"You Can't Get to Comprehension Until They Trust You": Teachers' Thinking About Practices That Foster Students' Meaning-Making of Literature

by

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DEDICATION

To Sandra, my wife, whose hard work, encouragement, and love made this possible.

Rainey was a great resource for teaching ELA, but more than that, she was also so excited and open to discussing this work. Her passion was infectious. Bob Bain constantly helped to sharpen my thinking, and more than that was willing to spend time with me as a person to discuss how to balance PhD studies and family, influential texts, and good jazz albums. Finally, Elizabeth Moje has helped to shape my thinking about literacy, teaching, and students for eight years. Her continued work with students and her commitment to justice and equity will always be an inspiration. Without her constant encouragement when I felt deficient, her practical advice on how to make progress, and her empathy for me, I could not have completed this work. It was a complete honor to design my own study, and then to get feedback and assistance in moving the work forward from a committee that I held in such high esteem.

Finally, I could not have done this without the love, understanding, hard work and encouragement from my wife, Sandra, and my two children, John and Josephine. They each made practical sacrifices for me during this time. Yet, at the same time, they encouraged and loved me. Sandy helped me balance work and family in a healthy way. Instead of being resentful, John and Josie asked questions about what I was doing and showed genuine curiosity and pride in my work. It was difficult to enter the PhD program as an older student with a family, but I could not imagine being able to do this without them.

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ABSTRACT

Often in classrooms meaning-making skills are not acknowledged and therefore not fostered. In addition, there are many high school ELA classrooms that prioritize students' reaching one correct answer, or one best interpretation of literature. Yet, some ELA teachers do engage their students in rich meaning-making processes, and do not privilege one answer or interpretation of a piece of literature. Learning how and why do they do this will shed light on how teachers can be supported in bringing their practice in line with research findings on adolescents' meaning-making processes as they interact with works of literature in ELA classrooms. In addition, it may reveal effective practices not yet studied, and avenues for future research, given the current state of the theoretical and empirical literature. Consequently, the questions guiding this study are as follows: How do these four ELA teachers in my study work to foster student meaning-making by shaping the classroom contexts, texts, readers, and activities? Specifically, what do these teachers think about and what do they do when they are working to foster student meaning making?

This study examines the practices of four teachers through classroom observations, interviews with teachers, and the collection of classroom handouts. The data collected through these means was then analyzed through constant comparative analysis. Each of these four teachers, in an effort to foster student meaning making, crafted environments, engendered relationships with students and between students and texts, chose and organized texts, employed instructional strategies, and modeled engagement. However, each of these teachers performed

these activities differently based on how they were thinking about their work. If meaning

making is to become a clear goal in high school English Language Arts classrooms, further study

on meaning making, the role of intellectual risk taking in meaning making, the role of student

teacher relationships in meaning making, the role of the classroom environment and meaning

making, and the connection between standardized testing and meaning making is required.

CHAPTER I: Prologue

As an adolescent, I hated my high school English Language Arts (ELA) classes. Yet, I loved to read. I read voraciously, and in many ways classroom work served as a distraction from reading events that were personally meaningful, intellectually stimulating, and would later prove to be academically useful. So, why was there a disconnect between my personal reading habits and my high school ELA experience?

My personal reading habits were fueled by curiosity, identity, imaginative engagement, and a sense of agency. One personal anecdote illustrates this. As an adolescent, a small group of friends and I were huge Jimi Hendrix fans. I read his lyrics and a Jimi Hendrix biography. I learned that Jimi Hendrix loved Bob Dylan. This led me to reading lyrics and a book of poetry by Bob Dylan, as well as to watching "Don't Look Back", a Dylan documentary. I found, through consuming these texts, that Bob Dylan was influenced by Jack Kerouac, and Jack Kerouac was a devotee of Dostoyevsky. Consequently, although I did not care for anything I was doing as a student in ELA class, I read *Crime and Punishment* outside of school.

I read it because I was curious. I was interested in what my favorite authors and musicians were reading, and how these books influenced them. The reading I was engaged in was a part of my identity. It engaged my imagination, and while both listening to music or reading printed texts, I was transported to places as varied as Woodstock or a Russian prison. Perhaps, though, what was most important to me was to choose what I read based on the new perspectives they would expose me to. As I discovered new perspectives on American society,

government, religion, race, culture, and counter-cultures, I became more curious about other texts. I changed as a reader. Each new experience with text had an impact on my future experiences with texts. But this meaning-making process was disconnected from the classroom. Inside my ELA classrooms, I found the study of literature a dull affair characterized by the memorization and regurgitation of facts and definitions.

Although I hated my high school ELA classes, as a college undergraduate I switched my major from Finance to English Literature. This unforeseen dispositional shift towards English classes occurred due to a College Composition professor who helped me to connect my interest to literary texts, who fostered my existing interest in literature, who was open to varied interpretations if they were supported by text, and who helped me to connect literature to the world at large. This experience gave me a glimpse of the possibilities in an ELA classroom, led me to become a middle and high school ELA teacher who sought to foster the meaning-making processes of my students, and ultimately led me to craft a dissertation study that seeks to reveal and analyze four English teachers' thinking about practices that foster student meaning making.

Problem Statement

The combination of teaching high school, serving as a field instructor for future teachers, and reading educational research revealed that my experiences in high school were not unique. Too often in classrooms, students' unique and nascent meaning-making skills are not acknowledged and therefore not fostered in the classroom (Moje et al., 2008; Luke, 2003). In addition, there are many high school ELA classrooms that prioritize students' reaching one correct answer, or one best interpretation of literature (Cazden & Beck, 2003; Marshall, 1989). Yet, some ELA teachers do engage their students in rich meaning-making processes, and do not

privilege one answer or interpretation of a piece of literature. Learning how and why do they do this will shed light on how teachers can be supported in bringing their practice in line with research findings on adolescents' meaning-making processes as they interact with works of literature in ELA classrooms. In addition, it may reveal effective practices not yet studied, and avenues for future research, given the current state of the theoretical and empirical literature. Consequently, the questions guiding this study are as follows: How do these four ELA teachers in my study work to foster student meaning-making by shaping the classroom contexts, texts, readers, and activities? Specifically, what do these teachers think about and what do they do when they are working to foster student meaning making?

CHAPTER II: Theoretical and Empirical Literature Review

The following chapter will explore the theoretical underpinnings of my study, and then turn to empirical research in order to understand the work that has already been done in examining the teacher's role in fostering student meaning-making with literature.

Review of the Theories That Frame My Proposed Study

Although this study is informed by a number of theoretical approaches, central to my work is the theory that an individual's meaning-making with literature occurs at the intersection of the reader, the text, and the activity, and within both a classroom context and a broader context (Alvermann & Moje, 2013; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; Tierny & Pearson, 1992a, 1992b). This theory is often represented with an image like the one shown below:

Figure 1: General Literacy Model
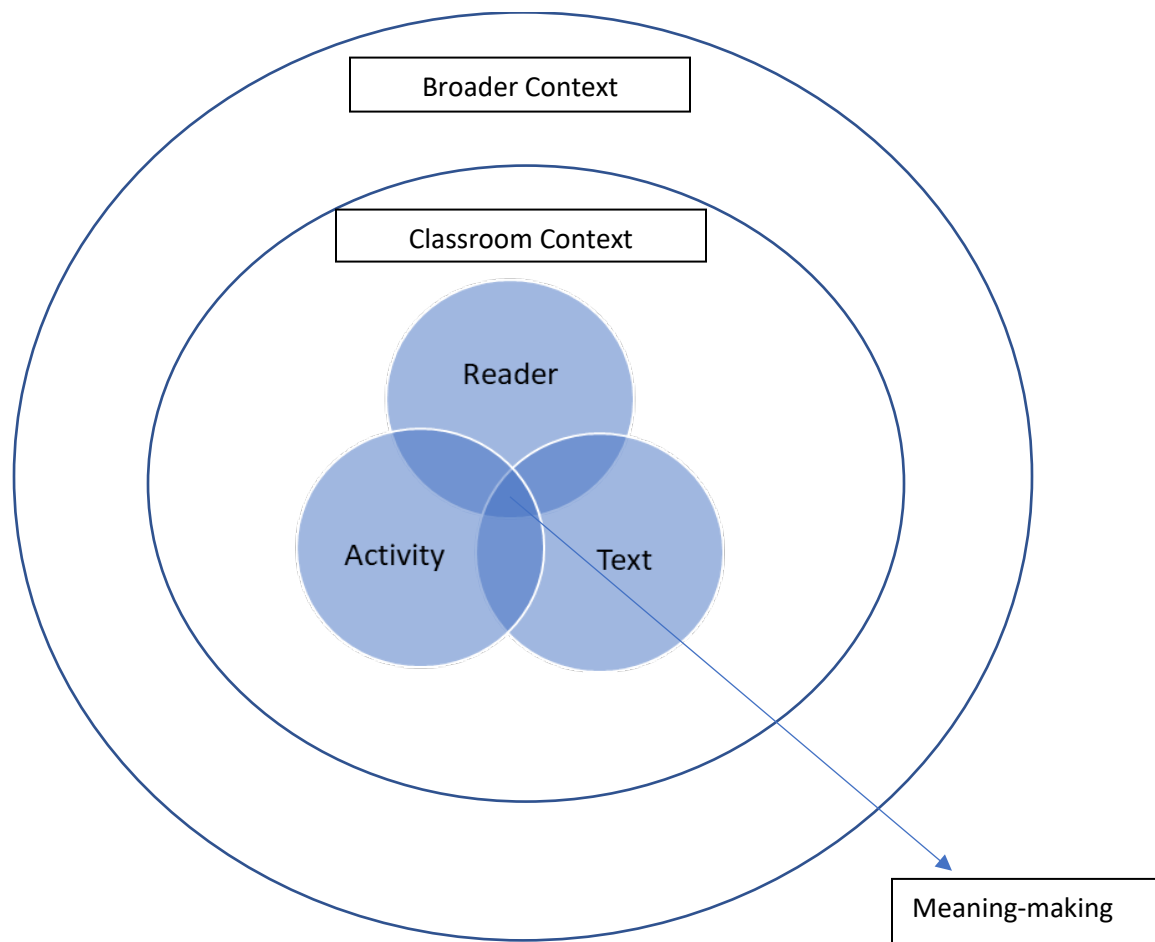
With this theory, the argument is made that meaning making (also referred to as comprehension in many cases) cannot be understood as residing within a reader or within the words on a page, but is instead an interaction—or transaction, a la Rosenblatt, 1938—between reader and text (e.g., Rumelhart, 1991). The theory goes even further to argue that the interaction depends on the purpose for reading or the activity in which reading is situated (Moje et al., 2000; Pearson & Tierney, 1983; Snow et al., 2002). And, even more expansively, the interaction/transaction of text, reader, and activity in any moment of reading are all embedded in multiple—and sometimes conflicting—contexts (Moje et al., 2000) that shape the meanings

readers make of a given text. In every case, these theories expand on the nature of the act of making meaning from and with text, and our understanding of this process has grown—and grown more complex—over years of research and theorizing. What we know less about, however, is what it means for one teacher to teach 30 (or more) readers at the same time how to make meaning with text. Apropos of my own experience, literature instruction is often rendered—and assessed—as a matter of learning given meanings within a text. My questions in this study are focused on how teachers create contexts and activities that inspire deep interactions and transactions between reader and text. Thus, although I review theories of reading comprehension and meaning making, I ultimately turn my attention to research on how teachers teach meaning making and comprehension. What do they think about as they plan to teach? What are their goals for students as meaning makers? What practices do they privilege? And how do they build the kinds of contexts that inspire students to do more than comprehend information in a text; how do they inspire students to engage deeply with texts, to ask questions and to wonder about why authors have used certain tools, strategies, and language? How do they make students feel secure in their wonder, rather than seeking received wisdom on the meanings of texts?

Why Meaning Making?

Generally, studies that use the heuristic above place comprehension at the intersection of the reader, text, and activity. However, the term comprehension does not adequately capture the type of reading that I want to explore. In the comprehension studies I examined, regardless of how comprehension was defined, comprehension was measured through a student reading a passage and answering literal and inferential questions. In this type of reading, meaning is in the text and the student must find it. It is a one-time event, and meaning is static.

Therefore, instead of using the term comprehension, I chose to use the term meaning making, with an emphasis on the word, *making*. The word itself implies that meaning is not something to be found, but rather something to be *made,* that is, constructed, built, or developed. Furthermore, the fact that the word *made* is represented in its gerund form emphasizes the idea that meaning is being constructed in an ongoing, dynamic process. Thus, taken together, the words *meaning making* themselves imply that the reader must do some of the creative work in this process. In addition, a view of reading that maintains that meaning is static and is to be found by mining the text is at odds with the theories and research that undergird this study. Rosenblatt (1994) posited that a poem was created in the transaction between the reader and the text. Each time a reader returned to a text, a different poem would be created due to the reader bringing different skills, experiences, and knowledge to the text. The meaning does not reside in either the reader or the text but is made in the transaction between the reader and the text. Langer (2011) built on the theoretical work of Rosenblatt and placed the act of reading in a social context. She theorized on how the meaning for a reader constantly shifts while reading a text. The meaning shifts as the reader asks questions, answers their own questions, tests their ideas, and encounters new information. These acts of meaning making can be accomplished through writing, thinking, reading other texts, and through discussion with others. Thus, in this view of reading, meaning is never finally "made." It is a process of making-meaning.

Using these theoretical underpinnings (which I will unpack further in what follows), I offer the following definition for meaning-making: Making meaning is a dynamic, socially-embedded reading process where a reader brings their whole being to bear on a transaction with the text. This includes the reader's social purposes for reading, identity, skills, previous reading experiences, knowledge, and emotions. This makes the act of reading a personal and immersive

experience. Simultaneously, in order to make meaning, readers must also be able to stand apart from the text, critique it, see perspectives that are not their own, find literary puzzles, and theorize answers to them.   This dynamic process is at odds with reading that simply gleans facts, seeks right answers, or views meaning as static. Instead, the meaning-making process is one where the reader asks questions, seeks answers, tests ideas, makes connections, finds textual puzzles, and focuses on the effect of the language used on the reader.

This definition of meaning making refers to what happens for an individual. But my study is concerned with how teachers go about planning and enacting the teaching of meaning making with literature. The questions for this study, then, are how do teachers build skills in these dimensions of meaning making? What do teachers do to build these habits of mind? What are the social practices they must help students develop to achieve these critical skills? How do teachers think about this work?

The literature review I offer in what follows suggests that to help guide students through this complex process, teachers choose texts, design instruction and activities, attempt to give students the necessary skills and knowledge, and craft classroom contexts conducive to meaning-making. This necessary work of teachers is grounded in a number of theoretical perspectives—cognitive, transactional, and sociocultural, which I discuss in more detail in the next sections.

Theoretical Perspectives on Meaning Making

Conceptions of the reading and meaning-making process have evolved in the literature from including only the reader and text (Huey, 1908; Rumelhart, 1985, 1991), to including the reader, text, and context (Tierney & Pearson, 1992a, 1992b), to including reader, text, activity, and context (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002), to including the reader, text, and activity in

context (Alvermann & Moje, 2013). Although there remains a hot debate fueled by the media about the so-called science of reading, currently the expert reading community generally shares a view that comprehension and meaning making are the result of cognitive, social, and cultural processes and practices. Cognitive theorists focus on the reader and building their skills, schema, and knowledge base, while sociocultural theorists view these cognitive processes as situated in and mediated by social processes, interactions, settings, and tools. In contexts, and using context-dependent tools, individuals communicate, share experiences, and produce knowledge (Brown, 2008; Vygotsky, 1974). These are taken-for-granted theoretical assumptions in the reading research community. What is less taken-for-granted is how teachers help readers make meaning, and, given what we know about the complex interactions of individual readers' knowledge, skills, and interests with texts, activities, and context, we must address the even more challenging question of how teachers help multiple readers make meaning from text simultaneously. What follows is a review of the empirical literature which reveals what we know, and perhaps more importantly, what we do not know about the meaning-making process in the classroom.

Empirical Literature Review

The following review of empirical literature will be broken into a discussion of what the existing literature has to say about the effective meaning-making processes of readers and the effective practices of teachers seeking to encourage student meaning making with text. Because my review uncovered a dearth of research on meaning making--and especially on the teaching of meaning making—specific to the study of literature in high school English Language Arts classes, it also contains a brief review of general reading research on both the reading processes and teacher practices that influence meaning making. This lack of empirical research in the area

of making meaning of fiction shows the need for research that examines the combinations of different activities and practices high school ELA teachers use in fostering student meaning making with literary texts. It should be noted that in many of the studies below, the term comprehension is used and meaning making is not. Meaning making as I have defined it for readers of literature is different from comprehension as used in these pieces. However, this does not mean that comprehension is irrelevant to this study. Part of the meaning-making process is comprehending what is happening in a text. As such, these studies are relevant, although they ignore aspects of meaning making as I have defined it.

Processes and practices of effective meaning-makers

Through my review of the literature, I have generated three categories in which literature on the effective meaning-making processes of students falls: motivation, skill, and identity. Adolescents are motivated to use their skills to make meaning in a variety of social contexts, and as members of various social groups (Moje et al., 2008). Understanding how adolescent meaning making occurs in multiple contexts ultimately will help teachers consider how to encourage meaning making in the classroom.

Motivation. Motivation is often characterized and then measured in the empirical literature as either intrinsic or extrinsic; and yet, when examined closely, motivation to read is less about this dichotomy than it is about access to rich texts embedded within meaningful social networks with powerful, personal purposes for reading. For example, Schaffner et al. (2013) studied 159 fifth grade students from nine different urban schools in Germany, and examined the students' intrinsic motivation to read, extrinsic motivation to read, the amount students read, and the students' comprehension levels. They defined intrinsic motivation as motivation that was

object oriented (reading to learn something of interest) or experience oriented (reading because the experience is enjoyable). They defined extrinsic motivation as being competence-oriented (reading to become better at reading), competition-oriented (reading to become the best reader, or get the best grades), and socially motivated (reading for social recognition). Using structural equation analysis, they found that intrinsic motivation contributed strongly and positively to reading amount, which significantly predicted comprehension at the paragraph level and higher (what they termed higher order comprehension), even when controlling for lower order comprehension (word and sentence level). In addition, extrinsic motivation had direct negative effects on reading amount and comprehension. Although the study shows positive effects of intrinsic motivation and reading amount on comprehension, it cannot claim any causal direction.

Lau and Chan (2003) studied 159 seventh grade Chinese students in Hong Kong. Eighty-three of the students were in a school that admitted primarily high-achieving students and seventy-six of the students were in a school that admitted primarily low-achieving students. They measured students' extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, social reasons for reading, comprehension, and reading strategy use. Researchers found that good readers scored better on every measure of strategy use. When examining motivation, intrinsic motivation (driven by a reader's curiosity and involvement), extrinsic motivation (driven by recognition, competition, and/or grades), and social motivation (driven by social reasons) had significant and positive correlation with reading comprehension. In addition, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, but not social motivations, were positively and significantly related to strategy use. It is unclear whether strategy use was a mediating factor between intrinsic motivation and reading comprehension. This study corroborates Schaffner et al.'s (2013) findings by showing a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and reading comprehension. In addition, it shows that these

findings cross cultural and linguistic boundaries. Perhaps, however, what is most interesting is a finding not discussed in the article, that social motivations for writing were not positively associated with strategy use but were positively associated with comprehension. Could this mean that strategy use is not a mediating factor of comprehension when a reader has a social purpose for reading?

Guthrie et al. (2007) clarified motivation to a greater degree in their study of 31 fourth-grade students from two Mid-Atlantic state schools. They examined students' comprehension of both narrative and informational text and their motivation, which they defined as interest, perceived control, involvement, collaboration, and self-efficacy. In looking at the variance in reading comprehension, they found that the interest students had in the topic explained 12% of the variance, choice explained 22% of the variance, involvement explained 12% of the variance, neither collaboration nor self-efficacy explained a significant amount of the variance, and a composite of motivation features explained 9% of the variance.   Although this study attempts to parse motivation, it seems to conflate issues of motivation, agency, and identity, given their aforementioned construct of motivation. These reader attributes may overlap and interact in ways not captured by this study and in ways that could be capitalized on by teachers as they foster student meaning making.

The impact of intrinsic motivation may not be equal for every student. Klauda and Guthrie (2015) studied 183 pairs of seventh grade advanced and struggling readers that were matched in free and reduced meal status, ethnicity, gender, and school attended. They examined students' motivation, engagement, and achievement with informational texts. Using regression analysis, they found that both motivation and engagement predicted achievement more strongly for advanced readers than it did for struggling readers, suggesting that motivation and

engagement may not facilitate greater comprehension as much for students that are already struggling with reading comprehension. However, Logan et al. (2011), in researching the reading comprehension, verbal I.Q., decoding skills, and intrinsic reading motivation of 111 nine to eleven year-olds from two U.K. schools, found that intrinsic reading motivation (defined as curiosity, involvement, and desire to work with complex materials) contributed 21.4% of the variance in comprehension achievement for the low reading ability group, and verbal I.Q., measured through a verbal similarities and word definitions test, explained most of the variance (19.1%) for readers who scored high on the reading comprehension assessment. Examined together, these two studies show that high achieving students are generally intrinsically motivated (as defined and measured by these two studies) and engaged, and consequently variance in their achievement is linked more closely to verbal I.Q. For students struggling with comprehension, although intrinsic motivation may not facilitate comprehension as readily as it does for students with higher levels of comprehension, it explains a significant amount of comprehension variance, and consequently must be attended to when seeking to positively impact the reading process of all students. Overall, these studies suggest that in classes with students at varying levels of reading, skills should be taught in combination with background knowledge and activities that foster curiosity and engagement.

If motivation is viewed and/or measured as a dichotomy as the aforementioned studies have done, extrinsic motivation may need to be attended to, because it also plays a role in the meaning-making process of readers. Wang and Guthrie (2004) studied 187 American and 197 Chinese 4th grade students regarding their intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, amount of reading for personal enjoyment, and text comprehension. They defined intrinsic motivation as curiosity, involvement, and preference for a challenge and they defined extrinsic motivation as

relying on recognition, grades, social pressure or purposes, competition, and compliance with teachers' or parents' expectations. They found that intrinsic motivation predicted the amount of reading for personal enjoyment, while extrinsic motivation negatively predicted the amount of reading for enjoyment. In addition, they found that students who relied on external motivation, as defined by the researchers, were more likely to score lower in reading comprehension. However, they also found that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation together explained a larger amount of the variance in comprehension than either one did alone. Wang and Guthrie (2004) suggest the findings reveal that external motivation may be beneficial when combined with internal motivation. Perhaps, however, there is an alternative way to conceive of motivation that more fully explains the findings of each of the aforementioned motivation studies.

Moje et al. (2008) surveyed 716 students from a predominately Latinx community in a large midwestern city, and 92% self-reported reading texts outside of school 3-4 times a week or more. Through the constant comparative analysis of 38 semi-structured interviews with these students, researchers discovered the following patterns in students' out of school reading. First, the reading was situated in the following social networks: Peers, family, affinity groups, and popular culture networks. Second, students read to generate social capital through racial/ethnic identity development, gender identity development, self-improvement, and/or learning information. In an earlier study, Moje (2006) used data from two studies: an ethnographic study of the in-school and out-of-school literacy practices of urban youths, and a mixed methods study of students' literacy practices, skills, and motivations across multiple contexts. Moje (2006), using data from reading diagnostics, surveys, school achievement data, interviews, observations, and student writing, revealed through the use of an exemplar that texts that are challenging, inconsiderate, and that do not scaffold a reader's knowledge can be demotivating. However,

these demotivating features of text may be overcome, and students may persist in reading

challenging texts in contexts that are situated in social networks (one of family in the exemplar's

case), and helps the reader generate social capital (through developing ethnic identity, and

improvement in Spanish in the exemplar's case). When neither the text nor the context is

motivating, however, students will not persist in reading challenging material. Teachers,

therefore, should attempt to provide both motivating texts and contexts for reading. This means

that teachers must know their students and use that knowledge to select texts, text-based

activities, and purposes for reading that connect with students in motivating ways.

When viewed collectively, the studies on motivation reveal that good readers are

motivated readers who read rich, motivating texts, as members of social networks, and for

motivating social purposes (Alvermann & Moje, 2013). Understanding how and to what extent

ELA teachers can engineer this in their classrooms is far from a settled issue in the literature.

However, this does have implications for how teachers choose texts, how they invite students

into the act of reading, how they design activities, how they set purposes for reading, and how

they leverage their knowledge of their students into motivating texts, contexts, and purposes.

Skill. To comprehend a piece of text, students need decoding, vocabulary, and fluency

skills (Pikulski & Chard, 2005). In addition, researchers are in basic agreement that good readers

are able to identify different text structures, make predictions, construct, revise and question

meanings they make as they read, attempt to determine the meanings of unknown words, use

their prior knowledge, monitor their own comprehension, and are able to effectively summarize

what they have read (Duke & Pearson, 2009). Although these general reading skills are useful

for students as they read fiction, I argue that different skills are required for different

combinations of readers, texts, and disciplinary purposes. The following section will therefore

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focus on empirical research on literature-specific skills that good readers use to comprehend literature at various levels, and for disciplinary purposes.

Beach and Wendler (1987) studied the use of inferences of 160 students, 40 in 8th grade, 40 in 11th grade, 40 college freshmen, and 40 college juniors. All read the same short story and then answered 11 questions about characters' acts, 16 questions about characters' perceptions, and 11 questions about characters' goals. Answers to questions about characters' acts were rated on a scale of 1-3, with 1 being less focused on social/psychological meaning and more focused on physical actions, and 3 being more focused on social/psychological meaning. Answers about characters' perceptions were rated on a scale of 1-3, with 1 being more focused on characters' feelings and less focused on characters' beliefs, and 3 being more focused on characters' beliefs. Answers to questions about characters' goals were rated 1-3, with 1 being more focused on short term physical action and less focused on long-range social or psychological needs, and 3 being more focused on long-range social or psychological needs. MANOVA revealed that grade level had a significant univariate effect on all three categories, with the mean scores of 8th and 11th graders differing significantly from college students in every category. The researchers assumed that the inference making of students becomes more focused on social/psychological meaning rather than physical actions, more focused on characters' beliefs rather than on characters' feelings, and more focused on characters' long-range social and psychological needs rather than on short term physical actions with age as the result of changes in cognitive development, social cognition, and self-concepts of students. This suggests that teachers who want to help students make meaning of literature should consider how the age, cognitive and social development, and self-concepts of their students might need to be factored into text reading assignments,

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depending on the nature of the text, the knowledge it demands and the ways a text might make readers feel about themselves.

Earthman (1992) studied 8 college freshmen and 8 graduate students at a state university, and their differences in gap-filling, use of text repertoire, and perspective taking. Each student read two short stories and two poems while using think-aloud protocols. Students then answered questions, participated in follow-up interviews, and an exit interview. Earthman found that graduate students were more likely to fill in plot gaps, character gaps, and gaps in symbolic language. Freshman had difficulty in assuming more than one perspective, but graduate students could generally take multiple perspectives simultaneously. Finally, graduate students were able to use the ways a text refers to the world beyond the text as a way of deepening their understanding, while this aspect was often ignored by freshman, and was even a hindrance to comprehension when the student was unfamiliar with the references or allusions to the world beyond the text. These three skills (gap filling, using a texts repertoire, and taking multiple perspectives) can increase students' level of comprehension, and can thus be brought to bear on the students' meaning-making processes; likewise, teachers of students at different age levels need to be prepared to scaffold gap-filling, repertoire-creating, and perspective- taking skills.

Garrison and Hynds (1991) looked at six college freshmen and their responses to literature. Three of the students were judged proficient readers because they had achieved a grade of B+ or better in an introductory written communication course, and three of the students were judged to be less than proficient readers who had been placed in a developmental reading course based on low SAT scores. Each student read and responded to four short stories. There was an unlimited amount of time given for reading, and fifteen minutes given to respond to each story in any way they choose. Responses were separated into idea units, and then coded as either

text-bound, text-focused, integrative-paraphrase, reader-focused reflection, or reader-based responses. In comparing the responses of proficient readers with less proficient readers, the authors found that less proficient readers often became so involved in their own personal experiences that they disengaged from the text, while proficient readers were able to weave personal experience into their response to text to make inferences and draw conclusions about the text. Doubt and/or confusion, and the evocation of personal feelings led less proficient readers away from interpretation and the text, and more proficient readers into the text to find deeper meaning. When thinking about characters, less proficient readers responded in ways that were vague, unelaborated, and not supported by the text, especially in comparison to the proficient readers. Finally, less proficient readers read in a linear fashion, while proficient readers were constantly hypothesizing, checking their hypotheses, and rethinking their conclusions. In total, more proficient readers had greater general reading skills (making predictions, constructing, revising, and questioning meaning), as well as skill in using personal experiences to achieve greater levels of comprehension in texts. Although not in the article, it should be noted that those deemed "proficient readers" were engaged in the meaning-making process as I have defined it through their hypothesizing, checking their hypotheses, and rethinking their conclusions. The main thrust of this study, however, is that teachers should encourage personal connections to the text (which also may assist with motivation), while simultaneously helping students to remain focused on the text through classroom activities and assignments that either illuminate the text or have students use the text in ways that engage students in textual meaning making.

Although most empirical studies view and measure comprehension in terms of single passages, Hartman (1995) examined how students made intertextual links among five passages.

He provided eight proficient high school readers (4 juniors, and four seniors) with five passages. Three were about the fighting and dying in the American Civil War, one was about the impact of the Spanish Civil War on those who were not soldiers, and one was about dying in a modern hospital. While reading the five passages, students thought aloud, and responded verbally to prompting questions about what they had read. Afterwards, they completed a debriefing interview. Hartman (1995) found that the proportion of links students made within each passage decreased as students moved through the five passages, while the proportion of links students made to one of the other five passages increased as students moved through the five passages. In addition, about 40% of the links students made were to texts outside of the five texts set. Students transposed, absorbed, and intersected texts, and in so doing they gained understandings that were used and then reconstructed. The implication is that the comprehension process is at least partially the function of intertextuality. Certainly, intertextuality is an integral part of the meaning-making process as I have defined it. Consequently, teachers should embrace this tendency in their students by giving them space to do make inter-textual connections. However, it should be noted that Hartman was studying proficient readers and teachers may have some non-proficient readers in their class who may not naturally make these types of connections, and may have to be encouraged to do so through explicit questions, activities, discussion, and assignments.

Overall, although the term "comprehension" and not "meaning-making" is used in these studies, it is clear that some combination of general reading skills may be brought to a transaction with text in order to make meaning. However, literature is a specialized genre that calls for a specialized set of skills if reading for the disciplinary purposes of literary studies (e.g., literary criticism, rhetorical analysis). As students age, they become more practiced in using

these specialized skills, they have a broader range of personal and textual experience to draw from, and their transactions with literature should reflect these changes. Teachers should consider the possibility of shaping this complex meaning-making process through crafting classroom contexts and activities.

Identity. The identities of students, as a function of the various and overlapping social groups they are enmeshed within, determines to a large extent the knowledge, discourses, and literate practices that students possess. Moje et al. (2004) examined the funds of knowledge that 30 bilingual students aged 12-15 in a Latinx community in Detroit possessed, focusing especially on funds of knowledge that could be used in science classroom learning. Using field notes, surveys, interviews, collected documents, community artifacts, and photographs, they ascertained the outside-of-school knowledge of students could be characterized as coming from parents' work outside of the home, parents' work inside of the home, travel, experience with environmental and health concerns, the communities they lived within, peer groups, and popular culture. Within these categories, peers played an important role in helping students read school-based texts, with fluent English speakers assisting Spanish-dominant students with translations, and with advice on "doing" school, such as completing worksheets quickly and efficiently. Although students have these funds of knowledge that stem from their participation in out-of-school social groups, these funds of knowledge rarely surfaced within the science classroom. There seemed to be a disconnect between students' funds of knowledge outside of school and their willingness to employ those funds or the knowledge they generated from them inside of school.

When examining the literate practices of students, the results are similar. Moje et al., (2008) used data from an ongoing ethnography in a predominately Latinx community in a large

Midwestern city, and then integrated large-scale survey and assessment methods. Examining the literate practices of 716 6th-10th graders in public, private, and charter schools, they found that outside of school, students were reading websites, letters and notes, music lyrics, emails, magazines, novels, short stories, and plays. Students read as members of social groups—peer groups, family groups, affinity groups, and popular culture networks. Students read for racial/ethnic identity development, gender identity development, self-improvement, and for information. In surveys and interviews, students indicated that they read texts in school, as opposed to skipping the assigned reading, when they were situated in social networks they could identify with. They liked fiction where they could identify with the characters, and they reported reading texts that connected them with their peers or others they wanted to get to know or impress (i.e., social capital). Moje and colleagues (2004; 2008) studies imply that student meaning making is tied to who they are and what they experience outside of school, suggesting that teachers who wish to support meaning making might do well to connect to students' lives.

Part of students' identity is shaped through their participation in school contexts. Learned (2016) shadowed eight 9th graders identified as struggling readers throughout an entire school year. She conducted interviews and 425 hours of observation, while also examining literacy assessments, school reports, and classroom artifacts. Through constant comparative analysis, she found that students' and teachers' interactions with particular school contexts co-constructed a reader's identity. Often, behavior problems were conflated with reading difficulty. Overall, a student could have a "struggling reader" identity, although they could perform skilled and engaged reading. "However, among classroom contexts through which youths and teachers built trusting, learning-focused relationships in concert with disciplinary literacy teaching, focal participants tended to demonstrate proficient or improving reading and express positive feelings

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about themselves, their teachers, and their classes" (Learned, 2016, p. 369). Based on her findings, teachers who wish to foster student meaning making should not only focus on their teaching, but also on building trusting, learning-focused relationships.

Overall, empirical research reveals that good readers are motivated to read great pieces of literature as members of social groups, and for social purposes. They can monitor their own meaning-making and employ both general reading skills, and literature-specific reading skills as needed. However, the identities, skills, and funds of knowledge of such readers may or may not be seen, valued, and used in the classroom. The question, then, that remains is, what do we know about how teachers can best facilitate the meaning-making process, given the fact that the processes of good readers are not identical and that teachers may not always be able to recognize what readers bring to the classroom? In what follows, I offer a review of the empirical literature on teachers' practices focused on helping students make meaning of literature.

Effective Practices of Teachers for Teaching Meaning Making with Text

My review of the research on teaching literature to adolescents yielded a range of studies that I divided into the following the categories (a) using cognitive strategies, (b) engaging students, (c) building a third space, and (d) attending to power. The section on cognitive strategies examines literature on teaching students' strategies that build schema and lead to greater comprehension, which should foster meaning-making. The section on engaging students focuses on multiple ways in which instructional strategies can be used to engage students in the process of making meaning of texts. The section on third-space focuses on teachers using existing student knowledge, motivation, interest, discourses, and skills to move students towards a new academic literacy, with new knowledge, skills, discourses, and ways of making-meaning

with texts. The section focused on power presents research on teachers attending to issues of power within the classroom, within works of fiction, and within the world at large in a manner that facilitates students' meaning-making. The practices studied are not always in the realm of high school ELA classes, or works of fiction. In addition, the practices are often studied in isolation rather than examining effective combinations of teacher practices and activities.

Using Cognitive Strategies. The goal of cognitive strategies is to build students' schema and to thus foster greater meaning-making with texts. For students to be able to use the cognitive strategies of good readers, these strategies should be directly/explicitly taught and modeled. Bean and Steenwyk (1984) analyzed the use of summary on 60 6th grade students. Twenty-one students were taught rule-governed summary, where the summary is formed by obeying a list of six rules. Nineteen were taught the GIST method of summary, which entails using only 15 words, and consequently students must use only big ideas. Finally, 20 students received no explicit instruction. After five weeks, those students who had received direct instruction in summary writing scored significantly higher on reading comprehension. In a similar fashion, Clark et al., (1984) studied the direct instruction of visual imagery and self-questioning strategies on one 8th grader, four 9th graders, and one 11th grader who were all being served in programs for LD students. This direct instruction in strategy use resulted in improved comprehension at both the ability level and grade level of the students under study. These two studies reveal that direct instruction is effective is getting students to employ specific strategies. These specific strategies can then be employed in the meaning-making process, which is not dealt with in these studies.

Singer and Donlan (1982) examined fifteen 11th grade students who received instruction in forming their own questions about complex short stories. For the first two short stories, both

the experimental and control groups' comprehension was close to equal. However, over time (the reading of the next four short stories), the students who received this direct instruction improved their comprehension significantly more than the control group who did not receive this instruction. This suggests that cognitive strategies take time to internalize. In addition, it suggests that as the literature grows more complex with the age and grade progression of students, new strategies must be implemented to ensure comprehension at various levels. When applied to meaning-making, this research suggests that the student and what skills a student brings to bear on a text can be affected. Teachers could use a range of strategy instruction techniques to help students preview texts and monitor their comprehension, both key dimensions of making meaning with texts.

However, as discussed in the Processes and Practices of Effective Meaning-Making section of the literature review, Hansen and Pearson (1983) studied the direct teaching of inference, they found poor readers benefitted more than good readers in regard to comprehension. In addition, poor readers did not significantly differ from good readers in answering inferential questions, and poor readers also outperformed their peers who had not received direct instruction in making inferences. Thus, while direct instruction of empirically proven cognitive strategies is very beneficial for poor readers, it may or may not be beneficial for good readers, who may already be using the strategy or an effective combination of different strategies. Consequently, to positively affect meaning-making, teachers must know their students and present an appropriate menu of strategy use.

The direct instruction of cognitive strategies is important to ensure that students have a broad repertoire of strategies from which to choose. However, what may be most important is apprenticing students to the practices of good readers (Greenleaf et al., 2001), which means not

only having a broad array of cognitive strategies, but also metacognitive monitoring and strategic control of the reading process, which means that readers can flexibly choose from this array of strategies based on purpose for reading, text, and on the contexts of the reading situation. It is through learning such a process that the 9th grade students at Thurgood Marshall High School improved their performance on standardized tests for reading by two grade levels in one academic year on average, doubled the number of books they reported having read, and even changed their disposition towards reading (Greenleaf et al., 2001). This increased comprehension level, increase in amount of reading, and a changed disposition towards reading would mean students are bringing a greater skill level, a greater amount of knowledge, and a greater number of experiences with text to the transaction between the reader and the text in future meaning-making processes.

Engaging Students. Student engagement is a necessary prerequisite for student meaning-making. One of the ways to engage students in meaning-making is through effective discussions. Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) examined student disengagement, student procedural engagement (or whether students followed classroom rules, regulations, and instructions), student substantive engagement (or "sustained personal commitment to understanding the world of a story or poem") (262), and student achievement. Using regression and controlling for race, ethnicity, sex, and SES, they found that student disengagement had a strong, negative impact on achievement. Student procedural engagement might contribute to achievement, but the relationship is ambiguous. Student substantive engagement had a significant positive relationship to achievement. Although measuring different types of student engagement, these types of engagement were measured by engagement in certain types of teaching. Teachers that encouraged substantive engagement asked questions that were authentic and open ended, used

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uptake on student comments, and had a high level of evaluation of student responses that continued rather than stifled classroom conversations. Teachers who were able to substantively engage students did not use the I-R-E pattern of classroom discourse.

Gamoran and Nystrand (1992) also studied 54 9th grade classes in 9 high schools in the Midwest. The schools were varied in context (urban, rural, suburban, private, and public). A total of 1,100 students participated. Four visits were made to each classroom and the types of questions teachers asked students were coded and the amount of time spent on each type of classroom activity was noted. In addition, students took reading tests at the end of the researchers' time at the schools. They found that high quality discourse rarely occurred. When teachers did use authentic questions based on literature and uptake, it had a positive impact on students' test scores. In essence, when teachers took students seriously as thinkers by asking them authentic questions, listening to student responses, and helping students elaborate their ideas, students generally scored better on their reading tests. Therefore, it can be inferred that taking students seriously as thinkers through engaging in this type of classroom discourse can help students engage in a process of reading where students see themselves as thinkers, rather than as receptacles of knowledge and gleaners of facts.

Building on some of the ideas in the previous studies, Applebee et al. (2003) studied 974 middle and high school students in 64 classrooms across five states that varied in their use of high stakes assessments. They examined, among other things, the impact of dialogic instruction, envisionment building, and curricular conversations on student achievement. Dialogic instruction is instruction that, in contrast to the I-R-E pattern of discussion, gives time for open discussion, uses authentic, open-ended questions, and uptake of student comments by the teacher to build a more continuous discussion. Envisionment building was conceived of as a "mixture of

understandings, questions, hypotheses, and connections with previous knowledge and experiences" which is dynamic in nature (Applebee et al., p. 691). Curricular conversations are those conversations based around questions used for an entire semester or even year. Dialogic instruction was measured through the number of authentic questions and questions with uptake. Envisionment building was measured as being present when students:

1. had room to develop their own understandings;

2. spent time in class in meaningful conversations;

3. were encouraged to take positions, express opinions, and/or have personal responses;

4. asked questions that showed comprehension;

5. asked questions that showed evaluation or analysis;

6. were allowed to shift discussions in new directions;

7. were encouraged by the teacher to use the questions and comments of others to have discussion;

8. used questions and comments of other students;

9. responded to other students or the teacher;

10. challenged the text; and

11. were asked questions that required analysis (701).

 In addition, each of these were rated according on whether the teacher:

1. treated all students as having important contributions or understandings;

2. treated instructional activities as something to develop understandings rather than test what students already knew;

3. assumed that questions were a natural part of the process of understanding rather than a failure to learn; and

4. used multiple perspectives to enrich understandings (701).

Curricular conversations were measured according to the following four characteristics:

1. Comments made connections with prior topics;

2. Comments made connections with future topics;

3. Students used texts to support or refute arguments;

4. Students used the vocabulary of literary analysis.

Nystrand and Gamoran found that these discussion-based approaches were significantly related to academic performance in the spring when initial literacy levels, gender, SES levels, and race were controlled for. Although no one single instructional practice is singled out in the study, this reveals the types of classrooms where student meaning-making is emphasized, how it is fostered by teachers using practices in combination, and the positive impact it has on student achievement. What it does not reveal is how teachers thought about, planned for, and rationalized the decisions they made. How, for example, did the teachers know when students needed supports? How did they build classroom spaces wherein students asked questions of the teachers, other students, and themselves? How did they choose texts with which students could engage? The list of questions generated by Nystrand and Gamoran's findings is long and motivates the questions examined in this project.

Building a Third Space. The term third space refers to a hybrid space within a classroom (Gutierrez, 2008; Moje et al., 2004) that combines in-school and out-of-school literacies. Creating such a space in the classroom entails knowing what students' out of school

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literacies, skills, and funds of knowledge are, and then leveraging these to move students towards academic or disciplinary literacies.

Moll et al. (1992) and Moje et al. (2004) examined students' funds of knowledge in the respective communities under study. Moll et al. (1992) studied working class communities in Tucson, Arizona, and found the following broad categories for funds of knowledge in the households of students: Agriculture and mining, material and scientific knowledge, economics, medicine, household management, and religion. Contrary to typical stereotypes about working-class families, both this study and the aforementioned Moje et al. (2004) study found that such families and communities offered ample funds of knowledge that could be drawn on productively in teaching children and youth to engage with concepts, academic practices, and texts. However, Moje et al. (2004) found that these funds of knowledge rarely surfaced publicly in the classrooms they studied.

After surfacing and using such knowledge, teachers must employ this knowledge artfully in a way that moves students' nascent meaning-making abilities towards deeper, unfamiliar, disciplinary ways of making meaning with literature. Consequently, teachers must understand how experts make meaning from literature to move students in that direction. To uncover the work of experts in the field of literary studies, Rainey (2017) interviewed 10 literature instructors at a public research university in the Midwest. Through interviews and constant comparative analysis, she found that all ten shared the orientation that the study of literature is both problem-based and social in nature. In addition, she found the following common practices: seeking patterns, identifying strangeness, articulating a puzzle, considering possibilities, considering contexts, and making a claim. As this is the work of experts in the field of literary studies, expectations of high school students would necessarily be on a different developmental level.

However, this represents where students should be moving towards in high school classrooms as they work to make meaning from literature.

Lee (1993) studied her own teaching as she attempted to move students towards a deeper, disciplinary form of meaning-making by using culturally specific knowledge students already possessed. She hypothesized that, "Students' prior social knowledge of the themes, values, and social conventions on which the texts are based and their skill in signifying may be productively drawn upon to teach skills in literary analysis" (p. 46). Six classes participated. Four classes were taught the experimental instructional unit, and two served as the control. The experimental instruction first drew on students' existing knowledge of signifying (performative African-American vernacular that is humorous, ironic, metaphorical, rhythmic, or some combination of the four) and expanded that knowledge. Then, students attempted to see signifying in literature, and to use signifying in their own writing. After writing, students attempted to interpret key passages in novels and short stories where signifying was at play. Finally, students used these classroom experiences to engage in interpretive tasks that were much more complex, and that did not focus on isolated passages, but on larger themes that encompassed entire works of literature. As a result, comprehension in the experimental group, as measured in an assessment of comprehension of an unseen story given to all groups, was substantially greater than the gains in the control group. Of special interest was the fact that the experimental groups gains were even greater in questions that required interpretive ability. Lee (1993) used students' funds of knowledge that were applicable to the interpretation of literature, and this use of cultural knowledge augmented students' meaning-making abilities. When looked at through the lens of Rainey's (2017) work, Lee (1993) may not have attended to every expert category Rainey (2017) uncovered. However, Lee (1993) did move students toward disciplinary ways of making-

meaning with literature through helping students to see patterns and consider contexts at the very least.

Lee's (1993) research hints that teachers can positively shape students' meaning-making process by understanding students' funds of knowledge, discourse patterns, and skills, and then artfully using these in the classroom to move students' meaning-making processes towards unfamiliar and disciplinary ways of making-meaning from literature. Her work has been confirmed by Mahiri (1998), Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002), and Lee (2004). In these subsequent studies, teachers used students' cultural knowledge and skills other than signifying to move students towards academic literacies. This movement or navigation among social worlds entails the teacher using knowledge of the social groups that students participate in, and also creating a new social group within the classroom with new knowledge, skills, ways of thinking, and ways of reading and making sense of literature.   Given the almost infinite possible combinations of students and texts, understanding how teachers facilitate the navigation between social worlds in their particular context, with their particular students, and using particular texts, would be beneficial in understanding how these teachers are helping students make meaning of literature at various levels. While observing such contexts in my study, it was important for me to keep in mind that contexts are always imbued with power relations, certainly between teachers and students, but also among students.

Attending to Power. Power dynamics are present in classrooms, and in the literature used in high school ELA classrooms. In the classroom, it is the teachers who are generally viewed as the "primary knower" and, as such, has the power of the correct interpretations in the ELA classrooms. Research on student centered classrooms has examined changing these power dynamics through giving students choices (Rogers, 1983), through acknowledging and

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accommodating student differences (McCombs & Whistler, 1997), and through treating students as co-creators of knowledge (Barr & Tagg, 1995).

Aukerman (2007) proposed positioning students instead of teachers as the primary knowers. During a summer school program, she studied seven students who were selected at random from 5th graders who were in summer school due to reading difficulties. All but one student was either ESL, received services for special education, or both. Twice a week, these students were pulled out of the normal summer school program for an hour-long literature discussion session, where students would read and discuss a piece of short fiction. The teacher was committed to positioning the students as primary knowers, and did not correct pronunciations of words, blatant misunderstandings, or interpretations. Instead, she offered occasional guiding questions. These sessions were observed and video recorded. Aukerman wrote analytic memos based on her observations, transcribed the video, calculated verbal participation through conversational turns and lines of transcript, and performed a conversation analysis that included eye gaze. By the third session, there was already a difference in eye gaze that shifted from often on the teacher, to predominately on each other. Students, through collaboration with each other, constructed meaning from texts in complex ways, and were able to correct their own mistakes.

In addition, Aukerman (2007) posited that reading is an evaluative act and if teachers make students' evaluations irrelevant through having the final authority, they then misrepresent the act of reading to students. Although this is an extremely alluring idea, it must be remembered that this was done during summer school, where teachers have much more freedom, and the stakes are far lower. In addition, one must ask whether never correcting students is a completely equitable move. If other, more proficient, students are, in fact, learning conventional

interpretations even as they learn to bring their own ideas to texts, then where does that leave less-proficient readers? Do we have to ignore the expertise, experience, and privilege of the teachers in the room for students to make meaning? Or can students be encouraged to use their agency to share their ideas, while teachers use their expertise to help students challenge their own thinking?

Although these issues within this research should be noted, the creation of social groups within the classroom that have identities as interpretive authorities is rooted in the theoretical work of Vygotsky (1978), and Bakhtin (2010), and the empirical work of Rainey (2017), and so deserves further investigation. For example, these studies bring up questions such as what role does attention to power dynamics play in teachers' practices as they seek to encourage meaning making? In what ways do the power differentials in a given classroom shape what students are willing to say, ask, or do in relation to reading texts? How might teachers mitigate those effects of power? How might they inadvertently play into them?

Some scholars argue that teacher should not only attend to power relations in classroom interactions, but also to the ways power is represented in and through text. Park (2012), for example, uncovered student visualization as an entry point into text-based discussions of power through a year-long qualitative study of three after-school book clubs for 7th and 8th grade girls. Each club, consisting of the middle school girls, a middle school literacy teacher, and the researcher, met once every two weeks to discuss student-selected texts, which included novels, short stories, and song lyrics. The literacy teacher and researcher facilitated discussion but had no curriculum and no agenda. The girls, who were proficient readers, brought their own questions and answered them as a group. Park (2012) found that inviting students to visualize characters was one way to initiate conversations on race, and the visualizations could be

attributed to students' social roles and identities. Although not explicitly stated in the study, visualization becomes fertile ground for readers to connect text meanings to themselves and to larger societal issues of power, thus promoting comprehension beyond the level of understanding the information or ideas in a text.   Park's (2012) findings suggest that teachers interested in supporting student meaning making may use visualization to illuminate power dynamics within texts.

Unlike Park (2012), who only examined the use of one cognitive strategy and its relationship to critical literacy in an after-school program, Locke and Cleary (2011) used the case study method to examine a year-long multi-cultural high school English class in New Zealand entitled Year 13-Popular Culture, that focused almost entirely on critical literacy and the relationships of texts to power.

In the first third of the class, students examined texts on Rubin Carter, the American boxer. These texts ranged from the movie *The Hurricane,* and Bob Dylan's song *Hurricane*, to non-fiction print and electronic texts. The teacher's goal, through the juxtaposition of these texts, was for students to understand that different points of view were present in each of the texts and that reality is constructed through language.

The second third of the class focused on medical and scientific experiments for prolonging life. The texts included excerpts from *Frankenstein*, non-fiction texts, and the movie *The Island*. The goal for this portion of the class was a critical interrogation of texts that included themes, main ideas, speakers, voice, point of view, audience, and audience's point of view. Through this critical questioning, students and teacher uncovered and discussed issues of power represented in the text.

The final third of the class used the texts "White Comedy" by Benjamin Zephaniah, and "Telephone Conversation" by Wole Soyinka. The goal of the class was to interrogate these, and other texts for issues of voice, power, class, and race.

Through her observations, reflective journal, student feedback, and an examination of student work, the researcher concluded that the students moved from readers who were easily manipulated by texts in the beginning of the course, to readers who understood language could be used to construct different versions of reality and were able to deploy their own cultural resources to respond to and challenge texts. However, even at the end of the course, students could not clearly articulate what the critical literacy approach to reading entailed. Overall, though, the teacher considered the class a success because all students who remained at school for the entire school year gained more school credits than they had the previous year. The teacher in this study selected and used texts and their juxtaposition with one another in powerful and productive ways which led students from being manipulated by texts, to seeing the impact of authors' language on readers.

In sum, the empirical research regarding increasing comprehension through attending to power in the classroom and in texts is scant. Teachers may be uncomfortable giving up their own authority, or discussing issues of power (race, gender, class, politics, etc.) in the classroom. Consequently, there are few empirical studies that study power in explicit ways and a large percentage of the ones that do exist take place in summer or after-school programs. Further research in this area is necessary because the research that does exist suggests fertile ground for improving the meaning-making of students. Applebee, et al.'s work (2003), for example, documents the value of teacher moves that relinquish authority over text meaning and even classroom discourse, placing both in the hands of students.

Overall, the research on teachers' practices to support meaning making with literature reveals effective practices of individual readers, and some effective practices of teachers seeking to foster student meaning-making with literary texts. This existing research has focused on the reader and the activity but has largely ignored how a teacher can craft classroom environments, choose texts, and organize texts in an effort to foster meaning-making. Consequently, this fine-grained study of what fostering meaning-making looks like in real classrooms as teachers consider not only the reader and the activity, but also the context and the texts, aims to fill this gap.

To guide this study, and generated by my review of the research, I offer a more detailed model of teacher practice to support meaning making. In my model, I call out the various dimensions of classroom practice implicated by my literature review for addressing reader factors, text factors, activity factors, and contextual factors in supporting students' meaning making from and with text. The model draws on the reader-text-activity-context model, and on the work of Alvermann and Moje (2013) who posited a model of disciplinary literacy teaching that both builds on and complicates the reader-text-activity-context model by attempting to model what it looks like for one teacher to work with multiple readers who bring different knowledge, discourses, identities, and cultural practices into a disciplinary classroom. First, however, I want to return to the original model and illuminate what the literature tells us about it.

Figure 2: General Literacy Model Illuminated by Literature
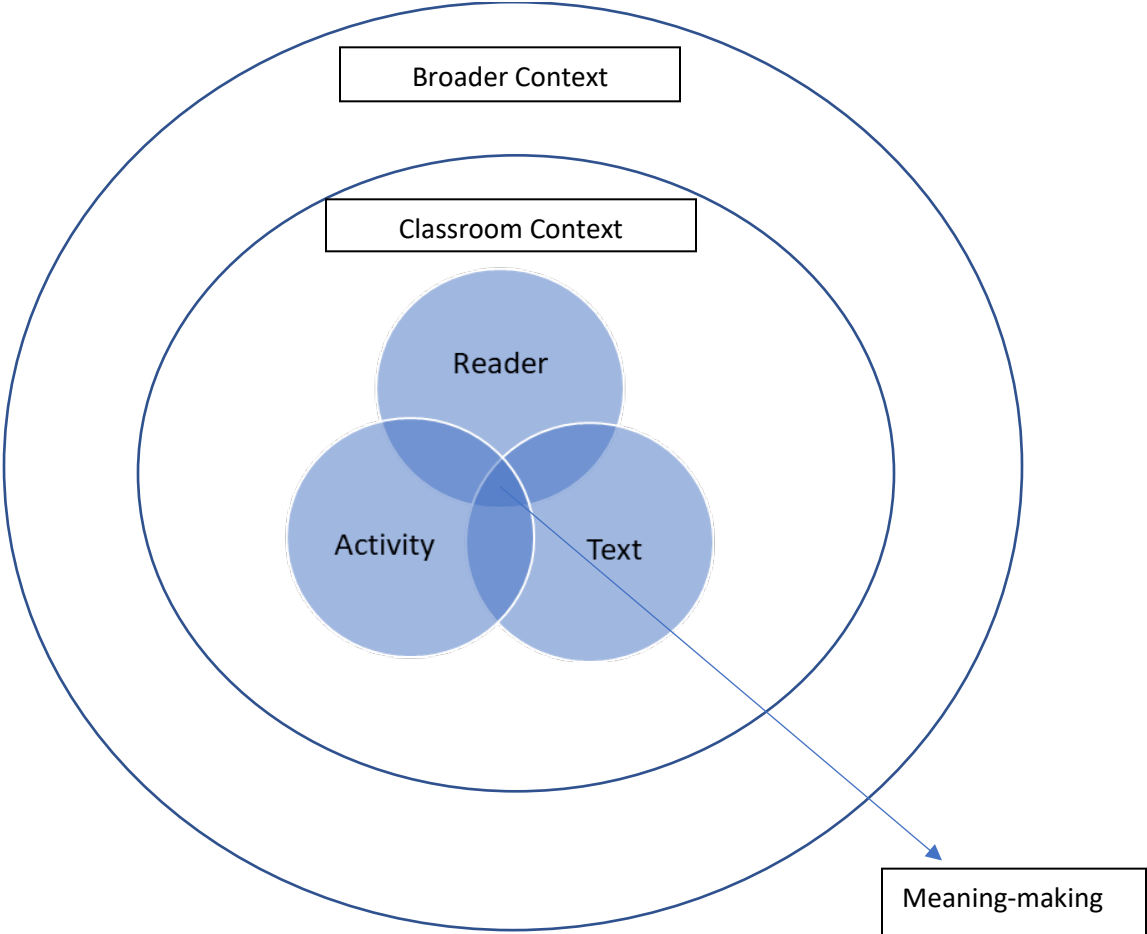
The literature shows what should, ideally, take place in the reader, text, activity, and classroom context circles if meaning-making is the goal.

Meaning-making Reader: Chooses appropriate skills from a personal menu, exhibits curiosity, is engaged, has a purpose for reading, takes multiple perspectives, makes intertextual connections, makes personal connections while remaining focused on the text, monitors own meaning making, develops own understanding, asks questions, discusses texts, challenges texts, analyzes and evaluates texts, sees power relationships

Meaningful Text: Motivating, rich, appropriate for students cognitive and social development, organized to facilitate personal and intertextual connections

Meaningful Activity: Motivates students, is based on text, provides purpose, fosters making connections, develops understandings rather than testing knowledge

Meaningful Classroom Context: Readers are motivated, power is shared, multiple perspectives are welcomed and evident, questions are natural and encouraged, trust is perceptible

The above illuminated literacy model shows only one reader. However, in a classroom, there are multiple readers, which makes a classroom model of literacy much more complex. Although students in one classroom may be engaging in the same activity with the same text, the transaction between each individual student and text, and each individual student and activity is unique and dependent on what the individual student brings to the transaction with either text or activity. Consequently, the model for student meaning making in the classroom must take into consideration multiple unique students that interact with the texts and activities in unique ways, interact with the teacher, and interact with each other. In the following figure, the interactions between students and the teacher are represented by double sided arrows. In the interest of

realism, some students interact more than others. The point is to see what the literature tells us about the complex work of teachers who seek to foster students' textual meaning making.

Figure 3: Student Meaning Making in the Classroom
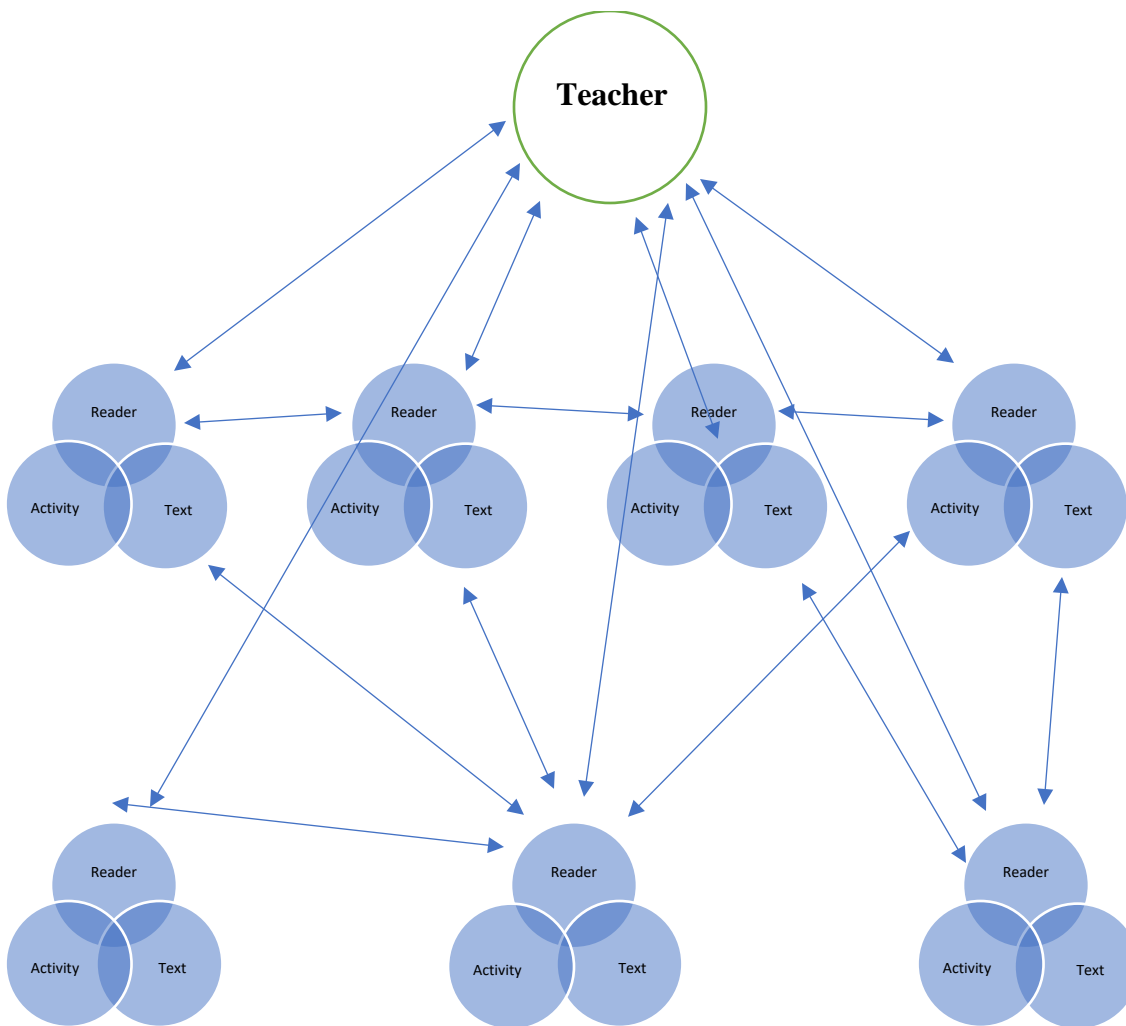
Meaning-making Teacher: Motivates students; sets purpose for reading; develops and leverages knowledge of students; plans for the cognitive and social development of students; considers the identities of students; chooses and organizes texts to foster meaning making; fosters intertextual and personal connections; taps into students' funds of knowledge; builds trusting, learning-focused relationships; presents appropriate menu of strategy use; takes students seriously as thinkers; is responsive to students; uses/models multiple perspectives; uses disciplinary vocabulary in discourse/conversation; shares power with the students; engineers activities to foster meaning making

These models ultimately show the best teacher practices for fostering meaning making according to current research. These are the practices that I looked for during data collection, laid out more fully in the following chapter. However, as I understand that literacy research has and will continue to evolve, I was not closed to discovering new practices that may be potentially useful for teachers and that warrant further research.

CHAPTER III: Methods

The two models presented at the end of chapter two reveal what the literature has discovered about the meaning-making reader, meaningful texts, meaningful activities, meaningful classroom contexts, and a meaning-making teacher. I used the research presented in the models to guide my observations and data collection in order to capture teacher practices that foster meaning making as well as how teachers were thinking about their role in the meaning-making process.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided my study: How do these four highly regarded ELA teachers work to foster student meaning-making by shaping the classroom contexts, texts, readers, and activities? Specifically, what do these teachers think about and what do they do when they are working to foster student meaning making?

Methods

Participants and School Sites

To address my research questions, it was important to have the best ELA teachers I could find in regard to fostering meaning making. What it means to characterize a teacher as "among the best" is an open question. Is this about producing high student achievement? A matter of being loved by students? Someone who education experts trust? Someone a principal nominates? Any one of these metrics is open to critique. A teacher can produce high

achievement through drill and practice. Students can love a teacher who makes them laugh but teaches them very little. Experts may be basing recommendations on only one dimension of their interactions with teachers. Principals might nominate teachers who keep control of a classroom. In other words, the concept of *best* is fraught. And yet, I did not want to examine the practice of any and all teachers because I wanted to examine the thinking of teachers who fostered meaning making. As a result, I used many different sources of information to seek teachers who could be considered *highly regarded* by a range of qualified sources. I used my personal experiences as a field instructor in the Rounds Project, and also asked for recommendation from Prof. Elizabeth Moje and Prof. Emily Rainey, who also worked with local literature teachers in their professional capacities, as well as teachers who our Teacher Education program regularly entrusted with the education of our future English language arts teachers. My initial list of possible candidates consisted of eight teachers. Six tentatively expressed interest. After meeting with the six candidates to get a sense of their work in the classroom and to let them know the gist of my study, one no longer wanted to participate. During the summer and the beginning of this school year, a second candidate did not respond to email. This left me with the following four school sites and participants, each of whom was considered *highly regarded* by multiple qualified informants.

School A is a suburban private school. Tuition is $22,670 for middle school students, and $23,190 for High School students. Books and supplies cost up to $700 for middle school students, and up to $1000 for high school students. Financial aid is available and is based solely on need. There are about 550 students and average class size is about 16. Students self-reported racial identities are 56% White, 23% Asian, 10% Multi-racial, 8% African-American, and 1% Hispanic. Students average ACT score is 32 and average SAT score is 1440. The teacher is

school A has her PhD in English Literature from a Research 1 university and has taught at School A since receiving her degree. The pseudonym for the teacher is Kirsten, and for the school is Briarwood.

School B is a suburban public high school. Close to 1500 students attend School B. Approximately 16% are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The students self-reported racial identities are 60% White, 17% African-American, 11% Asian, 8% Multi-racial, and 4% Hispanic. Average ACT score is 29, and average SAT score is 1290. The school has a 95% graduation rate. The participating teacher in School B has a B.A. in English and Political Science, an M.A. in Teaching, and an M.A. in Educational Administration and Policy, all from the same Research 1 university. He has taught English and Social Studies since 2006 and has taught at School B since 2011. He currently teaches English and Humanities classes and is director of the writing center. The pseudonym for the teacher is Jacob, and for the school is Sawmill.

School C is a magnet school within the same public-school system as School B. There are approximately 475 students and about 5% are eligible for free and reduced lunch. The students self-reported racial identities are 77% White, 8% Multi-racial, 6% African-American, 5% Asian, and 4% Hispanic. The average ACT score is 29, and average SAT score is 1300. The graduation rate is 95%. The participating teacher in School C received a B.A. from a Research 1 university and an M.A. from a Research 3 university. He has taught ELA at School C for 20 years. The pseudonym for the teacher is Carl, and for the school is Casey.

School D is public high school with approximately 1600 students. About 21% are eligible for free and reduced lunch. The students self-reported racial identities are 43% White, 22%

Asian, 20% African-American, 8% Hispanic, and 7% Multi-racial. The average ACT score is 30, and average SAT score is 1330. The graduation rate is 93%. The participating teacher at School D received a B.A. in English Literature and History from an R1 university, and a Masters in Curriculum and Instruction. He is I.B. certified and has been teaching since 2004. The pseudonym for the teacher is Kyle and for the school is Erie.

Overall, although these schools contain some measure of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity, the student populations are predominately white, and middle to upper class. They perform beyond the national average on the ACT, SAT, and graduation rates. The practices of highly regarded ELA teachers in these schools, due to a somewhat similar student population, may be similar to each other, but far different from schools with different student populations. My main concern was finding the ELA teachers with the best reputations for helping students make meaning of literature and who were willing to participate. That overarching concern, combined with a limited number of teachers who had been recommended to me, led to less variation in sites than I would have ideally chosen. However, I believe that the practices and activities of these teachers will be transferable, but the ease with which they are transferred will be shaped by the particular contexts of schooling, by students' skills, and by their sense of agency developed through prior literacy experiences.

Data Collection

Over an eight-week period, I rotated through schools A,B, and C in one-week rotations, observing at least three days a week. The days were chosen to maximize my exposure to teacher practices, processes, and engineering of activities in consultation with the classroom teacher. In addition, whenever possible, I observed multiple sections during each school day. In some cases,

these sections were sections of the same class and in other cases they were sections of different classes. During the initial rotation, I had an initial interview with the teacher (see Appendix A for protocol), observed instruction (see Appendix B for protocol), audio recorded instruction, took field notes, collected assignment instructions and other relevant classroom artifacts, and asked *in situ* questions of the teacher. After cycling through each school for one week each, I again cycled through each of the schools for an additional week. During this cycle, I conducted a closing interview based on questions I noted about instruction in my field notes. My timeline was determined through comparing school schedules and scheduling to allow for a maximum number of possible observation days during the noted period. After this period, I began an initial analysis of the data, and began rethinking my conceptual model. At the beginning of the following school year, in an attempt to see teachers both at the end and at the beginning of the school year, I again observed in the same cycles and collected the same types of data, although this time, I added school D to the rotation.

Data Analysis

I used constant comparative analysis to analyze my data (Strauss, 1987). I began with the open coding of field notes, interview transcriptions, audio recordings, and classroom artifacts. During this phase, I began to analyze the raw data through open coding (developing descriptive tags for my raw data) and constantly comparing the codes with each other, refining them, and making them more descriptive and thus more useful. In addition, during this time I used my work on data analysis to ask teachers in situ questions. I was especially drawn to Aukerman (2015) and started with a conceptual model and codes that included intellectual integrity, textual curiosity, imaginative engagement, agency, identity, and textual dexterity. These codes, however, described the work of students and I needed to develop codes that described the work

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of the teachers. It was during this phase of analysis that I moved to the conceptual model in

figure 2 of the last chapter which focuses on the reader. After my switch in conceptual models, I

first began to test whether all of my data could fit under teachers' work influencing the context,

text, reader, and activity. All of my data fit within these categories, and so I proceeded with data

collection with new conceptual models.

At first, I grouped my data by categories (text, context, reader, and activity) in my

conceptual model. When analyzing the data grouped under context, I initially had codes that

actually described the context such as quiet, seats arranged for small groups, and free of

distractions. However, I soon realized my codes needed to be focused on the work of the

teachers, and most of the data and coding that I had under the category of context was not

focused on the teacher. However, when looking under the reader category, I had initial codes

such as respects students' opinions, and values students' voices. The work of teachers captured

in these codes potentially impacted both the context, the reader, and the activity. At this point I

decided to abandon looking at the data by category, focus solely on the data and the story the

data was telling, and to determine later how the work of the teachers impacted these categories.

During open coding, I developed a large number of disparate codes (e.g., promoting

student talk, culturally responsive teaching, promoting criticality, having students use textual

evidence for arguments, using critical theory, using ideological frameworks, uses small groups,

arranges room for small groups, using writing for meaning making, giving students choice and

autonomy, banning phones, modeling engagement, facilitating engagement, sharing engagement,

providing supplemental texts, providing metacognitive strategies, disciplinary teaching, etc.). As

I moved into axial coding with these codes, I also wrote informal memos that placed the teachers

in this study on a continuum in terms of teaching authority, disciplinary teaching, and promoting

efferent and aesthetic reading. I tried these three categories as axial codes and rejected them as they did not explain enough of the data. Eventually, through refining my codes and through the process of axial coding, I tested and selected five axial codes to explain my data: crafted environments, engendered relationships, selected texts, provided scaffolding, and modeled engagement.

As I began to write, continued to code data, and moved from axial coding into selective coding, a few of these codes changed. The data revealed that teachers talked about organizing texts as much as they talked about selecting texts, and so organizing had to become a part of the descriptive code. When I examined the code "providing scaffolding" I realized that this was not capturing all of the data about the teachers' moves. Consequently, to include the total of the data and reach data saturation, it needed to be changed to "employed instructional strategies." After this process of selective coding, I found that these four teachers, in an effort to foster meaning making, crafted environments, engendered relationships, chose and organized texts, employed instructional strategies, and modeled engagement.

Some of these categories were broken down even further.   Engendering relationships was broken into engendering teacher-student relationships, and engendering student-text relationships. Engendering teacher-student relationships was further broken down into using structural supports to engender teacher-student relationships, engendering non-transactional relationships, engendering empathetic relationships, engendering trusting relationships, and engendering relationships through feedback. Engendering student-text relationships was further broken down into changing students' reading practices and changing students' responses to texts. Changing students' reading practices was broken down into pace, preference, and persistence. Changing students' responses to text was broken down into three different types of responses:

personal, dependent, and dynamic. In the course of writing, sharing my writing, and receiving

feedback, I saw the necessity of using a model that focused not just on one reader in a classroom,

but on a teacher teaching many readers (Alvermann & Moje, 2013) and I developed the model in

figure 3 of the last chapter.   The codes ended up supporting much of what the research has

revealed about meaning making. However, the data in the following three chapters illuminate

what these practices look like in the real classrooms of highly regarded teachers.

The goal in understanding these practices of ELA teachers, and in answering the

proposed research question, is to illuminate the moves these teachers made, how they thought

about these moves, and how the combination of teacher beliefs, values, and epistemology led to

teacher practices. Thus, this study begins to reveal teacher practices that foster student meaning

making in high school English classes.

CHAPTER IV: Crafting Environments

Based on an analysis of my data, the four English teachers in my study engaged in the following five teaching moves in an effort to maximize student meaning-making: Crafting environments, engendering relationships, choosing texts, employing instructional strategies, and modeling engagement. These moves can be mapped onto the widely accepted literacy model of comprehension which occurs at the intersection of the reader, the text, and the activity (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Figure four provides a representation between these meaning-making teaching practices and the reader-text-activity-context dimensions of an individual reader's comprehension. Far more important, however, than the teaching moves themselves, is why and how these teachers thought about and made these moves. The ways that teachers engaged in the moves—and their reasoning for such engagement—is what distinguishes a teaching *move* from a teaching *practice*. This chapter, and the two that follow, will present a data-based account of how these teachers thought about and practiced these teaching moves. This chapter focuses on the first of these, which is "crafting environments."

Figure 4: Teacher Practices

Engendering Relationships

Crafting an Environment

Broader Context

Classroom Context

Reader

Activity

Text

Employing Instructional Strategies

Choosing Texts

Modeling Engagement
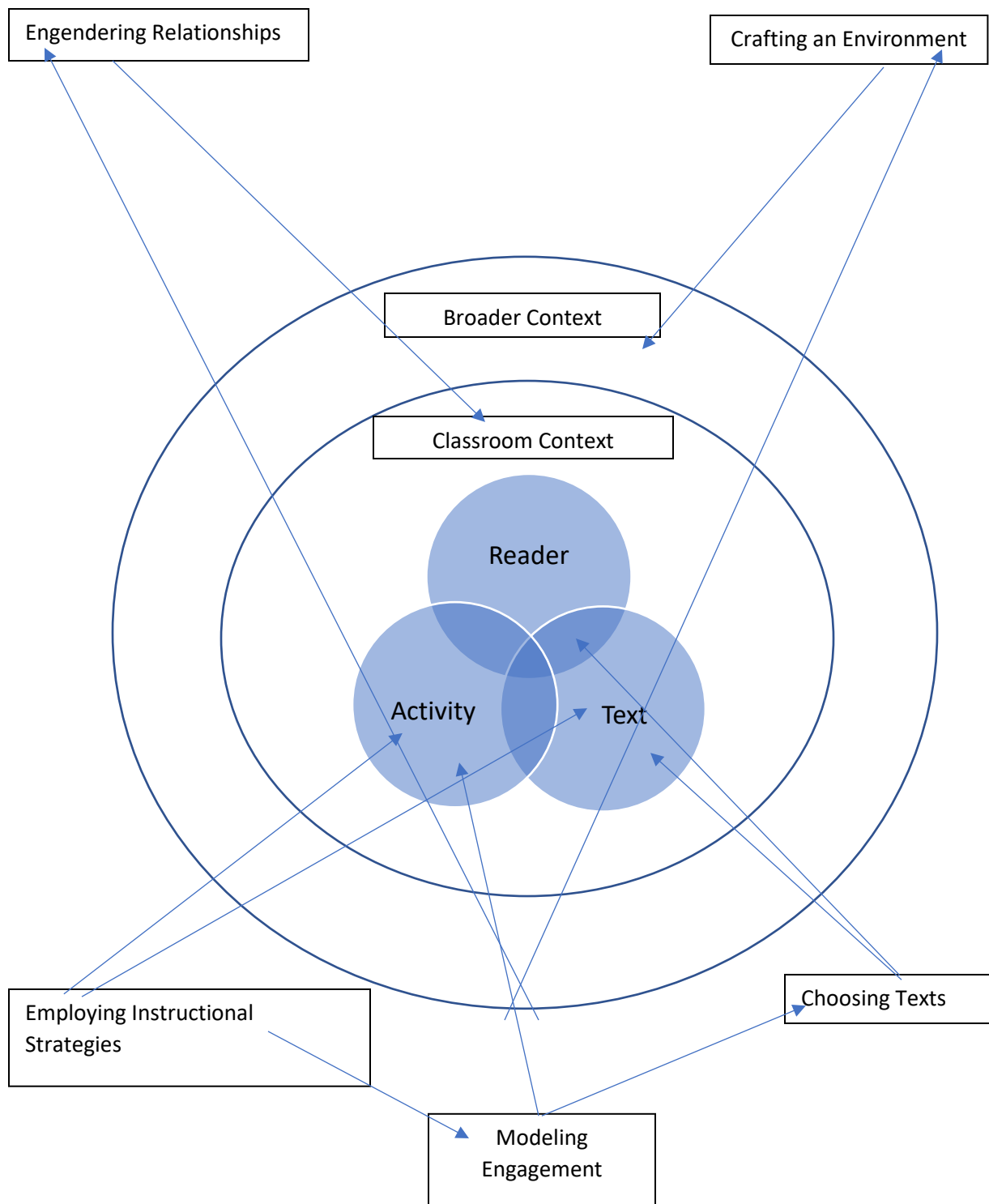
Crafting Environments

Meaning-making is a socially embedded process and, as such, can be encouraged or stymied in the context of the classroom. As illuminated in my Chapter 2 review of the literature, for meaning making to occur in the public space of a classroom, students need to be able to ask questions, test ideas, learn from the perspectives of others, and share their own perspectives. All four of these teachers sought to foster student meaning-making through attempting to craft environments where students felt some combination of safe, valued, and responsible so that students would feel safe enough to ask questions and take intellectual risks rather than feeling fearful of saying something incorrect. Teachers wanted students to feel that their voice and perspective were valued enough to participate in collective meaning making in class rather than feeling that they had nothing worthwhile to contribute. From the teachers' perspectives, students needed to feel responsible enough to follow their curiosity and make meaning individually rather than attempting to glean or guess the "right" answer. Overall, although each of the teachers I studied talked about crafting environments to create safe spaces where students felt valued and responsible, they did the work of crafting environments in different ways. They practiced these environmental attributes in particular combinations to encourage student meaning making. Due to the differences in how and why teachers crafted environments for their students, I have organized this section by individual teacher.

Kyle: Using Metacognitive Instruction and Discourse That Values Varying Perspectives

In the following data exemplar drawn from field notes, Kyle attempted to help students feel safe through his intentional use of language. During one of our interviews, he explained phrasing I had noticed during my observations,

It's ingrained in me now. I'll say, "What questions are there?" That's a simple thing, but those are the types of things I've gotten a lot better at. . .If I ask the question, "Does anyone have any questions?" the implication is if I ask a question as a student I might be seen as dumb. Instead, if I phase it as, "What questions are there?", there's an assumption that there can be questions, or it's okay, there should be questions here. I think part of it is using language to my advantage to make it normal to ask questions, making it normal to mess up, and wonder about things.

From Kyle's perspective, for meaning making to occur, students must feel safe enough to ask questions, to make assertions that are incorrect, to wonder about difficult passages, and to make attempts at meaning-making that do not bear fruit. Kyle's discourse move represents a subtle but powerful device for communicating to students that questions when discussing literature are more than acceptable; they are expected. This simple discourse move demonstrates a deep knowledge on Kyle's part about the power of communicative moves in building trusting relationships through the signaling of safe and accepting spaces and conversations. The move serves as an example of the difference between a deeply informed, and yet in-the-moment, teaching practice that encourages student talk, questioning, and meaning, and the kind of routinized "discussion strategy" rubric advocated in many teacher practice guides designed to improve reading comprehension.

Kyle also endeavored to craft an environment where students felt safe through gradually raising the stakes in class assignments. For example, during my observations, individual jotting down of notes and/or small group discussion almost always preceded whole-class discussion. When asked about this process after one of my observations, Kyle commented on the effectiveness of small group work as follows,

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I think that the great part is there isn't that pressure that can happen with a whole-class discussion, right? It's much more casual in terms of the conversations that are happening, so there is a little bit less intimidation put on to students that you have to have the right answer. You get to explore possible answers.

In a similar fashion, I observed Kyle preparing his students for a fishbowl-style conversation, where each student would have a turn in the fishbowl. Part of the preparation for the assignment included Kyle delivering the following remarks to his students, "Don't freak out if you're someone that doesn't like to speak out loud or participate." Kyle, at this stage, let students use notes as a way of giving them support and lowering the stakes. As Kyle attempted to raise student confidence, the stakes were then slowly raised in terms of both participating in larger discussions and in terms of assessment. For example, Kyle often had students in his class begin discussion on a topic with turning and talking to a partner, which progressed to small groups, which progressed to whole-class discussion. The assessments were likewise given in a way that slowly raised the stakes. The summative assessment for first semester was an individual text-based oral presentation. Formative assessments that are worth less in terms of a student's total grade, like the fishbowl discussion above and mini individual presentations that are similar in content but shorter in length, were given along with critical feedback from the teacher. Thus, Kyle attempted to build student confidence as the stakes were slowly raised. Overall, Kyle used multiple teacher moves in his practice of attempting to make his students feel safe in the classroom.

Kyle also worked to craft an environment where students felt valued. During one of our interviews, Kyle discussed how difficult this was to do with around 30 students in class. He stated,

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It can also happen in terms of writing, where they're developing themselves as

a thinker, as a reader, as a writer, and they're feeling that sense of empowerment.

I think part of that also comes from making a space in the classroom where students

can bring their voices and are valued, no matter what level they are at, and I think

that really takes some maneuvering as a teacher to really create a space where all

voices and all students are welcome. . .So it's this kind of constant back and forth

of showing students their ideas are valuable, and that the ideas that they come up with,

the things that they are talking about, that they came up with from their interaction

with the text, their direct interaction, is important and interesting. At the same time,

it adds to a larger conversation or discussion that their perspective is only one

perspective, and they're going to share a lot of things in common, too.

Kyle's remarks revealed the fact that teachers face a challenge: it may not be difficult to value

and honor one student's voice and perspective, but teachers have to value and honor the voice

and perspectives of 18-35 students. Given that student voices and perspectives may be in

conflict or tension, this is not easy work. So, Kyle had students do some of the work. Kyle

taught students about perspective with the hope that they would understand that multiple

perspectives could be heard, valued, and honored simultaneously. Students could potentially

look for similarities, and honor differences. Kyle began this work at the beginning of the year

through showing a TED talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie entitled, *The Danger of a Single

Story,* which extolls the benefits of seeing multiple perspectives and the dangers of seeing only a

single story.

The evidence that Kyle valued student voices was often available in my observations, and

the following are two exemplars I witnessed. As one student was commenting on an essay they

had read, Kyle said to him, "I like that you were talking really fast and you are excited about this!" This comment, although it was made in an effort to slow the student down so other students could better understand him, showed how much Kyle valued this student's perspective and enthusiasm. In slowing the student down, Kyle could have also dampened this student's excitement, but instead, Kyle slowed him down while also validating his perspective and emotion.

During another observation, Kyle was giving students directions for an assignment that included the following statements,

> Discuss the question using evidence from the text—words, phrases, sentences, claims, the structure, etc., and from your own personal experience—what you've read, what you've been taught at home and at school, what you've witnessed, observed, and wondered.

Kyle not only used comments to students in class to signal that he valued students' voices and perspectives, but he also designed assignments that revealed this fact. In assignment instructions, it was clear that Kyle wanted evidence from the text, but also valued students' personal experiences and home cultures. All readers bring their experiences, identities, and cultural context to bear on texts, but Kyle was explicit with students with the hope they would feel comfortable in doing so and could therefore take greater interest in and personalize the meaning-making process. Kyle's perspective on his practice was that as students get comfortable with sharing their personal experiences, identities, and cultures in class, they learn perspective-taking. From his point of view, class discussions that include different perspectives can be used in meaning making with texts. It is this belief that informed Kyle's practice of valuing all students' voices.

Kyle also crafted an environment where students were responsible for their own meaning making. At the beginning of every class, Kyle told students to quietly put away their phones and headphones. In this way, students were reminded daily that they were responsible for a distraction-free environment for themselves and for others. However, crafting an environment where students are responsible for their own meaning making is much more complex than just this particular move.

Kyle understood that the type of tools used to make meaning are dependent on the match between the text and the student. What works for one student will not work well for another, and what works for a student with one particular text, may not work with the next text. Consequently, Kyle gave students choices and the responsibility to use the tools that best suit the match between the student and the text. For example, when teaching students how to make annotations during one of my observations, Kyle presented students with a plethora of options including, summarizing, using symbols, color-coding, boxing literature terms, making predictions, identifying personal connections, using arrows to make connections within a text, identifying themes, motifs, and symbols, asking questions and then seeking answers in the text, making a list of characters, writing down the definitions of words, drawing pictures, making a plot map, and using brackets. After briefly discussing how each of these could be useful, Kyle told students, "Try some of these. See what works for you and the text." According to my field notes, Kyle taught students different ways of annotating a text, but then gave students the responsibility to figure out the best way to use annotation to make meaning of text. In this brief statement, he acknowledged that the process would be different for different combinations of students and texts. Kyle did not mandate the type of annotations students used. He did not mandate the number of annotations students must have. Students had complete responsibility for these

decisions, which positioned meaning making in the classroom as a process unique to the combination of student and text.

In Kyle's classroom students were not only responsible for the tools they used, but also more importantly for making meaning. Kyle did not tell students the meaning of texts. During an interview, Kyle explained his teaching moves in this way,

> It's really approached from an open way, so I'm not going to tell students what they should think about the critical passage in *Catcher in the Rye*. I'm going to let them uncover that, and I'm going to have them look for patterns in the text, look up words, think about what they are noticing. Really, we are going to come to the consensus that I want them to come to, right? Like, there is an end point of what I think they should get from that passage, but I'm not going to tell them it. I'm going to let them practice those skills of uncovering it and getting to that sort of conclusion.

Although this could be read as Kyle making students guess the answer he wants, this was not his intent. Instead, Kyle had faith in both his students' abilities and the process he lays out for them. Kyle believed that through looking closely at the text, through looking for and identifying patterns in the text, and through thinking about those patterns, students would be able to make personal and collective meaning of the text. It is this faith in his students and the process that informed his practice of giving students responsibility for making meaning.

This responsibility for making meaning was not all on the individual, however. There was both a personal and a collective responsibility for making meaning from texts. Kyle also stated,

I'm inviting all the students into a conversation and it's about all of us working

together, so it's very much a collectivist approach to inquiry and uncovering. So, I

think there is kind of lots of things that go along with that, but I think making a culture

of thinking requires that the teacher shifts that space from being one of, "I know

everything here, and I'm the authority here." to "We're going to work together here."

When students are given the responsibility for making meaning, they are encouraged to think

critically rather than memorize. They are encouraged to be vulnerable through making attempts

that are not always successful. They are encouraged to follow their personal curiosity and

interest rather than teacher directives. According to my field notes and observations, Kyle did

not give reading quizzes. Kyle did not give assignments that required the regurgitation of

information. Kyle did focus on the meaning-making process, and his summative assessments

had students demonstrate their ability to make meaning from text. This may not be how students

are used to functioning in a classroom, where reading quizzes, worksheets, and assessments that

call for some level of memorization are not uncommon. Consequently, Kyle sought to institute a

"culture of thinking" in his classroom to encourage meaning making rather than knowledge

gaining.

Kyle reported experiencing some student resistance to this type of teaching, where

students are given the responsibility for tool selection and making meaning. In one of our

interviews, Kyle discussed this resistance at length. He stated,

With their annotations, I scan through them and I skim through them, but I tell

them, "These are for you. You're going to use them." At the beginning, it's funny,

there's always a little resistance like, "Well, what should I be writing down?" and

like, "I don't know. What do you think is important to write down? What are you

thinking about? What are you noticing? What's your key? Are you going to come

up with a key for your annotations? What's that going to look like?" It's putting the

power back in their hands as opposed to the power in my hands, you know, handing

them a packet and saying, "You are going to fill this out. You have to answer these

correctly and I'm going to check for correct answers." That, to me, is so boring and it

takes away autonomy and choice for them. It's really detrimental to student thinking.

It tells them that to read a text is to look for all of these things that I'm telling you

that you should notice, and if you don't notice those things in the way I want you to,

you're incorrect.

Many students may be used to being told what to do, how many annotations to make, what type

of annotations to make, what the meaning of a passage is. Kyle believes this inhibits meaning

making. Yet, Kyle believes this can be overcome by placing the responsibility back into the

hands of students for making meaning.

When asked why some students find having responsibility and autonomy disconcerting,

Kyle responded,

Well, there's safety in it, right? What I notice is that the students that dislike it the most

are your kind of robotic, A plus, four point zero students. It's easy to fill out worksheets.

It's easy to sit there when you don't have to do much thinking, and you don't really

have to think for yourself. You don't have to come up with ideas that are interesting

or original. You can just fill this out. You sit there in class, and then you get an A. It

shouldn't be that way. . .Packets and things like that really cater to your top tier students

who have gotten used to the system of school. I guess I would put school in quotations

because that's a very old school way of thinking, right? It caters to your privileged

students and the students that have had access to lots and lots of resources, and they know how to play school. You know, I love changing that paradigm because it opens it up for all students. It does take some students a little bit of getting used to, but ultimately all students like it because they're actually developing skills. They actually get to engage. They have opinions and they can bring those to the discussion.

Kyle believes that giving students responsibility and autonomy can undercut the feeling of safety in the classroom for some students, and therefore Kyle uses other aforementioned ways of promoting students' feelings of safety in the classroom. Kyle's goal is for students to eventually feel safe even in what may be an initially disconcerting classroom environment. In addition, Kyle maintains that this type of teaching helps to form a more equitable classroom environment. When students are responsible for their own meaning making, they are free to use their own personal experiences, culture, and identity in the meaning-making process. In such a classroom environment, where such practices are encouraged and perspectives are shared, it is Kyle's hope that students are transformed from passive recipients of a teacher's knowledge and perspective, into makers of meaning, critical readers, and empathetic people.

Jacob: Opposing Compliance-based Schooling

Jacob at Sawmill also crafted a classroom environment with the goal of making students feel safe, valued, and responsible. When discussing his attempt to craft a safe environment in his classroom, Jacob stated that he wanted students to understand, "No one is going to punish you here. No one is going to hurt you." In many ways, Jacob wanted to create that type of environment so that students were free to try out ideas that may not be great, may not work, and may even be utter failures without fear of reprisal, as this is critical to making meaning. He stated, "If they have to fail in some respects, I want them to fail in a supportive environment and

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a free environment, rather than a potentially unsupportive environment where it costs them money [college]." Jacob's belief that taking intellectual risks, and sometimes failing were an integral part of meaning making, coupled with his belief that students' fear of punishment may stymie this process, informs his practice of creating a classroom context aimed at giving students a sense of safety.

Like Kyle, Jacob also attempted to foster student safety through giving students low-stakes practice before higher stakes assessments. Before students engaged in their first Harkness discussion, I observed Jacob telling his students,

> This is a completely low-stakes environment. This is a process grade. It is not a mastery grade. But I think working on your ideas here, not just in terms of what I just said about participation, but also in terms of thinking of this as pre-writing for mastery assignments, an opportunity to try out some ideas. Like the Commonplace books, this is a little bit of sandbox time. We can kind of just play with ideas and see where they go.

In this environment, students were encouraged to try ideas, "just to see where they go." These student ideas may be utterly fantastic and may also be dismal failures. They may connect with other students and texts, or they may be idiosyncratic and bizarre. However, the quality of the ideas is not the point in this low-stakes assignment. Rather, the point is that this is an important part of the meaning-making process and for students to engage in this process authentically they have to feel safe enough to try out bad ideas and fail.

Jacob crafted a classroom environment aimed at valuing student voices. In discussing his work in this area, Jacob first told me about reading and commenting on student writing in the following remarks,

At the start of this class, you get a lot of like, "You told me that the thing needs to be 750 words." "If it's 500 words, if it's 5,000 words, whatever it takes to make your point, I'm going to read what you write." They were like, "You're going to read what I write?" "Yeah, I'm going to read what you write. So, have at it. I mean, it's got to be what works for you."

Jacob reported giving feedback on every piece of student writing that he received (which is discussed in the next section). His openness to read and comment on every student attempt at meaning making showed how much he valued students and their voices. Jacob was not interested in students being compliant with any sort of classroom rules for meaning making. He was extremely interested in crafting an atmosphere where student meaning making was encouraged because student voices were valued.

Jacob also used two particular participation structures that, among other things, showed he valued students' voices, and encouraged students to value the voices of each other.

I've tried to create assessment structures and structures in class where even though you have taken what you have needed, you can still participate in this community. . . This idea that everybody's going to be at the same place, at the same time, with the same interests, with the same understanding is not how reading works. So, I'm trying to create an openness where kids can take what they want and what they need and do something with it.

One such structure Jacob used is the Harkness discussion, which was a student-led discussion about texts. The instructions for this assignment read,

Collectively, our work is to make meaning of new, complex works together through critical conversation, reflexive questioning, and imaginative, dialogic connection making that embeds us all as mediators in a grander cultural conversation. In this, Harkness Discussions are student-led, student centered dialogues about texts and their attendant concepts, frameworks, and meanings; these discussions can move in any number of productive directions, allowing you, the class, to talk about what you find interesting, strange, revealing, and problematic about our topics of study. Harkness Discussions also put students' sociopolitical realities at the forefront of the class. Sometimes students not used to collective learning struggle either to find their voice, or to let other voices in, but these learners often find success with continued practice and consistent reminders that there are no "right" answers—our interpretations of readings and our lived experiences can be valid even when they are dissimilar—and that this is not a competition or a stage. It is a laboratory for learning.

Jacob used this participation structure and its instructions to communicate to students that he valued students' thinking and voices. In the instructions, meaning making is characterized as "our work." Students are positioned as "mediators in a grander cultural conversation." Students are given license "to talk about what you find interesting, strange, revealing, and problematic." Valuing student voices and encouraging students to use those voices to make collective and personal meaning in text-based discussions is part of Jacob's work in fostering meaning making. In addition, these instructions also attempted to teach students to value the voices of each other. For Jacob, if the teacher is the only person in a collective learning classroom who values student voices, students' meaning-making processes will be shut down by other students. Jacob attempted to craft an environment that facilitated both individual and collective meaning making,

where students could find their voice through personal meaning making, but also learn from the perspectives of others.

Teaching students to value other students' voices is not always an easy task, but one that Jacob used another structure, The Socratic Seminar, in combination with the Harkness Discussion, to accomplish. Although the Harkness Discussion was student led, the Socratic Seminar consisted of Jacob leading a discussion by asking students a series of related questions. Jacob called on students at random and did not take volunteers. Consequently, students were encouraged to listen to what each student had to say, because they might be called on next to build on a student's previous comments. When talking about this participation structure, Jacob told me,

> There are kids in the Socratic seminar who are ready to explode because they can't talk,
> and they have to listen. And the reason they have to listen is because they might be next,
> and they don't know what's coming. But they really want to talk, and they are so used
> to talking that they can't stop. White males tend to have the most trouble because they
> are ready to talk and 'cause they're always heard, and they are centered. So, centering
> someone else is a little bit of a hard move for them in some ways.

Because Jacob wanted to craft an environment where learning is collective and student voices are valued, it was essential to teach students to value the voices of other students. His practice was guided by his commitments to equity and justice. Yet, this is difficult as majority voices are centered, and marginalized voices are de-centered. To counter this typical classroom reality, Jacob taught centered students to listen to ideas and perspectives that may have been foreign to them. This move was meant to be beneficial for all students. From Jacob's perspective, students who were normally marginalized had an opportunity in this environment to find their voice, use

their voice, and have their voice valued. Likewise, students who were not normally marginalized would have the opportunity to learn from others they had previously not heard or valued, whether or not this was a conscious or unconscious decision. In some contexts, this move to silence students who want to talk would be an authoritarian move. However, in this particular environment which Jacob had crafted, this move was intended to advance student equity.

Jacob also crafted an environment where students were responsible for their own meaning making. Like Kyle, Jacob presented meaning making tools to students and gave them the choice of whether or not to use them. For example, during one of my observations Jacob presented three questions to students before viewing a text and told students to use them if they were helpful in making sense of the text. Jacob's primary manner of crafting an environment where students are responsible for making their own meaning, however, was in transferring authority from himself to his students. He described classrooms where the authority rested fully in the hands of the teacher as "compliance based." In making a distinction between compliance-based classrooms and his own, Jacob stated,

> They [students] don't see those compliance-based mechanisms because they don't exist
> here, and so that really helps free them to make meaning. So, they don't feel constrained
> by a bubble sheet or a study guide, whatever the case may be. Then, I think it really is
> intentional to do it at the beginning so that in the second trimester, it's almost like you
> don't even need me. That's the goal of my course—to make myself as scarce as possible,
> because again, when you yell for authority all the time and that's your default move, what
> happens when the authority doesn't come or you can't get what you need? It's usually
> pretty bad. I want to give them that agency; I want them to try that out.

It is important to note here that Jacob did admit that he still retains some authority given his content knowledge. However, he tried to quickly pull away his authority in regard to making meaning for students by transferring this authority and responsibility from himself to students. In furtherance of this goal, Jacob gave students open-ended questions or heuristics. In discussing these and their impact, Jacob explained,

> They are very much like, what do you agree with? What do you disagree with? What do you want to problematize? How can you connect it?. . .It's more about how am I facilitating what you know into these readings and how are we making those connections and how are you able to approach this not with, "How do I please the teacher?" or "How do I read for the assessment?" but "How do I make meaning from this thing that's pretty complicated?"

Like Kyle, in furtherance of the goal of a classroom environment that promotes student responsibility, Jacob encouraged students to be responsible for making their own meaning. However, this entailed creating assessments that did not undercut this ideal. Assessments in Jacob's room did not involve regurgitation of facts and details, but instead asked students to use facts and quotes from the texts to make connections to themselves, other people, other texts, and the world at large. There was a balance in Jacob's classroom of freedom and responsibility. Assignments and assessments were designed so that students had the responsibility to make meaning, but the freedom to do that in almost infinite ways. Jacob's belief that compliance-based schooling that forced memorization, recall, and guessing the teacher's preferred responses was detrimental to student meaning making led to his practice of opposing compliance-based schooling through attempting to craft an environment where students felt safe, valued, and responsible.

Kirsten: Teaching in a Disciplinary and Responsive Manner

Kirsten at Briarwood also crafted a classroom environment through promoting student safety, valuing students' voices, and giving students responsibility for their own meaning making. Kirsten attempted to give students a feeling of safety in much the same ways as Kyle and Jacob. She used intentional language, like Kyle, to promote the idea that questions about the text were expected, and no one should feel deficient for having a question. In observations, I noticed that she used the exact phrasing Kyle used, "What questions do you have about the text?"

Kirsten, like Kyle and Jacob, used low stakes practice to encourage students to try out new ideas. During a discussion I observed, after asking a question, Kirsten waited a few seconds and then commented, "You can be broad. You can have a hunch. You can try out an idea. No judging." This is a representative comment made during discussions in her classroom. In addition to this, I also observed her state, while trying out ideas of her own, "I don't really know what I'm doing." Taken together, these statements communicate to students that it is fine to try out new ideas in class and that it is okay to try to make connections that may not work. This is how meaning is made. Even Kirsten, who has a PhD in English Literature, tried out new ideas in class that might not have worked. Kirsten's show of vulnerability when attempting to make authentic connections to and among texts in class, combined with her confidence in presenting disciplinary techniques was an attempt to show students that even with high level academic work, intellectual risk-taking and failure are part of making meaning.

One of the things that Kirsten employed to attempt to give her students a sense of safety was thinking routines, often "What do you see? What do you think? What do you wonder" or

some variation of this particular routine. This thinking routine was also evident in the

classrooms of Jacob and Kyle, but only Kirsten explicitly tied it to students' safety. She stated,

> It [the thinking routine] is providing a structure that slows down the process of thinking,
>
> and then ultimately encourages risk-taking. If kids have a structure for the process, then
>
> it gets them to the place where they will say more interesting things that might be rolling
>
> around in the back of their head that they might be sort of afraid to say in a sort of more
>
> loosely structured kind of small group setting or full class discussion.

From Kirsten's perspective, slowing down the process of meaning-making, rather than

immediately going to interpretation and analysis, may build a level of safety for students that

encourages them to take intellectual risks in the process of seeing, thinking, and wondering about

text rather than being fearful of not being able to demonstrate the "correct" interpretation of a

text.

> Kirsten also valued student voices in her classroom. Like Jacob, she taught her students

to do the same. She told me,

> I've been shifting away from a kind of individual relationship to learning, knowledge,
>
> understanding, and more towards the collective relationship. I talk with students about
>
> this during the beginning of the year, and it's one of the reasons why I like small group
>
> work. I think education trains us to be the next person to say the next smart thing, and
>
> get validated by the teacher, right? That's just the way it works in almost every
>
> discipline. I think with English, it is sort of about empathy. I want them listening to
>
> each other, so I talk about listening as a part of learning.

From Kirsten's perspective, learning to listen is an important part of disciplinary meaning-making. Listening, and learning empathy, can help students take different perspectives, receive new information, and better understand unfamiliar characters and contexts in literature, skills which are necessary to do the meaning-making work of the discipline.

Kirsten also personally valued student voices. This is seen in ways similar to Kyle and Jacob, such as validating student comments in class, and reading and commenting on all student work. However, Kirsten also had a unique manner of validating all student voices in her class. She explicitly made comments, which were seemingly influenced by her reading of Louise Rosenblatt and the conception of meaning making that suggests everyone has a unique reading experience, and every person's reading experience is valid. For example, in this field note I took while observing one of Kirsten's class discussions, Kirsten commented, "That's Michael's experience of reading. That may not be your experience of reading and that's okay." In making this comment, Kirsten valued not only student voice, but also student identities. She was explicit about readers bringing their entire beings, including their identities, experiences, and knowledge to texts. Even with just a brief comment, Kirsten showed she valued not just student voices, but also students themselves and all they bring to bear on a meaning-making experience with texts.

Perhaps the most prominent way that Kirsten valued student voices was through being flexible and responsive as a teacher. Kirsten was flexible in implementing her lesson plans so that she could be responsive to the students. While discussing planning, Kirsten stated,

> You don't need everything (planned) down to the minute. It limits the some of the cool and spontaneous interactions you can have with kids if you're like, "Well, we are on minute 15, and we really need to be here in the lesson". What are you going to miss?

They (students) might take you in a direction that could be really interesting, or be more

fruitful for them, or at least make them feel more engaged.

Despite planning carefully ahead of time, Kirsten's willingness to abandon her well-thought-out

lesson plans in an effort to engage with student questions, student problems, and student interest

revealed how much she values student voices.   Through this, unplanned for meaning-making

events could occur for the students as they discussed portions of texts they found interesting,

strange, revealing, problematic, or personally meaningful.

Kirsten not only attempted to be responsive to students who were participating in her

classroom, but she was also responsive to students that were not participating. After one of my

class observations, Kirsten explained her perspective of a discussion on the novel, *The Great*

Gatsby.

When we were puzzling through when we knew Gatsby was dead, a group of people

seemed not to be sure. But Wayne knew. I could tell. I had my eye on him. He was

bored in that moment, which is one of the reasons that I wanted to figure out how I could

pull him back into the discussion at a later point. He reads all the time, and he's written a

novel. Wayne is on another level. But I need to, again, not teach only Wayne. What I

have to figure out is, how to figure out how to answer these questions that are sort of

comprehension questions, and then pull Wayne in at another point, where he can

contribute to a larger discussion about something else that is going on in the novel.

Kirsten's statement points to a dilemma encountered by all teachers seeking to foster meaning

making. How do you foster meaning making with a large number of students, all of whom have

different skill levels, interests, and obstacles to making meaning? Kirsten's flexibility,

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knowledge of students, and watchfulness allowed her to value voices that were not always evident in class, and to bring them to the fore. This shapes the classroom environment as students have access to a greater number of voices, perspectives, and critiques of text with which to engage in their personal meaning-making process.

Like Kyle and Jacob, Kirsten gave students responsibility for their own meaning making. During one of my observations, she explicitly asked students to not use google, schmoop, Wikipedia, or any other sites or search engines to look up information on the novel they were studying, so that they could make meaning of the novel themselves and not simply regurgitate information, themes, or motifs found on the internet. From Kirsten's perspective, doing so would be shirking their responsibility to make meaning from the text.

In addition, Kirsten often modeled responsibility for the students. Kirsten modeled both the correct atmosphere for reading, and also taking personal interest in reading. Kirsten told me,

> I want students present in the story. I don't want them texting their friends after a certain number of pages. I don't want them multi-tasking. I don't want them doing their reading in a way that is interrupted or intermittent because that is the thing that forestalls comprehension. That's when you get kids coming in like, "Who's Nick again?" or like, "What's the difference between Daisy and Jordan?". . .So , on our first reading day, we'll spend 15 minutes talking about motif, and then I'm going to ask them how their reading went at home. Then, I'm going to talk about the conditions you can create for yourself to create a stronger reading experience, and we'll create those in the classroom too. Hopefully that will serve as a model for avoiding multi-tasking at home.

Kirsten's belief that meaning making is optimized through sustained engagement with the text shaped the manner in which Kirsten crafted her classroom environment at certain times. Kirsten made sure her classroom served as a model for effective reading, in that it was quiet, there were no cell-phones, computers, or headphones, and students were given a sustained amount of time to just read silently. However, it was the students' responsibility to recreate a similar environment at home. It should be noted that not all kids, due to poverty, homelessness, cramped living quarters, etc., have the privilege of controlling their own reading environment. However, given the context in which Kirsten was teaching, most students would have been able to recreate the reading environment modeled in the classroom if they chose to do so.

During one of my observations, I also saw Kirsten model meaning-making for students in a way that shifted responsibility onto the students. As students were discussing *The Great Gatsby,* Kirsten talked about a word she had found repeated in the text that she had become obsessed with. One of her students asked, "Should we be obsessed with that word, too?" and Kirsten responded, "You should find your own word to be obsessed with!" Kirsten modeled one of the ways that she was making meaning from the text, through finding a repeated word and asking questions about why it was repeated and how it was used, but gave the student the responsibility to find his own word and make his own meaning.

Although in many ways Kirsten engaged in the same or similar practices as Jacob and Kyle, she did less work crafting environments than the other two. This may have to do with her context. The students in the school may have felt safe and valued as a result of their privilege as tuition-paying private school students. They may have felt safe and valued because they had been in the school context for several years, and the schools works as a whole to build a sense of student value. They may have taken responsibility for their own learning because of the pressure

they felt as tuition-paying students. And some may not have felt as safe and secure, but Kirsten attempted to help them feel that way within her classroom context. So, while Kirsten may not have done the work of crafting a classroom environment to the extent of the other two, she may have had less work to do due to her school context. Overall, Kirsten's educational background and beliefs that empathy, perspective taking and intellectual risk taking are critical for student meaning making informed her disciplinary and responsive teaching practice.

Carl: Teaching for Success

In his freshman *Introduction to Literature* class, Carl's work in crafting environments stood in stark contrast to the other three teachers. This was the result of his focusing on helping students achieve success as defined by SAT and other standardized test scores, rather than focusing on making meaning from texts. To help students achieve success on these tests, Carl began to use classroom assessments that mimicked these tests. For example, while preparing his Grade 9 students for a test on *Beowulf,* Carl told his students,

> The *Beowulf* test actually has an article on it. In my classes now, I'm trying to mimic
> the new SAT, which is pretty good. So, in addition to asking you about *Beowulf* and the
> other Icelandic sagas and the vocab I gave you the other day, I'm going to give you
> a *National Geographic* article all about Vikings and your task on the test is to read that
> text and then answer questions about that text. Some of the questions are sort of right
> there. You just have to find the line with the info in it. Others are what I would call
> deep thought or inference questions. You have to put it together in a reasonable answer.

Carl's ultimate goal in this class was to prepare students for future standardized tests. However, he also felt that the test was a good measure of understanding texts at multiple levels. Practicing

reading in the classroom entailed reading stories and then answering questions that ask for the regurgitation of facts and inferences using those facts. Although meaning-making was not the focus, this strategy did not preclude meaning-making.

Although for Carl testing was a proxy for meaning making, Carl also gave students a choice reading assignment every semester and time to read their book of choice during class. Before one of these silent reading sessions, Carl told his class,

> I hope you're loving your choice reading book. I want to sheepishly admit something to you. You know how I was supposed to be in back reading Karl Knausgard's six. . . he's got six books. . .what is it? It's a six-volume memoir. He's kind of hot stuff right now, traveling the world. He's probably going to win a Nobel Prize. . . I got bored with it. I mean it was pretty good writing and I liked it and I can kind of stick with just about any book that I. . .and especially if I am doing it for a class, if it really matters. But I was kind of doing it for me and I got bored. . .I was sabotaging my reading and I kind of called myself out on it and I retreated to a fantasy adventure, which has been awesome. There's lots of sword action. Knights. Wonderful. So, I am saying this because I'm recommending that you do this if you're. . . still only at the beginning, and only reading here when we do this, I think you need to cut bait and move to a new fishing spot. That is, find a new, different book. It doesn't necessarily have to be easier, per se; it's got to be high interest.

Although Carl prepared students for standardized test, he also wanted his students to read for pleasure. Carl saw the world quite dichotomously, divided into reading for school (where you have to force yourself to plod through) and reading for joy (where you are engaged and excited). Carl made himself quite vulnerable in this moment and encouraged his students to see that there

is more to literature than the game he is teaching them to play by drilling them on the SAT. For Carl, reading could be driven by personal interests and curiosity and filled with pleasure and joy, and he balanced his focus on finding the conventional meaning of a text with exhortations to students to make meaning. In his typical fashion, however, Carl told the students about his meaning making, rather than inviting them to share interests and passions or to talk about the books they were reading. Implicitly, Carl was teaching his students to make meaning in two different ways, but his methods remained nonetheless teacher-driven.

Carl's *Fantasy Literature* class, as opposed to his *Introduction to Literature* class, was not compliance based. Testing was never mentioned in the two weeks I observed this class. Instead, students read assigned fantasy novels silently, and worked in groups to create their own fantasy worlds, which they then presented to the class over the course of a few days. The written instructions for the assignment stated,

> In a group, collaboratively create a fantasy world that is fully realized in terms of
> its history, geography, creatures, populations, cultures, magical properties, etc.
> Your project should include the following:
>
> - A map or similar representation of your world
>
> - An overview of the world
>
> - At least two separate textual artifacts from this world (these might be written
>   Histories, spells, curses, prophecies, encyclopedia entries, genealogies, etc.)
>
> - A physical artifact (this could be a costume, a staff, a game, a magic box, etc.)
>
> - An active presentation to the class that involves each of your group members
>   In some way

Clearly, due to the time spent in the classroom on this project and presentations, Carl valued his students thinking and creativity and felt that they could engage in similar work as fantasy authors. Students were engaged in this process while reading their fantasy novels, and so this work could potentially help students make meaning as they compared their world to the author's world in terms of many factors including history, geography, and culture.

The data may suggest that Carl has a developmental ideology, where freshman need foundational information and skills that they can then use to make meaning in future upper level English classes. My field notes show that in his *Introduction to Literature* class, there were lessons on grammar usage, disciplinary terms such as hyperbole, alliteration, and assonance, and descriptions of the genre features of different types of literature. During my observations, there were no discussions in this class and the I-R-E pattern was followed. However, in *Fantasy Literature*, these features were absent, and during my entire time of observation, students were either working in groups on their projects or reading silently.

The differences between the environment crafted by Carl and the environments crafted by the other three teachers reveal a difference in how each of these teachers showed their care for their students. Carl believed that in his *Introduction to Literature* class, students needed information from the teacher, test preparation for upcoming standardized tests, and practice making text-based arguments. Carl was providing a foundation that he believed was necessary for the meaning-making that would occur in future high school and college English classes. However, in addition to this, Carl also strove to let his students see reading as interesting and joyful.

Overall, in somewhat different ways, these four teachers crafted classroom environments where students felt safe, valued, and responsible. However, this looked different in the four

different classrooms. Teacher beliefs about students' meaning-making process informed the

practices of these teachers. How teachers felt about the role of questions, taking intellectual

risks, perspective taking, and empathy in meaning making changed the moves of teachers. In

addition, these teachers sought to strike a different balance in collective versus individual

meaning making, freedom and authority, and teacher authority versus student authority.

CHAPTER V: Engendering Relationships

Crafting environments and engendering relationships are intimately related. The environment crafted impacts the relationships engendered and vice versa. In some instances, it was difficult work figuring out under which category to place the data. However, the bulk of the data I collected reveals that this work is distinct and warrants examining these categories separately.

This study does not examine student outcomes. Consequently, it does not make any claims about the impact of engendering relationships on student meaning making. However, as I observed and interviewed these four teachers, how they thought about the relationship between engendering relationships and making meaning, and how their thinking informed their teaching moves was revealed and is reported and analyzed in this chapter.

Engendering teacher-student relationships. For meaning-making to occur, students must be willing to engage in the meaning-making process. In the four classrooms I studied, this meaning-making process may have been foreign and therefore difficult for students at the beginning of the school year. Yet, these teachers trusted that their students could engage and make meaning if their students learned to trust the teachers and their processes. These four teachers considered relationship building an important part of the meaning-making process.

In an interview in May 2018 Carl stated, "You can't get to comprehension until they trust you." This statement is a concise representation of how all four teachers felt about the

importance of trust in helping students to make-meaning from works of fiction. To do this trust-building work, the teachers engaged in some combination of the following five moves:

1   Engendering relationships using structural supports

2   Engendering non-transactional relationships

3   Engendering empathetic relationships

4   Engendering trusting relationships

5   Engendering relationships using feedback

Using structural supports to engender teacher-student relationships. In the work of engendering relationships with students, existing school culture and goals provided structural supports for two of the teachers. On Casey High School's web page, under the heading, "What makes Casey High School unique", the following is listed: "Forum—we talk about your class schedules and what courses to take, eat together, take trips, spend time talking about life, give back to our community, and graduate together." In addition, in an effort to engender teacher-student relationships, the students refer to teachers by their first names throughout the school. As part of this school wide work, Carl, the teacher I observed at this school, took his forum group on an overnight camping trip with the goal of building student-to-student and teacher-student relationships.

At Briarwood, Kirsten was able to have office hours that the students were able to attend. During these office hours, Kirsten got to know her students, and individualized instruction. During my time of observation, Kirsten was using this time to assist some students with selecting novels to read, based on Kirsten's knowledge of students and their interests. During class, she stated, "I have read most of the books on this list. If you are having problems picking a novel,

come to my office and I can make suggestions based on what I know about you and your interests."

The structures of both of these schools support their teachers in engendering relationships through providing time and space for students and teachers to interact outside of the classroom. Indeed, it was simply assumed that teachers were there to connect with and serve students. The name of the one of the schools actually suggests the idea of a collective, suggesting it was formed with the concept of working together to learn. These taken-for-granteds and their resulting interactions supported teachers in their attempts at building student-teacher relationships. However, the work of engendering relationships was not confined to these two schools. Rather, all four teachers engaged in the practice of engendering teacher-student-relationships within their particular contexts; Jacob and Kyle simply had to do the work more explicitly and could not assume that everyone came to the space with the sense of trust and community. Their schools were much larger than the other two schools and admitted a greater range of students and student experiences. They could not assume that their students felt safe in school; they could not assume that their students would take learning risks in school. And nor could they assume that students knew how to trust teachers or had had positive experiences with teachers in the past. Thus, they paved the way to meaning-making through the work of engendering relationships.

Engendering non-transactional relationships. All four teachers attempted to engender non-transactional relationships with students. Jacob at Sawmill High School explained these types of relationships as follows:

It means treating students as human beings first. I was talking to my students about transactional relationships and how crappy it can feel like when relationships feel like,

I'm using you and you're using me. I asked them, "What if I told you all, you're just my evaluation data, and then you're off?" They were like, "Oh, that would suck." And then I was like, "Yeah, that doesn't feel very good." And so it got down to this kind of conversation like, "Listen, I don't care what's in Power School (online gradebook) for you. I care about you. I want you to succeed, whether you have a 52% in this class or a 92%. Your value is not intrinsically related to how you're doing here or whether you like me."

Jacob made it clear to his students that he cares for them as people, regardless of their performance as students. This is part of what Jacob terms "relational work" that he considers critical for the work of student meaning making in the classroom.

Although Kirsten and Kyle did not use the same language as Jacob, they also attempted to engender non-transactional relationships. Kirsten stated, "I love knowing everything about the kids. I love seeing them interact with each other. I love knowing what extracurriculars they are involved in. I love knowing their families. I like it when I get siblings a couple of years later. I just love the relationships and the connectedness." Her knowledge of students goes beyond her class and students' reading and writing interest. It extends to extracurriculars and family. She even invited family members to participate in students' "choice" reading assignment at the end of the school year because she knew that many of the family members loved to read and she hoped it would inspire family conversations around text. Nothing in her comments tied her relationships with students to their performance. She tries to build non-transactional relationships with the students and their families.

Kirsten also developed long-term relationships with her students, which is facilitated by the small school size. When talking about what she wanted for her students, she said,

What I want for them is to be compassionate and empathetic, and have rich intellectual

lives, and social lives that are interesting and exciting. I like to think about them at the

age of 28. Now I am to the point where this is my eleventh-year teaching here and I've

got 28-year-olds coming back and talking to me, which is awesome! I can hear about

their lives, and that's really cool. That's the nice thing about this small environment and

small community. We do have students come back and visit all the time and it's just

lovely.

Kirsten was the only one of the four teachers to espouse the goal of developing long-term

relationships with her students. These relationships, and the willingness of at least some of her

students to come back and visit, are evidence of Kirsten engendering non-transactional

relationships with her students. Kirsten invested personal time engendering relationships with

students even after they have graduated.

Kyle sought to engender non-transactional relationships through modeling these types of

relationships himself. He stated,

We were watching a film and I made popcorn for them, right? So it can be these

humanizing elements too. Like, I made popcorn for you all. I'm a person, right?

It's a nice thing to do for people. But at the same time, we're going to watch this film

and you still have to take notes on it, and you're going to be ready for this discussion

next Tuesday, where I expect you to use direct evidence from the text, right? So it's

kind of coupling these things like, let me model what it means to be a nice human, and a

nice person, but also you have to do all these things. So, like, in creative writing I bring

apples on Fridays and I cut them up for them. It feels very juvenile in some ways, but it's

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like, we're working on our writing and so now I'm meeting with you all, trying to model

those little things all the time with students.

Apples and popcorn are not handed out as rewards for grades or behavior. Kyle served all of his

students and treated them all as humans first, and students second.

Carl also attempted to engender non-transactional relationships. As mentioned

previously, Carl used the structural supports in his context. However, Carl went above and

beyond what other teachers did in a few instances. For example, each advisory class teacher was

expected to do something outside of school with their advisory class as a way to build

relationships with students. Many teachers had a bonfire, picnic, or other similar activity. Carl

took his students on an overnight camping trip. This took much more time and effort. Yet, Carl

took the time and effort to try to build relationships with these students, although he did not have

all of them in the context of his English classes. The sole goal was building relationships.

One other way Carl attempted to build non-transactional relationships with students was

through being vulnerable and sharing his life with them. According to my field notes, in his

Fantasy Literature class, Carl brought in a model of an elven city that he had crafted for playing

the game *Dungeons and Dragons* with his nephews. This vulnerability and willingness to share

his life with students (also seen in the last chapter as Carl discussed his personal reading habits)

was done not as a reward and was not done with only some students. It was non-transactional

and characterized the way he attempted to engender relationships.

Using Jacob's description of non-transactional relationships, all four teachers in this

study sought to engender non-transactional relationships with students in ways that echoed

Jacob's description. This aspect of the relationships had nothing to do with texts, grades, or

student behavior. Although my data does not show a clear tie between student meaning making and engendering non-transactional relationships with students, it is clear that all four of these teachers, who had excellent reputations for fostering student meaning-making, attempted to engender these types of relationships.

Engendering empathetic relationships. Although not confined to teacher-student relationships exclusively, two of the teachers explicitly stated their desire to increase empathy in their classrooms. While discussing having his students watch the film *Paris is Burning,* Jacob stated,

> It is a weird experience to watch them (students) watch it, but also watch themselves at the same time and go, "How does this mean for me?" One of the questions we asked as they were trying to make meaning was, "What are the political implications as you are looking at this? What is your gaze when you look at someone or something?" Because it's not neutral. Even for people who are not in the dominant culture, they tend to look at things through dominant culture lenses because that is what is available to them. So we talked about bell hooks and developing a positional gaze, a different perspective that allows us to encounter things in an empathetic way. I have kids that are still like, "I can't get there on it. I'm struggling to get there."

Although this is not explicitly focused on teacher-student relationships, empathy has the potential to change teacher-student relationships, student-student relationships, and meaning making through students seeking to understand people in class and characters in works of fiction.

Kirsten's thinking about the tie between promoting empathy and student-teacher relationships was much more explicit. During one of our interviews, she said

We're here to use literature as a way to have students think empathetically about the world, and so if I am not empathetic to what they bring to a text, then how can I expect them to walk away feeling empathy for the characters, or for other people they may encounter in their lives like the ones they've read about.

For Kirsten, part of engendering relationships with students is both teaching empathy and exercising empathy. These empathetic relationships can then be used to guide instruction and to present viewpoints students may have been hitherto unaware of, which can then be used in the meaning-making process. For Kirsten, empathy towards each other in the classroom and empathy towards characters in pieces of fiction are necessary to make meaning in a classroom setting.

In one particular observation, Kirsten was asking students about a sample A.P. test they had taken for homework. She asked students, "How did it feel to do an argument analysis of someone else's writing and also in that 40-minute compressed time slot?" Although Kirsten provides feedback to students and works to help students improve the quality of their answers, she also understands that testing can be stressful for students and she seeks to understand how tests and practice tests make students feel. Her words to her students exhibit empathy and model the type of empathetic relationships she seeks to develop with her students, and that she wishes her students to have with others.

Engendering trusting relationships. In interviews, two of the four teachers posited that gaining and maintaining student trust is critical for student meaning-making. Carl at Casey High School stated, "You can't get to comprehension until they trust you." This explicitly ties the work of engendering student-teacher relationships with the work of making meaning with texts. Carl views the work of building trust as essential to making meaning. Perhaps his view has been

colored by years of working at this particular school. When asked how he built trust, Carl replied,

> I mean it [the school] is really good at trust building. So, a lot of the trust-building activities that we might do in my room are actually done at other sites and other times in the school. Have you seen Forum happen ever? It's like a little home room, except it's very intense and it's a little like camp. It's somewhat orderly, but it looks like camp. They're eating. They're all talking at the same time. The orderly, respectful rules of the school are not followed during Forum. It's loud and boisterous and chaotic-looking, but it's time to be together as human beings, and it's a lot of gas in the trust tank. What's great about Casey High School is that stuff takes care of itself outside of class. The kids, their guardedness is just low in my room. It's not some magic I'm doing. It's like it's coming out of the walls because it's what we have imposed. It's what we're really good at. If I didn't work at Casey, I would have to do trust building activities to lower the guardedness. You know, I'm sure you have seen kids elsewhere. There's the backpack and the coat on, and they're just super guarded because school is an unsafe place. The vibe at Casey is it's a very safe place and gosh that goes far.

It's not just that Carl buys into the philosophy of the school where he is teaching. Carl does the work of trust building in Forum, rather than in his English classrooms and he recognizes the similar work other teachers are doing to impact school climate and culture. Carl has a firm belief that through this work, comprehension is made possible. This informs his practice of taking his Forum class on an overnight camping trip every year. It is a huge amount of work. However, Carl is the head of the English department at his school and believes that this trust-building work will pay off for his entire department.

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Although I did not observe Forum, during one of my observations of his English classes I was able to see one of the Forum activities on the board. Students in his Forum class were supposed to relay to the class the following personal information: A favorite period of time, your favorite gift, a place that is special to you, earliest memory of a holiday in your family, and what makes your family different? Through sharing and listening to such personal details, students were sharing their humanity, being vulnerable, and hopefully building trust in each other and in the teacher, who also shared these personal topics with his Forum students.

Jacob made a comment that echoed Carl's ("You can't get to comprehension until they trust you.") but elaborated on his view in this interview excerpt:

> One of the things that is a constant is that without the relationship component, you're not going to get them to do the work. Over time, I think there is a lot of trust that gets built up. One of the things you have to say on the first day is don't drop. Trust the process. Trust me. Trust yourselves. Let's believe in each other and let's make this happen. And it happens.

Jacob went beyond simply noting the necessity of students trusting their teachers in the meaning-making process. He also acknowledged that students must learn to trust in the process of meaning-making, and trust in themselves to be able to make meaning from texts if they engage in the process laid out by the teacher. So what moves did Jacob make to build this type of trust?

In an effort to build student trust in the process, Jacob would not give students any work that he felt wasted students' time. He stated,

I let them know I do not give them anything to do that is not valuable. I think it can be a

good signal that, hey, process matters. The work was not just to keep you busy. It had a

purpose and ties into what I need you to do.

Jacob attempted to build trust with the students through not only giving students purposeful,

meaningful work, but also through explaining the purpose of the work to the students. For

example, while reading dense work by philosophers, Jacob placed the following quote and

attribution at the top of an assignment hand-out for students,

The task of literary and cultural theory. . .is not to escape ideology, but to account for its

workings in the seemingly disinterested and neutral presentations of culture, as well

as in our interpretations of cultural artifacts. There is no escape from ideology, but

there is a kind of vigilance that ideology critique calls for: What unarticulated

premises stand behind our 'knowledge?' This is the first and last question of ideology

critique, and it is necessarily an ongoing question." – Nealon and Giroux, *The Theory*

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The texts students were reading were not easy. But Jacob gave them an authentic purpose for

reading. This was not busy work. This was work designed to connect to students, to their

identities and ideologies, and to the way that they see the world.

Although Kirsten did not mention building trust with her students during our interviews,

she did attempt to build trust with her students. During one of my observations, Kirsten had

recently started having students track different motifs in *The Great Gatsby*. She had never had

students do this before, and she told the students, "I'm going to be honest with you. I don't

know what I'm doing." Kirsten did know what she was doing. She has a PhD in English

Literature. Her students very likely understood that she knew what she was doing and referred to her as Dr. in the classroom. But, in these two sentences, Kirsten was letting her students know that she was taking a teaching risk and she was unsure of how it would turn out. But she was willing to take risks in the classroom because she trusted her students. In so doing, Kirsten was modeling the type of behavior she wanted to see in the classroom from students. She wanted students to trust her and each other enough to take intellectual risks, try out new ideas, and new approaches to texts as they engage in the meaning-making process.

Engendering relationships through feedback. Three of the teachers mentioned feedback and two explicitly tied providing feedback to engendering relationships. In an interaction with a student during one of my observations, Carl stated, "I have to insist on a hard copy. I like to write comments all over your work. If you spend the time writing it, I will spend time commenting on it and I like to do it on actual paper." Through both feedback and this brief comment, Carl let students know that he valued their work enough to read it carefully and provide feedback, not just an overall score or scores on a rubric. Written messages to students that are focused on their writing and thinking (feedback) is one of the ways that teachers can engender relationships with the 100-150 students that they have in class every day. It is one way that teachers can show students that they value their thinking, writing, voice, identity, and effort.

Jacob provided feedback to students and in interviews, tied this feedback explicitly to building relationships with students. He stated,

> Feedback is so vitally important, and people don't realize the way in which feedback can help you create relationships. I leave even just a little piece of feedback on everything a student does, everything that I collect. . .If I'm going to formally assess you through like, Commonplace (an on-going choice writing assignment), you better believe you are

going to get comments back, and pretty substantive ones. That's a relationship that I'm

forming with them, and that's a way that I say, "Your voice matters to me, and I'm seeing

you, and I'm hearing you." If I'm going to say it matters, I'm going to show you it

matters by investing and talking to you about it, and investing, giving you some feedback

on how you could grow, think differently, consider other things about this idea, or how

this idea, you know, could be used over here. So, I'm going to give you that feedback,

and so that's one of the hugest parts of developing the relationships with students. And

my comments are never like, "This is wrong, or this is the wrong way.", but it's like,

"Here's some other things you could do to learn." I think kids internalize that. . .They

know that they can make meaning and nobody's going to punish them for it. Like,

there's not a consequence for disagreement, right?

Jacob used feedback in an attempt to build trusting relationships with students so that students

did not have to fear disagreeing with the teacher and were thus free to engage in personal

meaning-making with texts. Through feedback Jacob seeks to give students the same feeling of

safety he promotes as he crafts his classroom environment in an effort to foster the meaning-

making of students.

Kyle at Erie High School also used feedback to attempt to engender a relationship of trust

with his students. Kyle described one of his beginning-of-the-year practices as follows:

So, they had to write me a letter about anything they wanted.   It's just a good way to

know what a student chooses to write about. It's kind of like a writing sample in some

ways. It takes a lot of time, but I'll read every letter and then write everyone a letter

back. And a lot of it is upfront gains. If you spend the time now, there is a big pay-off

later as a teacher to show them I'm invested and I'm actually going to read what they

wrote and respond to it as well. So, I think that the intent of it as well is to build that relationship of trust.

Although Kyle stated multiple purposes for this activity, one of them was to help students trust that Kyle will read their work and provide feedback. During one of my observations, Kyle gave students the letters he had written to them. According to my field notes, every single student began reading the letter on their way back to their seat, showing their high interest in Kyle's response to their own letters. It was an amazing moment in witnessing the beginning of a teacher-student relationship developed initially through feedback!

Written feedback was not the only type of feedback Kyle used with the aim of building relationships with his students. When asked in an interview about practices he felt all English teachers should be doing, he responded:

The third thing I would do, that I have done way more of, is one-on-one meetings with students. What that can look like is a simple ten-minute meeting where I pull the students out into the hallway. We look at their writing together, and I'll have already read it ahead of time, and maybe made some written comments on it, and then we conference about it. I always ask students, "What questions do you have?" or, "What things do you want to work on? What are you noticing about your writing that you're wondering about?" Those quick conferences, I think, do way more than any comments I've ever written on any text because students won't want to read those comments, or they don't like encountering the comments where maybe there is a distance between the teacher, or I might have said something they perceive as, you know, tough or mean. If we do one-on-one, I can clarify.

Although Kyle used written feedback to try to engender relationships with students, he felt that short one-on-one conferences were more beneficial for student relationships as they were student directed and Kyle could clarify statements so they would not be perceived as harsh or demeaning. Kyle believed these conferences could improve student-teacher relationships through closing the distance between student and teacher that is present in written comments.

Jacob saw feedback not only as a way to build relationships with students, but as a form of equity. While discussing feedback with his student teacher, Jacob told her, "Feedback is equity. Every student deserves meaningful, timely feedback that they can use to grow." Feedback is one of the tools Jacob used to try to engender relationships with students, and to attempt to ensure that every student felt like their voice, work, and thinking was valued. Providing feedback was one of the teaching moves that Jacob used to advance his practice of promoting justice and equity. As a mentor teacher, Jacob felt it was important to share the practice and not just the teaching move with his student teacher.

Overall, my data revealed that all four teachers worked to engender student-teacher relationships. All four attempted to engender non-transactional relationships. Two tried to engender empathetic relationships. Three reported engendering trusting relationships and three reported using feedback as a mechanism to engender these types of relationships. The differences of these teachers may be at least partially explained by their school context and the students in their classroom. Due to differences in students and contexts, some teachers may have had to do more of this work than others. However, the work of engendering relationships with students was important to all four of the teachers and regardless of the teacher moves used, engendering relationships was a practice of all four teachers.

Engendering new student-text relationships. All four of the teachers in this study

sought to change the fundamental relationship between their students and texts used in their

classroom, as they each had perceptions about their students' relationships with school mandated

texts they felt needed to be changed. This section describes first the teacher's perceptions of

students' relationship with school mandated texts, then describes the new student-text

relationships these teachers sought to engender.

Teacher perceptions of students' relationships with school mandated texts. Each of the

four teachers in this study felt that students' relationships with school-based texts needed to be

refashioned in some way. Kyle at Erie High School stated,

> I think that's something that high school students really struggle with is realizing that
>
> they need to read texts differently, and that not everything is about loving a text and
>
> this sort of easy pleasure and enjoyment that can come with a text that you really like.

Although the four teachers were in agreement that students' relationships with texts needed to

change, they articulated the needed changes in somewhat different ways. Kyle saw students as

approaching school texts in the same way they would approach reading a novel for pleasure and

he found this relationship problematic for studying texts in class as students could potentially

make meaning only with texts they found pleasurable.

Both Jacob at Sawmill and Kirsten at Briarwood perceived that students wanted the

"right answer" from the text. This "right answer" is the one that students believe teachers want

them to reach. These teachers reported that students would often use the internet to find the

"right answer." During one of our interviews, Jacob described an encounter with such a student

as follows:

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A lot of kids will comprehend things because they think there is a right answer. Lou

came and asked me, "Should I just hit up online for what Althusser's claim is?"

"No, you shouldn't do that."

"Well, that's what I did last year in AP Lang. I just hit up, whatever, Shmoop, and I got

what the theme was and then I went from there."

"Yeah, that's a bad strategy, Lou. You've comprehended it. Or you can get

comprehension from those other books, but what happens when the conversation maybe

moves beyond that? Or, somebody asks you something slightly different or asks you to

think about it in a different way?"

Similarly, when discussing her students' school reading habits, Kirsten stated,

There was something about instant gratification. They wanted the answer to a story

instead of trying to feel their way through a story and trusting themselves about what they

could unearth and uncover. They will do a google search about Gatsby (*The Great*

Gatsby) or what is *Passing* about, and they would read the notes on Shmoop or on the

kind of summary websites about the story. You know, that's boring for everybody. It's

boring for them. It's boring for me.

During one of my observations, Kirsten told her students, "I had also asked you guys to promise

not to internet, google, Wikipedia, schmoop any of these texts, right? And I think that means

that you have to create your own relationship to the texts." When further elaborating on this

during one of our interviews, Kirsten shared,

So, you heard me at the end of class today, "Please, please, please, don't google anything about this novel.", right? If you google something about *The Great Gatsby*, not only do you get whatever happens in the plot, but you will also get "The American Dream" and you get this very cliché, kind of pat version of the story. When students google things, they think it's the right answer, and so I am not interested in the "right answer," right? What I am interested in is that student relationship with the text. I want them to be curious. I want them to be sucked into the story. I want them to . . .I asked what are they wondering, right after we just looked at the first page and a half. I want them to ask questions as they read, to think, "How do these characters interact with each other and why does the author do things in this way?"

Although expressed somewhat differently, both Jacob and Kirsten identified students seeking the "correct answer" as problematic, because this practice leads to students accepting the answers of someone else, rather than making meaning from the text on their own. In their view, Kirsten and Jacob believed that students must have a new relationship with school-texts where the focus was on making-meaning rather than gleaning answers. What is fascinating is that when these teachers did not give students "correct" answers or best interpretations, students sought these on the internet. Perhaps students were conditioned by past school experience, or perhaps they simply sought short cuts to the more difficult meaning-making process.

In an effort to provide spaces for student meaning-making, Kirsten, Kyle, and Jacob used an on-going assignment called "Commonplace Books," where students wrote entries reacting to a number of texts and topics. The requirements for student entries were fairly similar across all three teachers, however, Jacob alone was extremely explicit in the instructions about the purpose of the assignment for students. The instructions on the assignment sheet stated,

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There are several goals for this assignment: first, it's important to me that you're making your own meaning from our work. I don't have the "right" answers, and this class isn't about becoming a mini-me. Puzzling over ideas, changing your mind, disagreeing with me are all acceptable here. Second, it's also important that you don't simply agree with texts that you read just because scholars sound smart or because philosophers are notoriously obtuse. Challenge these folks and their ideas; push new thinking by making imaginative connections and think carefully and contextually about the ideas that are being presented. I don't agree with every thinker we read, but that doesn't make them unimportant or not worth reading . . . Giving you this space and the class time necessary to work through difficult ideas, ask questions of complex texts, and make important connections seems well worth it.

Although among the three teachers who used this assignment, Jacob alone was explicit as to the purpose of the assignment, the use of this assignment by all three teachers revealed a desire to have students make their own meaning rather than gleaning "right" answers from their teacher, the internet, or other sources. Like a safe classroom, this is another space where students were free to take intellectual risks, disagree with authors, challenge the text, make personal connections, disagree with the teachers, and engage in any other manner of personal, text-focused meaning making.

Carl at Casey High School identified a different problem with students' relationships with texts. During one of our interviews, Carl stated,

I see the job as giving them (students) meaningful texts to pay attention to, and growth happens. If I am able to adequately incentivize them in different ways to pay attention to a text, there will be growth. There will be growth in vocabulary, in syntactical coding,

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and by that, I mean like tracking the meaning of a paragraph from the beginning to the end, which is really complex, and thirty percent of kids can't do that. Half of kids can't do that. Maybe half of Americans just do not have the ability to follow the meaning, to track meaning, and continue to think about it from the beginning of the paragraph to the end of the paragraph. That's why journalistic articles are two lines long. There is no working memory left, especially if they are checking their phone in the middle of a story, but that leads me back to attention. So, it has taken me a long time to realize I'm an attention manager as a teacher, and to think really hard about how to deal with the massive attention deficit that western civilization is struggling with right now. Not even western, just civilization.

Carl identified a different problem with his students' relationships with texts. His belief about the reading habits of his students, and of most people in the world, in conjunction with his belief that sustained engagement with texts leads to growth, inform his teaching practice of promoting sustained engagement with texts. However, it cannot be just any text according to Carl, but a "meaningful" text, or one in which meaning can be derived by students if they could engage with it for a sustained period of time.

Changing students' reading practices. In an attempt to engender new relationships between their students and texts, teachers attempted to change students' reading practices in terms of pace, preference, and persistence in the following ways: 1. Managing pace: Teaching moves focused on managing pace were meant to help students understand that the pace at which they read texts is dependent on the text and the purpose for reading. 2. Managing preference: When teachers worked on students' reading preferences, they attempted to help students find books they loved, tried to help students develop a love for great literature, and strove to help

students make meaning from texts regardless of whether they like them or not. 3. Managing persistence: Teachers engaged in a variety of teaching moves designed to help students persist in reading through difficult and/or dense texts without giving up.

Managing pace. Three of the four teachers spoke about their students' reading pace. I watched Kyle teach, "Why Read the Classics," an essay by Italo Calvino. Students began reading this in class, and then were assigned to finish reading and annotating the essay for homework. As part of the in-class work for that day, students had to answer the question, "What made this reading this text challenging?" Kyle then gave the following tips (captured in my field notes), which he summarized in bullets on the white board at the front of class under the heading "Tips for reading this type of text":

- Put it away for a while and then come back to it

- Chunk the text

- Realize that this type of reading may be new to you

- Depending on the text, you may have to read differently

- Reading depends on our experience

- This reading is slower

- You may need to look stuff up and you may need to reread.

For this particular type of text, Kyle advised students to read more slowly, as they would likely need to look up unknown words, terms, and historical figures. In addition, due to the dated language and complex sentence structure, students may also have needed to reread portions of the text to make meaning.

During an interview with Kyle, as he unpacked his teaching of the Calvino essay, I asked

him to explain more fully his comment to students that they have to read different texts

differently. He responded,

> I thought it was interesting with the Calvino essay. That text, I think, is pretty complex,
>
> and it's written in a different time period. They (students) have said things in our
>
> discussion like, "I think that Calvino is just flaunting. . .he's throwing all these names
>
> out here that no one knows about." So that is a really great moment for students because
>
> getting them to realize that there are different groups of people that are thinking about
>
> this that know all these names, but you don't. From your perspective as a high school
>
> student, you don't know all of these names, because you haven't read about them. That
>
> doesn't take away their value, right? So, getting them to see some of those fallacies too,
>
> right? I think that was one thing that was happening with the Calvino text. What I liked
>
> about the Calvino text too is that it forces them to unpack and slow down

Later, as I watched Kyle teach *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, Kyle told students,

> Alright, like I mentioned, we're only going to start this today. We won't finish it.
>
> And so, we'll probably start with the individual annotating part. We might get to the
>
> class sharing. Take a look at the directions there at the top. We are going to annotate
>
> just the last paragraph of *Things Fall Apart*. A question that I want us to think about
>
> is why do we think Achebe ends the text this way? This is the last impression he leaves
>
> us with. We also want to consider things like diction, so word choices here. Syntax,
>
> what do we notice about the order of words? Connotation, denotation. Think about how
>
> those might add to Achebe's point. Part of what we are doing here is we're annotating
>
> this as we normally would, but I want us to take a really close look at the language here

of this last paragraph because it's a really important one. I'm going to read this through one time. We'll take first impressions. I'll read it a second time and then we'll go into individual annotation.

Both of these instances show Kyle attempting to slow the reading of students down with the practices of looking up unknown words, terms, and people; rereading the text; annotating the text; and paying close attention to the language of a text. It should be noted, however, that these two different texts are very short—the Calvino essay was four pages long and the portion of *Things Fall Apart* was only a paragraph. Kyle is not advocating slowing students' reading down for entire novels or short stories. As stated earlier, Kyle told his students that they needed to read different texts differently. Kyle tried to slow students' reading down when he felt students' meaning-making depended on it and he also used short passages to teach them how to slow themselves down when they needed to. So, he was not just deciding for them when they needed to slow down, but instead was teaching students strategies to slow themselves down as necessary.

Kirsten, while teaching *The Great Gatsby,* had her students track motifs of their own choosing through the novel. When I asked about this particular practice in one of our interviews, she responded,

> With the motif stuff, I want to slow them down as they're reading. What I'm struggling with is like. . .So, time is a motif in Gatsby and the theme that that connects to is the idea of nostalgia or the past always being with us and not being able to escape it, and in Gatsby, there are clocks, watches, dates everywhere, right? There's all these ways that motif shows up in the story, but I don't want to just tell them that, right? So, on Wednesday we're going to talk about motif and we're going to look at some examples

of different themes and motifs and how they might show up in a story. We're not going

to attach it to a particular story. So, I've come up with a list of things like, power

struggle is a theme, and maybe the motif is corruption. You might get in a novel

something like gambling, or lying, or cheating on a partner, or, like, all of these ways

that corruption kind of shows up. So. I'm going to have them work together and

brainstorm with. . . I'm going to give them a theme and a motif and I'm going to have

them brainstorm the concrete ways that it will show up, and then talk about how that

relates to figurative language, imagery, simile, diction. So, I want them to slow down.

Kirsten wanted her students to slow their reading pace. However, this was not the end goal. She
wanted students to slow their pace so they could wrestle with motifs, themes, figurative
language, simile, imagery, metaphor, and diction. Having students track motif was a teaching
move Kirsten used to slow students down and advance her practice of fostering students'
disciplinary meaning making with texts.

Jacob at Sawmill also dealt with pace. He had students use two column notes while
reading texts. When asked about how he felt these types of notes benefitted student meaning-
making, he replied,

I think one good thing about it (two column notes) is that it slows everyone down, cause

if you'll let them they'll put a cinder block on the gas pedal and just drive it. So, it forces

kids to kind of take their time through a novel and take time to reflect.

Although Jacob advocated for a slow and careful reading for some portions of texts, he also
stated in an interview,

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I don't know that I deeply read every page of every text. And I don't know that I need to. And so, if this girl who came to me says, "I've gotten enough out of Foucault" and we talk about it. "So, why would you stop reading where you did?" and she says, "Well, he's repeating himself." As he is wont to do. "He's repeating himself, like, I've gotten what I need. I stopped there because I've heard this before." And that's when I said, "Well, what do you think you got?" And then she went through, and I was like, "Yeah, that's pretty much Foucault. You didn't need to read any further. And what are you reading for anyway? Like, what do you want to know? What are you trying to get? Are you trying to get the gist? Are you really invested? Are you trying to read a passage closely because it interests you or you find it strange and you are really focused on that? Why move away from that if that is what you want to think about more?" We compel kids to read down this very linear path. You will read pages 10-40. It's like in math. You will do problems 1-50 odd. Why does a kid need to do 25 problems to show any kind of mastery or anything? I don't understand why a kid needs to read every page you assign in the most thorough possible way in order to participate in a class.

These quotes, taken together, show that Jacob advocated for slow, careful reading of some portions of texts, but not for all portions of text. For Jacob, the intersection of the text, the skill level and/or interest of the student, and purpose for reading dictated the pace students should read.

Overall, when examining the comments of three teachers, and looking at their teaching moves in regard to students' reading pace, they consistently used techniques to slow students' reading down at some points in the text teachers considered critical for meaning-making.

Slowing students down was not the ultimate goal for any of these teachers, but changing pace was in service of the practice of helping students make meaning from texts.

   Managing preference.   All of the teachers in this study reacted to students' reading preference, although they did not all react in the same manner. Carl at Casey High School gave his students a reading assignment where the students were able to choose the book at the beginning of the school year. A few weeks into the school year, before giving his students time to read in class, he told them about his own experience in reading a book of his choice, getting bored with it, and then abandoning it. He then encouraged students to abandon their choice book if they were bored, and pick something new that they have a high interest in reading. This full quote is in the previous chapter. In essence, Carl gave his students permission to enjoy a novel for this particular assignment. In an attempt to help students understand the purpose of this assignment (student enjoyment of the process of engaging with a novel), Carl differentiated between reading for school and reading for pleasure. He gave students a window into his own thinking about these two types of reading. When reading for a class, or for another important purpose, Carl stated that he can get through any text. But when reading for pleasure, he can just stop reading if he gets bored with the book and move on to another book that he is more interested in reading. Carl attempted to give students, in the context of school, a close approximation of a non-school reading experience for pleasure.

   Carl also gave students permission to choose a novel based solely on their interests, curiosity, and passions. While discussing his personal reading experience, he set up a dichotomy between the book he got bored with and put down, with the book he picked up and was excited about. The book he put down was by an author Carl speculated would win the Nobel prize. The book he picked up was a fantasy adventure. In using this example, the message for students is

that, for this particular assignment, it is more important to find a novel you can be engaged with than it is to choose a novel that is well respected by English academics. If students were engaged with their book, whether it is well-respected such as *War and Peace*, or a piece of pop-culture like fantasy adventure, Carl was pleased. However, if students were not engaged with the book they had chosen, Carl's advice was to "cut bait and move to a new fishing hole." Carl's goal for this assignment was student engagement with text.

Finally, Carl explained to students what engagement and non-engagement looks like. The words he used to describe the text he put down and the text he picked up were very different. When talking about the text he put down, he stated that it was "pretty good writing" and "he liked it," but "got bored with it." In contrast, he described the fantasy novel he picked up instead as "awesome," "wonderful," and an "innately interesting setting." Looking at these descriptive words and phrases, it is clear that Carl "liked" both books, but he was far more excited and interested in the fantasy adventure, and thus, more engaged in reading it. Carl also explained what non-engagement looked like for him; he was avoiding reading and choosing to make dinner, sleep, or engage in other activities instead. Consequently, if this is what non-engagement looks like, engagement would be choosing to read a novel over choosing to engage in other activities. This takes a level of curiosity, interest, and/or passion. It is this type of engagement that Carl was promoting to his students.

Kirsten, as was mentioned previously, also gave students a bounded choice of novels to read and stated that she would help students find a novel based on what she knew about their interests. In addition to giving students a list of novels to choose from, Kirsten (and another English teacher) sent a message home to parents that included this statement,

For the final unit of English III-AP, students will have the opportunity to choose a "great American novel" to read on their own. We have come up with a list of over 30 novels for students to choose from that reflects the diversity of voices and perspectives that contribute to American Literature. We invite family members to join in this shared endeavor of reading some wonderful stories; please let us know what you're reading if you decide to pick up a book from the list.

When I asked her about this teaching decision in an interview, she replied,

I curated a list of books to pick from, but students still had freedom to choose and to have that experience of what it feels like to pick a book and get interested in it. Maybe a family member, a sibling or a parent, reads a book off that list, then they have a conversation about it if it's the same book or if it's different, maybe they'll trade books and somebody might read an extra book in the summer, you know? There are some kids who are readers, and I don't want to act like no one reads anymore, because that's just sort of a curmudgeonly thing to say, but I think it's rarer than I would like it to be, and I want them to see reading as part of their future kind of intellectual life. I use my husband as an example a lot. He's a physician. He was a biology and biochemistry major in college and went to Med. School, didn't take any time off. He loves books. He loves stories. He reads so much contemporary fiction. He reads graphic novels. He reads comic books. He reads more than I do during the school year because I'm grading; I'm reading a lot of student writing. He just devours books, and our son, who is almost nine, over the weekend he and I were listening to Christopher Paul Curtis's book, *Elijah of Buxton.* He's just gotten to the

point in third grade where he is reading kid's novel without pictures, but he is also

reading comic books and graphic novels, but he said to us yesterday, "I love stories!"

I was like, "Yes!" and my husband goes, "Mom and I love stories, too! Mom built

her whole life around stories!"

Kirsten loves stories. Her family loves stories. It is this love of stories that she tried to implant

within her students. Her methods for this included giving students a bounded choice of novels to

choose from for one particular assignment. In addition, she sent the letter home to encourage

family members to read a novel from the list. It is not just individual joy in reading that Kirsten

wanted to help her students to find. It was also the joy of reading in a community and discussing

books with others. It was also not just present joy that Kirsten wanted her students to access, but

also joy in the future as she hoped that stories and discussing them in a community would be part

of a joyful, rich, intellectual life of her students in the future.

In addition to trying to help students find novels they enjoy, Kirsten was also concerned

with helping students enjoy school-mandated texts. I talked to her while she was in the middle

of teaching *The Great Gatsby*, and she told me, "I want the students to love this book as much as

I do. You know, that's kind of my secret goal, and it's a beautiful story, right?" In addition,

during one of our interviews she stated, "You know, I want their experience of reading Gatsby

[*The Great Gatsby*], *Passing*, and then whatever novel they decide to choose to kind of provide a

structure in which they access that joy, that pleasure in reading." For Kirsten, it was important

for students not only to be able to choose and enjoy a book that interested them, but also to find

joy in assigned texts.

As I watched Kirsten teach both *The Great Gatsby* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* I noticed her point out lines for students to simply notice the beauty of the language. When I asked her about this practice, which seemed common in her teaching, she responded,

> You know, you can appreciate how beautiful the language is without knowing the definition of a metaphor, right? Like you can appreciate how rich her [Zora Neale Hurston's] description of Tea Cake is when she first sees him. You can appreciate that without needing to take the time to like, analyze every single natural element she mentions in relation to him, you know? I just think those moments of, those are the moments of pleasure as a reader that really sort of stick with me, and I figure like, sharing them with students, letting them know that it's okay to be excited or awed by this. . .I think that's a good thing, to just sort of share that enthusiasm or passion. I don't do it. . . like it's not a part of my lesson plan usually, right? We might have a day where we focus on language and analysis like we did on Wednesday with *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, where I paired the students up and gave them sections of the text to look at, but I didn't plan to find. . .I didn't remember that that line that I loved was in one of the sections. But when I was peering over their shoulders and kind of looking, I was like, "Oh, yeah, that's that line about Janie doesn't read books and so she doesn't know how important she is." And I was like, "Aw, that was such a great line!" And so highlighting that for the students was sort of a spontaneous moment. I think some of it is coming from me, like personality-wise, and I think some if it is just that I want students to see that reading can be a joyful experience.

Kirsten attempted to help students find joy through sharing her personal joy in reading. This went beyond preference into emotional responses of love and joy and was done in the context of

school-mandated texts, which students may or may not prefer. Students' preferences will probably change over time, but Kirsten attempted to impart a love for beautiful language and poignant lines, and a joy in seeing great stories unfold that would outlast students' reading preferences at a specific point in time.

Kyle and Jacob were less concerned with students' reading preferences and more concerned with using skills to unpack school-mandated texts. In an interview, Kyle stated, "I think that's something that high school students really struggle with is that they need to read different texts differently, and that not everything is about loving a text and this sort of easy pleasure and enjoyment that can come with a text that you really like." Kyle's phrase "not everything" implies that for certain types of reading, pleasure, love for the text, and enjoyment are important. However, students are not going to love or derive pleasure from all school-mandated texts, and they have to read these texts that they do not love differently.

When asked about how students need to read these texts differently, and what skills and behaviors students need to unpack and engage with a text, Kyle responded,

I think there are different skills and behaviors. I think it also depends on the student, too. One of the things that I always tell students is that not every text are you going to "enjoy" (I guess I would put that in quotes). Every text that you read, you're not going to personally connect with, but you can still unpack a text and look at what the author is doing and find something interesting that the author is doing. I think that depends on the genres. A lot of my students say, "I don't like poetry." They'll say, "We don't like poetry." Well, there are still some interesting things that you can extract even though you don't enjoy the poetry. You know, it's funny. Jacob [another one of the four teachers in the study. Jacob and Kyle are friends and discovered I was doing research

in both of their classrooms] and I have talked a lot about this, you know, getting students past the I like or I don't like a text, and sometimes a student will want to use that as an excuse for not wanting to engage with a text. They'll want to say, "I didn't like this story. I didn't enjoy it." Both of us have really always stressed, you know it's not so much about whether you like or enjoy the text. It's more about what the author is doing and how can we notice patterns in a text, and what is the purpose of a text. So, I think with some students that don't like poetry, getting them to see that they can uncover patterns in the text. Part of the skills that I try to teach them is close reading. If we are looking at a poem, look for patterns within the text. What skills do you need to approach this text? Maybe you need to look up words you don't know. Maybe you need to understand something about the form, if it's a specific form in terms of a poem, or even something like flash fiction, or getting them to tackle an allegory, getting them to develop those skills that are necessary in order to tackle the specific genre.

Kyle, and Jacob as reported by Kyle, saw preference as an obstacle to engagement, and their goal was engagement. Neither purported to assist students with developing a love for literature, but both reported assisting students in engaging with literature in interesting ways, helping students to identify patterns, purposes, and authorial choices within texts. Students could then potentially develop interest in texts that they may not have initially preferred or loved. This is somewhat at odds with Kirsten, who wanted her students to love reading and authors' use of language. Carl, in some ways, straddled both perspectives. For school mandated texts, Carl focused on engagement and could be grouped with Kyle and Jacob. However, Carl acknowledged the importance of student preference in his choice reading assignment, and that particular assignment falls more in line with Kirsten in terms of reading preference.

Managing persistence. All four teachers taught reading persistence in some manner, as they all sought to engage students with complex texts and persistence was often a prerequisite for student meaning-making with these complex texts. Kyle at Huron High School taught and viewed skills as a way to increase his students' reading persistence. When discussing a complex piece of text he had given his students, Kyle stated,

> What I liked about the Calvino text is that it forces them to unpack and slow down. Because it's so complex, they can't read it leisurely and they have to do this kind of hard and arduous work of unpacking it. And sometimes it doesn't feel fun, but that's life, right? That's what's going to happen when you go to college, you're going to encounter things that are really tough and hard to get through. So, JSTOR is developing these new tools for teachers. They invited some of the teachers to come in and look at the beta version of what they are putting together, and so we had this conversation about complex texts, because with JSTOR my students will pull up like a twenty page article or critical essay, and they're just overwhelmed by it, right? They don't want to take it on, but JSTOR is actually developing some tools that's going to make it easier for students to kind of unpack, right? I think that's the part I want to stress to students, that there are going to encounter that. . .I want to prepare them so that when you encounter a text that you aren't super into, you can still unpack it, and you still have the tools to be able to persevere through it and not give up. . . . I think a place where a lot of students get caught up is when something looks long to them. They already have this fixed mindset of I'm not going to be able to unpack this. So, getting them to that place where they can unpack it, it's about breaking it down or chunking it out. Giving them those skills so they can do that takes some time.

Kyle noted that both low interest level (or not being "into" a text) and longer texts can be barriers to students' reading perseverance. Kyle saw reading perseverance as something his students would need in upcoming college reading and sought to impart this skill to students through teaching skills to his students.

In the classroom, Kyle used a number of teaching moves in an attempt to build students' reading perseverance. First, he had them think about challenges the texts presented to the students. During one of my observations, Kyle told the students

> We are going to start with a little reflection activity. Think a little about our reading and annotating of the Calvino essay, and I want us to think about the following question: What did we find ourselves doing? So, we'll go through a reflective process and think about what did it feel like to read what I consider a pretty dense, complex essay. It's a little tough to get through, so we will reflect on what we found ourselves doing.

This process of reflection was focused on four questions that Kyle presented to students, who discussed them in small groups and then as a whole class. In instructions to students before the small group discussions, Kyle instructed the class as follows:

> On your own, look back through your annotations. Look back through the reading that you did, and I want us to consider four questions. The first one is, what type of annotations seem to be the most prevalent? So, as you look back through, what were you doing the most of? Were you looking up definitions? Were you asking questions? Color-coding, etc.? So, those things we were brainstorming last Thursday. Number two: Why do you think this was the most prevalent? Thinking a little bit about yourself, thinking a little bit about the text, why was that the most prevalent type of annotation

you made? Question three: What did you find challenging in the reading? It might be

a concept. It could be something. . .there may have been a portion of the text you found

harder than the others. So, think a little bit about what was challenging. Was it just

getting through the reading? Was it setting aside enough time? So, think about

yourself here and what you found challenging. And then think about what made it

challenging. So, reflecting a little bit on why it was challenging for you.

Kyle gave the students an opportunity to reflect on their work of annotating a complex text, an

act of making meaning with the text, as well as reflecting on the challenges the text presented

personally. This gave students space to identify personally challenging aspects of the text, and to

think about how they could persist despite these challenging aspects.

Kyle, in the same class period, also gave students insight into his own process of reading

persistence. Before small group discussion, Kyle also told students,

Kyle, in the same class period, also gave students insight into his own process of reading

For me, I had to stop, and I'm used to, and you might be used to this too, reading

something non-stop. I'm reading, reading, reading, and I'm understanding what

the author is saying and then I'm done. A text like this, I had to read, stop, look up

something, write it down, re-think about it, maybe re-read it, keep reading. So, know

that this may be a different or new type of reading that you're doing. It will slow you

down a bit, sometimes. But that's okay. It's a different type of text that requires you

to do that. I want you to be kind of aware of that going in. Read different texts

differently based on whatever that text needs. And so sometimes that means you're

going to have to stop, reframe, re-read something, re-think about something, write

something down. This might be a new process, especially if you are used to reading

something straight through, and then being able to talk about it.

In these brief remarks to students, Kyle noted that he had to read this particular text differently. Kyle admitted to students that he did not read this essay all the way through. He had to stop, look stuff up, re-think, and re-read portions of the text. The message for students is that this is not a type of reading only readers deficient in some manner have to do, for even their teacher reads in this manner. This is a type of reading dictated by the meeting of a particular text with a particular reader. These are skills that Kyle is seeking to impart to students in an effort to increase students' reading persistence. Through both helping students think about their own personal process with the text, and also inviting students into his own process, Kyle was trying to help students persist in reading complex texts.

Finally, Kyle had the class brainstorms tips for reading this type of text. During the brainstorming session, Kyle used student comments to write the following on the board

- Put it away for a while, come back. . .chunk text

- This type of reading may be new to you

- Depending on the text, you may have to read differently, also reading depends on our experience

- This reading is slower, need to look stuff up, need to re-read

Kyle understood that the reading process is different depending on both the reader and the text. Consequently, the reader must understand his own personal process, and how to adjust when reading a text that is more unfamiliar, dense, or complex than usual. Students are given tools, and the responsibility for using them, to improve, among other things, reading persistence.

Instead of focusing on skills, Kirsten used framing and empathy to help her students increase reading persistence. When discussing how she helped students with a particularly challenging 15th century text by Thomas Harriet, Kirsten stated,

So, historical context is one way, right? I think I also try to do a little more framing sometimes if I can. Like, here's what you are about to see, right? This is going to be really hard. So when, with Thomas Harriet who, he's not writing in Middle English but he spells things weirdly because spelling wasn't standardized in the late fifteenth when he was writing, and so it can be challenging for students, so when I was setting that up, I said, "We're going to read this guy, but there's going to be some weird spelling, but I need you to kind of focus, read without distraction." So, I guess, framing the text right and acknowledging that this might feel hard. I am also interested in and doing a bit of reading about, I guess nerve science sort of loosely, and thinking about a couple of things. One of them is the growth mindset, which is that when something feels hard, that is actually when you are learning. If it feels easy, you already know how to do it. So, there's no neural pathways being formed, right? So, I talked to my students about that.

Kirsten framed this particular text as difficult, but also let students know that when the reading is difficult, that is when new neural pathways are being formed and growth is happening. In essence, Kirsten was showing students the benefits of engaging with difficult texts in an effort to increase their reading persistence.

While watching Kirsten teach both a short Phillis Wheatley poem (*On Being Brought to Africa From America)* and a long Phillis Wheatley poem (*His Excellency George Washington*), I observed Kirsten making different teaching moves. For the short poem (8 lines long), Kirsten had the students read the poem three times through without interruption before having a whole

class discussion. For the longer poem, Kirsten only read the poem aloud once and stopped six times to give definitions of uncommon words and unknown people, to provide a summary of events in the poem, and to give students questions to consider. After reading the poem aloud once, students got into groups to consider how Wheatley established her authority. When asked about these teaching decisions, Kirsten said:

> You heard when I was reading Wheatley's long poem out loud, I stopped and kind of said, "Here's what's going on now," right? Like, what's going on in this moment that they wouldn't have understood if I had just read the whole poem as a block of text. Nobody would have walked away from it understanding even remotely what was going on. So, I think doing some of that groundwork for them saves a little bit of time, and you can sort of get to interpretation and analysis more quickly. If I read that whole poem to them and I said, "Okay, in groups I want you to analyze the poem," they would be stuck on what was happening, and I don't need them stuck there. I need them past just what was going on in the poem and into thinking about the language and thinking about ethos and all that kind of stuff.

Kirsten used rereading with her students on the shorter poem, which included fewer unknown words and allusions than the longer poem. Although the shorter poem was complex, it required less persistence due to the length. For the longer poem, Kirsten gave students a summary of events. Consequently, students were able to skip the decoding of arcane language and allusions, which can have a negative impact of students' reading persistence, and focus on making meaning from the text. The purpose of students' reading here was to get to the core of the poem, not to decipher the language. In another instance, she might have wanted them to examine and decipher the language. But that was not the learning goal here. Kirsten's teaching moves and

the ways in which she sought to increase students' reading persistence were dependent on the purpose she had in mind for students' reading.

Carl at Casey High School saw lack of attention and lack of information as obstacles to reading persistence. While discussing students' reading behaviors, Carl stated,

I think the most important to me, the one I think about the most at this point in my career is they're directing their attention at the text. That can happen in a variety of ways. The reason attention has become the single greatest factor in recent years, first of all it has taken my entire career to recognize that the gig of teacher is director or manager of kids' attention. . .I see the job as giving them meaningful texts to pay attention to, and growth happens. If I'm able to adequately give them the incentive, incentivize them, in different ways, to actually pay attention to the texts, there will be growth. . .Maybe half of man just doesn't have the ability to follow the meaning, to track meaning, and continue to think about it from the beginning of the paragraph to the end of the paragraph.

With this view guiding him, Carl abandoned all novels in his *Introduction to Literature* classes and used only poems and short stories. He stated, "We lose between thirty percent and fifty percent when it exceeds one hundred and fifty pages." In other words, he believes a large percentage of his class will not persist to the end of a longer piece of text. However, Carl used shorter texts to attempt to manage students' attention. It should be noted that Carl's remarks appear to apply only to his *Introduction to Literature* class. During observations in his *Fantasy Literature* class, students read primarily novels. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the *Introduction to Literature* class was populated entirely by 9th graders in their first semester, while the *Fantasy Literature* class was filled with students of various ages and grades. Perhaps, too,

Carl felt as if students who opted to take *Fantasy Literature* were interested in and curious about the texts, and less work needed to be done to help students persist in reading these fantasy novels.

For the shorter texts he used, Carl attempted to manage students' attention through in-class reading sessions where students were given a grade for reading. During these sessions that I observed, the class was quiet and almost all students appeared to be reading. However, Carl acknowledged that this may not have been working. When discussing a test he had given on *Beowulf,* Carl stated,

> They had to read an article on Vikings from *National Geographic.* That was half the test, and it kind of blew some of their minds actually having to read something and get to the end. There were kids that didn't finish the test, even though other kids finished it in half the time of forty minutes, and what that revealed to me is the huge preponderance of kids who are faking reading all the time.

Although I do not have the data to agree or disagree with Carl's assessment, it is clear that he felt reading persistence was a problem for his students that needed to be addressed.

In addition to using shorter works, Carl, similar to Kirsten, provided information about the text before reading. Before teaching *Beowulf*, I observed Carl showing his students an animated film of the work. When we discussed this teaching move afterwards, Carl told me,

> You may be asking why I'm showing the whole story ahead of time, and that has to do with the high interest phenomenon. If you know about what you are reading about, you're able to do two things much better. First of all, you're able to pay attention

better to what it is you're reading if you already know about that topic. And, interestingly, you're able to remember what you read much better.

Although this was the only time I observed Carl provide a summary of the text before reading, I did observe every time he introduced a text, he provided historical information about the text, and attempted to connect the ideas to the lives of the students. Carl's attempts to increase students reading persistence were tied to his firmly held belief that knowledge of the topic of the text was critical and necessary. There is an interesting contrast between Kyle and Carl. Both desired to foster student meaning-making through increasing students' reading persistence. However, Kyle did this through teaching students skills, while Carl did this through presenting students with historical information, which could function as a type of graphic organizer for the upcoming reading.

Jacob at Sawmill High School saw reading persistence as students' persistence in making meaning with a text. He told students in class, "You can take what you need from a text, and then you can let that text go." During the course of one of our interviews, I asked him to elaborate on this sentiment and he told me, "I don't understand why a kid needs to read every page you assign in the most thorough possible way in order to participate in a class." In Jacob's view, reading persistence was not about making it through to the end of a text, reading every word carefully, but about persisting through text until personal meaning is made. Making meaning from a text can possibly require persistence, depending on the match between the student and the text. In his view, persistence to make personal meaning comes from personal motivation, and having students puzzle over why they are reading, why they are invested, why they are interested, and what they want to think about. His language revealed that persistence, in

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his view, comes from students' personal motivations to read. Consequently, Jacob sought to build students' reading persistence through helping them make personal meaning from text.

Changing students' responses to texts. The reading practices of the last section are in service of changing students' responses to texts and of improving student meaning-making. This section shows and explains the types of responses to text these teachers were trying to elicit in an effort to improve student meaning-making, categorized as personal responses, dependent responses, and dynamic responses.

Personal responses. All four teachers made moves to help students make a personal connection to texts, although the degree and manner each teacher did this varied. Carl at Community High School often attempted to help students connect personally with texts with his comments during class. While reading Praxilla, Carl told his students, "If you've fallen in love, you'll find yourself doing some pretty dumb things." While reading the poems of Sappho, Carl mentioned to his class, "When you are in the throes of bad love, and you will be, sometimes you just have to get out and you feel helpless, like you're drowning." Also while reading Sappho, Carl told students, "She's feeling like she's going to die. We've all felt that. You're overwhelmed. Your head spins. You feel like you're going to die. It comes up in Psalms so often too." Through these short comments, Carl attempted to connect students to the emotions of the texts. If students could connect personally with these emotions, they would have an easier time making meaning from the texts.

Kyle at Erie High School also facilitated students' personal responses to texts. He saw a students' personal response to text as the first level of meaning-making. In our interview he stated,

You know, I think on some levels there's an emotional connection. So, I think there are kind of different levels that students work at. Some students are thinking about how they connect themselves directly to the text. I think it's kind of like the first level, where students are thinking of themselves in relation to the text. "Do I see myself in the text? Have I had similar situations or scenarios?" I think there is also some decoding that's happening at the same time, so, students thinking about, "What are the words I understand versus what are the ones I'm maybe struggling with?" Thinking about different types of students too, you know, some of my students that really struggle with the decoding piece, you know sometimes those are the students that are thinking about a text just on a personal level. I think some of my students that can kind of move past that, or can see value in a text that isn't necessarily connected to their life, I think start to see text as kind of like another layer, where there's a text that they can value even though they don't necessarily see their own personal experience in it. I think that's sort of another level. I think what I find is that those students tend to have bigger vocabularies, tend to have read way more in their life, and are able to see those different perspectives and value those different perspectives.

Kyle saw value in helping students have a personal response to text. It can provide students who, in his thinking, may have difficulty with what he refers to as "decoding," a way to think about the text. However, he understood that this may not always happen. During one of my observations, he told students, "Some characters you connect with and some you may not be able to." Kyle wants students to be able to value and respond to texts where they do not have a personal connection to the characters or situations. The value in moving beyond personal response only is in facilitating perspective taking and building empathy for those unlike

ourselves. In addition, this is disciplinary work. It is the work of the discipline to read and interpret texts that we are not personally connected to.

Although Kyle wanted to help students move beyond only having personal responses, he still saw the value in personal responses to text. In an assignment entitled "DP Literature Seminar Responses Semester 1" Kyle included two columns, and students had to respond to a question from each. The first column was "Questions from and about the text," and the second column was "Questions from and about personal experience." This latter column read as follows:

How do we read non-fiction about literature?

Why do we read non-fiction about literature?

How do you define a "classic"?

Are schools making youth read classics before they are ready?

How does the definition of a classic change with time?

Where is the line between a favorite and classic?

Who defines what a classic is?

How does your home culture define a classic differently from Calvino? Differently (from) our educational system?

Mandating answering a question in this column communicated to students that they were free to agree or disagree with the author. Students were allowed, and encouraged to have an authentic, personal response to the text. Students may or may not have had that type of response valued previously, instead seeing reading as a means of finding the answer or remembering the details

that the teacher desired. From Kyle's perspective, practicing this type of reading helps to engender new student relationships with texts.

Kyle also tried to help students to think metacognitively about their personal responses. During one of my class observations, I observed Kyle tell his students,

I'm bringing all my connotations from 2018 American culture to my reading of a text. I think that is a good thing to keep in mind when we have those very strong reactions. To ask ourselves those questions, right? Where is the reaction coming from and why do I feel this way?

Kyle briefly explained a small piece of his own personal reading process, and then invited students into this same process of investigating and interrogating our personal responses and why we have them. Once students are able to ask these questions of themselves and ruminate on the origins of their responses, they can begin to ask these questions of others they do not identify with, and hopefully develop perspective-taking and empathy for others. Practicing these types of responses continues to engender new relationships with texts, as students read more texts, learn more history, and have more personal experiences.

Kirsten was explicit with both me during interviews and with her students during my observations that the experience of reading is unique to every reader, and contingent on what each individual reader uniquely brings to the text. Immediately before a class discussion about what personally resonated with students in a text, Kirsten told students, "Our reading experience is different depending on who we are, and what we bring to the text." During the course of the discussion, Kirsten then validated having a unique experience of reading through many comments that paralleled the following as students shared what personally resonated with them

while reading the text, "In Martin's experience of reading. . .That may not be your experience of reading, and that's okay." In this teaching move, Kirsten assured students that their voice and their authentic reactions to literature were heard and valued.

During a different observation, Kirsten was asking students which portions of the text resonated with them. After a number of student responses, one of her students said that chicken and shrimp stood out to them in the text, but probably for the wrong reason of it being an entrée that he enjoys ordering at Applebees. Kirsten responded:

Oh, no. That's perfect, actually. That's not the wrong reason. So Rob says chicken and shrimp sticks out because I have it at Applebees, it's what I also get at Applebees. I love chicken and shrimp. So, this is what you bring to the text as a reader. You have a context for that. You have, "I go to Applebees and that is what I order, and it is delicious." And so, when you see chicken and shrimp, you're like, "High five book! You just acknowledged my favorite food," right? Did you have a little moment where your heart was like, "Yay!"? So, that's a good example of how we bring different things to our reading of a text, and that's a great concrete example of how we respond to things in the moment. So, again, you all bring your own personal experience, your own frames of reference, like likes and dislikes of food, your own whatever, right? Your experience in other English classes, you bring all of those with you every time you read a text, and so we are all reading the same book, right? And yet, we are having different experiences reading. Some of us are getting hungry while we read. Some of us are thinking about bodies of water while we read. Some of us are thinking, Oh, I know someone named Dana, or, Oh, I have a friend named Kevin, right? So, the ways that we connect to a text, we can all find our own ways in.

Although the student's personal connection to the text (his love of shrimp and grits) might seem superficial to some, Kirsten understood that this is a point of entry into the text for this particular student. In addition, she used this instance to teach a very Rosenblatt-inspired point of view, that readers bring their entire selves to their transaction with a text. A reader's identity and experiences impact their reading of the text, and that is okay. In these remarks, Kirsten validated students' identities and experiences and showed their value for bringing about a personal response.

When asked why this particular lengthy interaction in class was important, Kirsten responded:

It was like an off-hand comment, but then I thought, "Oh, no, that's perfect! One person is going to read and pick up on that, and then another person is going is going to completely pass by something, right?" It's not just mentions of food that might whet your appetite for something, but it's also experiences the characters have, or the themes that come up, or the way that relationships and interactions that are depicted might resonate with each kid in the room on a different level. I think all of those experiences are valuable. So, I think not being afraid of letting kids respond in authentic ways to texts is really important, even if it was just like, "Oh, I was hungry for fried shrimp too." Okay, well, so fried shrimp resonates with this kid. What's resonating with other people from the text, right? It might be an opportunity to turn an off-hand comment into a discussion about how we all respond to things in a different way.

Kirsten's teaching practice of allowing, encouraging, and valuing personal responses to text communicates to students that reading is a unique and personal experience, and that each person

responds to text differently. Therefore, students were encouraged to respond to texts in unique and personal ways.

In the same interview, Kirsten went on to explain further her rationale for giving classroom space for personal responses to text. She stated,

> It's a way of valuing who they are, right? Nobody's under the illusion that we're going to produce a room full of English teachers in the future, right? That's not what we're here to do. We're here to use literature as a way to have students think empathetically about the world, and so if I am not empathetic to what they bring to a text, then how can I expect them to walk away feeling empathy for the characters, or for other people they may encounter in their lives like the ones they've read about.

For Kirsten, encouraging and valuing students' personal responses to texts is a way to encourage empathy. Kirsten taught empathy through modeling empathy. She provided an example in modeling empathy to those with different experiences than herself and hoped that this modeling translated into student empathy for both fictional characters and real people, which would impact the classroom environment and students' meaning making.

It is not empathy alone that was the goal of personal responses to text. Kirsten sought to make texts more meaningful for her students through helping them have personal responses to texts. One of the ways she promoted this is through using a see--think--wonder protocol, where students identified what they saw in the text, what they thought about it, and what they wondered about it. In relaying how she used this protocol in a specific instance, Kirsten told me,

> The first time I did that in a classroom was with ninth graders and it was about *The Tempest*. *The Tempest* is really hard to teach, especially to ninth graders. Nothing

happens in *The Tempest*, like everything has already happened, right? So, it's hard

to get them hooked in because they are not interested and there is not a conventional

plot structure to move the story along. So, we were looking at the scene with Caliban

and Stephano and Trinculo. It's where they give Caliban alcohol and then he worships.

He's worshipping them as kings or gods or whatever. So we took that scene and had

them read it out loud in small groups and look at every single word that was related

to power in that, and just write them down on sticky notes and then they stuck them

up around the room. That was the "see" stage, right? Then we asked the question,

"Well, what do you think is going on in this scene then, now that you've seen all this

language is coming up relating to the theme of power? What do you think is happening?"

So, then they would sort of talk through that, and then we asked them, "What do you

wonder about power in the play, or about power in the scene? What word (from

the text) are you referencing?" Then, "What do you wonder about power in the world?"

We had a kid who didn't seem super interested in lots of English related things, more

of a science-y kid, also kind of a jock, right? Just affable, a good kid, but not that

interested. His wonder question was something like, "I wonder how Prospero's power

on the island is like the President's political power?" We were like, "That's the best

question ever!", right? So, then he took that question and he wrote a commonplace book

entry that actually compared Obama to Prospero and that was fascinating, right? Because

then what happens is it makes *The Tempest* more interesting to him, but it also maybe

makes Obama more interesting to him, or politics in general, or that kind of like

overarching power that someone has in a particular setting, and so that's when I knew

this was the direction I wanted to go in teaching.

This was a pivotal moment in Kirsten's teaching, as she saw a student go from disinterested to interested, and from incurious to curious. Consequently, many similar activities and questions to students were captured through both interviews and observations. She asked her students how the Pequod (the ship in *Moby-Dick*) was like their school. She asked how today's dating culture was similar and different from dating culture in *The Catcher and the Rye*. She sought to build students' personal connections, interest, and curiosity in order to foster students' meaning making.

In order to accomplish this, she built on students' natural interests and curiosities. When discussing her goals for her students reading *The Great Gatsby*, Kirsten stated,

> I think kids are curious about people, and stories are about people, right? So, we want to be able to say, "What does Gatsby tell us about today? What does Gatsby tell us about our relationships? What does Gatsby tell us about friendship? What does Gatsby tell us about party culture? What does Gatsby tell us about all of these things that connect to our lives today?" If you bring kids' own experiences and things that are relevant to them into the discussion, then the text becomes more meaningful.

Through her use of activities and questions to build interest and curiosity, Kirsten sought to engender new student relationships with text. In her class, texts were not dead things to be dissected, but living texts to be interrogated and interpreted by students personally in light of students' identities and contexts. Overall, Kirsten valued personal responses to texts and recognized their usefulness in building empathy, interest, and curiosity in order to make the texts more meaningful to students.

Jacob at Sawmill High School tailored instruction to encourage personal responses to texts. He graded two types of discussions in class. One he called a Harkness discussion, which began with a question from Jacob, but then was run almost entirely by students. Jacob called the second type a Socratic seminar, and this entailed Jacob questioning individual students about the text. When I asked about the connection between these two types of graded discussion, Jacob replied,

> So, in the Harkness discussion, it's more freeform because it's just like, let's just try out ideas. Let's see where things go. What's on your mind? What do you want to know about? It helps me tailor instruction between the Harkness and the Socratic. When you hear kids talking and you ask yourself, "What are you interested in? What do you misunderstand?" That's what I'm looking for, like, where are the gaps? What do we not know? What do we need to know? How can I tailor this better to your curiosity, to your interests, to your imagination?

Jacob sought to encourage, understand, and leverage students' personal responses to text. He encouraged personal responses during his Harkness discussions. As students made personal responses to text during these discussions, Jacob sought to understand them. Finally, Jacob leveraged these personal responses through tailoring instruction to students' interests, misunderstandings, knowledge gaps, curiosity, and imagination before engaging in the Socratic seminar. For Jacob, personal responses were a way to not only tailor instruction, but to also make texts more meaningful to students.

Jacob was very explicit with his students about the importance of having personal responses to texts. In his hand-out for students explaining the assignment, "Mastery Assignment: An Ideological Critique of a Public Place," Jacob wrote,

Choose a place (or non-place) in our community that you want to think about more deeply through the lenses of ideology and place that we've studied in this unit. That is, consider places where History and history intersect in ways that are interesting, strange, revealing, or problematic to you. How does digging deeper into your selected location allow us to unpack some of the hidden assumptions that live there and within its denizens? How might we better understand some of the ways in which identities work (or don't) within the place you've selected, and what might identities and their performance say about the relative distribution of power and the relative strength of interpellation at the site?

Jacob's instructions for the assignment pointed students toward both using texts and personal responses to the text. Students first read the texts and, ideally, made meaning from the texts. These texts potentially gave students new ways in which to view places. Students were then directed to find a place in the community that is personally interesting, strange, revealing, or problematic to the student. This is a personal response, but one that is colored by the students' previous meaning making with the text. Jacob designed this assignment to help students toggle between making meaning of the text, and personal meaning making with each affecting the other.

Jacob's goal for eliciting personal responses was for students to make meaning from texts. In another handout for students explaining the "Commonplace Book Assignment", Jacob writes,

There are several goals for this assignment: First, it is important to me that you're making your own meaning from our work. I don't have the "right" answers, and this class is not about becoming a mini-me. Puzzling over ideas, changing your mind,

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disagreeing with me are all acceptable here. Second, it's also important that you don't

simply agree with texts that you read just because scholars sound smart or because

philosophers are notoriously obtuse. Challenge these folks and their ideas; push new

thinking by making imaginative connections, and think carefully and contextually

about the ideas being presented. I don't agree with every thinker we read, but that

doesn't make them unimportant or not worth reading.

This was Jacob's goal for not only this assignment, but also for his students overall. Jacob was

not interested in students regurgitating facts from texts, guessing what the "right" answer may be

according to the teacher, or complacently accepting ideas from intelligent, articulate authors.

Instead, Jacob wanted students to respond personally to the ideas in texts, to change their minds

based on new information from texts or discussion in class, and to make connections with texts

to them personally, to other texts, or to the world at large. For Jacob, personal meaning-making

was the end goal of eliciting personal responses.

Also in the assignment handout for the "Commonplace Book Assignment" were

descriptions of the four types of entries that students could make. One of them, "Rumination,"

focused on eliciting personal responses from students. The description reads,

Rumination: This style of entry asks you to select a passage of considerable length

(use your best judgment) from one of the unit texts that you want to think about or

puzzle over more to better understand your investment in and link to the work being

discussed. After choosing your passage, write a bit about what these lines mean to

you: what's at stake for *you* here? What does it make you think about your current

interactions with literature, popular culture, art, friends, or yourself, and how might

it have an impact on those interactions moving forward? Personal experience is valid

and welcome, so long as it meaningfully intersects the text you have selected. This is a chance for you to put some of the complex works we read into practice. Include the annotated passage as the image for your entry.

In the description for this type of entry, the italicized "you," as well the phrase, "Personal experience is valid and welcome. . . ." revealed to students that their personal responses were wanted and valued. Yet, it was not personal response alone that this entry was meant to elicit. The entry also encouraged puzzling over text, and the personal responses needed to meaningfully intersect with the text. This entry elicited personal responses as a means of making meaning of the text, which was Jacob's overarching goal for students.

Dependent responses. Personal responses assist in students engendering new relationships with texts. However, if the responses are not dependent on the text itself, on other texts, on history, and on the world at large, students' responses may be outlandish or, at the very least, a response that is less informed. Personal responses coupled with dependent responses engender a more informed relationship with text than personal responses alone, and facilitate students' meaning-making to a greater degree as there is more information from which to make meaning.

Carl gave students historical information about the text and its context before beginning the study of any text during my observations. Although the data from interviews, observations, and collected documents did not make it clear that these mini-history lessons were designed to foster a response to literature, at times the information could have been used for such a purpose. For example, while teaching a few lines by the ancient poetess, Praxilla, Carl shows the poetess's innovation in regard to style and time period,

Lyric poetry is a big deal, not just because it is about flowers and beautiful celestial

objects and your desire for another beautiful human being (all of these are great topics

for lyric poetry), but it's the invention of the first person, the fictional perspective of the

individual and an author expressing his or her person, which was really not done in

all of literature prior to about 700 BC. . .Again, contrast this with epic poetry, but also

religious and occasional poetry. Occasional poetry is well, poets are hired to write

and then perform. They were performers as well. But lyric poetry is about the self.

These brief remarks placed the text in historical context, and also gave a brief comparison of

types of poetry students had already studied and were going to study. However, these remarks

also gave students something to examine in the text. They might have looked at the impact of

first person on the text and compared how this is different from previous texts taught in class that

did not use first person. Such remarks teach history and historical context to students but may or

may not have an impact on students' responses to texts.

Also, while looking closely at one of Praxilla's poems, "Hymn to Adonis," Carl gave the

following synopsis of the story of Adonis to his students,

So, you have Adonis. This is a story that changes characters and names, but

it's kind of a story that you might recognize, because it was told over and over.

So, it switches back and forth. Sometimes it's a man; sometimes it's a woman;

sometimes it's an immortal one, but one of a pair of lovers is essentially claimed

by the god of the underworld or the goddess of the underworld. So the deity of the

underworld claims this lover's life, and they go down to hell. And, by the way, for

the Greeks, you went down and you didn't go up. And so death, then, was sort of this

dusty place of boredom, where not a whole lot happens. And so the other lover, in

this case it's Adonis, he is a mortal man and he is heartbroken. He is willing to do

anything for his love. He is willing to sacrifice himself so that she could come back to

the land of the living. So, he makes a deal with the god of the underworld. He goes

down and trades places with her. And this is just before he leaves the world. So, he's

kind of taking a look at a day, maybe like today, where there are awesome celestial

objects in the sky, making the world a pretty cool place. He's just kind of ticking

off like, "Wow! This is a great place to be alive, and I'm going to leave it all, so

this is what I'm going to miss."

During these remarks, Carl gave a brief synopsis of the story of Adonis. The original intended

audience would have had knowledge of this story, and Carl gave students this synopsis as a way

to help students make meaning from the text. In a subtle way, Carl also revealed how archetypes

operate, repeating themselves over in literature in slightly different iterations. Overall, this

synopsis could potentially be used by students to make meaning of the text under study and also

future texts that use the same myth or similar archetypes.

Kyle at Erie also presented his students with historical content. During one of our

interviews, he stated,

So, I tell students that in some ways, with some of our texts, we're going to need to be

historians. We need to go and understand what's happening in the time period that the

text is taking place, and maybe also when the text is being written. So, for example, *The

Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison, we need to know what's happening as she's writing this in the

1960s with the "Black is beautiful" movement, but we also need to think about the time

period that this is being written in as well. So, we have to understand those pieces in

order to understand and then start to decode what's actually happening with the words.

Kyle presents history and cultural context to his students at times so that students had more information with which to make meaning of the texts under study. But Kyle also wanted students to begin to look these things up themselves as part of their interaction with texts. During one of the classes I observed, Kyle told his students,

> There are going to be times where we are reading a book, and you are going to need to look things up. When we start with *Things Fall Apart*, it has a built-in glossary in the book, cause the text is taking place in 1890's Nigeria in a culture that many of us won't know until we start reading. Chinua Achebe puts a glossary there, so we have that. So, we should be thinking about not only time and culture and how those are going to change our understanding of a text, but also thinking about what tools we need for a specific type of text.

Kyle used history and cultural context, but he did this in a way to scaffold students' interactions with texts. As with all scaffolding, it could be pulled away in time after students learned the importance of history and cultural context in their interactions with texts. Kyle's hope is that students will investigate these areas on their own when the scaffolding is pulled away.

Kyle also used supplemental texts to elicit dependent student responses to primary texts. For example, before studying *Things Fall Apart*, Kyle had students watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*, and read portions of *Heart of Darkness*. When asked about his rationale for this teaching move and the impact it had, he responded,

> So, you try to front load it with those pieces so that students were already thinking about those ideas like, how do we define this? Who gets to define it? What can that look like? What are different perspectives on texts? Part of that conversation

was getting them to think a little bit about personal connection versus texts that they might not necessarily have a personal connection to. Chinua Achebe's building up this culture and they don't necessarily see themselves in it, but I think maybe we preempted some of that by having that conversation about a different perspective, what Achebe was trying to do, you know contrasting with *Heart of Darkness*, which I hadn't done before.

Kyle used both a non-fiction TED talk about the seeing texts from different perspectives, as well as the canonical text, *Heart of Darkness*, to promote student interaction with a text that was potentially not relatable to students. Instead of using other materials to constrain personal responses to literature, Kyle used supplemental texts to promote interaction with texts when they were difficult to connect with personally. During one of our interviews, he confirmed this point of view, saying,

> You know, not all of what we'll do with a text is focus on the historical and cultural context. These are things we can look up. Those are things that are easy to find sort of literary criticism of. We can even go to Wikipedia to understand the time period. I think what tends to interest me more is a students' interaction with a text, so we spend way more time on that stuff. What are they noticing about the text? What's their interpretation? What meaning are they bringing to the text based on their experiences? So, I'll do a little in the beginning of the text about time period, what they need to know. Here are the basics, right? I like spending a majority of the time on student perspective and what they're noticing about the text, and what the experience is from their perspective.

Kyle used historical and cultural context, as well as other texts, not to constrain personal responses, but to encourage students' interactions with texts with which students had no personal connection. This may have given students the ability to take different perspectives, and even empathize with characters that were unlike them. This can change students to be not only empathetic readers, but also empathetic citizens in a diverse country, and empathetic people in a diverse world.

Kirsten used historical and cultural context, theoretical frameworks developed from non-fiction texts students read, as well as a "no text left behind" policy in her classroom to help students move beyond personal responses alone. After reading *The Great Gatsby* and before reading *Passing*, Kirsten made the following remarks to her students during one of my observations,

> Context wise, this [*Passing*] was published in 1929, which was four years after Gatsby came out. So, that's the same cultural milieu, same historical time period, context and that's something that matters to remember when we're thinking about what's going on in the 1920's, right? There's this party culture. There's also these really weird conversations about race that are happening, right? You saw some of that in *Gatsby* when Tom starts bringing up all that stuff he read. I would say that in *Gatsby*, race and ethnicity function as a motif, but they are not what the story is about in terms of the abstraction of a theme, but in *Passing*, race is not a motif, it is what the story is about.

In this brief excerpt from an observation, Kirsten used historical and cultural context in combination with her no text left behind policy. As these particular two texts are written during the same time period, Kirsten was able to mention less about the historical context, as it had been covered before and during the reading of *The Great Gatsby*. The texts read previously in class

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were constantly and explicitly referenced to invite student comparisons of the texts through

teacher questions and student discussions. This provided not only an opportunity for students to

make meaning of the work they were currently studying, but also an opportunity to continue to

make meaning of the texts previously studied and often referenced. Kirsten wanted meaning

making to be an on-going and evolving process for students in her classroom.

Kirsten also used non-fiction, often academic, texts as theoretical frameworks for

students to use to make meaning from fictional texts. When discussing race in a specific section

of *The Great Gatsby* during an interview, Kirsten told me,

So, we had a framework for it already because I have the students read in the fall Toni

Morrison, her one big book of non-fiction that was based on her Nobel Prize lectures

called *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.* She talks about

something called the Africanist Presence and it's how white authors use blackness

as a literary device, right? Or as a motif, and it's through character, but it's through

shadow imagery, like all kinds of stuff. She says, "White authors use it like other

authors use water or flying." Or something like that, right? They use those motifs as

well, but she says, "White authors access blackness in particular ways that reinforces

cultural stereotypes and that associates it with negative imagery." She calls it the use

of the Africanist presence, and so the kids have that under their belt because we read

that book in the fall. So, for that moment, this is one of the passages we're going to have

group analysis for on Thursday, they have a framework for it, right? They have a

theoretical framework with which to interpret that moment where we have an inversion

of the social order because there's a white limousine driver, right? Morrison also talks

about the ways the Africanist presence shows up in a text and one of the ways is through

something she calls metaphysical condensation, which is that a person is condensed or reduced down to an animalistic state, and if you remember the description it was, "three bucks and a girl. . ." and so that's like the kind of condensation of those men, into animals at that precise moment. It happens again, when Wolfsheim shows up and he's described, there are six or seven references to his nose within two pages. Of course, it's an allusion to his Jewishness, but Morrison calls that metonymic displacement, where a trait stands in for a person.

Kirsten, through the study of non-fiction academic texts, gave students new information, a new vocabulary, and a new way to view works of fiction. The goal of this practice was to give students a way to move beyond a solely personal response to the text and towards a response to the texts that was dependent, rich, and disciplinary.

Although I have tried to isolate teaching moves in the interest of analysis, often these moves are artfully woven together. When studying *Citizen*, Kirsten made the following comments to her students,

Earlier in the year, we talked about the racial imaginary. Did you guys see *Get Out*? It's sort of like, you know the sunken place in *Get Out*, right? It's not exactly, but it's akin to the racial imaginary, the idea that there is a place where as a person of color you are trapped by others interpretation of you, of your existence, of your actions, of your words, of every aspect of your being. And so, when we think about the racial imaginary. . .that quote you brought up, Sadie, "Because white men can't police their imaginations, black men are dying." They can't police their imagination because the racial imaginary is over-determining how they respond to black bodies in the field. So, we talked also about Joe Feagin's work. He's the sociologist from UT Austin that I

told you about. We talked about the white racial frame, where there's a sort of framework of interpretation that white people have that enables us to rely on stereotypes about blackness to interpret the individuals in front of us. So all of this is about a failure of imagination on the part of white people to be able to see (this is another trope that has come up in Rankine's work) people of color as people and individuals.

Here, Kirsten artfully combined a pop culture film with the work of an academic to provide a theoretical framework with which to view a single sentence from *Citizen.* Although students were not asked for a response yet, the framework was provided so that students could use it to interact with other pieces of *Citizen*, with future texts, or to think about texts they have studied previously. When using previously studied texts and frameworks derived from academics, students were given a way to look at texts that approximates the way academics view and respond to texts. Out of the four teachers in this study, Kirsten may have had the most disciplinary approach to looking at works of fiction, which makes sense given that almost all of her students at the expensive private school she teaches in plan on going to at least a four-year college.

Jacob at Sawmill wanted students to put texts in dialogue with each other. His handout, given to students before they take part in the assignment, "Socratic Seminar: Putting Sources in Dialogue," reads,

Much of the work of our Socratic seminars is about putting sources in dialogue, as incorporating multiple points of view into our discussions on complex topics is central to meaning making. Indeed, it is best to think about our readings as a set of debates between reputable sources about important issues rather than texts to be memorized for their facts or quotes. It is the *student* who determines what is important and why,

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not only the individual authors. Here, then, the best Socratic seminars will show that students are conversant with the ideas in the readings, and, perhaps more importantly, that they are able to use their academic imaginations to make connections between key ideas in each text.

Jacob was explicit here with his students about what he wanted them to do with texts and why. Jacob did not want his students to memorize or mine texts just for facts and quotes. This is not how meaning is made. Instead, Jacob wanted his students to decide what ideas were important in each text and then to place these ideas in dialogue with each other. In this and other similar assignments, Jacob encouraged personal responses to text, but goes beyond that by also encouraging students to place themselves in a conversation between texts. Jacob wanted students' personal responses and dependent responses to be combined and transformed into personal meaning making.

This elicitation of a combination of personal and dependent responses was seen in his comments to students and also in his directions for assignments. After studying the ideas and texts of three French philosophers (Althusser, Deleuze, and Foucault), Jacob showed his students the Lady Gaga video, "Paparazzi." Before viewing the video, Jacob told his students,

> I have a couple of questions here for you that might be worth answering. If this
> doesn't make any sense to you, then feel free not to use it. But if it does make sense
> to you and helps to view the video in some way that's more critical, that's more
> questioning of what's been represented to you, then feel free to use it. So, three big
> questions here: What do you see here that challenges disabled subjectivities propagated
> by notions of biopower and ableism and what do you see that reinforces them? What
> do you think this communicates to abled and disabled audiences about disabled folks?

And then choose one of the thinkers we've studied, Althusser, Foucault, and Deleuze

and wonder what they would say about Gaga's new movie.

Jacob's comments showed his use of a combination of student choice (feel free not to use it),

attention to what the text actually says (What do you see here. . .), and putting texts in dialogue

with one another (wonder what they would say about Gaga's new movie). This assignment

encouraged students to use the ideas learned from French philosophers in a modern context. It

both pushed students to solidify what they had learned from texts previously studied and gave

students a new framework with which they could view a modern text. Students were, overall,

given tools, texts, and frameworks to make meaning in new ways.

Jacob had students put texts in dialogue with one another in multiple assignments. For

the "Commonplace Book Assignment," one of the types of entries students could make was

termed the "Burkean Parlor" Entry. The description of this type of entry on a hand-out given to

students reads,

> In the Burkean Parlor, we, as learners, enter into an ongoing, interminable conversation
>
> that started before us and will outlast us. One of the goals of this course is to provide
>
> you with the skills, knowledge, and context necessary to participate in these important
>
> conversations. Select two (or more!) different passages either from the same text or from
>
> different texts in order to understand how the texts are *in dialogue* with one another.
>
> Include the annotated passages as your image and write a bit about the (dis)connections
>
> among the works you selected. How do we, as learners and thinkers, mediate these
>
> conversations? How do the passages help you clarify ideas or complicate themes?

For the assignment "An Ideological Critique of a Public Place," part of the directions for students reads,

> Once you've selected a site, I want you to engage in an imagined conversation with a few of the various thinkers from this unit of study to do the work of an ideological critique. Write your imagined dialogue as you would a script, making space for each thinker, including yourself, to have a say. You must engage with two (2) other thinkers in this unit. When writing dialogue for our other thinkers, you're allowed to (and should) mix direct quotes with paraphrased evidence. Give these thinkers life; make their voice heard. Rather than writing about *every* element of your place writ large, I'd encourage you to select one or two elements to write about to make your task a little more manageable. It's also worth saying that the best assignments will not feature a ton of agreement between sources; indeed, the richest conversations will feature discussions about points of tension. The goal is not to "convince" or "persuade" here, but, instead, our outcome is to talk, to raise more questions than answers, and , ultimately, to think more deeply about a place in our community that might be familiar to us. Really dig into those layers that make our local palimpsest come to life.

In both of these assignments, students must put texts in dialogue with one another, but there is also room for students' thoughts as well. In the last assignment description, the ultimate goal is thinking. These assignments were designed to help students think about the texts they have read in relationship to each other, and in relationship to the students' personal response. Jacob's work of having students place texts in dialogue with each other and with themselves creates a new relationship between students and texts, where students were encouraged to not only respond

personally, but to also think critically about text-based ideas, while simultaneously being allowed to develop their own thinking in regard to these ideas. For Jacob, personal meaning making of texts was his ultimate goal for students.

Dynamic responses. Of the four teachers in this study, three explicitly promoted students' dynamic responses to texts. In other words, they expected and encouraged students' meaning-making processes to change and evolve throughout the course of a single work, and throughout the course of the year, as students encountered new information, had new experiences to bring to bear on the texts, and studied new texts.

Kirsten discussed dynamic student responses both over the course of a year, and also within a particular text. During one of our interviews she told me,

> I'm still discovering connections between the set of texts that I chose. So, I want a student to feel that we were always discovering as we were going, and that connection to what we had read in the past or ideas we had discussed in the past were not just going from isolated class to isolated class. That's been really fun because I think that it enables students to have this body of knowledge that we're building collectively, right? It makes us not think about literature as isolated, individual experience.

Much of this is the result of the aforementioned "no text left behind" policy in Kirsten's classroom. As previously studied works were constantly referenced in class, students had the opportunity to continue to discover connections between texts, and these connections potentially changed the meaning made from texts.

Kirsten also saw students' meaning-making process as dynamic as they progressed through a text. During an observation, she relayed to her students the following,

In a sense, what a book does, as you keep reading it, it teaches you how to read it, right?

But when you are first reading a book, you're like, I don't know. . .is this a style

I'm familiar with? Is this a point of view that I've encountered before? Who are these

characters? Can I remember their names? You're sort of getting your footing and you're

getting oriented within the story, and as you gain some momentum, that's how the book

teaches you how to read it, so that's why it feels easier 40 pages in than it does on page 1.

Kirsten expected dynamic responses to text from students as they progress through a novel.

Although she is there to guide her students, she also wanted students to be guided by the text, or

in her words, to be taught by the book how to read it. This takes time, and consequently, she

expected students' responses to evolve as they progressed through the text and learned to read it

from the book.

Jacob at Sawmill also emphasized students' dynamic response to texts. In one of our

interviews, he told me,

One of the things I have always toyed around with in this class is re-reading a piece

of familiar fiction that they have already read through a different lens and see how the

meanings change and see how the interpretations change, and how they make meaning

and how that changes as well. So, like, re-read *To Kill a Mockingbird* through those

different lenses and see how things shift.

In addition, on one of his assignment sheets handed out to students he wrote,

As a student, it is important to begin to shift your thinking about school and education

from getting the "right" answer or having the "correct" interpretation to developing

your critical imagination. The best students are those that are able to see new, interesting,

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and enlightening connections between texts; they can visualize and hear the cross-textual conversations. Those students use their imagination to develop new readings of old texts, and they bring these new readings to the fore.

Jacob encouraged new readings of old texts. Assignment and activities that had students put texts in conversation with each other and had them view one text through the ideas contained in other texts, made new readings possible.

Kyle also encouraged students to have a dynamic response to texts. During my observations of his teaching, he often repeated the phrase, "We read different texts differently based on what we need from that text." Although generally Kyle was trying to get through to students was that to make meaning from a text, students may have to look up words, phrases, or time periods, re-read difficult passages, take notes, etc. However, secondary to this is the message that students will undergo different meaning-making processes based on the students' purposes for reading. Reading an old text for a new purpose will potentially change the students' response to the text, and thus over time, the response will be dynamic.

Overall, all four teachers sought to engender student-text relationships. This work began with teacher moves designed to change reading practices by managing students' pace, preference, and persistence. However, these moves to change reading practices were really in service to changing students' responses to literature. Students were encouraged to have personal, dependent, and dynamic responses to text. Such responses are a hallmark of mean making, a dynamic and personal process where readers bring their entire being to bear on a text, but must also must also be able to stand apart from the text, critique it, see perspectives that are not their own, find literary puzzles, and theorize answers to them.

CHAPTER VI: Choosing and Organizing Texts, Employing Instructional Strategies, and Modeling Engagement

In the previous chapter, I outlined how Kirsten, Kyle, Jacob, and Carl crafted environments and engendered relationships to foster student meaning-making. This work primarily sought to impact the classroom context, the student, and the intersection of the student and the text. This chapter focuses on how these teachers seek to impact the text, classroom activities, and the intersection of the student, text, and activity through their work of choosing texts, employing instructional strategies, and modeling engagement.

The teachers in this study had different goals for their students. Jacob and Kyle wanted to maximize student meaning making, albeit through different means. Jacob sought to maximize student meaning-making through a focus on skill/strategy use and a focus on the process, while Jacob's focus was on helping students understand and use the ideas present in texts. Carl wanted to increase student achievement. Kirsten wanted students to view reading and the discussion of texts as part of their future intellectual life. Yet, in pursuit of their disparate goals, they all sought some level of meaning-making, which occurs at the intersection of the reader, the text, and the activity in the widely accepted model of literacy processes previously referenced. This chapter will examine how these highly regarded teachers chose texts, employed instructional strategies, and modeled engagement for the purpose of helping students make personal meaning of texts. In terms of the model of literacy processes, these teacher actions interacted dynamically with the reader and the context, but primarily shaped how the text was chosen and used (the

activity). More important, these teachers' actions provided a roadmap for how meaning making with literature can be taught to multiple readers (or meaning makers) simultaneously.

Choosing Texts: Organizing Meaningful Texts for Meaning-Making

The following section documents the types of texts teachers chose, the rationale for choosing these texts, and the method by which the teacher organized these texts into units in their classrooms. There is variance in type of text, rationale, and organization, however, these teachers each chose and organized texts with the aim of helping students make meaning.

For example, I observed Carl teaching *Introduction to Literature* and *Fantasy Literature.* During *Introduction to Literature*, Carl had students read a non-American novel of their choice, and also used a course pack filled with short stories, articles, and poems. For *Fantasy Literature*, Carl chose fantasy novels, novellas, and short stories. When discussing his rationale for using non-fiction texts in his *Introduction to Literature* class, Carl stated,

> My jaded perspective is now increasingly tied to the SAT, where only a third of the
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> passages they read are fiction, right? So, on the reading test they've got maybe one,
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> maybe two at the very most, literary passages and then the rest of them are science
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> or social studies. So, with that realization, I am increasingly introducing nonfiction
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> texts.

Each of the three other teachers in this study also used nonfiction texts, but Carl was the only teacher who used nonfiction texts to prepare students for the SAT. In fact, the SAT was never mentioned by any of the other three teachers in this study but was mentioned frequently by Carl. It is noteworthy that Carl described his perspective as "jaded." It seems to imply that he is not

entirely happy about this perspective but resigned to the reality that he must prepare students for standardized test, which can be a tiresome activity for a teacher.

When asked about the rationale he used for choosing the texts in the course pack, Carl responded,

> We were looking for diversity of authors, diversity of contexts, settings, but also, and maybe most importantly, diversity of syntactical challenge level, lexile level—some hard, some real hard ones, some real easy ones.

In addition, Carl stated,

> Consider the ultimate assessment tools, which are the SAT and ACT. Those experiences are predicated upon the 500-word essay. That's the new standard now and they can be a short story, a memoir, an article, but that is the essential text of our time. . .My curriculum has shifted drastically away from the novel and towards the short story and the poem. The shorter the better. I don't mean easier. What I mean is my typical unit, let's say my South American magical realism unit, is for homework we did a longer fifteen or ten page short story by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and then you come to class and we read a two page one [story] together. That's kind of the rhythm of the class and we're doing pretty well. We do well on the SATs.

Carl sees his job as giving students, "meaningful texts to pay attention to." In choosing "meaningful texts," Carl was attentive in providing a diversity in authors, contexts, settings, and reading level. In doing so, Carl was making it more likely that students could have a personal response to at least some of the texts in class. In addition, the diversity of "syntactical challenge" in his text selection does some of the work of balancing student access to text with

high expectations. Finally, the length of the pieces used by Carl in *Introduction to Literature* were chosen with the SAT and the ACT in mind, but also with the idea that shorter texts are the texts of "our time," and as such, students need to be familiar with such texts.

Teachers not only chose individual texts but chose sets of texts that had some connection to each other. When asked how he organized his chosen texts, Carl replied, "I like to organize my units thematically, geographically, and chronologically." This was seen in my observations of his units on Magical Realism, and early Anglo-Saxon literature studied in the *Introduction to Literature* class. Students were given a timeline of the works, which also included events in the time and region the text was written. In addition, Carl made thematic connections between the texts for students.

In contrast to his text selection process for *Introduction to Literature*, his *Fantasy Literature* class used novels instead of shorter texts. This may be due to the grade level of the students. Most of the students in the *Fantasy Literature* class were juniors and seniors, and consequently those aspects of text selection driven by tests could be abandoned, as most students had already taken the SAT.

Kirsten chose texts based on much different criteria from Carl. When asked how she selected texts, Kirsten replied,

> I pick things that I love. This is American Literature, so I think there are certain books that you should not be able to escape 11th grade American Literature without reading. I think there are three sort of canonical ones and then there are others that I have strong feelings about, right? The canonical ones are Emerson's essays, specifically "Self-Reliance" and "Nature," though not all of "Nature," as it becomes too overwhelming.

Then, part of Douglass's slave narrative, and *The Great Gatsby*. . .they are all pretty

canonical, and so I think that canonical texts like Gatsby get even more interesting

when you pair them with sort of non-canonical texts like Nella Larsen's *Passing*,

which is the novel we are going to read next. . .So, you can't have the luxury of only

choosing to teach things that you love and so you have to also be aware that you might

teach things that you wouldn't pick up on your own and read and find as interesting.

Kirsten viewed canonical texts as essential for English classes, and those canonical texts varied

depending on the class (*American literature, World literature, African-American literature*). Her

pairing of canonical texts with non-canonical texts (some of which, based on my observations,

were non-fiction), I posit is a disciplinary approach to text selection, and one that is congruent

with her PhD in English Literature. In choosing such texts, Kirsten was trying to ensure that her

students were familiar with the texts commonly studied in the discipline. Furthermore, in an

effort to include critical texts in the field Kirsten acknowledged that she did not love *every* text

she taught, but she did often choose texts she loves, during the teaching of which she shared her

enthusiasm for the language, the author's choices, and the overall work with her students. This

seemed at odds with Carl's method of text selection, as Kirsten was more concerned with the

canon than the literature of our time, and less concerned with testing and length. This is likely a

function of her background, training, and the context, where students were much more concerned

with AP scores than with SAT and ACT scores.

When Kirsten discussed her organization of texts for her classes, she stated,

I started teaching the African-American Literature class three years ago. I didn't know

how to organize the texts for that class. I thought, "Do I go chronologically? This

doesn't feel right. Do I go thematically? I don't know. Do I go by gender loosely?

I'm not sure." You know, I couldn't quite figure it out, so I thought, "Okay, well, I'm

kind of going to organize it actually according to gender.". . .I thought it would help

me to think about what the connections are between the texts that I chose. Like, I kind

of chose them on instinct, right? I mean, a little bit. I mean there was some, "I wanted

to make sure I have an author from this period or a text about this topic." Or "You really

can't teach African-American Literature without Toni Morrison so which of her novels

will I include?" Like, there's some of that decision making, but I'm still discovering

connections between the set of texts that I chose. So, I want a student to feel that we

were always discovering as we were going.

There was no one system of organization that she bought into. For Kirsten, the important thing

with the group of texts was that students could feel as if they were discovering connections as

they progressed through the course of study. Certainly, the texts were chosen with some

connections in mind. However, Kirsten's teaching of these sets of texts provided opportunities

for students and Kirsten to collectively discover new connections as they progressed.

Like Carl and Kirsten, my observation revealed that Kyle used a mixture of fiction and

non-fiction, and both shorter and longer texts. When discussing text selection, Kyle explicitly

told me, "Part of what I try to do is choose texts that are accessible to all students, but also are

going to challenge your high-end students." Kyle went on to explain how short stories by Jorge

Luis Borges could accomplish this. Kyle stated,

What's great is that they're not super long. Some of them are two pages long. Some

of them are four pages, five pages, but the ideas—it's super abstract and these riddles

within riddles, and all these contradictory images that make you think, "He's

contradicting himself, but it's intention al." So, all these labyrinths is what he calls them.

It's great, because I would argue that if the text were a novel, kids would really not

like it but because it's short, they look at it and go, "Alright, two pages? I can reread

this multiple times and I can unpack it, or I can think about it and come back to it."

In this case, Kyle used very short, complex stories to accomplish his goal of balancing

accessibility for all students and challenge for more advanced students. In using such a format,

Kyle felt that students were not overwhelmed by the length and could thus engage with the text

and use skills such as rereading, annotating, and questioning the text in order to unpack the text.

In this way, Kyle and Carl were very similar, in that they both saw the power of a short complex

text in teaching students how to make meaning.

Kyle did not organize his texts as any other teacher did. Instead of organizing by text, as

the other three teachers did, Kyle used complex texts as opportunities to systematically build

students' tools and skills in order to prepare them for the summative assessments, which were in

line with the school's International Baccalaureate curriculum. The texts were not presented

systematically, but instead the skills were taught systematically.

I observed Jacob teaching a *Humanities* course during a unit featuring French

philosophers. When I asked about the difference in text selection between his Humanities course

and a normal English course, he replied,

I think if we were doing fiction in a different type of English class, it would be very

much more like what we would expect in an English class, or what we think would be

traditional. I think you'd have to have a lot of conversations around symbolism and

imagery, which is really not what this class was designed to do. So, we learn all this

stuff and then we go back and apply it to fiction. So, we read through the lens of the

theory toolbox rather than through the lenses of, I'm going to look at diction. (In *Humanities*) I'm not going to do a traditional rhetorical analysis of a text. I'm going to do an ideological analysis.

For Jacob, the text selection and organization depended upon the class. In *Humanities*, philosophical texts were studied first, and then used as a lens in order perform ideological analyses of works of fiction. When Jacob teaches a traditional English class, he has a greater focus on language, how the language of the author impacts the reader, and a more traditional rhetorical analysis. As with all of the four teachers studied, Jacob's text selection and organization are dependent on the goals of the class, which for him revolve around identifying how different ideologies or world views shape both what an author writes and the meanings a reader makes. So, Jacob's text selection and organization focuses on engaging students with ideas, in contrast with Kirsten's focus on the canon, Kyle's focus on the process, and Carl's focus on test preparation and introducing students to exemplars of texts of "our time."

Employing Instructional Strategies

The instructional strategies captured during my observations and discussed during interviews certainly do not show all of the strategies used by any of these four teachers. Instead, this section is intended to show the instructional strategies commonly employed by these teachers in an effort to facilitate student meaning-making.

Based on my observations of and interviews I conducted with Carl, he used silent reading in class, questioning values in the text, constructing or offering analogies to clarify concepts, and teacher-led summarizing to help students make meaning of text. At least twice a week during my observations, Carl devoted a significant period of time in class (at least 30 minutes) to silent

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reading of a novel of the student's choice. When asked about this practice, Carl replied, "I see the job as giving them meaningful texts to pay attention to and growth happens. If I am able to adequately give them incentive, incentivize them in different ways to actually pay attention to the text, there will be growth." During observations, almost all students were silent and reading the entire time. The incentives were participation points for reading and an assessment based on the students' reading of their choice novel.

> Carl often looked at the values present in a text. During one of our interviews, he stated,
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> I think a useful discussion is to trace the plot to the point where someone has to make a moral decision. It's a tough decision about how to deal with this other person that they're in conflict with. Now talk about their choices. Kind of a fool proof way of having a discussion. Then you can interrogate those values and also interrogate the difference between your values and those of the person in the story.

Although Carl referred to "discussion" in the prior interview exemplar, during my observations, I never saw an exchange between or among Carl and his students. What's more, I never observed students themselves interrogating the values in a story. However, I did see Carl pointing out these moments for the class. For example, while studying the story, "Thorstein the Staff-Struck," Carl told the class,

> For my money, that's an interesting moment in the story because before he kills him, he asks for compensation. This is how their understanding of this is maybe different from ours. It's hard to imagine walking up to the bully on the playground, after he socks you, and demanding ten dollars, right? Give me ten dollars and I won't kick your butt. Or, I don't know, maybe you could do that. Or, if someone

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bashes your car you can sue them and then demand money, right? Not just the cost

of repairing the car, but more because there's honor involved. At any rate, we do

demand money sometimes in these conflicts.

Carl is attuned to those moments in the story where there is a moral decision made and he is

explicit about those moments with his students. However, he does not take every opportunity (or

any opportunity that I witnessed) to have students interrogate those moments on their own.

Carl's instructional strategy here seems to revolve largely around letting students inside his own

interpretive frames as a way of modeling thinking about text and teaching them information

relevant to text comprehension and meaning making. That said, in my admittedly limited

observations of Carl's teaching, I never saw him engage the students in a discussion that pushed

them to make their own interpretations, especially in his Grade 9 *Introduction to Literature*

course. In that respect, Carl's epistemological stance toward meaning making—at least for

Grade 9 students—seemed to revolve around modeling one's thinking and information transfer.

Carl also provided a summary of texts for students when the text was especially dense or

the language was complex and/or dated. Before reading *Beowulf*, I observed Carl showing an

animated movie of the story that used much of the original (translated) text. Before students

viewed the animated movie, Carl was explicit with them about why he was doing this. He told

his students,

You may be asking why I'm showing the whole story ahead of time and that has to

do with the high interest phenomenon. If you know about what you're reading about,

you're able to do two things much better. First of all, you're able to pay attention better

to what it is you're reading if you already know about that topic. And, interestingly,

you're able to remember what you read much better.

Carl uses summary to try to help his students "pay attention" and "remember." This fits with how he sees his job as primarily to give students opportunities to pay attention to meaningful texts. Two other teachers in this study also provided a summary of texts to students in some instances, however Carl's rationale was unique in that he focused largely on attention and memory, driven by what he believes students need to learn to do in the current time period. In addition, Carl's remarks to students are in line with cognitive research about providing an advance organizer to students. However, Carl did not just present an advance organizer, but the entire text in this instance. Consequently, I believe that his goal for his students with this particular text is that students become aware of and remember a culturally significant text.

Carl also used analogies to try to help his students understand texts. These often took the form of comparing values as mentioned previously, or through comparisons to pop-culture. For example, while teaching *Beowulf*, Carl made the following analogy,

> J.R.R. Tolkien's day job. . .He was an author at night. He would go to the pub or into his attic and write on a lap desk, I think. During the day, he was a teacher, professor at Oxford and his job was teaching *Beowulf*. He was actually translating the likes of *Beowulf*. He was an Anglo-Saxon scholar. He rips off many a scene and even names and things that people say. In fact, I would argue the tone of *Beowulf*, which is an elegy, is the tone of *The Lord of the Rings*.

The language of *Beowulf* is so dated and potentially unfamiliar to students that they may miss the tone of the work. Through an analogy to a popular book series (and subsequent movies), Carl helped students understand the tone of the text, which has the potential to assist in students' meaning-making from the text, although the goal of meaning-making may have been undercut through Carl's decision to show the entire animated film before reading the text.

Overall, with the exception of silent reading time, Carl used lecture to point students to conflict and moral decisions in stories, to give students information about a text, and to give students analogies useful for comprehending or making-meaning from texts. Reading across multiple interviews with Carl it became clear that the instructional methods he employed were aligned with his goal of helping students succeed on the SAT. The more practice they had in paying attention to a text, and the broader their knowledge base, the better they would be able to answer questions based on a text they had not read previously.

The most common instructional strategies employed by Kirsten were visible thinking routines employed in a disciplinary way. When asked about these routines, Kirsten told me,

> I can't tell them to go home and think about the book. They don't know how to do that. So the visible thinking routine sort of breaks down the process of thoughts. There's a sort of primary one I think that to me feels like the basis for everything, and it's *See, Think, Wonder*. So, it's like, what do you see in this text. This is noticing all of the language, really. Looking is just the level of observation. What do you see? What do you think is going on here? Like, why is this here? What is happening? What do you wonder about this?

During my observations in Kirsten's classroom, this never took the form of filling out worksheets. I am not sure whether students even knew that this instructional strategy was being employed. Instead, Kirsten used assignments and activities in her effort to get students to "see," "think," and "wonder" about texts. This visible thinking routine could have been given to students to use as an independent reading strategy, and indeed, Kirsten may have hoped the students would internalize the process, but she never explicitly assigned the strategy or asked students to document their responses. However, Kirsten's students, as a whole, do not really

struggle with reading. As a result, Kirsten took this reading strategy and turned it into an instructional framework, or a way that she could use assignments and activities to move students through texts.

One of the ways in which Kirsten tried to get her students to "see" a text was through rereading. When Kirsten directed her students to look at poems, or shorter passages within larger works, I observed that she generally had students read through the text more than once. When discussing this practice in an interview, she stated,

> When we study poetry, we read it multiple times out loud. I used to have students read poems for homework and students would come in, and we would read it once and then talk about it. I don't really have them read poems for homework anymore, and I think it's because they'll read them, but they won't stick. So we might as well eliminate the homework and read it together in class the first time and then read it two or three more times and then talk about what's happening.

Kirsten believes that rereading in class helps students to "see" what is in the text and that it forces students to do this before they move on to "thinking" and "wondering." From Kirsten's perspective, before students can make meaning from texts in an English class, students have to pay attention to the specific language used in a text, and rereading is one tool Kirsten used to accomplish this. It's worth noting that Kirsten paid attention to her students' reading practices and needs, and rather than demanding homework for the sake of homework, Kirsten changed her instructional practice. She took an asset-based stance on the fact that the poems didn't seem to "stick" when the students read them on their own. Instead of assuming that her students lacked the capacity to learn the poetry, she assumed that she needed to teach them the poetry. Her

students' learning and meaning making was a higher priority for her than was enforcing a homework policy.

Often, in Kirsten's class, rereading was not done in isolation. A number of times during my observations, I saw rereading paired with other activities. When Kirsten had students reread a smaller passage from *The Great Gatsby*, she also had them circle verbs and adjectives in an effort to help students notice the type of language that was being used in the passage. In addition, during two of the novels I watched Kirsten teach, she had her students track motifs in the text. The goal was to help students to "see" the patterns being used in the texts.

Kirsten's efforts to get students to "see" the text were sometimes idiosyncratic, and dependent upon a unique text. For example, when discussing her teaching of *The Great Gatsby*, Kirsten told me,

> Chapter seven in Gatsby, which is the scene in the hotel where everything comes to a head, I have sometimes treated that like a play because there's so much dialogue. We'll set up the hotel room and I'll just read the narrator parts and kids play the different roles. That's a really interesting thing to do because you see how quickly their conversation is moving and you get a sense of the tension in the scene which you don't really get if you are just reading through it.

Kirsten believed that in this particular passage, it was difficult for students to "see" the pacing, tone, and tension in the text. Consequently, Kirsten had students enact the scene as part of her effort to get students to really "see" the text in a new way. Kirsten used many opportunities to direct her students' attention to the text, the language used in the text, and the patterns evident in the text.

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In an effort to help students not skip any of the steps in the see, think, wonder routine, Kirsten sometimes used summary. While discussing this strategy, Kirsten explained,

There are poems that I've taught where kids have just woefully misinterpreted what's happening. . .Then what happens sometimes is that their interpretation sort of twists up in their minds as they are working through it and you have to talk them down. You're like, "Well, no, it's a poem about cooking." or "This is a poem about a seashell. Let's get that level first. This is a description of a seashell. Then we can ask the question about why this matters. So, this is a description of a seashell. Well, who's the speaker? What is the point of this description? What is it trying to tell us? Can we connect it to something about nature or about serenity or about whatever?" I think sometimes with poetry if you go back to that see, think, wonder, I think they skip the see step. Or maybe they skipped the think step and go from see to wonder and they don't have that middle part where they are puzzling through the things that they notice about the language and saying, "This could work. . .Oh no, this doesn't work."

Kirsten's use of summary differed from Carl's. While Carl used summary with the aim of helping students pay attention to and remember the text, Kirsten used summary to prevent students' misinterpretation from coloring their ability to "see" the text, and to try to help students continue to puzzle over the text. Distinguishing between paying attention to the text and "seeing" the text may seem like hair-splitting. However, the distinction is drawn into sharper relief when looking at the end goals of the process. Carl wants his students to be able to answer literal and interpretive questions about the text. Kirsten wants students to be engaged in the

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process of noticing the language used in the text, thinking about the language used in the text and the impact that language has on readers, and then wondering about the text.

After trying to help students "see" the text, Kirsten employed instructional strategies to try to help students think about the text. When discussing the students' work in tracking motif, Kirsten told me what was coming next in her class

> So, time is a motif in Gatsby and the theme that that connects to is the idea of nostalgia, or the past always being with us and never being able to escape it. And in Gatsby, there are clocks, watches, dates everywhere, right? There's are these ways that that motif shows up in the story, but I don't want to just tell them that, right? So, on Wednesday we are going to look at some examples of different themes and motifs and how they might show up in a story. We're not going to attach it to a particular story. So, I've come up with a list of things like, power struggle is a theme and maybe the motif is corruption. You might get in a novel something like gambling, or lying, or cheating on a partner, or all these ways that corruption kind of shows up. So, I'm going to give them a theme and a motif and I'm going to have them brainstorm the concrete ways that it will show up, and then talk about how that relates to figurative language, imagery, metaphor, simile, diction.

At this point, Kirsten attempted to ensure her students were very clear on what a theme and a motif were. The point of this activity was to help students "think" about what they "see" in the text. The goal of this activity was to assist students in understanding that the language and the patterns that an author uses and the choices that an author makes contribute to the meaning of the text. In using this activity with an unspecified text, Kirsten relayed this information to students so that they could later use what they have personally uncovered by tracking motif to think about

how the motif relates to the specific language used in and the overall meaning of *The Great Gatsby*.

Kirsten was careful in not usurping the "thinking" step from her students. During one of my observations, when she had students circle verbs and adjectives in a passage, she then directed them to think about the relationships between the words and find patterns. When I observed her rereading a poem multiple times with the students, the pattern was noticing the text first, and then thinking through how the language contributed to meaning. After having students choose their own motifs to track during the course of reading *The Great Gatsby*, Kirsten taught a lesson on how to generally relate a motif to theme and then had students collectively engage in this work in class with the specific motifs they had tracked. Sometimes the work of thinking was given to the individual student and sometimes, as in this case, it was given to the class to engage in collectively, but during my observations it was never usurped by Kirsten.

During one of my observations, as students were beginning to read *The Great Gatsby*, Kirsten explicitly asked students what they were wondering about in the text. After eliciting a number of student responses, Kirsten told her students, "As you're reading, all of these things should remain as questions. Some you'll answer along the way. Some you'll wrestle with and you'll get new questions as we go." This statement by Kirsten revealed why this "See, think, wonder" routine was never done in the form of a worksheet. This is not a linear process, especially when studying a novel. Students' wonderings may occur fairly early in the process and may be satisfied through engaging in "seeing" and "thinking." Although none of the steps should be skipped, they should happen over and over again during the course of reading a longer work such as a novel.

Kirsten employed the "see, think, wonder" routine in ways that were very discipline specific. She communicated to her students that reading done in one discipline is very different than reading done in other disciplines. During one of my observations, she was very explicit about disciplinary reading with her students. She stated in class,

> I would say the way to characterize that in history we have to do the "what" and in English, we have to do the "how," like, how is something being said. . .Language always does stuff. Even that sort of factual language in your history textbook is sort of doing stuff, right? Our job in English class is to figure out what language is doing to us and how do we make sense of it as readers and unraveling, explaining, looking for literary devices (similes, metaphor, imagery, anaphora, like whatever millions of literary devices there are) noticing those things is sort of one way in to realizing that language does stuff. I always think of it like a puzzle, like you're trying to figure out how to unlock this puzzle or how to fit the pieces together in your mind for how this text is having an impact or effect on you.

Having this as her view of reading in English class mirrors that of scholars in the discipline who seek patterns within texts; identify strangeness, surprise, or confusion within texts; articulate interpretive puzzles; recursively considering interpretive possibilities with texts; consider histories of use and other contexts; and make original claims about texts. (Rainey, 2015, p. 76). This stance means that the "see, think, wonder" routine she employed is focused on identifying patterns in the language of the text, thinking about these patterns, and identifying puzzles. The work of students then is to fit these characteristics or puzzle pieces together to form a unitary reading of the text. This is using the practices of the discipline to make meaning.

Kirsten also employed disciplinary lenses within her classroom. As she began studying accounts of early interactions between American Indians and Europeans, she told her class,

So, there are a couple of things that I have up on the board for us to sort of have back in our wheelhouse from last week that should help with our discussions today, and tomorrow, and Friday and one of them is over there, and it's the list of words in our shift from the old paradigm to the new paradigm for thinking about American literature and also about encounters between American Indians and Europeans. And we learned that the old paradigm is this sort of "discovery" paradigm, which is kind of this monolithic narrative where there is a linear march from east to west and the land is taken over and conquered by Europeans. The focus in American literature as a result of that narrative has been Eurocentric and focused on New England and it remains pretty decontextualized. We start to hear that narrative as early as elementary school with Columbus discovered America and conquered the land, or whatever, right? The new paradigm that has emerged in the last couple of decades within American literary scholarship is a paradigm based on "encounter." So, we're shifting from discovery to encounter, and with that we get a much more dynamic paradigm that's messy, and complicated, and much more rich, and interesting if we're starting to think about how we can read between the lines of these European colonial texts. The words that we got from our readings last week are movement, network or web, multiplicity, hybridity, negotiation, improvisation, transnational, expansive or inclusive, dis-unity, intercultural, interactive, and contextualize. Those were our words that you guys pulled out and I added to that list so that we could

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kind of develop a lexicon or critical vocabulary for talking about these moments

of encounter between Europeans and Native Americans.

Here, Kirsten gave her students a lens that came directly from American literary scholarship,

with the aim of coloring how students "see" the text, "think" about the text, and "wonder" about

the text. Students were, through the use of such lenses, introduced into the discipline, and how

the discipline can use an ideological lens, such as feminism, Marxism, post-modernism, etc., to

view texts. These disciplinary lenses gave students a new way to make meaning from the text.

As an English teacher, Kirsten had to incorporate more than one discipline into her class,

however. Not only did she have to be concerned with literary studies, but also rhetoric and

composition. While studying Abby Wambach's graduation speech at Barnard College in 2018,

the following was on the board in her class as she taught her students to analyze the speech using

the discipline of rhetoric.

Ethos:

[Appeal to] Credibility

--arete=moral virtue

--phronesis=skills/widom

--eunoia=good will to audience

Logos: Appeal to logic/reason, clarity, organization, evidence, #'s

Pathos: Appeal to emotion, anecdotes/stories, description, diction, repetition

Kirsten used lenses from the appropriate discipline when studying texts. When looking at a

speech such as this, she employed a lens from the study of rhetoric. As before, when employing

a lens from literary studies to look at colonial accounts, she is still directing students to "see, think, and wonder." She is still encouraging students to pay attention to language and the impact it has on the reader. But she did this in a different disciplinary context.

Kyle's most observed instructional strategies included metacognitive tool development by students, a systematic meaning-making progression, and the use of a disciplinary approach to texts. At the beginning of the school year, I watched Kyle teach a particularly dense, but short, text. Before going over the content of the text, Kyle taught annotating a text, so students could then annotate this particular text. In teaching annotation, Kyle first had students brainstorm the purpose of annotation. Students provided answers, and Kyle wrote their answers on the board, often rewording or adding to their answers. At the end of the brainstorming session, the following was on the board,

What is the purpose of annotation?

- Better understanding of text to our own thoughts

- Analyze + criticize----interacting/conversation

- Forces active reading

- Personal interaction

- Metacognition

- Uncover bigger ideas

- Notice details

- Organize thoughts

- Unpacking a complex text

Immediately following this, Kyle again engaged in a brainstorming session with students about the ways in which they could annotate. As a result of this brainstorming session, the following was written on the board:

What are the ways we could annotate?

- Highlight important parts

- Circle topics of discussion

- Lines/connections

- Notes/observations/comments

- Summarize—use abbreviations

- Color-coding

- Boxing lit. terms

- Predictions

- Personal connection

- Arrows

- Notes in different areas

- Identify themes, motifs, symbols

- Asking questions---seeking answers

- List of characters

- Definitions of words

- Draw pics

- Plot map

- Brackets

At the end of this brainstorming session, Kyle commented to his students, "Try some of these and see what works for you and for the text." Kyle wanted students to see the purpose of annotation. He mandated annotations. However, there was no required type of annotations for students. There was no required number of annotations for students. Instead, Kyle taught students to purposefully develop unique tools that worked for both the student and the text as they sought to make meaning.

Later, when elaborating on this type of instruction in an interview, Kyle stated, "I ask students what skills they need to approach this text. Maybe you need to look up words you don't know. Maybe you need to understand something about the form?" In essence, Kyle's instructional strategy was to present tools to students, and then have students decide which tools work best for them for a specific text. During observations I saw Kyle presenting such tools and reading strategies, talking about their potential usefulness, and then giving students a choice of what tools or strategies to use. In this way, Kyle sought to equip students for meaning-making, and give students the responsibility for their own meaning-making.

During my observations, I noticed a progression in the way Kyle moved students through texts in his class. When asked about this during an interview, Kyle responded,

> A lot of what I try to do is a lot of informal work in the beginning. So, getting them
> to jot down notes, make lists, circle things that they notice, look up denotations. The
> goal of that is trying to get them to reflect on what they're thinking. "So, I'm thinking
> these things in my brain as I'm reading. Let me write down what I'm thinking.
> Then, the next step is to kind of step back and look at, alright here's the things that
> I was thinking about. What patterns do I notice? Oh, I notice this, this, and this, so
> I'm going to write these down. Now I'm going to go and write a little bit more formal

piece, maybe two or three pages on what I was thinking about or noticing, and then maybe we're going to bring that to a discussion as well and maybe then I'm going back to my writing and I get to revise it even more. Then it's going to lead to something larger, like a larger presentation." So, I think a lot of that is trying to get students to start with thinking, then look at their thinking, then develop it a little bit more, and ultimately develop something that they're interested in and something that they feel like has a larger value that they want to bring to a larger sort of class discussion.

In many ways this is similar to Kirsten's use of "see, think, wonder" to move students through a text. Kyle directed students to look at the text, and to vacillate between looking and thinking using informal writing and discussion. Kyle's goal was for students to continue looking and thinking until they developed their thoughts enough for a formal piece of writing or discussion.

Kyle, like Kirsten, took a fairly disciplinary approach to texts. Kyle pulled critical passage from novels in order for students to perform a close reading of these critical passages. When asked about his definition of close reading, Kyle responded, "Close reading would be spending time to really look at on sort of a word and sentence level, what an author is doing." During one of my observations, I witnessed one of these close reading sessions for the last paragraph of the novel, *Things Fall Apart*. In the beginning of class, Kyle told his students,

The second thing that we're going to start today is we're going to start a close reading of the last paragraph of the book. You might remember that last paragraph is written. . . the district commissioner is writing his book. . .The purpose of that close reading is for us to look really closely at what Achebe's doing with the ending of the text, and what he's doing in terms of language, right? And what he's doing in terms of that paragraph in terms of language but also in terms of the content of the book itself.

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Kyle asked his students to look at the language in the last paragraph, to think about the language of the last paragraph, and to think about the relationship between the language and the content of the book as a whole. In essence, he asked students how the language of the last paragraph impacts the reader and the reader's view or interpretation of the book as a whole. I posit that this is a distinctly disciplinary approach to text, and one that mirrors Kirsten's.

Kyle also used disciplinary academic articles in his class, although I never witnessed this in my observations. During one of our interviews, Kyle stated,

> We do a lot more with it (JSTOR) next semester, in terms of pulling in literary criticism. We tried to also. . .students can get inundated when they pull it up and it's like 15 pages. So we do a lot of pulling excerpts of literary criticism so they can get used to what it feels like to read that and also consider different perspectives and to see how people are writing about literature.

Kyle's approach here can be contrasted with Kirsten's approach. Kyle used excerpts, while Kirsten used full pieces, including a fairly lengthy book of literary criticism by Toni Morrison. Kyle introduced his students to different perspectives used by literary scholars, while Kirsten had students use such perspectives or lenses as a way to make-meaning from texts. Kyle's students were introduced into the discipline, while Kirsten's students were immersed in the discipline. This may be due to a difference in teachers, as Kirsten had earned a PhD in English literature. It may be due to a difference in students and their reading levels. Most probable is that the differences were due to a combination of the two.

Jacob, in an effort to maximize student meaning-making, employed the use of reading strategies, summary, and ideological and theoretical lenses When asked how he prepared students to read dense, complex texts, Jacob responded,

One of the things I do is give kids reading strategies that they can use to navigate texts. . .so QTI's, questions, thought and insight about a text, 5 A's protocol, agree, argue, what you find awesome, I forget the other two now. You know, ruminate. Choose a passage and go really in depth about what it means to you, and connects to you, and making some personal inroads for the students who need it. Paraphrasing lines multiple times to try to really get down to brass tacks to what it might mean, and how it might mean. So, giving them strategies are a huge part with a complex text.

These reading strategies were explicitly given to students in an effort to make texts more accessible to students. However, strategies were never mandated, and students had a choice about which strategies to employ for a certain text. During one of my observations, Jacob gave students a handout with spaces to take notes on a text under the headings of "see," "think," and "wonder" but then told students to use those categories only if they found them helpful. The goal for these strategies was text accessibility and Jacob was open to students using any strategy they found useful.

In addition to teaching reading strategies, Jacob used summary to increase text accessibility. For some of the more complex texts, Jacob provided a handout that included a summary of each and every paragraph in the text. Students were thus given access to the ideas in the complex text. This was critical for Jacob's class as he started the year with three French philosophers, and then used the ideas within these texts as lenses to view other texts, and to put into dialogue with other texts. If students did not have access to the ideas, they could not have

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accomplished future tasks, their participation would have been limited, and their ability to make meaning in the future would have been hampered.

One of the primary ways in which Jacob attempted to help students make meaning from text is through using the ideological or theoretical lens from one text to view another. When discussing this in an interview, Jacob stated,

> We talked about this the other day. If you came back to *The Great Gatsby* with a theory toolbox lens, how would that change your view? No longer may it be about the American dream. It could be about something completely different. So, I'm going to take a post-modern lens. I'm going to look at it through queer theory, or I'm going to take an ideological reading and run it through those lenses. You might get something different. So these are the things we experiment with and try every day about how we get into text, how we make meaning from it, and how the meaning can shift depending on who we are and what lens we're using and where we shift. I think there's a lot to say here too probably about perspective taking as a way of meaning making. . . So, we talked about bell hooks and developing a positional gaze, a different perspective that allows us to encounter things in an empathetic way.

Jacob uses theoretical and ideological texts, and theory in general, to give students a new way to make meaning of texts. Jacob seeks to impart to his students that the meaning can change depending on the lens used. In addition, Jacob wants his students to learn, through the use of lenses, perspective-taking and empathy. In this commonly used practice in his *Humanities* class, there was less focus on the use of language and its impact on the reader, and a much greater focus on the content and ideas presented in the text. According to Jacob, the focus would have been different had I observed an English class.

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Modeling Engagement

Carl rarely modeled engagement in his classroom. He did, however, sometimes model his enthusiasm over literature, and also engaged in some of the assignments or activities with his students. During one of my observations before they began studying *Beowulf*, Carl told his class, "*Beowulf* is going to be fun, interesting, engaging! There's a dragon!" It should be noted that this was spoken with genuine excitement. Carl showed an enthusiasm for literature that I consider a way to model engagement with literature.

During one of my observations, students had time to read a non-American novel of their choosing. Before the period of silent reading started, Carl told the class, "So dig out your choice reading book. I'm going to do the same. I'm going to adjourn to my desk over there." Carl did not always read his own book during silent reading time, but he did frequently. Certainly, as a teacher, there was much work he could have been doing. However, his reading with the students sent the message that reading a book of your own choosing has value for Carl and he was asking students to do something that he also engaged in with regularity.

Carl also completed some of the assignments he asked students to complete, and then used his assignment as a class example. During one of my observations in his *Fantasy Literature* class, Carl had students create a movie trailer for a fantasy world they had created. The trailer was supposed to be brief and use parallelism. Carl had created his own trailer as an example to students. This was very brief (three sentences long) and was the only time I saw Carl complete an assignment along with his students.

Kirsten modeled engagement with the text often and in a number of ways. Kirsten modeled her enthusiasm for language, curiosity, the process of discovery, and outside reading for

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her students. Kirsten constantly shared her enthusiasm for language. The following were comments by Kirsten overheard during my observations: "Ghastly's a great word!" "No one can approximate Fitzgerald's language in a paraphrase!" "In Fitzgerald, the language is gorgeous!" When asked about this aspect of her teaching, Kirsten replied,

> You can appreciate how beautiful the language is without knowing the definition of a metaphor, right? You can appreciate how rich her description of Teacake is when she first sees him without taking the time to analyze every single element. I just think those are the moments of pleasure as a reader that really stick with me and I figure that sharing them with students and letting them know it's okay to be excited and in awe of this. I think that's a good thing, to just sort of share that enthusiasm or passion. . .I think some of it is coming from me, like personality-wise, and I think some of it is I just want students to see that reading can be a joyful experience.

Certainly Kirsten, who has her PhD in English Literature, was passionate and enthusiastic about language. She made this passion and enthusiasm very public in her class. She loves books and language and wanted to impart this love to her students, so that they could also find, pleasure, joy, and enthusiasm through reading. Although scholars in the discipline of literature read texts they are not in love with, I posit that Kirsten's enthusiasm and passion for language and many texts is an attribute shared by those in the discipline.

Kirsten also modeled reading outside of class in a few ways. First, she told students about avid readers that she knew. During an interview, she stated, "I talk about my husband being a big reader, and he's a physician. My best friend's a scientist and she's a big reader. So, sometimes I just talk about the people in my life that are readers also." Through referencing

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these friends and family, Kirsten communicated to her students that it is not just English teachers who are big readers. People of any profession and walk of life enjoy and find passion in reading.

During one of my observations, I also witnessed Kirsten telling her students how her setting at home impacted her reading. She intimated to them,

> If I'm allowing myself to text, or if I'm allowing myself to multi-task, like cook dinner and then read a little bit and then go back and check on whatever. . .I rarely cook though, so that's not a problem. But if I allow myself to do other things and kind of go back and forth, then it's harder for me to get into a story. If I say I'm going to give myself thirty minutes of quiet and I'm just going to read this book, it happens much more quickly for me.

Kirsten, through her words and not her actions, was modeling for students how to "get into" a book. This was a response to reports from students who claimed they rewarded themselves with texting after reading a page or two. Although Kirsten is an expert in the field of literature, she let students know that even she has more trouble reading in a distracted setting. If students took her words to heart and followed her model, they may have improved their reading environment at home.

Kirsten also modeled curiosity for her students. In addition to comments such as, "I wonder why the author did that?" and "I wonder if those two things are connected?", Kirsten told her students, "You guys know I've read this book like a million times, right? But I'm still finding my way through it. So, as you read it is important to raise questions and keep your curiosity active!" Kirsten modeled her curiosity and let students know that she was still curious.

She was still finding things in the text. And if she was still curious about a text she has read over and over, certainly her students could be curious as well.

Kirsten also modeled discovering new things in the text. She would reread texts and make further annotations as she taught them again each year. During an interview, she told me,

I show them my texts, which are pretty heavily marked because I remark as I reread and I say, "Your book does not have to look like this. You are not on your 12th read of *The Great Gatsby*, so you don't need it to look like this, but I do want you engaging with the text."

In addition to modeling annotations, Kirsten also tracked specific motifs along with her students. She not only brought to light the connections she had found through tracking motifs, but more importantly, she made visible her uncertainty with comments to students such as, "I think that is a motif that is rolling through the text, but I don't really know how to make sense of it yet." She also made visible her thinking when she did not find connections that she was pursuing. During one of our interviews she told me,

We had some motifs up on the board and I was like, "Well, I keep thinking about X." And I was like, "Well, I don't know if this works, and I don't want you guys to assume that because I'm the teacher that this will work, but I'm really struggling with whether this and this are connected. . .Actually, I don't think that this works." And I kind of back away from it.

It is critical that Kirsten modeled not only successfully making connections within the novel, but also that she modeled unsuccessful attempts at making connections. Kirsten was willing to make herself vulnerable in class in this way because she understood that not all attempts at discovering

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something new within a novel are successful. Successful attempts are often only made possible

by many unsuccessful attempts. In total, Kirsten modeled the process of discovering new things

about a text.

Kyle modeled his enthusiasm about the text and made visible his reading process while

reading a dense, complex text. During one of my observations, Kyle excitedly told students he

was going to get to meet the author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, whom students knew from

watching her TedTalk "The Danger of a Single Story." During one of our interviews, Kyle

revisited that interaction with his students

> I model things as well. A lot of that is me trying to model my own curiosity in terms
>
> of the text. So, part of what I'm doing is showing them that I'm actually interested
>
> in the text and then, you know, excited about it. I think you were probably here when
>
> I talked about Chimamanda Adichie, right? Like, I intentionally was being very
>
> excited, as I naturally am, but I wanted to share that with them as opposed to hiding
>
> that or not even telling them about that. I'm excited to hang out with an author and
>
> be able to hear an author speak because these are the things that I'm interested in, that
>
> I'm passionate about.

Kyle's enthusiasm was expressed in slightly different terms than Carl's or Kirsten's. While Carl

was enthusiastic about the content of text, and Kirsten about the language used in text, Kyle

expressed his enthusiasm for meeting an author. I suggest that this is an enthusiasm expressed

for the field of literature.

The main way Kyle modeled engagement was through making his reading process visible

as he engaged with a text. He did this almost every time I observed in his classroom. The

following remarks to students, given while studying a dense non-fiction text, is the best exemplar.

> For me, I had to stop and I'm so used to, and you might be used to this too, reading something non-stop. I'm reading, reading, reading, and I'm understanding what the author is saying and then I'm done. A text like this, I had to read, stop, look up something, write it down, rethink about it, maybe reread it, keep reading. So know that this might be a different or a new type of reading that you're doing. It will slow you down a bit sometimes, but that's okay. It's a different type of text that requires you to do that. I want you to be aware of that going in. Read different texts differently based on whatever that text needs. And so sometimes that means you're going to have to stop, reframe, reread something, rethink about something, write something down. This might be a new process, especially if you are used to reading something straight through and then being able to talk about it.

In making his reading process visible, Kyle was teaching reading strategies in a different way than elaborated earlier. In addition, Kyle was letting students know that even the teacher has to read texts like this slower. Even the teacher has to look things up. Even the teacher needs to reread and rethink ideas. Students hopefully understood that these are not the strategies of deficient readers, but the strategies of expert readers when they encounter texts that are dense and complex.

During observations of Jacob's classroom, I saw him model very little, but I did see students using reading strategies, problematizing texts, and taking the perspective of others which Jacob claimed he had modeled for students previously. When I asked him in an interview how he modeled engagement with texts for students, Jacob replied,

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Almost every day there is a lot of modeling of textual engagement. I'm like, "Okay, this is how I read. These are the strategies that I would use when I read this text." Even in the feedback I'm like, "I'm noticing this. Have you considered this strategy based on this?". . .I have to show them this, because they don't know, how do I problematize something? What does it mean to do that? So, in class we go, "Okay, we're going to take a chunk and we're going to sit here and puzzle through it and problematize it. What are we missing? What's the author missing? What have they not accounted for and who have they not accounted for? So, I think you can model those strategies by what you do with text in class every day. It's really important. . . So, I think there's a lot to say here too probably about perspective taking as a way of meaning-making. So, I'm making meaning as a white, cis-het male, but I also have to make meaning as a black lesbian woman, and putting on those oppositional gazes, and thinking about how different perspectives can lead to different meanings, that's part of the epiphany of the other they were talking about. Like, that's how you do it. It's the Levi Strauss thing about how you can inhabit someone else's subject position and that's true empathy.

Jacob modeled reading strategies, problematizing texts, and perspective taking. Although I did not see Jacob modeling these in class, I did see activities and assignments that involved at least one of these three every day that I observed his class. Certainly his students had learned to do these from somewhere, and I trust that Jacob modeled these at the beginning of the year before I began my observation in his *Humanities* class and then continued to have students engage in these practices.

In modeling engagement, there was, once again, variance among the teachers. However, the variance certainly suggests that each of these teachers engaged with texts differently, albeit enthusiastically. Carl's engagement was contingent on the purpose for reading. Jacob's engagement was marked by perspective taking and problematizing texts. Kyle's engagement was focused on process, and Kirsten's was a very disciplinary type of engagement. These types of engagement are the product of the backgrounds, training, experiences, and even dispositions of each particular teacher.

Each of the four teachers focused on meaning making to some degree while making moves to choose and organize texts, employ instructional strategies, and model engagement. Although these moves contained some similarities across all four teachers, they were employed in unique ways due to the teachers' backgrounds, dispositions, and beliefs about meaning making, students, and epistemology which informed each of their practices.

CHAPTER VII: Conclusions and Implications

In this study, I was guided by the following research questions: How do these four highly regarded ELA teachers work to foster student meaning-making by shaping the classroom contexts, texts, readers, and activities? Specifically, what do these teachers think about and what do they do when they are working to foster student meaning- making? It is important to remember that this study looked solely at the teachers, what they did to foster meaning-making, and how they thought and talked about their work.

It is also important to revisit my definition of meaning making from Ch. II. In my conceptual framework, making meaning is a dynamic, socially-embedded reading process where a reader brings their whole being to bear on a transaction with the text. This includes the reader's social purposes for reading, identity, skills, previous reading experiences, knowledge, and emotions. This makes the act of reading a personal and immersive experience. Simultaneously, in order to make meaning, readers must also be able to stand apart from the text, critique it, see perspectives that are not their own, find literary puzzles, and theorize answers to them. This dynamic process is at odds with reading that simply gleans facts, seeks right answers, or views meaning as static. Instead, the meaning-making process is one where the reader asks questions, seeks answers, tests ideas, makes connections, finds textual puzzles, and focuses on the effect of the language used on the reader. This view of meaning making, along with the following figure derived from the literature, guided my design, data collection methods, and analysis.

Figure 3: Student Meaning Making in the Classroom
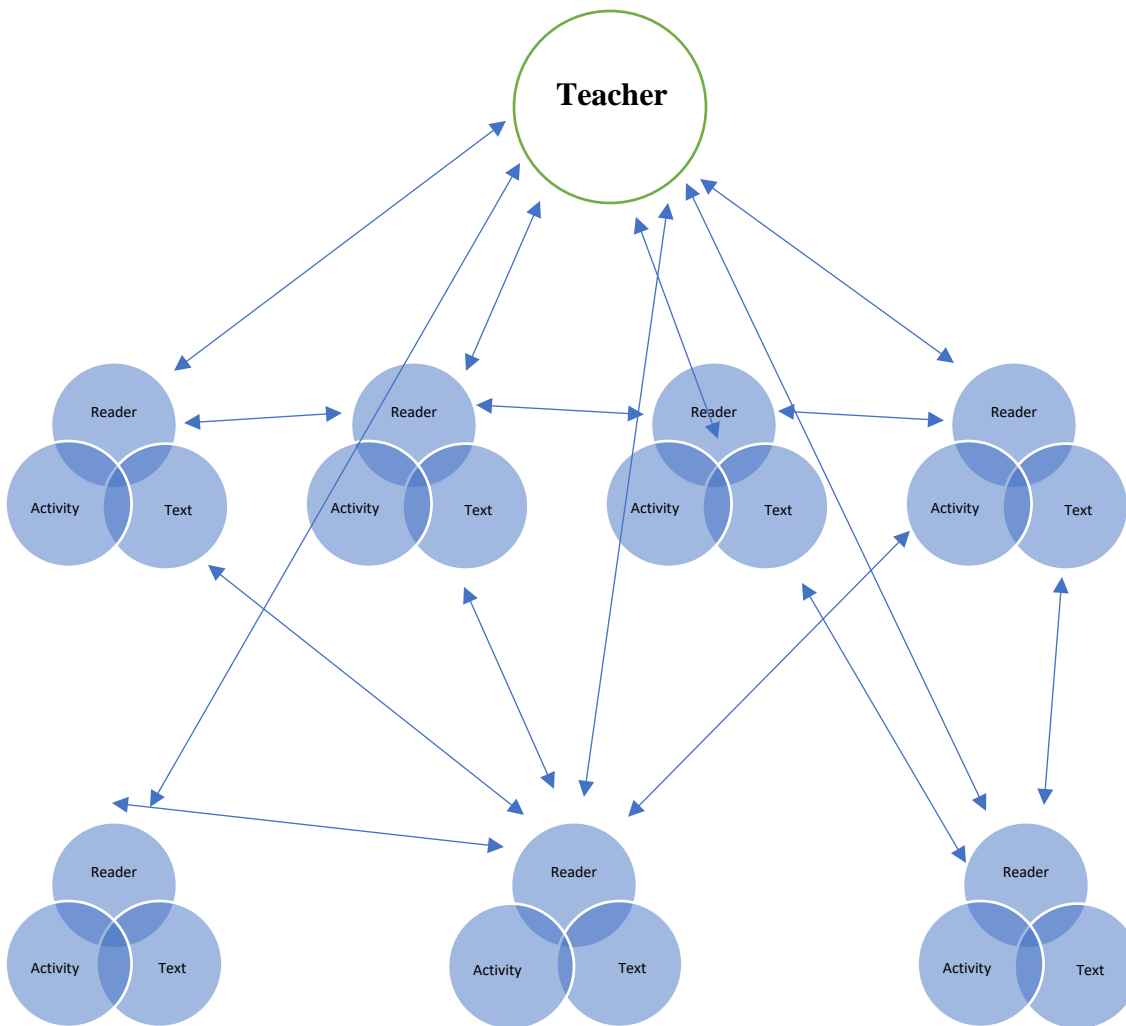
Meaning-making Teacher: Motivates students; sets purpose for reading; develops and leverages knowledge of students; plans for the cognitive and social development of students; considers the identities of students; chooses and organizes texts to foster meaning making; fosters intertextual and personal connections; taps into students' funds of knowledge; builds trusting, learning-focused relationships; presents appropriate menu of strategy use; takes students seriously as thinkers; is responsive to students; uses/models multiple perspectives; uses disciplinary vocabulary in discourse/conversation; shares power with the students; engineers activities to foster meaning making

An analysis of semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and hand-outs given to students showed that these teachers engaged in five general teaching moves. They 1) crafted environments, 2) engendered relationships, 3) chose texts, 4) employed instructional strategies, and 5) modeled engagement with texts. Many of the practices and moves of the teachers in this study were supported by current research, however this study shows the practices these teachers employed as they carried out these moves. In addition, there are some teacher moves and practices that have not been heretofore examined in isolation or in combination, and this study provides fodder for further research.

Crafting Environments: Making Students Feel Safe, Valued, and Responsible

In three of the four classrooms, the teachers intentionally crafted classroom environments meant to make students feel safe, valued, and responsible. These three teachers tried to help students to feel safe through impressing on them the fact that questions were expected and providing many opportunities for low-stakes practice where students were encouraged to try out new ideas without the fear of failure. Overall, these three teachers attempted to craft environments where students felt safe enough to take intellectual risks and to try out ideas that may not work. Intellectual risk-taking and trying out new ideas are critical steps in making meaning of a text within the context of a classroom (Applebee et al., 2003). Without engaging in intellectual risk-taking and trying out ideas, students become passive recipients of information rather than active makers of meaning.

Learned (2016) found that trusting, learning focused relationships coupled with disciplinary teaching was associated with proficient or improving reading. However, this study in combination with the existing literature may begin to explain why. Perhaps feelings of safety can encourage student questions (Applebee et al., 2003), and increase the likelihood of students

sharing their lives (Moje, 2004, 2008), cultures, and funds of knowledge in class (Moje et al., 2004). Safety that leads to such questions and student sharing can bring multiple perspectives into the classroom, enriching the meaning making experience for students (Applebee et al., 2003).

These three teachers sought to craft classroom environments that closely resembled Langer's (2011) description of classrooms where the envisioning of literature by students is fostered by teachers. According to Langer (2011), these are classrooms where learning was a collective experience, but individual student voices were valued. This valuing of student voices through treating all students as having important contributions and/or understandings gives students room to develop their own understanding, encourages students to take positions, express opinions, have personal responses, use the questions and comments of other students, and challenge the text. These elements were found to positively impact student achievement (Applebee et al., 2003). However, the existing research does not show how difficult this can be, as individual student voices often conflict with one another. Consequently, these teachers, whose practices were informed by notions of equity and justice, felt they had to teach perspective-taking, and listening skills with the goal of making student voices valued not only by the teacher, but also by other students. When students feel their voice is not valued, it can potentially stymie thinking and meaning-making. Students may then seek to regurgitate the thinking of the teacher or of other students. These teachers, however, sought to encourage meaning-making through crafting environments where student voices were valued by all.

Finally, each of these three teachers attempted to craft environments marked by student responsibility. Through assignments, activities, and discussions these teachers attempted to place the responsibility for meaning making in the hands of the students. My observations

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documented a high level of autonomy in each of these classrooms and teachers stated in interviews that they wanted students to feel independent. Thus, students had very few rules in regard to the type of notes they had to take, the type or number of annotations they had to make on a text, or the types of questions they should ask. Students were free to engage with the portions of the text they were curious about or especially interested in. In each of these classrooms, the teachers tried to give students a balance of freedom and responsibility. They aimed at giving students individual responsibility for making meaning of texts, but a large amount of freedom in how they did this. Having students take up this level of responsibility must be related in some way to motivation. However, it is unclear whether it was due to motivating texts, motivating contexts (Moje, 2006), or some combination of these and other moves by the teachers.

Carl, the fourth teacher, who did not seem to follow the same pattern as the other three, put in less work in crafting an environment than the other three. However, this may be due to the school in which he worked. At Casey High School, there was a large school-wide effort to build trust with the students. Students called all of their teachers by their first names. There was a time set aside during the day to build relationships among small groups of students and teachers. Due to this focus, trust seemed to be a feature of the school as a whole and Carl may have had to do less work to make students feel safe and valued. However, in *Introduction to* Literature, Carl's particular classroom environment was dominated by the quiet reading of short passages followed by answering literal and inferential questions in a Socratic style. The passages, the format of the class, and the format of the assessments Carl used were crafted together with student success on the SAT in mind. *Fantasy Literature*, on the other hand, was dominated by student group work and silent reading. His classroom was in stark contrast with the other three.

However, his work in attempting to shape the school context and build trusting relationships in the entire school was a significant part of his attempts to craft a context where students felt safe, valuable, and responsible. Carl felt that this time-consuming work was valuable. The positive effects of his school-wide efforts to build trust were not captured in my data, but that does not mean that they did not exist.

Overall, in most contexts, teachers are going to have to do the bulk of the work in helping students feel safe, valued, and responsible. However, when crafting environments where the goal is student meaning-making, this is critical work. Students need to feel safe enough to fail at initial attempts at meaning-making, valued enough to participate and persist in meaning making, and responsible enough to continue to develop their own meaning-making processes.

Engendering Relationships

All four of these teachers attempted to engender both teacher-student relationships and student-text relationships. These teachers believed that when the environment is crafted to support student meaning-making, and a teacher-student relationship is in place that supports student meaning-making, then it is easier for the teacher to engender new relationships between students and texts.

Engendering teacher-student relationships that are non-transactional, trusting, and empathetic

All of the teachers in this study sought to build trusting relationships with their students. Three of the teachers attempted to build non-transactional relationships, and two of the teachers explicitly mentioned empathetic relationships. These categories, however, were derived from the self-reporting of teachers during interviews and therefore it is possible that these relationship

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attributes might have been sought by all of the teachers. However, teachers desired that relationships would function together with the environment to help students feel safe, valued, and responsible.

Certainly, the desire to engender these types of teacher-student relationships permeated teachers' planning and interactions in class. However, all four teachers provided feedback and two of these teachers reported believing that feedback also played an important role in developing these types of relationships. Through providing what they felt was adequate and appropriate feedback, teachers attempted to reveal to students that they valued their voice enough to read and comment on everything they had written and submitted. These teachers worked hard to gain student trust so that students would believe them when they claimed there was no "right answer" to questions. The feedback was designed to help students fine-tune their meaning-making process rather than on assessing whether students found correct answers.

Learned (2016) found that in classroom contexts where students and teachers built trusting relationships in combination with disciplinary literacy, students tended to demonstrate proficient or improving reading. Although Learned (2016) provided key research tying trusting relationships in concert with disciplinary literacy teaching to improved proficient or improved reading, many questions remain. How are these relationships developed? What do these relationships look like? How do teachers think about this work?   Although this study answers these questions, it does so for only four teachers.

Engendering Student-Text Relationships that are personal, dependent, and dynamic

All four teachers sought to engender new student-text relationships through their teaching. Three of the teachers believed that students came into their classes wanting to find the

"right" answers, either through mining the text and guessing what the teacher wanted, or through looking up information on the themes, language, and interpretations of the text on the internet. The fourth teacher saw students who came into his class as not being willing or able to pay attention to or engage with a text for a sustained period of time. In an effort to engender new student-text relationships, these teachers attempted to change reading practices and reading responses.

Changing Reading Practices. Teachers attempted to change students' reading practices in terms of pace, preference, and persistence. Three of the teachers explicitly tried to change students' reading pace. Often, teachers sought to slow students reading down in an attempt to help them notice more of what was in the text. However, this does not mean that these teachers wanted students to read every word of every text more slowly. The appropriate reading pace is dictated by the intersection of the student's skill and/or interest level, the difficulty of the text, and the purpose for reading. When a particular student reads with the appropriate pace for the text and purpose of reading, it can increase meaning-making as they slow down and notice more about the text. Although pacing is not mentioned explicitly by Greenleaf et al. (2001) this does fit with the notion of students being able to monitor their own meaning making and then choosing from an array of strategies. More research should be considered on the role of reading pace and meaning making.

In terms of reading preference, there was a split among the teachers. Two of the teachers gave students a choice of novels in certain assignments so they had the opportunity to choose books they were interested in and passionate about. They wanted students introduced to the practice of choosing their own books and making meaning from them. The other two teachers focused solely on trying to help students make meaning of texts they may not initially prefer.

Although there was a split in terms of the role of using and developing student preference in their classrooms, all four teachers wanted their students to be able to make meaning of texts whether or not they loved them. In addition, all four teachers attempted to provide a motivating text, a motivating context, or both (Moje, 2006). When the text may be demotivating for students, a motivating context must be crafted.

In teaching reading persistence, all four teachers engaged in teaching skills such as chunking text, rereading, and looking up unknown words and/or allusions (Duke & Pearson, 2009). For especially complex or dense texts, three of the teachers reported providing a summary for students so they could more easily focus on the language used by the author. Two of the teachers reported using short, complex texts so that students were not initially overwhelmed by length. One teacher promoted a growth mindset with her students, telling them that when it felt difficult, they were forming new neural pathways in their brains and learning was occurring. One teacher reported increasing student autonomy to promote reading persistence. He gave tried to give students the freedom and space to respond to literature in ways that were meaningful to them personally and felt that this gave students personal motivation to read with persistence. Although these teachers focused on different and multiple ways of improving students' reading persistence, none of these practices are antithetical to the others. In many ways, what I observed reveals teachers' assessments of where students were in their level of reading persistence, and how these teachers were attempting to move them forward. In the view of these teachers, sometimes students needed greater skills or more tools to use, while some students had been using these skills for many years before entering a teacher's classroom. Sometimes teachers saw students as unfamiliar with dated, dense, or complex syntax used in a text so providing a summary was appropriate, while at other times the teachers believed that the

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match between the text and the students made summary unnecessary. The teachers viewed some students as able to read persistently through longer texts, while assessing that others required shorter texts first in order to practice the skill. These moves looked somewhat different because these teachers had different students, dispositions, backgrounds, and beliefs that informed their practice.

Each of these four teachers tried to change students' reading practices in fairly similar ways. However, solely changing reading practices was not the goal. Changing reading practices was in service of changing how students respond to texts and make meaning from texts.

Changing Reading Responses. Changing how students respond to texts changes how they are thinking about texts, and thus changes how they make meaning from texts. All four teachers in this study encouraged personal, dependent, and dynamic responses to text.

Enabling students' personal responses to texts is partially done through the work of crafting environments and engendering teacher-student relationships. These teachers believed that if students did not feel safe, valued, or responsible, they would be far less willing to offer personal responses to literature. In order to encourage personal responses, reading was positioned as a unique, personal experience where students bring their identity, knowledge, and experiences to bear on a text (a position in complete congruence with Rosenblatt and Transactional Theory). Students were allowed and encouraged to respond to texts in authentic ways, and then to develop this initial personal reaction. Sometimes students were encouraged to think about their emotional or empathetic response to characters or situations within texts. Yet, teachers also strove to give students the freedom to also disagree with ideas or characters within texts. But students also were encouraged to interrogate their personal responses to text and think about why they reacted to texts in the way they did, which provided opportunity for perspective

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taking and empathy. In being allowed to respond personally, students were allowed to follow their personal curiosity, and make personal meaning, pushing back against the notion of "correct" answers in ELA class.

All four teachers also encouraged student responses that were dependent on other texts or information. Teachers presented historical information, cultural contexts, other texts, theoretical frameworks, ideological frameworks, and disciplinary frameworks. Through activities, assignments, and discussions, teachers then gave students the tasks of making points of comparison, putting texts in dialogue with one another, or using one text as a lens to view another text. Using dependent responses in combination with personal responses, as these four teachers did, was done in an effort to keep students' personal responses from being too outlandish, and to root students firmly in the work of the discipline, where this is common practice among scholars. This pairing of personal response with dependent responses is in agreement with Hynds and Garrison (1991) who found that teachers should encourage personal connections to the text while simultaneously helping students to remain focused on the text through classroom activities and assignments that either illuminate the text or have students use the text in ways that engage students in textual meaning making. Personal connections to the text can greatly aid meaning making but are only productive when focused on the text or texts being studied. These teachers made a number of teaching moves that encouraged personal responses and were text focused including talking to the text, annotating the text, Socratic seminars, and giving background information about the text. The additional texts used to elicit dependent responses were representative of a teacher's practice. For example, Kirsten and Carl provided disciplinary lenses and articles within the discipline of English literature. Jacob

provided ideological and theoretical lenses and Carl provided background information and historical lenses.

Finally, three of the four teachers encouraged dynamic responses to text. These teachers believed that as students learned new information, had new experiences, and read new texts, their meaning-making processes would be impacted, and the meaning-made from texts changed (Rosenblatt, 1994). Therefore, during the course of a novel, these teachers asked and encouraged students to ask new questions, had students read more supplemental texts, engaged students in more discussions, and gave students new information and new experiences. This happened not only within a longer text, but across texts as well, exemplified by Kirsten's "no text left behind" policy, where making new connections between texts currently studied and texts previously studied was constantly encouraged with the goal of making meaning newly from previous texts and through previous texts. This practice was congruent with Langer's (2011; Applebee et al., 2003) idea of literature envisionment and Hartman's (1995) study of intertextual connections. However, this study helps to reveal what this looks like in practice. One of the things this study reveals is the role of organizing texts to facilitate a dynamic response to texts and how teachers thought about this work.

Overall, the point of new reading practices and new reading responses was to engender a new type of relationship between students and texts. For three of these teachers, the text was not something to be mined for "right" answers. There was not a "correct" interpretation that needed to be guessed. Instead, three of these teachers sought a more personal and dynamic relationship between students and texts, where students were constantly making meaning of texts old and new. In many ways this too fits well with Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory, which states that through the transaction between reader and the text, the work of art is formed and this work of

art changes on subsequent readings as the reader is constantly bringing new information and experiences to this transaction. However, instead of rereading texts completely, texts were briefly revisited with the goal of eliciting dynamic student responses within the limited time frame of a school year.

Choosing Texts to Make Meaning

There was not a clear consensus among the teachers on text selection and organization for their classes. One teacher selected texts to mirror texts used on the SAT. One teacher often chose texts she loved. However, there were some points of agreement. All of the teachers chose texts that were both accessible and challenging. All teachers chose texts that were dependent upon the class they were teaching. For two of the teachers who taught 9th graders in general English courses, the text selection was in service of the goals of skill development and test preparation. For the other two teachers, who were teaching more specialized classes such as *Humanities*, *African American Literature*, and *American Literature*, texts that were canonical to the discipline were coupled with non-canonical texts. Overall, the text selection was fairly unique to each teacher, which points to these teachers selecting texts based on the courses taught, the students in the classroom, the goals teachers had for the course, and pairing texts with students based on students' cognitive and social development.

Employing Instructional Strategies: Information, Processes, Ideas, and the Work of the Discipline.

In many ways the instructional strategies employed by these four teachers can be placed on a spectrum ranging from non-disciplinary to disciplinary. Although all teachers had disciplinary aspects evident in their employment of instructional strategies, Carl's teaching could

be described as the least disciplinary of the four. He focused on helping students pay attention to and remember texts so they could answer literal and inferential questions. However, his goal of sustained, substantive engagement with text is supported by Nystrand and Gomoran (1991), who found that a sustained personal commitment to understanding the world of the text led to a significant positive impact on reading achievement. However, the study also found that teachers encouraged this through authentic, open-ended questions, uptake on student comments, a high level of evaluation of student comments, and a rejection of the IRE response pattern. These were features that were rarely seen in Carl's classroom. So, Carl may have needed to learn how to better teach substantive engagement.

Kyle used metacognitive skill and tool development in an attempt to prepare students for close reading. This teaching practice is supported by the work of Greenleaf, et. al., (2001) who found students improved their reading performance through having a broad array of cognitive strategies to use, and metacognitive monitoring of strategies so that students know when to use specific strategies. In addition, Kyle began to introduce students to excerpts of scholarly articles in the discipline. Jacob used theoretical or ideological texts as lenses to view fiction. Kirsten focused on helping students see that language "does stuff," and on how to help students fit the puzzle pieces of the text together to figure out how the text is having an impact on the reader (Rainey, 2015). Both Kirsten and Jacob also engaged in dialogic instruction (Dialogic instruction is instruction that, in contrast to the I-R-E pattern of discussion, gives time for open discussion, uses authentic, open-ended questions, and uptake of student comments by the teacher to build a more continuous discussion) and envisionment building (characterized by students having room to develop their own understandings, students spending time in class in meaningful conversations, students being encouraged to take positions, express opinions, and/or have

personal responses, students asking questions that showed comprehension, students asking questions that showed evaluation or analysis, students being allowed to shift discussions in new directions, the teacher encouraging students to use the questions and comments of others to have discussion, students responding to other students or the teacher, students challenging the text, the teachers' questions require analysis, the teacher treating all students as having important contributions or understandings, the teacher creating instructional activities as something to develop understandings rather than to test what students already knew, the teacher assuming that questions were a natural part of the process of understanding rather than a failure to learn, and the teacher using multiple perspectives to enrich understandings). Applebee et. al., (2003) found that both dialogic instruction and envisionment building were significantly related to improved academic achievement.

What is still unclear is whether these differences between teachers were due to the different reading levels of the students each of these teachers had in their classrooms, different teaching philosophies these teachers operated under, different goals for students teachers had, difference in teacher backgrounds, or some combination of all of these. What is clear is that each of these teachers used some measure of disciplinary literacy, and research-based instruction to improve students' reading achievement.

Modeling Engagement: Enthusiasm, Strategies, and Reading After High School

I did not see any lessons that strictly followed the "I do, we do, you do" pattern. Instead, each of these teachers modeled their enthusiasm over texts and/or the language used. Three of the teachers modeled adult engagement with texts, including their own strategy use, their home reading habits and the reading habits of their family and friends, their curiosity, perspective taking, annotating texts, and problematizing texts. In many ways the modeling of engagement

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by these teachers was less focused on students learning a particular skill (although that did occur), and more focused on helping students grow into adults who still engage with and make meaning from texts.

Implications for Teachers

Research reveals in order to foster student meaning making, teachers should motivate students, set a motivating purpose for reading, develop and leverage knowledge of students, consider the cognitive and social development of students as they choose texts and plan and enact instruction, consider the identities of students, organize texts to foster meaning making, foster intertextual and personal connections, tap into students' funds of knowledge, build trusting, learning-focused relationships with students, present an appropriate menu of strategy use, takes students seriously as thinkers, be responsive to students, uses multiple perspectives, give disciplinary vocabulary, and share power with the students.

One of the things that this research adds to the conversation is the importance of classroom contexts and relationships with students. There is very little research in this area, but existing research (Learned, 2016) does show that trusting, learning focused relationships with students is associated with proficient or improving reading. What existing research does not show is what teachers can do to develop these types of relationships. This study may give teachers some places to start and some questions to ask as they seek to engender relationships with students. Teachers may consider their own classrooms and ask themselves how they can use feedback to gain student trust. Teachers may consider how to build empathic and non-transactional relationships to gain student trust.

In considering crafting contexts and engendering relationships, teachers should remember that these should both be put in the service of encouraging intellectual risk taking, balancing collective learning with the valuing of individual voices, and giving students the space, tools, and responsibility to make meaning on their own (Applebee et al., 2003; Langer, 2011). Environments should be crafted and relationships engendered in a purposeful way to encourage meaning making.

Finally, in seeking to implement research-based practices that foster meaning making in the high school ELA classroom (Applebee et al., 2003; Hartman, 1995; Hynds & Garrison, 1991; Langer, 2011), teachers should encourage student responses to text that are personal, dependent on text(s), and dynamic. Encouraging all three of these student responses fosters meaning making rather than reading that seeks right answers and views meaning as static.

Implications for Teacher Education

Meaning-making is a disciplinary activity. The meaning-making process of a literature scholar differs from the process of a scientist which differs from the process of historian, which differs from the process of a mathematician. Accordingly, to teach meaning making efficiently and effectively, students should be separated by discipline in their literacy, methods, and student teaching courses.

In teaching meaning-making in ELA, the research-based literacy model of comprehension should be used. It can help future teachers understand how meaning-making occurs. However, it must be kept in mind that this model pertains to one student, and not a full class of students. The categories from this dissertation derived through CCA (Crafting environments, engendering relationships, choosing texts, employing instructional strategies, and

modeling engagement) could be used to show the pressure points on which teachers can press to impact student meaning making for an entire class. In addition, the models at the end of chapter two could be used to emphasize not only the process of meaning making, but also the best practices of readers and teachers according to current research.

Alignment should also be emphasized. If meaning making is taken as the goal of ELA instruction, teacher education students must learn to craft summative assessments that do not seek "correct" answers or preferred interpretations. This is difficult, as many have had years of experience taking these types of summative assessments, and many may feel that these types of assessments are critical to helping students perform well on standardized tests which mirror this type of assessment. Then, working backwards, teacher education students must learn to design formative assessments, instruction, and activities to prepare their students for an assessment of meaning making. Assessments that actually measure students' meaning-making, rather than measuring how well students can memorize and regurgitate or guess what answer or interpretation the teacher prefers should guide a new type of teaching.

ELA teacher education should consider the fact that each of the teachers in this study planned extensively but the moments when the plan was strategically abandoned to respond to students' needs, interests, or curiosity were powerful moments with the potential to positively impact the classroom environment, relationships with students, and students' meaning making. However, this can be difficult to teach, and may be problematic for younger teachers who may fail to reach their goals for the class as they are less than strategic in abandoning their plan. Consequently, teacher education programs should consider how and when this could be taught most effectively.

Finally, teaching moves should not be taught in isolation from the underlying assumptions and philosophies behind them. This study clearly shows five teaching moves (Crafting environments, engendering relationships, choosing texts, employing instructional strategies, and modeling engagement) taken up in vastly different ways by these four teachers. The teaching move alone, even when supported by research, may or may not be effective. These teaching moves must be undergirded by effective beliefs, dispositions, and epistemologies, which turn said teaching moves into effective teaching practices.

Implications for Policy

The teachers in this study had both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge that went well beyond their training in teacher education programs. This knowledge came from advanced degrees, continued education, going to and presenting at academic conferences, personal research and reading, and even personal travel. Developing teacher content and pedagogical knowledge further is not cheap and teachers often have to pay for it themselves on modest salaries. At some level (district, state, national), grants should be easily accessible for teachers who want to continue to gain knowledge of their content and their craft.

We live in an era of testing. Some teachers, like Carl in my study, use standardized tests to guide their instruction. Consequently, policy makers should ask the following questions: Are the tests measuring what we would like them to measure? Can teachers use data gleaned from test results to positively impact student meaning making in the classroom? How are tests currently impacting instruction in the classroom? Could tests be changed to positively impact student meaning making? How so?

Finally, in the standards, there should be a clear definition of close reading that clearly opposes David Coleman's notion that close reading should be confined to the text and to the text alone. This is antithetical to disciplinary meaning making in the field of literature. It keeps students from viewing one text through the lens of another. It keeps students from placing texts in historical and cultural contexts. It keeps students from viewing texts through disciplinary, theoretical, or ideological lenses. His definition of close reading is used as a tool by some school administrators to enforce poor teaching practices, and to unintentionally hamper student meaning making. A more clear, robust, and disciplinary definition of close reading should be placed into the Common Core Standards or any future standards.

Implications for Future Research

I believe that one of the reasons that meaning-making is not taught as widely as it should be is due to our understanding of how to assess it. Consequently, I believe an area for future research that could impact assessments at all levels would be researching the following questions: How can meaning-making be effectively assessed? Due to the dynamic nature of meaning making, would there have to be multiple assessments to adequately measure it or could the assessment be designed in such a way as to introduce new texts and information in stages during the assessment? If this were not an adequate measure, how many assessments would it take to adequately measure meaning making? Would these types of assessments be appropriate only classrooms, or could they be designed to be given on state or national levels? How could these assessments guide instruction?

This study is very modest, in that it looks at only four teachers in classrooms with students that are generally middle to upper SES. In addition, although the students of these teachers thrived as the teachers engaged in practices that fostered meaning-making, there is no

clear causal connection between any one practice and student outcomes. Consequently, I propose the following research questions for further study: How can student meaning-making be effectively measured? What skills have the greatest impact on student meaning-making? What instructional strategies have the greatest impact on student meaning-making? What types of environments are most conducive to student meaning-making? What attributes of student-teacher relationships positively impact student meaning-making? How can engagement be modeled in ways that positively impact student meaning-making? What combinations of environment, student relationships, and instruction are effective at improving meaning-making? Answering such questions can begin to add to the paucity of research on fostering student meaning making in high school ELA classrooms.

APPENDIX A: Protocol for Initial Semi-Structured Interviews with Teachers

1. How do you conceive of the comprehension or meaning-making process of your students?

2. What do you believe that your students need to improve their meaning making process?

3. What are your goals for your students in regard to their comprehension or meaning-making of novels, plays, short-stories and poems?

4. How does your knowledge of students make its way into your instruction?

5. Could you describe your process of selecting texts for your students?

6. How do you believe your instruction differs from traditional instruction in ELA? What gives you the confidence to deviate from traditional ELA instruction?

7. What practices have you found to be most effective in helping students make sense of literature? How did you learn these practices?

8. How do you use, foster, or create social groups in your classroom?

9. What purposes for reading literature do students in your classroom have?

10. What social purposes for reading do you engineer for students?

11. How do you promote textual curiosity?

12. Do you believe that emotion is important in the meaning-making process?

APPENDIX B: Classroom Observation Protocol

1. Is the teacher talking? If so, note what the teacher says, and ask the following questions:

    a. Is the teacher describing an activity? Theorize on how the teacher is promoting comprehension at various levels, textual curiosity, and textual dexterity.

    b. Is the teacher creating social groups and/or social purposes for interacting with texts? How is this done?

    c. Is the teacher responding to or reacting to students' issues, problems, comments, work, etc.

    d. Is the teacher directly instructing students? What is the connection between the direct instruction and texts used in the classroom?

2. Are students working? If so, note students' talk and the teacher's response to students. Furthermore, ask the following:

    a. Does student talk reveal textual curiosity or textual dexterity in any way?

    b. Are students aware of their own comprehension processes?

    c. How does the teacher interact with students working individually or in groups?

    d. What role does the teacher play as students are working?

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