hour for student work time on their projects - remind students that any work not finished will need to be completed at home.

Day 18	Presentations
Standard	CCSS 9.4.1.1 *Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.* CCSS 9.4.2.2 *Provide an objective summary of the text.*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT create a book talk analyzing their individual novel using the tools of literary analysis practiced throughout their reading. SWBAT to provide a summary of their book that is engaging and captivating for a peer audience.
Learning Plan	● Students will give their presentations. Students not presenting should be focused, quiet, and respectful audience members.

Day 19	Presentations
Standard	CCSS 9.4.1.1 *Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.* CCSS 9.4.2.2 *Provide an objective summary of the text.*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT create a book talk analyzing their individual novel using the tools of literary analysis practiced throughout their reading. SWBAT to provide a summary of their book that is engaging and captivating for a peer audience.
Learning Plan	● Students will give their presentations. Students not presenting should be focused, quiet, and respectful audience members.

Day 20	Celebration & Reflection
Standard	CCSS 8.5.10.10a *Self-select texts for personal enjoyment, interest, and academic tasks.*
Learning Target(s)	SWBAT reflect on their ability to read independently for personal enjoyment, tracking and monitoring their own understanding.
Learning Plan	- Students will complete the final reflection in their journals and hand in their journals. - The rest of the hour should be a celebration - treats, a book swap, watching Pixar short films, or anything else that would be appropriate for your students.

Appendix H

Student Reading Tracker Calendar

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Date _____ Intro to unit & select books Page # goal: __	Date _____ Mini lesson: figurative language Page # goal: __	Date _____ Reading day & one-on-ones Page # goal: __	Date _____ Mini lesson: responding to literature Page # goal: __	Date _____ Journal time & reading day Page # goal: __
Date _____ Reading day & small group work Page # goal: __	Date _____ Journal time & reading day Page # goal: __	Date _____ Mini lesson: mood and tone Page # goal: __	Date _____ Reading day & one-on-ones Page # goal: __	Date _____ Reading time & speed dating discussion Page # goal: __
Date _____ Mini lesson: theme and motif Page # goal: __	Date _____ Journal time & reading day Page # goal: __	Date _____ Reading day & one-on-ones Page # goal: __	Date _____ Reading time & review day Page # goal: __	Date _____ Mini test on figurative language Page # goal: FINISH BOOK
Date _____ Book project work day	Date _____ Book project work day	Date _____ Presentations	Date _____ Presentations	Date _____ Celebration & reflection

Appendix I

Teacher Discussion Tracker

Student Name: Book Title: Author:	*Student can identify & describe:* ❏ Simile ❏ Metaphor ❏ Personification ❏ Hyperbole ❏ Allusion ❏ Idiom ❏ Imagery ❏ Irony ❏ Mood ❏ Tone ❏ Motif ❏ Theme	*Reading progress:* Day 3: Day 6: Day 9: Day 13:	*Additional notes:*
Student Name: Book Title: Author:	*Student can identify & describe:* ❏ Simile ❏ Metaphor ❏ Personification ❏ Hyperbole ❏ Allusion ❏ Idiom ❏ Imagery ❏ Irony ❏ Mood ❏ Tone ❏ Motif ❏ Theme	*Reading progress:* Day 3: Day 6: Day 9: Day 13:	*Additional notes:*
Student Name: Book Title: Author:	*Student can identify & describe:* ❏ Simile ❏ Metaphor ❏ Personification ❏ Hyperbole ❏ Allusion ❏ Idiom ❏ Imagery ❏ Irony ❏ Mood ❏ Tone ❏ Motif ❏ Theme	*Reading progress:* Day 3: Day 6: Day 9: Day 13:	*Additional notes:*

Appendix J

Book Suggestions for Reluctant Readers

1. *Ready Player One by Ernest Cline*

   A fast-paced novel set in a high-tech dystopian future, this book is sure to appeal to many readers, especially those interested in video games, virtual reality, or 1980's pop culture.

2. *Warcross by Marie Lu*

   For fans of *Ready Player One* and *Hunger Games,* this book is just the right mix of futuristic technology, competition, and the looming threat of danger. It stars a strong female lead who is a bounty hunter turned hacker who finds herself accidentally immersed in the competitive world of virtual reality video game competitions.

3. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian by Sherman Alexie*

   A hilarious coming-of-age story based on the author's own life, this book shows the struggle all teens face of finding where they fit in. Junior's situation, however, is complicated by the fact that he has to walk the precarious line between his Native American culture and attending a white school off the reservation.

4. *A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle*

   A fabulous scientific journey through space, time, and the fifth dimension, featuring 13 year old Meg and her 5 year old genius brother Charles Wallace as they attempt to rescue their father.

5. *Uglies by Scott Westerfeld*

   A dystopian novel that explores the implications of what it means to be pretty and what teens are willing to sacrifice in order to achieve this ideal.

6. *The Golden Compass by Philip Pullman*

   Follow Lyra into a world where every human has an animal familiar that is a physical manifestation of their soul - in a world of danger, intrigue, mystery, and armored bears, science, religion, and magic collide.

7. *Simon vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda by Becky Albertalli*

   Simon, a not-so-openly gay high school student, is being blackmailed and faces the risk of exposing the secret of his email penpal, the mysterious Blue - another gay student at Simon's school.

8. *The Maze Runner by James Dashner*

   A maze filled with teenage boys, monsters, no hope for escape, and no memory of the past - what more could you need to get your heart racing?

9. *The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton*

   A gang of boys live in a world divided by the haves and the have-nots, better known as socs and greasers. After his friend commits a murder, Ponyboy finds his worldview begins to crumble.

10. *The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath*

    A book for more mature readers, this novel parallels Plath's own life and struggles with mental illness and depression. Parent permission is strongly recommended for younger readers.

Appendix K

Student Choice Novel Study Unit: Journal

Name:

Hour:

Book Title:

Book Author:

Responding to Literature Mini Lesson

Think/pair/share: why do we read literature?

_____

_____

_____

Daily Reading Tracker

I am on page # _____ and I am (circle one) **on / off** pace to finish my novel on time.

Short summary of what has happened so far:

_____

_____

_____

One character in my book is named:

_____

This character looks like:

_____

This character acts like:

_____

Other people think this character is:

_____

One important quote about this character is (include page number):

_____

_____

Daily Reading Tracker

I am on page # _____ and I am (circle one) **on / off** pace to finish my novel on time.

Important notes from my reading today:

Figurative Language Review
Define each of the following:

Simile _____

Metaphor _____

Personification _____

Hyperbole _____

Allusion _____

Idiom _____

Imagery _____

Irony _____

Write down a quote from your book with an example of one of these, including page number:

Daily Reading Tracker

I am on page # _____ and I am (circle one) **on / off** pace to finish my novel on time.

Important notes from my reading today:

Group Discussion

My group members today were:

_____

Rate yourself: 1 – Needs work   2 – Sometimes   3 – Often   4 – Always
(circle one)

I can define figurative language: 1   2   3   4

I can identify figurative language: 1   2   3   4

I can stay on pace for reading during class: 1   2   3   4

Daily Reading Tracker

I am on page # _____ and I am (circle one) **on / off** pace to finish my novel on time.

Important notes from my reading today:

Vocabulary
Define 3 words from your reading today that you did not know:

1.

2.

3.

Important Quote
One important quote from my reading today was (include page number):

Why was this quote important?

Mood and Tone Mini Lesson

Frozen Trailers Comparison

Mood definition: _____

Tone definition: _____

Daily Reading Tracker

I am on page # _____ and I am (circle one) **on / off** pace to finish my novel on time.

The author's tone in my book is: _____

I know this because....

The mood in my book is: _____

I know this because....

Daily Reading Tracker

I am on page # _____ and I am (circle one) **on / off** pace to finish my novel on time.

Important notes from my reading today:

Vocabulary
Define 3 words from your reading today that you did not know:
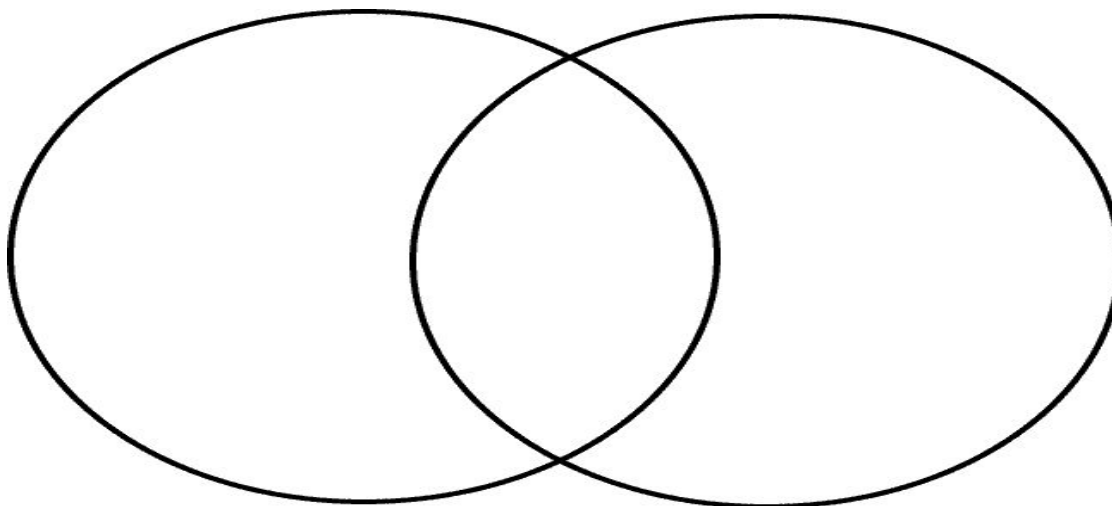
1.

2.

3.

Important Quote
One important quote from my reading today was (include page number):

Why was this quote important?

Speed Dating Discussion

Partner 1: _____

Book they are reading:

DEBATE QUESTION: Should there be books in school that all students are required to read?

Partner 2: _____

Book they are reading:

DEBATE QUESTION: Is it better to read about a character who is similar to you or different?

Partner 3: _____

Book they are reading:

DEBATE QUESTION: Can you learn anything from fiction? If so, what?

Partner 4: _____

Book they are reading:

DEBATE QUESTION: What was the worst book you ever had to read in school? Why?

Partner 5: _____

Book they are reading:

DEBATE QUESTION: What was the best book you ever had to read in school? Why?

Speed Dating Discussion Part 2: Reflection

Take a few minutes to journal about your discussion. Think about what you learned, a book you might like to read after hearing about it, what went well during the discussions, what did not go well, or anything else you would like to reflect on.

Daily Reading Tracker

I am on page # _____ and I am (circle one) **on / off** pace to finish my novel on time.

Important notes from my reading today:

Theme and Motif Mini Lesson

Motif definition: _____

Theme definition: _____

Motifs in "The Man who walked Between the Towers":

Theme in "The Man who walked Between the Towers":

1. Choose <u>one</u> idea or motif explored in the story _____

2. Consider what the author is using the story to say about that topic and finish the following sentence:

   The author believes that _____

   ↑ This is your theme! ↑

3. Now write down two examples from the story that support your theme:

   a.

   b.

Daily Reading Tracker

I am on page # _____ and I am (circle one) **on / off** pace to finish my novel on time.

Potential motifs in my novel:

Important notes from my reading today:

Daily Reading Tracker

I am on page # _____ and I am (circle one) **on / off** pace to finish my novel on time.

Important notes from my reading today:

Letter to the Author

You should be nearly finished with your book - time to write a three paragraph letter to the author. Consider talking about what you like about the book, what you don't like or would change, what questions you have, and any predictions you have for how the book will end!

Dear _____,

Daily Reading Tracker

I am on page # _____ and I am (circle one) **on / off** pace to finish my novel on time.

Important notes from my reading today:

Learning Target Self Assessment

❑ I can identify and describe figurative language in literature, including simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, allusion, idiom, imagery, and irony.

❑ I can describe and identify mood and tone in literature, analyzing the word choices made by the author.

❑ I can identify and describe the use of motif in literature.

❑ I can identify and describe the development of a theme throughout the course of a literary work.

Character Development

How have three of the characters in the story changed over the course of the book? Use examples to back up your argument.

1.

2.

3.

Daily Reading Tracker

I am on page # _____ and I am (circle one) **on / off** pace to finish my novel on time.

Important notes from my reading today:

Vocabulary
Define 3 words from your reading today that you did not know:

1.

2.

3.

Rate Your Book

After finishing reading, rate your book out of five stars! In 3-4 sentences, explain your rating.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Appendix L

Name:

Hour:

Mini Test: Figurative Language

<u>Part 1:</u> *Match the definition to the type of figurative language it is describing. 1 point each.*

1. _____ Comparing two similar things using "like" or "as."

2. _____ A brief reference to a person, place, thing, or idea that is significant in culture, history, literature, or politics.

3. _____ A saying or common phrase that is usually not used in a literal sense.

4. _____ Comparing two unrelated things, where the one is described as *being* the other.

5. _____ An obvious and intentional exaggeration.

6. _____ Giving human traits or characteristics to something that is not human.

7. _____ When words are used in a way that their intended meaning is different than the actual meaning, usually used for dramatic or humorous effect.

8. _____ Descriptive language that appeals to the five senses.

A. Simile

B. Metaphor

C. Personification

D. Hyperbole

E. Allusion

F. Idiom

G. Imagery

H. Irony

Part 2: *Give an example of three different types of figurative language found in the book you are reading, naming the type of figurative language and explaining why it is an example of that. Include page numbers! 3 points each.*

1.

2.

3.

Part 3: *Thinking of the book you are currently reading, why do you think the author chose to include figurative language? What does it add to the story? How would the story be different without it. Answer in 3-4 thoughtful sentences, explaining your reasoning. 3 points.*

Appendix M

Choice Novel Study Unit: Final Project

As a culmination of the work you have done over the course of this unit, you will be creating two projects to show what you have learned. Everyone will be creating and presenting a book talk to the class and you must choose ONE other option for your second project.

Step 1: Book Talk
Create and present a 2 minute book talk to the class. Think of this like a movie trailer, rather than a book report - no spoilers! The goal is to get your fellow classmates excited about reading your book. For an example, check out this video. Make sure to include the following:

- Title and author.
- Why you liked the book.
- A preview or taste of the storyline.
- A comparison to at least one other book (i.e. "If you liked "x" then you will love "y").
- Presentation is at least 2 minutes and no more than 4 minutes in length.
- You may use notes for your presentation, but a good presentation focuses on eye contact and body language so you should not plan to stand and read your notes to the class.

Step 2: Choice Project

A. Choose a scene from your novel that represents a key theme or important moment. Turn the scene into either Facebook posts, tweets, or a blog post.
B. Create a visual representation of your novel – it could be a diagram, drawing, sculpture, etc. Include a one paragraph explanation for your choice.
C. Choose a historical event, character, or allusion in the novel. Write a 1-2 page paper (typed, double-spaced, 12 point font) explaining your research and the connection to the book, as well as how your research helps you understand the book better.
D. Write a new ending for the story. Do the bad guys win? Do the protagonists finally fall in love? Is it now a cliffhanger? Use your imagination! It should be 2-4 pages (typed, double-spaced, 12 point font) and should include a 2-3 sentence explanation at the end (new paragraph) for why you chose to end the book in that way.
E. In 1-2 pages (typed, double-spaced, 12 point font), describe how your novel would be adapted into a video game. Consider point of view, levels, objectives, abilities, rewards, and multiplayer vs. single player.

Student's Name: _____

Book Talk RUBRIC

	Exceeds	Meets	Meets Most	In Progress	Needs Review
Inclusion of Elements	All project elements are included and indicate a clear effort put forth. 10 points	All project elements are included but they have some errors in them or omissions, such as page numbers for quotes. 8 points	Most project elements are included and/or they have several errors or omissions. 6 points	Only some project elements are included and/or they have many errors or omissions. 4 points	Only one or no project elements are included. 0 points
Personal Response	Project indicates a thorough understanding of the text; does not summarize. 10 points	Project indicates an understanding of the text. 8 points	Project indicates a partial understanding of the text; information may be too general or simplistic. 6 points	Project indicates a very limited understanding of the text; project may exhibit some flaws. 4 points	Project is inaccurate, confused, and/or irrelevant. 0 points
Presentation	Speaker's voice is loud and clear, good eye contact is made with the audience, displays appropriate body language, and reads minimally from notes. 10 points	Speaker's voice is fairly easy to hear, eye contact is made <75% of the time, body language is good with little shuffling or swaying, reads occasionally from notes. 8 points	Speaker's voice is mostly easy to hear, eye contact is made <50% of the time, body language is okay with some shuffling or swaying that can be distracting, reads occasionally from notes. 6 points	Speaker's voice can be difficult to hear, eye contact is made <25% of the time, body language is poor with shuffling or swaying that can be distracting, reads frequently from notes. 4 points	Speaker's voice is difficult to hear, no eye contact is made, body language is poor with shuffling or swaying that can be distracting, reads straight from notes. 0 points

_____ / 30

Student's Name: _____

Choice Project RUBRIC

	Exceeds	Meets	Meets Most	In Progress	Needs Review
Inclusion of Elements	All project elements are included and indicate a clear effort put forth. 10 points	All project elements are included but they have some errors in them or omissions, such as page numbers for quotes. 8 points	Most project elements are included and/or they have several errors or omissions. 6 points	Only some project elements are included and/or they have many errors or omissions. 4 points	Only one or no project elements are included. 0 points
Personal Response	Project indicates a thorough understanding of the text; does not summarize. 10 points	Project indicates an understanding of the text. 8 points	Project indicates a partial understanding of the text; information may be too general or simplistic. 6 points	Project indicates a very limited understanding of the text; project may exhibit some flaws. 4 points	Project is inaccurate, confused, and/or irrelevant. 0 points
Appearance	The project was neat, clear, and shows a lot of brainstorming and effort went into it. 5 points	The project is not as neat as it could be, but the information is organized. 4 points	The project lacks neatness and looks like there was a little effort; the information isn't organized well. 3 points	The project is sloppy and disorganized. 2 points	The project is extremely sloppy and disorganized or large sections are missing. 0 points
Spelling and Mechanics	All spelling, grammar, and mechanics of writing are accurate. 5 points	Most spelling, grammar, and mechanics of writing are accurate. 4 points	Some spelling, grammar, and mechanics of writing are accurate. 3 points	Few spelling, grammar, and mechanics of writing are accurate. 2 point	Spelling, grammar, and mechanics of writing show widespread errors and little effort. 0 points

_____ / 30