

A Savory Stew: Text Differentiation in a Middle School Immigration Unit

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Abstract

The goal of this case study of a mindful literacy teacher in a middle school social studies class was to describe the nature of one teacher's differentiated text choices in one seven week unit. The participant was nominated by an administrator, a district supervisor, a university professor, and the researcher based on characteristics of mindful literacy instruction. Classroom observations and teacher interviews described four differentiated text events: an historical fiction novel unit; primary source oral histories; expository non-fiction articles; and picture books, magazines, and an anthology set. Interview transcripts were coded using constant comparative analysis and revealed the teacher's belief in stories, student choice, her resistance to standardized testing, and her own teaching confidence and activist spirit. The discussion addresses the teacher's effectiveness in the areas of collaboration with students, the assignment of varied and plentiful texts, the expectation of high achievement for herself and students; and her effective management of the differentiated texts in the classroom. The researcher also concluded that this teacher did not have the expertise to diagnose or remediate basic reading deficits but her disposition in seeing herself as a reading teacher, challenging mandated curricula, and working to offer appropriate choices for all of her students supported her decision to offer differentiated text choices.

Dedication

To Loretta and Hannah, you each are my inspiration, my joy, and my reason for balance. The world is a brighter place because you are in it.

To Robbie, for your steadfast love and belief in me.

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Chapter One: Introduction

When all students have access to ample, diverse texts that they are able to read, they are more likely to meet with success that will foster motivation to read more (NCTE, 2010; National Reading Panel, 2000). Secondary classroom teachers, like Mrs. Wolf (a pseudonym) recognize the difficulty inherent in motivating students to read but struggle with the classroom realities that may actually discourage reading. A staple expectation in literacy education for adolescents is that it is imperative that our students learn to read so that they can then “read to learn” (Herber, 1978). Mrs. Wolf, an award-winning seventh grade teacher at Brownton Middle School, teaches social studies by differentiating texts in her diverse non-leveled classes. She explains:

I am not going to deny a rigorous academic environment to any of my students and yet I know that some of my students struggle with the assigned academic texts. Other students are reluctant to read at all and engage in creative avoidance behaviors. One of my goals is to choose texts that are appropriate for each of my students, so that all will gain enduring understandings of the concepts and content of mandated state and national standards.

Mrs. Wolf verbalizes the inherent struggle that content area teachers face when teaching required content such as is suggested by national standards documents (NCSS, 2010) in differentiated classrooms. Academic struggles are magnified to students in their adolescence, already a difficult time for students. Ideally, teachers match student to texts so that all students meet with enough success to see themselves as capable readers and to motivate their students to continue to read.

Rationale

Secondary students must be able to read to learn. Scholars suggest that the landscape of literacy demands today ARE different than ones needed in the past (Alvermann, & Hagood, 2000; Christenbury, Bomer, & Smagorinsky, 2008; Snow, 2009) and modern definitions of literacy suggest that literacy needs to be defined in the context of global change (Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, & Morris, 2008; New London Group, 1996) and within social interactions (Gee, 2000). When policy makers define literacy; however, they are most often citing norm-referenced standardized test scores (i.e. Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005), discussed below. These score reports are interpreted in policy documents as evidence of “crisis” (Henriques, 2009). While the nation’s elementary students are competitive in their reading scores, adolescents seem to be reading inadequately compared to their international peers. Perhaps educators and the public are becoming desensitized to the cries of “crisis” not because we do not believe that there is one; most educators and the public agree that the state of our adolescents’ literacies today are cause for concern. Instead, it is possible that there is some level of resignation that the problem is too big and too daunting to attempt to fix. Much like a struggling adolescent reader who chooses aliteracy because some texts are too hard, many classroom teachers resort to lecturing because they just do not know how else to deliver the content to aliterate students. This proposed research will add to our current knowledge base about appropriate texts for both successful and struggling adolescent readers.

Further, when applied to classroom practice, this research may give teachers a way of looking at this issue of literacy differently. Instead of simply telling students what they need to

gain from assigned reading in an oral summary or lecture that rewards students who do not read (Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Broz, 2011; Moje & Wade, 1997), they may be encouraged to find the right texts for their students, texts that will instead motivate them to read and see themselves as capable readers, ending a reluctance-to-read cycle.

When children struggle with reading, they are at risk of becoming aliterate by adopting a refusal-to-read stance. These reluctant readers will not become better readers. Frustration can cause learned helplessness (Allington, 2001; McCormick, 2007), a condition that is difficult to reverse in an adolescent struggling reader. Students who read get better at reading. Successful and striving academic readers must also be nurtured with appropriate texts, as any adolescent student is at risk of becoming aliterate if not exposed to appropriately rigorous texts. Content area classroom teachers who offer a variety of diverse texts are more likely to support all students in conceptual understanding of course content.

Statement of Problem

University of Michigan researcher Moje (2009) shares that scholars have been concerned about adolescents and their literacy development for more than twenty years. The International Reading Association (IRA) has rated it as a “hot topic” for two years in a row (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2009/2010). Many texts (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Hinchman, 2008; NCTE, 2006; Sturtevant, Boyd, Brozo, Hinchman, Moore, & Alvermann, 2006) in the field of adolescent literacy begin with disturbing, if not alarming, test score data. For example, sixty percent of all twelfth graders cannot read on grade level (ACT, 2005; NCES, 2010); National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores show that fourth grade reading has improved but adolescent

reading has declined (Loomis & Bourque, 2001). Employers report that approximately 40% of high school graduates do not have the literacy skills needed for work (Achieve, Inc., 2005); and experts estimate that “as many as 70% of students struggle with reading in some manner” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 8). Carnegie’s Time to Act chair Henriquez, in his introductory remarks at An Agenda for Advancing Adolescent Literacy for College and Career Success, videocasted on September 15, 2009, called the data “dire” (Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, 16 minutes). It is striking that scholars feel the need to justify the notion that so many of our adolescents cannot read well. Perhaps the message is being diluted because the public has been hearing this for decades. The public heard in 1955 why “Johnny can’t read” (Flesch, 1955), and, in an alarmist piece of propaganda, that our country is “at risk” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). While these two publications have some merit in their research, the messages in each have become distorted into a judgment on our schools and our kids. The messages are blurred with perennial concern that adolescents today are no different than any other adolescent. In reality, the demands literacy demands are much higher than they ever have been (Snow, 2009) and lack of literacy skills should be cause for real concern.

What We Know; What We Need to Know

The most recent *Journal of Literacy Research* encourages teachers to implement a variety of texts (Fagella-Luby, Ware, & Capozzoli, 2009). Deschler states, “One of the great challenges that we face in teaching struggling adolescent learners is having an ample supply of instructional materials that first of all are engaging for students” (Deschler, 2009). Teachers need to have

support in choosing texts that kids like and are on their reading level (Greenleaf, Shoenbach, Cziko, & Mueller, 2001; International Reading Association, 2009; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Kamil, Borman, Dole, Kral, Salinger, & Torgesen, 2008). Text diversity depends on student interests and student maturity, and it requires a trusting student-teacher relationship where the two stakeholders together consider interventions (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzone, 1996; Cheatham, Colvin, & Laminack, 1993; Hinchman, 2008; Sturtevant & Moore, 2009/2010).

Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006) recommends fifteen elements of effective adolescent literacy instruction, number six being, “**Diverse texts**, which are texts at a variety of difficulty levels and on a variety of topics” (p. 4). While the *Reading Next* report privileges three other elements (professional development, formative assessment of students, and summative assessments of students and programs), the question of “which text” can be fostered within these three most important foundations. When teachers are supported with professional development in how to choose texts in all classrooms, when they use formative assessment to collaborate with students to determine texts, and when schools monitor and support progress, student reading can improve. Struggling adolescent readers need to increase their amount of successful reading in texts that are at appropriate reading levels in conjunction with more focused comprehension instruction (Kamil, et.al., 2008).

All students must have a “wide variety” of text that they “can and want” to read (IRA, 2010). There are two parts to this step in offering text diversity and then matching specific texts to students. Both the student and the text need to be analyzed: each student to each text, as all

texts require different levels of interest and maturity. Assessing student interests and maturity is not as simple as asking students to fill out a reading inventory. A relationship with the teacher or other invested adult is integral in this step. Students want to read different things, and those areas of interest broaden exponentially as students get older. A text analysis by a reading mentor or teacher can help to guide book selections, and as students mature, peer feedback and eventually personal choices guide a reader. Self-selection is effective (Alvermann, 2001a; Fisher & Ivey, 2007; Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000; Kohn, 1993) but it is limiting in that some students do not know themselves, as adolescence is a time of identity construction and some adolescents are reluctant to fail in the face of a new challenge. Again, finding a balance takes some mindful risk-taking and the belief that there is not going to be one right answer for each text and for each student.

Adolescent identity has been shown to affect the willingness to read. Students who identify themselves as poor readers may avoid reading, despite the industrious use of coping strategies (Hall, 2005). Recently released drafts of Common Core State Standards of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (2010a), recognize the need for students to be college-and career-ready but suggest “text-complexity bands” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010b, p. 5) of text difficulty that assume that no secondary students are reading significantly below grade level. Further, the suggested standards too-easily seem to suggest that students are not ready for college and careers because of “insufficiently high text demands and a lack of accountability for independent reading in K-12 schooling” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010b, p. 4). Prominent

literacy scholars question this assumption. The past president of the Literacy Research Association's recent letter to the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices challenged these standards, asking for more empirical research and more representation from school-based personnel. This letter states that "the proposed standards represent expectations . . . that few secondary teachers are prepared to meet" (Hinchman, 2009, p. 2). In an additional response to these standards, Beers, NCTE president asked, "How can professional development for teachers be improved so that every student is guided by a teacher who understands the needs of individual students and responds appropriately to those individual needs?" (Beers, 2009, p. 2). This proposed study will help to focus the latter part of this question about identifying readers' specific needs and teachers' appropriate responses. Additionally, current research published by IRA in the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* suggests that "researchers must observe and analyze highly effective secondary literacy teachers in action because . . . data to help older students who have not mastered basic skills are limited" (Parris & Block, 2007, p. 591).

Adolescent aliteracy and insufficient reading comprehension achievement is a documented problem among middle school readers. Students must read accessible academic texts regularly in order to improve comprehension skills. Teachers can encourage adolescent motivation to read by offering appropriate texts to students. Past studies show that reading motivation is affected by interest in the content, feelings of self-efficacy, and a safe classroom atmosphere. What is not known is how teachers differentiate texts and how those instructional choices are perceived by the teacher in a middle school classroom.

Theoretical Frameworks

The Construction-Integration Model

Grounded in a constructivist approach to learning and inherent in research on text cohesion, Kintsch (2004) defines comprehension as a “paradigm for cognition” (p. 1270). The construction-integration model suggests that readers create a mental model that interacts with the text model. Kintsch suggests that what the *situation model* (created by the reader from information provided in the *textbase*) looks like depends on the reader’s goals, interests, beliefs, and amount of relevant prior knowledge he or she has, and each reader may form a distinctly individual model. This *situation model* also suggests that knowledge construction requires “strategic action and effort on the part of the reader/learner” (p. 1275). The development of these terms and concepts has enabled reading researchers to discuss the comprehension processes of readers in order to more fully understand impediments to comprehension and propose research that will inform the field in specific ways. Schemas, mental representations or images, make up part of each individual situation model derived from a textbase.

At the word level, schema allows readers to determine polysemous word meanings, as the representative model created by a reader for a text could reject “sound” as meaning noise, for example, in the following sentence: “She paddled the boat across the sound.” Developing middle school readers begin to encounter text with heightened levels of hypernym, levels of abstraction, and thus the situation models that are created must be more sophisticated. What is most applicable about this theory is the difference between retrieval and generation in the meaning-making process. Struggling readers may be asked simply to retrieve or remember facts

and information from texts. Developing and advanced readers may be asked to generate meaning, which hones critical reading skills, the ability to generate new thoughts from the supplied texts. To put it into simple terms: a reader has to get the information and then *do* something with it in order for it to be integrated into a knowledge base and in order to foster skills in reading critically. Important in this suggestion is that the research shows that making inferences takes more processing time (Kintsch, 2004). When struggling readers are given text that is too hard, their time is being used to decode and then make literal meanings; they do not have the available time nor inclination to make the inferences that not only aid comprehension but also develop critical reading skills. This model suggests that it is unlikely that ideas encountered in too-hard text can ever be committed to long-term memory. Long-term working memory (LGWM) theory suggests that once we are expert in a topic, reading comprehension comes easily; memory is good in familiar domains. This implies that “student readers cannot read in the same way as experienced readers; . . . they have to be induced to be active readers” (p. 1305).

Kintsch suggests that matching readers to text may be time-prohibitive, but that students could write a paragraph reflecting their understandings on a topic before instruction as a measure of prior knowledge. Based on the results, students could be assigned differentiated texts: one for low-knowledge learners, and one for high-knowledge learners (i.e. McNamara, Kintsch, Songer, & Kintsch, 1996).

Cognitive Flexibility Theory

The demands of what it requires for teachers to authentically differentiate instruction escalate as students reach secondary schools. The gaps in achievement widen; teachers are typically responsible for more students each day; and adolescents are increasingly aware of their situated identity in the classroom and within social groups. Cognitive Flexibility Theory (CFT) could inform the foundations for a study in higher level reading for all students in a differentiated classroom. CFT (Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich, & Anderson, 2004) addresses the characteristic of advanced learning of complex concepts. Secondary students who struggle with reading difficulties do not necessarily struggle with conceptual difficulties, although poor readers do often miss background knowledge that could add to their understanding. When secondary teachers introduce concepts to be understood by introducing various perspectives, the brain is conditioned to change and adapt to the information, thus the prime environment for knowledge acquisition is reached.

Cognitive Flexibility Theory has seven themes, or conditions, that support conceptual understanding: avoidance of oversimplification, multiple representations, centrality of cases, the use of knowledge, flexible schema, multiple interconnectedness, and mentor support. While some middle school instruction privileges one best answer to a problem, cognitive flexibility theory would instead “demonstrate complexities and irregularities” (p. 644). Instead of a single text, ideas introduced with multiple texts would be preferred for students to produce enduring understandings. Examples of the abstract are “necessary and not just nice” (p. 648). Cognitive Flexibility Theory (CFT) encourages clinical practice of emerging understandings and flexible

schema (instead of fixed) as valued as optimal for critical reading. Stand-alone units, so often taught in middle schools, would be instead connected, because this theory espouses the value of cross-curricular comparisons to challenge current understandings in a way that promotes deep understandings that do not carry with them right or wrong answers. Finally, CFT aims to allow students to search and question to arrive at flexible, yet enduring understandings in an active environment with provided guidance.

Matthew Effects

Often described as rich-get-richer and poor-get poorer patterns in reading achievement, Matthew Effect Theory (Stanovich, 1986) is based on a large number of empirical studies on individual differences in reading achievement. Stanovich argues that one of the coping mechanisms of students who have many unrewarding reading experiences in too-difficult text is a chosen aliteracy. The other is a tolerance for text, but reading “without real cognitive involvement” (p. 364). This habit of disengagement affects other areas of schooling. Stanovich also concludes that context, which includes background knowledge of readers, is not necessarily relied on less by struggling readers, who may not have the support of such contextual knowledge to aid in understanding; instead, they process the information less efficiently for a variety of reasons. This statement does not generalize to word-recognition, however. Able readers process all of visual stimuli more efficiently than less able readers. In differentiated, individualized, appropriate texts, Stanovich (1986) found that less-skilled readers displayed as much contextual facilitation as the skilled readers, showing that the reliance on context to make meaning is not a characteristic of good or poor readers; the variable, instead, is the text and its appropriateness for

a given reader. Stanovich also reviews the research on vocabulary development, pointing out the reciprocal relationship between reading and vocabulary development. If a struggling reader is affected by poor-get-poorer effects, he or she encounters difficult text and at one point becomes passive or reluctant. The student continues to lose ground academically because of a failure to develop new vocabulary and background knowledge acquisition. At the heart of the Matthew Effect Theory is the imperative that educators accept the notion that there are extreme differences in how individuals process text and develop as readers. Accepting anything else leaves teachers susceptible to the lure of quick-fix programs or a philosophy that one text could be appropriate for a whole class.

These Three Lenses

The Construction-Integration Model, Cognitive Flexibility Theory, and Matthew Effects Theory together support the suggestion that differently-skilled students are most likely to gain conceptual understandings of content from a variety of texts and from purposefully individualized text choices. The Construction-Integration Model serves as a lens for this scholarship particularly because teachers strive to foster understandings that remain in their students' long-term memory bases. This model supports the powerful nature of pre-existing schemas and the individual nature of each student's likelihood of comprehending text.

Cognitive Flexibility Theory (CFT) also suggests best-practice for fostering student construction of enduring understanding through a variety of different texts and perspectives. CFT specifically requires the avoidance of simplification of concepts, which may be seen as contradictory to teachers as they search for texts that struggling readers can access

independently. Instead, CFT supports constructivist paradigms instead of didactic stances in the sense that students are encouraged to construct flexible, enduring understandings of concepts instead of memory of written facts or supplied opinions. CFT supports deep understanding of concepts through the presentation of varied texts. Parris and Block (2008) relate CFT to reading development in adolescents specifically from a neuroscience perspective in that adolescence is a time when the “brain is choosing which neural connections will stay and become more efficient and which will be pruned” (p. 274). The researchers suggest that this research, once only thought to benefit those in the field of special education, is applicable to all students.

Matthew Effects is a lens that most importantly reinforces the individual nature of reading achievement and conceptual understanding and is at the heart of current understanding of what we know about differently-skilled adolescent readers. Matthew Effects may help to explain struggling readers, as they have lost ground in reading skills, vocabulary development, and background knowledge because of the vicious cycle that early reading difficulties may create. Reluctant readers, those who may or may not be struggling, can be viewed through the lens of Matthew Effects in that a tenacious spirit in the face of difficulty is particularly hard to foster in adolescence. Matthew Effects can also explain why successful students may continue to succeed, in the rich-get-richer interpretation of individualized reading acquisition. These students find an enjoyment that others do not, and gain in vocabulary development, increased background knowledge, and more exposure to different kinds of texts. This success is motivational for adolescents and may explain why some students want to read while others do not.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to delineate basic themes that describe attitudes, assessments, and strategies a seventh grade social studies teacher uses to match readers to text. The purpose of this study is also to analyze and describe the differentiated text choices that are made in one middle school social studies classroom.

Deschler states that “there is a growing list of instructional materials that are available to teachers that cover a broad array of subject areas that are of interest to students and they are leveled, that is, they are of various levels of difficulty” (2009, minute 24). The International Reading Association corroborates the importance of text that struggling adolescent readers can read independently in a recent podcast:

Regardless of where a student might be reading, even if it is at a rudimentary third or fourth grade level, [it is important that there] are material [available] that he or she might find success in and at the same time be engaged with . . . And what is important, of course, is being able to have an ample supply of those so that as skills and strategies are required, the materials can be made increasingly more difficult and closer to grade level (Deshler, 2009)

Repeatedly, adolescent literacy scholars challenge teachers to offer struggling students abundant opportunity to “interact with a variety of texts in authentic ways” (Johannessen & McCann, 2009).

Research Questions

Scholars challenge teachers to supply appropriate texts to students, but how can they do that? Research questions that are proposed in this study are found below.

1. What is the nature of one teacher's process in assigning differentiated texts to readers within a seventh grade social studies unit?
2. What are the characteristics of differentiated texts assigned during the course of one seventh grade social studies unit?

To answer the first research question, a descriptive embedded single case study approach (Yin, 2009) of one social studies teacher for the length of one unit of seven weeks was conducted. The teacher participant was determined by principal, district supervisor, and university professor referrals determined by eight domains [Figure 1] of exemplary secondary literacy teachers (Parris & Block, 2007) and taught social studies in a seventh grade heterogeneous, non-leveled classroom. These domains of exemplary teaching are "teaching pedagogy, methods of addressing diverse needs, personal characteristics, knowledge base, quality and quantity of literacy activities used, amount of professional development, relationship with students, and classroom management" (Parris & Block, 2007, p. 587). The unit of analysis within the single case study consisted of four text events.

Data collection was comprised of teacher interviews, researcher field notes and journal, copies of assigned texts, and student work samples. These data were collected to triangulate findings and to offer opportunities for reliable analysis (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Data

analysis of interviews consists of constant-comparative analysis (Corbin & Strauss; 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), while data analysis of field notes and the researcher's journal consists of "summarizing and interpreting information as a basis for understanding the topic" and answering the research question (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 57). Because of the "inductive and reflexive nature of data analysis" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 80), the researcher used open-coding to make sense of the multiple sources of data before constructing assertions.

To answer the second question, copies of all assigned texts were collected as data that were described and analyzed quantitatively using readability formulas. Descriptive statistics were used to compare text passages. Passages of 200 words of connected text were randomly selected for analysis purposes. Text variables that were described consisted of each text's title, author, publication date, length, and Lexile score only. In addition to quantitative data for this research questions, the researcher used Alvermann, Phelps, and Gillis's (2010) Framework for Assessing Texts (p. 164) to qualitatively describe the assigned texts in order to further triangulate data.

Lexiles (MetaMetrics, 2011), a unit of measurement on a scale of 0L to 2000L used in this study as a variable in determining text difficulty, were used because The Lexile Framework readability formula offers equal-interval data that can be corresponded with descriptive statistics into grade level norms for practitioner use and offers more specificity in analysis because of the broad range of units offered by the formula. The Lexile Framework measures semantic difficulty of words in the text based on word frequency. Low-frequency words, those generally used less often than others, have been determined by readability scholars to be more difficult for readers to understand. Thus, the number of low-frequency words in a text informs scholars as to

the text's difficulty. In addition to semantic measures, The Lexile Framework also measures syntactic difficulty. The mean sentence length is quantified for comparison purposes. Years of readability research has shown that longer sentences tend to make for more difficult reading (Archer, 2010; McCormick, 2007). Statistical comparisons of semantic and syntactic measures provide an estimate of text difficulty, and can be used as one of several text analysis tools to determine which text is appropriate for which reader, and what support or adaptations may be needed for students to gain comprehension from assigned texts. Alvermann, Phelps, and Gillis's (2010) "Framework for Assessing Texts" was a qualitative descriptive tool that will support further triangulation of data.

Significance of Study

Recently released drafts of Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies & Science address the need for matching individual readers to appropriate texts. These Common Core Reading Standards for Informational Text 6-12 states that Grade 7 students should be able to "read informational text independently, proficiently, and fluently in the grades 6-8 text complexity band;" (p. 34) and "read 'stretch' texts in the grades 9-10 text complexity band with scaffolding as needed (p. 34). Despite this, co-editor of *Neo-Vygotskian Perspectives on Literacy Research* Lee states, "There are virtually no assessments available for diagnosis for reading capacities in the content areas," (2009) and yet teachers know that many academic texts, even those listed as within grade-level complexity bands, are not accessible to struggling readers (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003). E. B. Moje shares,

As one ages, it's not just that the texts get longer and the print gets smaller, and the words get bigger, it's also that young people are asked to engage with ideas that are far more abstract than ideas that they were asked to engage with when they were in lower grades. When a young person advances in the grades, they start encountering concepts that one can't see, that can't be easily defined, like democracy. . . . and it's not just that they are bigger words, but they are more abstract. (Moje, 2010, minute 3)

This conceptual difficulty is only one of the reasons that readability formulas, so accepted by elementary teachers, have not gained favor with teachers of adolescents. Most readability scholars (e.g. Chall, 2000) accept that the formulas are imperfect; however, because they have been thoroughly researched (McCormick, 2007), it seems that these formulas should inform teachers of adolescents. Texts on leveling students abound for elementary students, but not for secondary students (Greenleaf, Jiminez, & Roller, 2002). The most recent national discussions of standards in the areas of text complexity and rigorous course content in secondary schools have failed to take into account the practicing teacher and real students. The field could benefit from research that tells us more about the nature of real readers and real teachers in real classrooms. Reminding policy makers, scholars, and practicing teachers about the difficulties inherent in finding the right text for each student at the right time could benefit the field in these ways.

Definitions

Content Area Reading – Content area reading implies any reading that is expected of students in academic classes in the secondary school. While narrative texts are present in these classrooms,

content area reading implies non-fiction expository text that includes varying text structure and conceptual vocabulary terms specific to each discipline (Alvermann et al., 2010).

Expository Text - The term expository text includes non-narrative, non-fiction text (McCormick, 2007). Because the term informational text is sometimes used but is confusing (a reader gains information from a narrative biography, for example) expository better suits a shared understanding of the various text structures that fall into this category. Expository text that is present in secondary classrooms may sometimes be categorized further as argument or persuasion, description, cause/effect, essay, and pieces that compare/contrast. While it is important to note that few sophisticated texts have only one explicit structure, usually one predominant structure prevails in texts of 200 words or less.

Adolescence: Adolescence, defined for the purposes of adolescent literacy research as students in grades 4 through 12 (Snow, 2009), is a time when the “belief in the self (or lack of such belief)” (p. 12) intensely affects self-efficacy (Sturtevant et al., 2006; Wigfield, Eccles, MacIver, Reumann, & Midgley, 1991). This is also a “time of identity, when labels begin to stick” (Alvermann, 2001b, p. 3). Because development at this age, specifically between the ages of 10 and 15, is swifter than at any other time in the human life span other than infancy (NMSA, 1995), teachers, parents, and the adolescent themselves are challenged to meet the needs of students that are nearly impossible to generalize about. Individualization is the most effective way to structure instruction at this time more than any other, because adolescents move through intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and moral changes at such different rates (Lesko, 2001; NMSA, 1995). Intellectually, students in middle school are moving toward more abstract

thinking patterns, and their attention spans at this time are marked by intense obsessions that may be short lived. Emotionally and socially, adolescents are easily discouraged (Alvermann, 2003; Smyth & McInerney, 2007); they prefer to interact with peers, and they like to have control. They are concerned with peer-acceptance, increasingly associate with sex roles, are self-involved, and are socially vulnerable (Kamil, 2003; NMSA, 1995).

Differentiation – Differentiated instruction implies individualization of classroom learning and is a way of teaching so that each student in a classroom may have a different learning experience generally in the four following suggested domains. Differentiation may occur in individualized learning processes, individualized demonstration of personal learning, individualized content from which to learn, and may appeal to different student interests and motivations for learning (Tomlinson, 2001).

Heterogeneous, non-leveled classrooms: Heterogeneous, non-leveled classrooms are defined as academic classrooms that are not grouped by ability (Cohen & Lotan, 1995) and are often called full-inclusion classrooms. Students are assigned specific teachers by factors other than perceived ability, so that students labeled “gifted” are in the same classroom as those labeled “special education.” Within these classrooms, teachers are expected to meet individual needs of each student.

Struggling reader: The struggling reader may have oral fluency issues that may interfere with reading or may have comprehension issues with academic texts (Hall, 2005). The struggling reader may have oral fluency issues, defined by rate, accuracy, and prosody that may interfere with reading (McCormick, 2007), or may have comprehension issues with academic texts.

Formal assessment measures may show that the student referenced is at least one grade below grade level. While the term “striving” has been used (United States Department of Education, 2010) because it connotes more positive reading-for-success policy jargon, the semantics on the issue are not as important as the student behind the label. When one is struggling, those charged with his or her welfare must help. Striving implies a personal journey. Adolescents who are not reading on grade level need active support. Throughout this dissertation, the term “struggling” is used. This label is problematic. All readers struggle with text at some point, and individual texts challenge individual students in different ways and at different times. Ivey (1999) found that although these labels are not helpful other than to initially and superficially describe potential participants, and that real identity is multi-faceted. As a point of clarification, reluctant and aliterate students avoid or refuse to read, but may or may not be struggling.

Striving Readers: While striving has been used to connote students that have had difficulty with text but continue to work to improve, the term striving is used in this research to define those students who are generally successful with the reading demands of their academic environments. Because, as stated earlier, all students may encounter challenging academic readings, even those students usually described as “successful” must “strive” to achieve understanding of certain complex academic texts encountered by adolescents in content area classrooms. The term “voracious,” as used by the teacher participant, is used synonymously with “striving” in this study.

Reluctant: Reluctant readers may or may not struggle with a text, but they choose not to read. A reluctant reader may, like a struggling reader, identify themselves as capable but

unwilling to try. While aliteracy, the most extreme form of reluctance, is defined as the refusal to read, reluctant readers can be motivated to move beyond refusal. As clarification, the researcher accepts the limitations of these labels. Any student may be described as struggling, striving, or reluctant on any given day or with any given text.

Text: For the purpose of this study, text is defined as words on paper or on a screen. While film, photographs, and other graphically represented images are considered texts, this study is limited to the printed word. For analysis purposes, 200 word passages will be selected from assigned texts for analysis and description.

Text Complexity – Text complexity is described as the levels of difficulty or challenge that a text may give a reader. Traditionally referred to as “considerate or inconsiderate” (Armbruster, 1984), scholars reject the binary nature of these two classifications and instead refer to levels of complexity. Many factors can determine complexity, including diction and semantics, structure, style, text features, levels of sophistication, topic, and length (Chall, 2000). Current debates in the field of text complexity mostly deal with the differences among individual readers, as a reader’s prior knowledge and individual interests can affect the ability to comprehend. Graesser, McNamara, and Kulikowich (2011) suggest that texts are best described with both qualitative attributes and quantitative scales” (p. 223).

Mindful instruction: Mindful teachers, also called responsive (Moje, 2008), exemplary (Parris & Block, 2007) or master teachers, do a better job than others in advancing their students’ reading achievement. The term mindful was carefully chosen by the researcher as a term that serves as synthesizing vocabulary to define and describe these teachers that have demonstrated a reflective

nature that forefronts individual needs of students in the classroom. While the term “responsive” has been marketed as an instructional strategy specifically within the phrase “culturally responsive,” the term for this study is not based on a commercialized product or specific way of teaching. Mindful instruction is characterized by teacher choices that are a direct result of a stimulus instead of a habit. These stimuli may be in the form of numeric data, student words or actions, or professional development. These mindful choices come in the form of practice that changes as a result of personal reflection.

Identity: Identity implies a changing personal definition of oneself. Often determined in the context of others, it determines and is determined by individuals and affects attitudes, words and actions of each individual and can change within different settings (Gee, 1990).

Independent level - Independent reading level is defined by McCormick (2007) as “the level at which a student can effortlessly handle material without teacher guidance” (p. 93). This is different than “considerate text,” an early term of the same concept. Considerate text connotes features of the text only, independent level reading connotes a match between text and reader. This term is relative to the terms instructional level and frustrational level. Scholars define a text as independent reading when a student understands 90% or more of the passage and can fluently read 98% or more of the words (Leslie & Caldwell, 2001).

Delimitations

This study was not about instructional practices other than differentiated words-on-paper and words-on-screen text choices in the classroom. While comprehension strategy instruction

and cooperative grouping may have taken place to support readers, these instructional practices were beyond the scope of this study. This study falls under the scope of what texts were used rather than how they were used, although this distinction is not neat. Similarly, teachers and students other than the single participant chosen are beyond the scope of this study.

Additionally, this is not about how students respond in longer units or later in the school year. This study is limited to one class period in one seventh grade classroom, for the duration of one unit of study and is explained further in Chapter Three.

Organization of Study

This study will be presented in five chapters, (Roberts, 2004). Chapter one presents the problem and the purpose of the study. Chapter two contains a thorough literature review. Chapter three explains and defends the embedded single case study methodology for the presented research questions. Chapter four presents the data found within the scope of each of the three research questions. Chapter five will be a comparative synthesis and subsequent analysis of themes that emerge from the data collected from the units of analysis as it informs the single case study of one teacher. Furthermore, Chapter Five will present limitations, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for scholars, teacher educators, policy makers, and practicing teachers.

Figure 1

Characteristics of Effective Secondary Literacy Teachers, Used under fair use guidelines, 2011

Highly effective secondary literacy teachers can be distinguished from their less effective peers in the following ways:

- (1) They know what to do, when to do it, and how to implement successful instruction effortlessly and automatically (Beers, 2000; Robb, 2000).
- (2) They can diagnose and teach so students overcome basic reading deficits (New Jersey Reading Association, 2003).
- (3) They are more likely to continue their education beyond the bachelor's degree (Langer, 2001; New Jersey Reading Association, 2003; Shulman, 1986; Wilson, Shulman, & Richert, 1987).
- (4) They collaborate with students, as most often demonstrated in rich co-constructed instructional approaches (Applebee Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003; Beers, 2000; Langer, 2001; Nystrand, 1997; Ostrowski, 2000).
- (5) They implement intellectually challenging and widely varied reading and writing activities (Carbonaro & Gamoran, 2002; Langer, 2001, New Jersey Reading Association, 2003; Ostrowski, 2000).
- (6) They model what they expect their students to do before students begin their work (Beers, 2000; Langer).
- (7) They hold high, positive expectations for their own abilities and for their students' capabilities (Applebee et al., 2003; Robb, 2000).
- (8) They are very good managers of many types of learning environments, their classrooms are well organized, and they allow few interruptions or disturbances (Robb, 2000).

Parris, S.R., & Block, C.C. (2007). The expertise of adolescent literacy teachers. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 50(7), 582-596.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Current literature in adolescent literacy clarifies the need for differentiated text choices in middle school classrooms. This literature review synthesizes current empirical studies in the field in order to support the need for a study that asks how teachers can support each middle school students' critical reading skills. Current findings in the field establish that middle school social studies classrooms that embrace the use of multiple, differentiated texts will better support adolescents in their literacy growth and ultimately improve critical reading skills. In reviewing the literature, the following six issues in the field emerge:

- 1) Mindful teachers
- 2) Motivation to Read
- 3) Access to Text
- 4) Appropriate Text
- 5) Expository Text
- 6) Purpose: Fostering Critical Reading Skills

As an additional framework for this work, Boote and Beile (2005) served as a guide for examining the purpose and approach to the review of the literature. Boote and Beile (2005) argue that the literature review is the most important thing that scholars can do to advance collective understanding in a field. Knowing what is known in a focused field is imperative before beginning research. A review “sets the context for a proposed study. . . . and situates existing

literature in a broader scholarly and historical context” (p. 4). This review of the research in the field is organized to be transparent about the suggested criteria reviewed in Boote and Beile’s study on the centrality of the literature review in graduate work. Beginning with a section on coverage, this review then moves to synthesis, discussion of methodology and suggested significance to both scholars and practitioners.

Coverage

In coming to these six themes, the researcher accessed library databases such as JStor, Education Research Complete and Web of Science. From there, reference lists and articles that cited relevant empirical studies were surveyed. Empirical studies and opinion pieces published in top tier journals and current handbooks were selected. While studies on middle school readers were most helpful, supplemental research on late elementary or high school student readers were included to support the narrowing focus on critical reading skills. Of the hundreds of abstracts accessed, 48 studies were the most relevant. Of these, 21 were to included in this review. Within the selection of articles, publications of International Reading Association (IRA), National Reading Conference / Literacy Research Association (NRC/LRA), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and American Educational Research Association (AERA) most informed the research, as these organizations affect classroom practice and reflect these research interests. The empirical, peer-reviewed studies published not only carry high-impact factors in the field; they disseminate collected understandings in the search for better research and thus, better practice. The most recent was published in 2010, the most dated, but still relevant, was published in 1996. In order to show

coverage of the historical breadth of this field, attention was given to each study's literature review. When appropriate, seminal work was referenced, even when not necessarily with adolescents (i.e. Gambrell et al., 1996; Neuman, 1999); theoretical underpinnings of others' work (i.e. Bourdieu, 1984), measures used (i.e. Bader, 2002) and data analysis methodologies (i.e. Merriam, 1998) were also referenced but not reviewed in depth because others that were reviewed in depth were more suitable to the focus of this scholarship.

Many of the literature reviews within the empirical studies acknowledged the newness of the field and the lack of past research in these specific areas. There are additional cited pieces that were necessary to support statements made within the review. These five additional articles and one published book (Krashen, 2004) were deemed important enough for mention but were not given a thorough review, as they did not lend themselves as well as the others to informing the research in the field. Current (McManus, 2008; Tatar, 2011) and seminal (Edgington, 1998) articles from the field along with publications by the Children's Book Council and National Council for Social Studies title *Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People* published annually since 2000 reflect interest in the use of trade books in the social studies classroom despite the dearth of empirical research on the subject.

Still, the research base is sufficiently broad. Finding convergence in these areas was a fulfilling task. Of the 21 studies cited, three studies did not study student participants at all, but analyzed texts. Fifteen studies were in the secondary schools. Two of the studies in the elementary school had fifth grade participants but the quality of the study, the impact found in current literature, and the relevance to current interest warranted inclusion. The one study done

in the third grade classroom on Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) was judged to be important enough for inclusion for the same reasons. Of the fifteen studies reviewed from the secondary schools, nine were in the middle school. The four studies that were conducted in content area classrooms focused on expository text. Studies conducted in language arts classrooms, for example the large surveys of what students like to read, were valuable in that they also espoused the importance of expository text. Two studies focused on preservice teachers.

While each study is reviewed in depth, this is organized in a synthesis that follows a cyclical, narrowing pattern that draws from each of the studies multiple times, eventually narrowing to the necessity of appropriate text to nurture students' critical reading skills in middle school classrooms. A variety of methods were chosen by scholars in the reviewed literature to answer a plethora of research questions. Methods are discussed specifically within each study and then more generally near the end of this review.

Synthesis

The Importance of Mindful Teachers

Individualized instruction is difficult to foster when middle school teachers serve students in 40 to 90 minute blocks, possibly teaching 150 different students each day. Teachers that do, however, can be called mindful teachers. Mindful teachers recognize the varied needs of each student in the classroom, and strive to offer appropriate instruction in order to develop skills necessary within the content area classroom.

Few empirical studies in the field highlight the power of the mindful teacher in regards to text selection in the secondary classroom. The six that were reviewed; however, were telling. Four were qualitative studies of classrooms with mindful teachers (defined differently by each researcher, and discussed within the contexts of each study below). Without a mindful teacher, students may not recognize their own reading difficulties (Hall, 2005; Ivey, 1999) or may retreat into a silence that teachers may interpret as reluctance or apathy (Hall, 2008; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Highlighting the positive power of a mindful secondary teacher is E.B. Moje's 1996 two-year classroom ethnography titled " 'I teach students, not subjects': Teacher-student relationships as contexts for secondary literacy." Moje found that one master secondary chemistry teacher who embraced her role as a reading teacher within her content area considered herself different than other secondary teachers in her basic foundations. Emerging from this qualitative study were themes that, when synthesized, amount to the practices of mindful teachers: constant informal assessment and flexible instruction that is planned to meet individual students' needs. While no measures of achievement were taken (either of the content or of reading skills), students interviewed reported enjoyment, motivation, and conceptual understanding in the course.

Another teacher, of eighth grade English, was thickly described as "An Interdisciplinary Field Guide" (Walker, Bean, & Dillard, 2005, p. 422) because she worked to engage her students with text outside of the traditional anthology, using her background as a former social studies teacher. In this comparative case study of multiple text use by mindful teachers, "Phyllis" responded to her students' needs by knowing their reading level, implementing collaborative

instruction strategically, planning for reading time and offering various read aloud activities like readers' theater. The ensuing discussion encouraged scholars and teachers to see the potential in case studies of master teachers who motivate students to read and, subsequently, think critically. While the aforementioned qualitative studies describe students and teachers, none quantitatively measure student gains in critical reading skills.

Mindful secondary teachers choose texts that are appropriate for individual students. In a Reading in the Content Areas course designed specifically for inservice and preservice English teachers, many who see themselves not as reading teachers but literature teachers, researchers asked how teachers chose texts for struggling readers (Friese, Alvermann, Parkes, & Rezak, 2008). This comparative case study showed that teachers differed widely in their text choices when given a specific assignment in a graduate class, but that teachers still are reluctant to stray from traditional text choices. Discussed in light of Bourdieu's (1989) "cultural capital," the researchers suggest that teachers see text content as perhaps something to be given to a student instead of a tool for supporting students' skills in reading. This study, to be discussed throughout many of these narrowing subtopics, was limited in that it was conceived and implemented within the backdrop of a graduate course, such that the teacher text choices could have been, to a certain extent, performative instead of authentic. The course assignment asked teachers to choose and justify texts for specific struggling readers, and reported teacher success in the form of vignettes lauding the students' improved reading assessment scores. The researchers conclude that assessments "are no substitute for a knowledgeable teacher with a variety of resources at hand and the autonomy to use them for the benefit of students" (Friese et al., p. 97). The teachers in

this study who were empowered to act in the best interest of their students tended to stray from prescribed curricula to differentiate texts for their struggling readers.

A striking complement to the previous statement is a recent study by a teacher-researcher who used quantitative assessment data and a variety of resources to eloquently convince her district leaders to rethink a prescribed reading intervention (Dennis, 2009). Dennis, a sixth-grade language arts master teacher, strived for “appropriate” (p. 283) strategies for each of her struggling young adolescent readers when she rejected a district-purchased commercial reading program and administered specific reading assessments to her students and then remediated accordingly. Her findings indicated her students fell into four distinct reading groups, and showed that intervention for the “automatic word caller” (p. 287) ought to be different than the intervention for the “strategic reader” (p. 286) who had trouble decoding nonsense words but who used appropriate “fix-up strategies” (p. 286) to comprehend text. Mindfulness was more than just a disposition; the teacher was trained in the administration and use of reading assessments and intervention instruction, including fluency practice, word study, vocabulary development, and the building of background knowledge through the use of expository text. While the disposition that empowers some teachers to keep state mandates in perspective while others do not is evident through many of the studies in this literature review, this disposition combined with the knowledge of research in effective practice becomes the pivotal difference in the studies that highlight reading achievement gains or the valuing of conceptual knowledge over surface understandings.

Other quantitative studies in the field include a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant-funded experiment (Guthrie, Wigfield, Barbosa, Perencevich, Taboada, Davis, Scaffidi, & Tonks, 2004) that specifically stated as rationale for their investigation that “outstanding teachers invest substantial time and energy in supporting students’ motivation and engagement in reading” (p. 403). The research group asked how Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) differed from comprehension Strategy Instruction (SI) or Traditional Instruction (TI) among 148 third graders in a 12 week intervention study. Teachers trained in CORI over a 10 day summer workshop institute) used multiple texts to teach a concept instead of the text, and findings showed statistical significance of increased motivation and passage comprehension, as measured by the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension Test (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Maria, & Dreyer, 2000). Results also included the finding that individual teachers matter: teachers who enacted higher implementation of CORI had students with higher reading comprehension outcomes. The certain teachers responded to the staff development opportunity and invested in motivation and engagement in reading. These results are not surprising, but the grant-funded support in the implementation of CORI is prohibitive: schools were provided up to ten days of summer staff development days and university support throughout the implementation of the intervention. While the researchers contend that the professional development was comparable, the SI group participated in only five staff development days in comparison to the ten that were offered to the CORI teachers. It is also possible that teachers who agreed to participate (knowing that they would have to commit two weeks of their summer vacation to this project) may have been already the type of teachers who are motivated to improve practice. The participant teachers

may have already had the dispositions of mindful teachers, and may have fostered reading gains without the CORI intervention.

While we do not know which mindful characteristics affected students' critical reading skills, nor to what extent the teachers acted on these, the literature show that mindful teachers value students as individuals and plan instruction accordingly. They work to motivate their students to read for conceptual understandings and are able to question prescribed curricula and mandated assessments. They show a desire to improve and reflect on their practice, and by defining "success" differently for each student, help students feel and be successful.

Motivation to Read

In order to narrow the focus, the literature was reviewed for instances of mindful teachers motivating students to read critically. One of the ways that mindful teachers help students make reading achievement gains and foster critical reading skills is in motivating their students to read. While many of the studies reviewed could be categorized in any of the six chosen sections of this manuscript, four of the twenty studies fell most heavily into the category on motivation to read. Of the four reviewed in depth, three subtopics emerged that are closely linked to motivation: concept-oriented reading instruction, self-efficacy, and student choice.

Concept-oriented reading instruction. At the heart of research in CORI is student motivation. Scholars continue to suggest that motivated students are more likely to comprehend text than those who are not motivated. This experimental study's participants were whole classrooms of diverse third graders; the intervention took place after summer professional

development for up to nineteen teachers (depending on which group they were assigned) in socially/economically comparable classrooms. Researchers found increased motivation at posttest, measured by teachers' ratings and the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) correlated with text comprehension. Meaning-centered curricula increase motivation (Guthrie & Davis, 2003; Guthrie et al., 2004; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Especially with adolescents, teachers' perceptions of student motivation is fraught with the possibility of extremely unreliable data (Hall, 2007), but the researchers were able to get students' self-report to triangulate their data for some of the subgroups. While CORI suggests that motivation can be increased when students strive for content learning goals instead of performance goals, other themes in the research emerge within the motivation-to-read literature. Scholars theorize that adolescent students are also more motivated to read when they see themselves as successful and when given some autonomy in text choice. Other studies discussed in this review (i.e. Boyd & Ikpeze, 2007; Walker et al., 2005) focus on the conceptual understandings fostered by texts, but may not be packaged as the University of Maryland's CORI.

Self-efficacy. Because self-efficacy (Bandura, 1979) is related to motivation, students who have opportunities to feel success in the task of reading are more likely to continue to read (Guthrie, et al., 2004). Students who believe they *can* read a given text are more likely to comprehend it (Hall, 2005). Thus, when students identify themselves as a satisfactory reader of a given text, they are more likely to continue to read. Using a year of data, Hall examined three different middle school students' socially situated identities (Gee, 2000) as readers in content area classrooms. Data collected included field notes and audio-taped bi-weekly classroom

observations, teacher interviews, student interviews and comprehension assessments (Bader, 2002; Hall, 2005). None of the students showed improvement in reading assessment data over the school year, and yet one of the three saw herself as successful in her math class because her course grades reflected an “average of an 88%” (p. 17). All tests in the course could be retaken and homework was given 100% for completion, inflating her grade. What is problematic in this finding is that when adolescents use coping strategies other than careful reading to define themselves as successful, 1) students may go unnoticed by unmindful or overwhelmed teachers and thus do not get necessary remediation nor time with text and 2) students hone their coping strategies instead of their reading skills. The coping strategies documented include silence (Hall, 2007), behavior problems (Ivey, 1999) and even apathetic aliteracy (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). The silence of struggling readers, observed and interpreted in a descriptive case-study (Hall, 2007), is related to the identity creation of middle school students; instead of seeing themselves as effective readers, they are likely to create an alternate identity that hides reading struggles. Thus, identity and self-efficacy are the same: students who do not have a feeling of self-efficacy may create a false identity to hide instead of seeking help.

Discursive identity theory (Gee, 2000) suggests that students choose actions to manipulate their teachers’ perceptions of them. Hall’s findings suggest that student silence about their aliteracy is not a case of motivation but instead an example of identity construction. The three struggling readers in her case study wanted to be seen as successful learners and not as failing readers and resorted to hiding instead of continuing to face failure. This issue of identity construction is crucial in the understanding of struggling adolescent readers. Teachers’ goals

may be to promote deep understanding of classroom concepts, as discussed later in this review (see discussion of Hinchman & Zalewski, 1996). When students are hiding, teachers will have a harder time reaching these goals. The motivation to understand text within the support of a safe community environment must be greater than the motivation to hide.

The issue of identity is closely aligned with text choice (Pecjak & KOSIR, 2008). Students need to have access to text that they can read independently. Middle school students like to read text that they feel success in reading (Ivey, 1999; Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999), and students who like to read are more motivated to read, and reading begets better reading.

Student choice. Much of the research in the field of adolescent reading motivation points to the positive effects of allowing student choice in texts. While research indicates that mindful teachers match students to text with student interests in mind (Afflerbach & VanSledright, 2001; Boyd & Ikpeze, 2007; Friese et al., 2008), it is interesting to note the research conclusions reached concerning student preferences. Allowing student choice has shown to be motivational in many studies done in the elementary years (Gambrell, 1996); fewer studies of young adolescents appear in the literature base. Pecjak & KOSIR (2008) surveyed 1,282 Slovenian seventh graders and their 67 teachers. Researchers asked what activities in the classroom motivated reading behaviors, and then measured student motivation with Gambrell's (1996) *The Motivation to Read Inventory*. Researchers also measured students' reading behavior (student self-report); reading efficiency (teacher report); and teachers' classroom activities (also teacher-report). Interesting findings include seventh graders who reported feeling competent as readers

had a higher likelihood of having a teacher who allowed choice in reading. While this survey has a large sample size, it is important to note that self-report of these behaviors is fraught with error, and the data was not triangulated with any additional measures.

Large-scale survey research shows what middle school students like to read (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001), and these preferences do not jive with many district's content requirements (Walker et al., 2005; Worthy et al., 1999). In "Just plain reading': A survey of what makes students want to read in middle school classrooms," Ivey and Broaddus (2001) surveyed 1,765 sixth-graders and followed up with 31 interviews to answer questions of preference and motivation to read. Findings included that "personal choice was closely aligned with positive experience in reading" (p. 363) and that students valued time for independent reading and teacher read-alouds. Quantitative data was reported in number of respondents and percentages of totals, and qualitative, open-ended responses were reviewed and grouped as trends emerged. Interviews provided depth of understanding. While survey data can be limiting, the findings from this study have informed later studies in text access, allocation of instructional time, and the desires of young adolescents (i.e. Friese et al., 2008). These data have limitations in regards to adolescent aliteracy, as sixth graders do not generally show the reading apathy that is so prevalent in older students.

Access to Diverse Texts

Ivey & Broaddus (2001) also probed the issue of access, defined as availability of engaging text in the classroom. Their third research question asked how well their middle school classrooms responded to these reading preferences. The answer is that classrooms do not

measure up (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Worthy et al., 1999). Only 28% of respondents reported that books that they liked to read were in their classrooms. Seventy-four percent of students reported that they found books they liked to read at home or at the book store, implying an environment where students with means (i.e. homes with engaging books, parents who transport and then spend money in book stores) are getting more access to engaging text than students without (Ivey, 1999). Because reading begets better reading (Allington, 1977; Krashen, 2004; Stanovich, 1986), research from National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that the issue of access is an issue that could potentially be a key to closing achievement gaps in reading across students of varied socio-economic status (Loomis & Bourque, 2001).

In an effort to examine ambiguities in the literature, it is important to note The National Reading Panel's *Report of the Subgroups* statement that "despite widespread acceptance of the idea that schools can successfully encourage students to read more and these increases in reading practice will be translated into better fluency and higher reading achievement there is not adequate evidence to sustain this claim" (United States Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000, p. 3-28). In response, controlled studies of Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) (Krashen, 2004) and the Matthew Effect (Stanovich, 1986) suggest that just reading helps students read better. Additionally, there is a wealth of research that indicates that repeated reading improves fluency for older elementary students (Allington, 1977) and the earlier discussed suggestion that success motivates reading which motivates success *in* reading, a cycle that needs to be fostered and sustained for *all* students.

Friese et al. (2008) also discussed practice implications of access to text in their multi-case study of teachers in a graduate content-area reading course. After data analysis of preservice and inservice teacher-reported text choices for individual struggling readers, the researchers concluded that “access influences the texts teachers select for use in their classrooms” (p. 92). Worthy et al. (1999) found that students who had low-attitudes toward reading and who were low-achieving (discussed in more detail later in this review) preferred drawing books, car/truck books, and picture books, all of which had “limited or very limited” (p. 23) supplies in school libraries and classrooms. While acknowledging that many school districts mandate or give limited choice in texts, especially in the secondary content areas, mindful teachers not only work to motivate students to read by increasing the variety of texts available in their classrooms (Boyd & Ipkeze, 2007; Friese et al., 2008), they differentiate instruction to meet the needs of individual learners as well. Repeatedly, adolescent literacy scholars challenge teachers to offer struggling students abundant opportunity to “interact with a variety of texts in authentic ways” (Johannessen & McCann, 2009, p. 69). Furthermore, current understanding in literacy processes suggests that instruction in diverse texts builds cognitive flexibility (Parris & Block, 2008).

Differentiated Reading Instruction in the Middle School Classroom

As the focus in this review continues to narrow, the discussion of the availability of appropriate texts narrows as well. What is appropriate for one middle school reader may not be appropriate for another, so a differentiated classroom is imperative to meet the needs of all readers. Differentiation of text in the secondary classroom has not been seen as controversial or seen as important for educational research (Friese et al., 2008). As discussed earlier, teacher

beliefs may guide text choice, as may mandated curricula. What makes a text appropriate for any individual student? The literature that is emerging on this topic includes readability, text cohesion, and individualized text-student matching, by reading level and interest. This is especially important with low-achieving and reluctant adolescent readers.

Text readability. Text readability is an important factor in text selection, but is often ignored by secondary teachers (Friese et al., 2008). Text readability formulas, like the ones available to Microsoft Word users (i.e. Flesch, 1948) and The Lexile Framework (MetaMetrics, 2004) are based on semantics and syntax. Secondary teachers know that many academic texts are not accessible to struggling readers (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009; Hall, 2008; Ivey, 1999).

Increasing popularity of High-Interest, Low-Readability (Hi/Lo) fiction has brought the debate to the forefront, but little research has been done as to the effectiveness of these texts (Spadorcia, 2005). In one 2005 quantitative study of actual readability (as opposed to advertised text readability) Spadorcia (2005) examined text typed of Hi/Lo books asked if there are different subtypes that support different types of reading instruction. The subtypes identified were “sight-word controlled texts,” “decodable texts,” “literature-based texts,” or “balanced texts.” Random samples of 100-word passages from sixty books advertised as Hi/Lo were analyzed at the word, sentence, and passage level. Using SAS software, the author analyzed the data and determined that there is inconsistency between what texts are compatible for specific students’ reading instruction and Hi/Lo advertised texts. Other research that focuses on text demands of these texts designed for struggling adolescents is out-of-date in light of these newly published texts (i.e. Hilgendorff, 1980) and is less helpful not only because the research was still

on elementary Hi/Lo texts, but also because we know that readability formulas were initially intended to quantify demands of naturally-occurring text instead of engineered texts that have been produced sometimes for commercial purposes. Companies that market these Hi/Lo texts advertised at lower readability levels suggest easier access to content; this research shows that claim is not always true.

Text complexity. Because text readability tells us only about text complexity at the word and sentence level, scholars of the Construction-Integration Theory (Kintsch, 2004) began to quantify units of texts, called propositions, and their interconnectedness. One of the complexities is at the conceptual level; text becomes more abstract in secondary classrooms. This conceptual difficulty is only one of the reasons that readability formulas have not gained favor with teachers of adolescents. Readability formulas do offer estimates of text difficulty that are meant to be informative, for example, in the textbook adoption process. The formulas also offer insight to teacher practitioners as to levels of adaptations needed (Alvermann et al., 2010; Spadoricia, 2005).

In McNamara, Kintsch, Songer, & Kintsch (1996), investigators tested the comprehension of expository text of middle school readers (N=36). The participants sorted vocabulary concept cards and answered questions on pre- and post-tests to measure text comprehension. They were given different texts to read, all on the subject of heart disease. The vocabulary card sorting activity, done before and after the reading, was a more sensitive measurement tool based on the small sample size because the comprehension data did not spread out as well across data points. While the sorting measure was more telling than the

comprehension questions, the results highlighted the need for differentiated texts in middle school classrooms. Results indicated that when students have sufficient background knowledge in a subject, less coherent texts can aid recall. Wait-time before the posttest was not indicated. Higher-level inference questions; however, were better answered by those with greater prior knowledge and less-coherent text. This finding could be used to defend current secondary academic texts. Instead, it more importantly shows the importance of background knowledge in meaning-construction from text and supports the Matthew Effect in that those who have reading ability, those who can and do read, gain more than those who do not. This research did not report reading levels of the participants in the study, and it is likely, with this small sample, that those with less background knowledge on the subject were already lower level middle school readers. The authors' final conclusions are troubling, as they make an assumption that overly coherent texts are ones where the authors "underestimate[d] their audience" and contained text that can be described as "overly explicit writing [that] is not only annoying, but also prevents the audience from actively processing" (McNamara et al., 1996, p. 36). This statement assumes one whole-class text and student background knowledge, something that teachers of remedial readers know that many students lack.

The International Reading Association corroborates the importance of text that struggling adolescent readers can read independently in a recent podcast from the Carnegie Foundation's *Time to Act* (2010) launch:

Regardless of where a student might be reading, even if it is at a rudimentary third or fourth grade level, [it is important that there] are material [available] that he or she might

find success in and at the same time be engaged with . . . And what is important, of course, is being able to have an ample supply of those so that as skills and strategies are required, the materials can be made increasingly more difficult and closer to grade level. (Deshler, 2009, minute 24)

What texts are appropriate goes beyond readability formulas and complexity issues. All readers also need text that is engaging and appropriate in areas of topic and language. Individual readers need individualized texts (Fisher & Ivey, 2007; Friese et al., 2008; Walker et al., 2005).

Text-reader matching for struggling adolescent readers. Research shows that low-achieving readers “often find themselves in materials that are too difficult for them. . . .[which] results in unrewarding early reading experiences that lead to less involvement in reading-related activities” (Stanovich, 1986, p. 364). Many low-achieving students avoid reading (Guthrie, McRae, Coddington, Klauda, Wigfield, & Barbosa, 2009; Hall, 2007; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), and this lack of exposure slows development. In Guthrie, et al.’s (2009) experiment out of the University of Maryland, researchers offered a 12-week CORI intervention for 41 low-achieving and 53 high-achieving fifth graders. Achievement was measured in reading comprehension on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. Motivation, self-efficacy, perceived difficulty, and avoidance were measured by various questionnaires that were not explained in detail. Within the intervention, CORI trained teachers were trained to give students choices of relevant, leveled text variety (ranging from Grade 2 with no ceiling mentioned) based in thematic units. The study did not disaggregate the various strategies, valuing the potential efficacy of the combined practice. Findings indicate that the students who were given the intervention

performed better and reported higher motivation than the Traditionally Instructed (TI) group. The low-achievers did not make more significant gains than the high-achievers, corroborating the Matthew Effect in reading. The benefit of this holistic rather than specific intervention with striving readers is quantified positively in that students made gains with CORI that the control group did not make. An important critique of this research is the feasibility of the intervention and large number of texts that were provided to participating teachers.

Ivey's contrasting qualitative study also asked about motivation, and the findings corroborated the large experimental study that found that differentiated texts motivate students to read. "Matching reading tasks and texts to students' interest and instructional levels leads to increased skill and motivation to read" (Ivey, 1999, p. 177). In this 1999 multi-case study, Ivey found that labels such as "skilled or unskilled" and "motivated or unmotivated" (p. 181) were not helpful in understanding middle school readers. Ivey acted as participant observer in a sixth grade classroom for approximately four hours a day, three to four times a week, for five months, which was the point at which the data became redundant and the researcher felt the point of saturation had been reached. Data consisted of field notes, audiotaped interviews, regular meetings with participants and the researcher's journal entries. Data were analyzed through Corbin & Strauss (2008) constant comparative method. Ivey found that each case participant was multi-faceted: Casey, the "successful reader" was also disinterested in assigned reading but had an ample supply of books of her own choosing at home; Allison, the "struggling reader" was highly motivated to understand and improve; and Ryan, the "reluctant reader," developed fluency throughout the time period of the study and enjoyed expository text that he chose on his

own. All three student readers frequently chose books that were “not cognitively demanding” (p. 188). Instead of being concerned that students are not being offered enough rigor in text in the classroom, classroom implications include the consideration that perhaps easier books need to be acceptable to secondary teachers, because easy reading is certainly better than no reading at all. As a whole, these cases resonate with practicing classroom teachers, and serve as a reminder that each child and each text is different.

Both of these studies recognized the teachers’ role in motivation and recognizing differences in the classroom. The CORI experiments offered staff development to teachers in areas of motivation and assessment of specific reading strategies prior to the intervention. Ivey (1999) partnered with a classroom teacher with an “eclectic” (p. 33) style that included differentiated texts including picture books for struggling readers. Mindful teachers strive to offer access to appropriate text that is readable, cohesive, and that matches individual students’ interests and maturity levels, within appropriate zones of each student’s proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Offering appropriate expository text in the secondary classroom is the final key to developing critical thinkers who are ready for the demands of content area readings at the high school and college level.

Expository Text

For the purposes of this review, the term expository text is used to include non-narrative, non-fiction text. Non-narrative text is defined as text that is not in temporal sequence or chronological order. Expository text complements narrative texts in classrooms that value critical reading skills and individualized instruction.

Both the CORI experiments and text coherence literature value the use of expository text in teaching concepts to students through the use of varied texts and mindful instruction.

Expository text is necessary in the classroom, as much as 75% of secondary students' reading demands are non-narrative (Dreher, 2003), and students gain conceptual understandings through these texts. Many scholars argue that expository text is inherently more motivating than narrative texts to secondary students (Ivey, 1999; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Moss & Newton, 2002; Worthy et al., 1999) and that practice in expository text is imperative for success in college (Friese et al., 2008). Moss & Newton (2002) examined currently published 6th grade basal readers. They used content analysis (Merriam, 1998) to classify texts as fiction, informational, biography, poetry, or play. While results indicated that informational text is increasing in these readers, compared to earlier basal publications, only 24% of the pages represented informational text. These findings reflect classroom practice that privileges narrative fiction in the middle school classrooms. Also problematic is the broad category called "informational" text. Essays, arguments, and opinions should be a staple of content area curricula in addition to the various informational texts that are specific to history, math, and science curricula. Hall (2007), discussed in detail earlier, found cross-curricular themes in her study of silent, female, struggling readers who struggled with expository texts in their social studies, science, and math classes. Afflerbach & VanSledright (2001), to be discussed later, found that readers who are not considered at-risk still struggle to make connections or to think critically about expository text they encounter in social studies.

Worthy et al. (1999) asked "What do middle school students say they prefer to read?" in their survey reported in "What Johnny likes to read is hard to find in school." Of an initial

population of 35 classrooms in nine schools, the researchers chose 15 economically diverse classrooms in three schools. Twelve teachers agreed to participate, making up a total of 614 students. Of these, 426 participated in the survey. Students reported preferring scary books, cartoons and comics, sports books, drawing books, and popular magazines. High-achieving students (determined by state reading competency tests) preferred funny novels and books for adults; low-achieving students preferred two expository text genres: drawing books and car/truck books. Students who reported high attitudes toward reading (on the Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey, McKenna & Kear, 1990) preferred series books and funny books while students with low attitudes preferred car/truck books and picture books. The expository texts mentioned above were reported to be limited in schools and classrooms. While the most concerning limitations of this study include the low participation rate (69%), this study has been highly-cited and school libraries and classrooms have responded with more accessible reading materials. Students like to read expository text, and expository texts in the classroom can supplement narrative in order to foster critical reading. Much of the literature on conceptual understandings in the secondary classroom highlights the importance of expository text (Afflerbach & VanSledright, 2001; Boyd & Ikpeze, 2007; Hinchman & Zalewski, 1996; Walker, et al., 2005).

Critical Reading of Text

Critical reading is the ability to not only comprehend the literal message of a text, but is also the ability to connect, make inferences, question, critique, detect bias, and even fantasize about related possibilities suggested by text (Ivey & Fisher, 2006; Ivey & Broaddus; 2001).

Critical readers “identify the perspective inherent in texts, in the process raising questions about both explicit and implicit messages choosing to resist some messages and accede to others” (Apol, Sakuma, Reynolds, & Rop, 2003, p. 431). Evidence of critical reading in the classroom can be seen in student writing, in alternative assessment products, and in student voices, like discussions and think-alouds. When secondary students read multiple texts to gain conceptual understanding, the research shows that students’ critical reading skills may be honed. McNamara, et al. (1996), reviewed in depth earlier, based their research conclusions about coherent and incoherent text on the premise that generating knowledge, opinions, or questioning current background knowledge “increases the learner’s active engagement” (p. 34) and thus improves learning and memory.

Hinchman & Zalewski (1996) paired as a university-based reading education specialist and classroom teacher in order to understand how participants understand activities in one 10th-grade global-studies class. This research, while in a 10th grade social studies course, met requirements for this literature review because of the teacher’s verbalized goal that she wanted her students to have “long-term understanding” of the concepts and issues of the course. This study differed from qualitative studies by Hall (2005; 2007) and Walker et al. (2005) where the researchers were not acting as collaborators in the study. Instead, like Moje’s (1996) ethnography, the researcher collaborated with the classroom teacher in answering research questions, but unlike Moje, Hinchman & Zalewski described their qualitative study as participant observation, as her involvement lasted one school year instead of Moje’s two-year ethnography. Data collected included video-taped classroom instruction, interviews, and other documents

(Hinchman & Zalewski, 1996, p. 94). Researchers used HyperQual2 software to assist with the emerging trends and themes, and the teacher's journal was analyzed later to triangulate data. Findings showed teacher directed reading activities within short lectures, during question-and-answer sessions, in small-group instruction, and on formal assessments.

The findings also indicate disparate interpretations of the teacher and the students. The teacher struggled to favor a classroom with an understanding-oriented approach in the face of a state test-based "results-directed context" (p. 104). The students, on the other hand, reported engaging in the material just enough to meet their own criteria for success, which in some cases was "piecemeal understandings" (p. 103). This study adds to the literature on the nature of reading instruction in the secondary schools. The gaps between intention and accomplishment are wide in this study, and the researchers go as far as implicating state standards in the unintended consequence of fostering classrooms that are devoid of a sense of community and student-drive for deep understanding. When seeking participants for research in this area, it was important that the classroom teachers involved were asked to participate based on researcher observations or student work samples that demonstrated critical reading based on the reading of differentiated texts.

In a multi-grant funded case study of struggling readers, Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, & Mueller (2001) recount a San Francisco initiative that served as an alternative to a traditional reading remediation program for 30 ninth graders. Called a Reading Apprenticeship, the teacher was the "expert" in subject-area texts, and the students were "apprentices" in an environment that fostered social, personal, cognitive, and knowledge-building areas. The course was built

upon encouraging “complex conceptions of high-level literacy practices” (p. 101) in a cross-curricular environment that allowed for inquiry and student choice in texts. While this intervention may not be feasible in many districts in light of the financial support needed to sustain such a program, it is encouraging to hear the positive statements ninth grade students made about reading gains, especially after reading the comments about the aliteracy that had been rampant among the group before the intervention.

Another study that is often cited in the literature on intertextuality, content area literacy, and the development of critical reading skills is Afflerbach & VanSledright’s (2001) study “Hath! Doth! What? Middle graders reading innovative history text.” In order to understand the processes that students go through when reading multiple non-fiction texts (both narrative and expository) in the social studies classroom, Afflerbach & VanSledright (2001) interviewed seven 5th graders about their think-aloud processes when constructing meaning from multiple texts about Colonial Jamestown. Students completed think-aloud protocols on a diary excerpt, an embedded poem, and a nontraditional textbook. The researchers reported that students were not adept at making intertextual connections, and were especially loath to critique or question the text. Researchers also named a phenomenon the Disney Effect, because much of the information given was from the movie *Pocahontas* and not the assigned texts. The authors suggest that a variety of text is helpful for students to attempt to reach deeper understandings, but that the role of the teacher in the process is imperative to “coach and model” (p. 705), eventually moving students to those conceptual understandings. The authors also recognize the difficulty of archaic vocabulary and syntax, unfamiliar text genre, the need to attend to details in higher level reading,

and the necessity of “a healthy degree of skepticism about the claims of authors writing about the past” (p. 706). While viewing and coding qualitatively the think-aloud protocols of proficient fifth grade readers is a valuable addition to the research base, performative reading for a research-team is quite different than student’s everyday school reading. An additional critique of this study is the definition of expository text. Diary entries, while non-fiction, may be narrative or expository depending on the individual purposes of each entry. While primary source material is important in developing conceptual understanding, non-fiction should not automatically be labeled expository text.

In their examination of how teachers select texts for struggling readers, Friese et al. (2008), discussed earlier in light of mindful teachers, researchers presented the text choices of secondary teachers to two university professors of English. Both professor consultants praised one secondary teachers’ multiple text choices and the learning exercises that came of these choices. Within the analysis of the multi-case research of inservice and preservice teachers in a Reading in the Content Area course, researchers found that secondary classroom teachers made decisions that fostered assumptions about content demands at the university level. The researchers asked university English professors to comment on the text choices and lesson plans of the secondary classroom teachers. One English professor defined the profession at all levels, stating that the focus in the discipline is on “words and discussions of their significance” and more difficult questions such as “why?” While such a concise definition of the field is open to much debate, this is clearly a high-level critical reading task. Secondary English teachers recognize the importance and power of successful teaching in our discipline when students, as

current members of our greater society, are able to determine the motivations and manipulations inherent in written texts. Because this research is grounded in Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital" (1986), researchers asked the two English professors about their values in regards to the content of the English course. Recognizing the inherent pull in the respective states of cultural capital reflected in the discipline is paramount. Institutions, from universities to middle school classrooms, are led by instructors who are affected by this cultural capital, and this is reflected in their text choices. While passing along cultural capital may be implicitly valued by some classroom teachers, finding text that is less about the content and more about the student grounds the following study.

This similar study on the text choices of elementary preservice teachers in a children's reading course, "When can we make paper cranes?": Examining pre-service teachers' resistance to critical readings of historical fiction" (Apol et al., 2003) found that elementary teachers were reluctant to choose texts that did not offer simplistic, emotionally safe, non-controversial interpretations. In this case study, the researchers chronicled the instruction of the university instructors in a children's literature course that privileged critical response that "maintains that texts and responses are historically, socially, and politically situated and are embedded in the value assumptions of a culture" (Apol, et al., 2003, p. 434). Data were collected in the forms of written responses to questionnaires completed by the preservice teachers. Despite a classroom presentation on historic and cultural inaccuracies, all of the preservice teachers still chose to teach the westernized and romanticized text choice, because of the positive moral lesson and logical hands-on follow-up activity. This study suggested that preservice teachers were more

resistant to taking a critical stance in reading a text than they were to the issues and ideals being promoted in the texts they chose to teach. Preservice teachers were also reluctant to encourage students to respond to text in complex ways; preferring crafts to discussions, and avoided the difficult or unpleasant critical stance toward the United States at the end of World War II, for example. While this research was not conducted on master teachers, but on neophytes, it clarifies critical reading practices and the resistance that may be encountered. The practicality of these teachers must be noted; teaching critical reading that implicates the United States in wrong-doing could bring unpleasant consequences upon a new teacher in many school districts. Equally concerning is the assumption that elementary students are emotionally prepared for their teacher to present texts that are not “emotionally safe.” The researchers’ findings seemed to implicate elementary preservice teaching for a perceived lack of deep thinking, when these teachers may wisely have left the emotionally difficult topics for the parent to broach with the child. Still, studying a master teacher in this context may be more fruitful, as master teachers, like the one discussed next, have the confidence to reject institutional understandings that may be too simplistic.

Dennis (2009) argues that struggling readers who attempt to read texts that are too difficult are forced to focus on specific facts within the text instead of allowing them a deeper understanding that then teaches “students how to engage and interact with text” (p. 284). Multiple sources can help students detect author bias. Additionally, intertextuality, finding common and divergent themes of multiple texts, promotes critical understandings of ideas in texts (Boyd & Ikpeze, 2007). In this seven week study, Boyd and Ikpeze asked, “How does the

teacher support and promote students' conceptual understanding about desegregation and social justice issues?" Qualitative case-study methods were used to observe, describe, and discuss issues of multiple text types (i.e. photographs, docudramas, documentaries, encyclopedia articles, and novels) used to promote critical reading and to foster conceptual understandings of 11 seventh graders in an elite private school. The researchers concluded that the cognitive demands placed on students as they compare and contrast by layering and revisiting multiple text types as is espoused in Cognitive Flexibility Theory (Spiro et al., 2004) fostered depth of understanding. The mindful teacher assisted with "interpretations of truth and contradictions represented in the materials" (Boyd & Ipkeze, 2007, p. 235) as students made sense of the complex content. Data samples included student samples of written text that synthesized the multiple texts and classroom transcripts of teacher-initiated discussions. The researchers suggest that this study is not generalizable because of the small private school classroom setting and short observation period. However, powerful insights into the positive effects that deep reading can lend to students' comprehension of and critical evaluation of text emerge from the data. While this study did not assess reading ability of student participants nor did it quantify readability of the multiple texts, it did show that multiple text types fosters the type of instruction that lends itself to deep, rich conceptual understandings.

Methodology

The quantitative studies in this review are comprised of nine studies, three of which were surveys. Three were text analysis, either of readability or cohesion, and three were controlled experiments of reading interventions. Basic statistical descriptions were used with standard

statistical software for data analysis. The eleven qualitative studies comprised eight case studies, one action research study, one participant-observational study, and one ethnography. Data were analyzed in most cases, using constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Straus, 1967). Of the reviewed studies, two of the surveys (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Worthy et al., 1999), both published in *Reading Research Quarterly*, have been the most cited and have come to define the field. The research methodologies of all the studies chosen for review were appropriate for the chosen research questions, and none of the research questions could be considered unproductive, as there is still so much to learn in this field.

The case studies and ethnographies that inform this review are rich and have impacted the field (Walker et al., 2005; Moje, 1996), even the newly published studies (Boyd & Ipkeze, 2007; Friese et al., 2008; Hall, 2005; Hall, 2007). Mixed-method research could be very powerful in a focused research study that asks how middle school teachers, in an approach that balances student motivation and text analysis, match each adolescent to appropriate text that can be read independently in order to promote conceptual understandings and critical reading.

Significance

There is no detailed study of the demands and the benefits of offering differentiated texts in addition to the whole-class text (Fisher & Ivey, 2007). While the Carnegie's *Time to Act* publications (2010) and IRA's list of "What's Hot" (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2010) will surely fuel interest in any high-quality adolescent literacy studies, a detailed case study and subsequent thick description of the classroom of a middle school master teacher who differentiates text in the classroom to promote critical reading skills will contribute to the collective understandings in the

field. Corbin & Strauss (2008) agree that “most researchers hope that their work has some relevance for nonacademic audiences” (p. 14), and it would be a welcome classroom change for standard curricula to include differentiated text offerings. While practical skeptics may argue that text differentiation is financially prohibitive, this research supports the belief that what is right and useful, and what may improve the lives of so many struggling adolescent readers must be funded. Educators cannot say that we cannot offer students abundant text choices because we must if we are going to stem this literacy crisis in adolescents today.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Given that leading scholars in the field of adolescent literacy have called for rich descriptions of literacy in use in secondary classrooms, this study answers these calls. Alvermann (2001a) proposes studies in the field of adolescent literacy that share effective practice, and Hinchman (2005) argues that the field and specifically teachers benefit from case study research (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Yin, 2009) that tells stories of specific adolescents and classrooms where literacy instruction is affecting students. Hinchman argues that qualitative research is appreciated by teachers, who have their own wealth of anecdotal evidence that informs their teaching. Mixed-method research is powerful in a focused research study that asks whether readability measures of assigned texts can inform middle school teachers, in an approach that balances student motivation and text analysis. Because text reading levels are quantifiable, this data will inform a rich case study and has the ability to impact classroom area teachers who may be reluctant to stray from prescribed textbooks. This chapter includes proposed rationale, assumptions, type of design, the researcher's role, site selection, data sources, and collection techniques. Also included in this chapter are proposals for the management, recording and analysis of data, and possible limitations. Finally, a succinct summary of those most pertinent studies (analyzed in depth in the previous chapter) is included to focus and further an understanding of the proposed methodology.

As a review, the research questions explored in this case study are below.

1. What is the nature of one teacher's process in assigning differentiated texts to readers within a seventh grade social studies unit?

2. What are the characteristics of differentiated texts assigned during the course of one seventh grade social studies unit?

Rationale for Design

Pilot Study

In order to focus these research questions and determine research design, a pilot study was conducted in January and February of 2009. With IRB approval, the researcher conducted nine classroom observations in three different classrooms in an observational study titled “Explicit teaching of text structure in middle school content area classrooms.” The research questions were: 1) What texts are assigned in three content area classrooms in one seventh grade team and 2) What explicit teaching strategies do teachers use to support varied text structure. After twenty-seven hours of recorded observations, the researcher determined that data collection was unwieldy in such a context and that more focused research questions needed to be written. The pilot study data was rich, as it informed the site selection for this proposed study.

Brownton Middle School (all names are pseudonyms), while serving only 4.3% of students receiving free and reduced meals and 5.9% minority (NCES, 2010) is an open-enrollment, public middle school serving 6-8th graders in a university town in Appalachian Virginia. Made prominent in 1992’s Academy Award winning documentary *Educating Peter*, this school system embraces full inclusion and non-leveled, heterogeneous classrooms through the middle school years. After observing in four different middle schools including one inner

city school and one rural school, Brownnton was chosen because of the non-leveled heterogeneous classrooms and referrals from both university professors and a district supervisor.

While the grade level team that was studied for the pilot study offered rich data on non-leveled heterogeneous classrooms, the researcher rejected this team for purpose of study in favor of one teacher in a social studies classroom. This decision was made when the researcher chose to focus the research site to one classroom instead of three. In order to situate the study within current literature that focuses on mindful literacy teachers within the secondary content area, the research proposed stipulated that the participant be determined by references from both the district supervisor and school principal. While the instruction being delivered in the pilot study was rich, the pilot study also helped the researcher determine that data collection of specific text could be a limitation, and thus determined that a handheld scanner was needed to gather text that could not be garnered otherwise.

Case Study

Dyson and Ganeshi (2005) share that the “messy complexity of human experience” can be illuminated in case study research. Scholars agree that the research design should be determined by the research questions. Case study is appropriate when asking “how” or “why” or “what is the nature of.” Descriptive case studies, when done well, have the ability to impact a wide audience of researchers, practitioners, and policy makers (Barone, 2004; Yin, 2009). While many still believe that case study research does not further the research base as do other methods, experts in the field caution prospective researchers that poorly implemented case studies have tarnished the field, and that doing a case study well is the most difficult of all social

science endeavors. A researcher that is suited to this type of research is perceptive, sophisticated, and works to triangulate all data in order to insulate against critical readers who may challenge the “subjective” nature of the case study. Further, case study researchers work to achieve credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) with transparent research steps and detailed descriptions of research practice in the researcher’s journal. Social science has historically been affected by rich descriptions of current instructional practice.

The research questions posed ask for thick descriptions of the complexity found in a differentiated middle school content area classroom. The questions, to be answered sufficiently, take into account not only multiple perspectives of the teacher participant and the researcher, but data were triangulated with student work samples and assigned text samples. A descriptive case study of a single case is appropriate when it “represents the *critical case* [sic] in testing a well-formulated theory” (Yin, 2009, p. 47). The single case can “represent a significant contribution to knowledge and theory building.” Just as historically acclaimed case studies like *Implementing Organizational Innovations* (Gross, Bernstein, and Giacquinta, 1971) focused on a single school with a history of innovation and subsequently challenged accepted organizational innovation theory, a case study such as this may challenge or support the Construction-Integration Model (Kintsch, 2004) of reading, Cognitive Flexibility Theory (Spiro et al., 2004) in the area of reading, and Matthew Effect Theory (Stanovich, 1986).

Assumptions

The initial assumptions of this research:

- the teacher participant assigned text mindfully. To confirm this assumption and to triangulate the data on this teacher's effectiveness, the researcher chose the teacher participant after classroom observations, and with the referrals of the district supervisor, the university professor, and a district supervisor.
- the teacher participant was not affected by the Hawthorne Effect and delivered assigned curriculum in her usual way, and that the students too acted as they normally would. The length of the research study and the researcher's refusal to interact with students mitigated this concern as the researcher moved beyond being viewed as a curiosity by students by regular attendance. Because the researcher had been present in the school regularly as a university supervisor, voluntary consultant, reading tutor, and researcher, the novelty of presence was less affecting.
- the teacher participant was able to honestly verbally chronicle, describe, explain, and then implement text-reader matching decisions.

Because much of what is emerging in the field of adolescent literacy is in contention, it is important that other, more global assumptions are clarified. These assumptions follow:

- Alliance for Excellent Education's 2006 *Reading Next Report* (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006) and Carnegie's 2009 *Act Now Report*, both which state that adolescents are

not achieving in the area of reading complex, expository texts, are sound. These two texts, in particular, are thorough and reflect a variety of perspectives on the field.

- Because schools are a place that can improve issues of social justice, the assumption is that all classrooms should be grouped heterogeneously. Leveled classrooms and privileged children insulated from others should be a schooling practice of our past. Teachers who are challenged and prepared to teach in a differentiated classroom will help to improve the lives school children.
- All students can improve their reading comprehension at each stage of schooling, and it is never too late to learn to read, even for illiterate adolescents.
- The final assumption is that reading begets better reading.

Type of Design

The research design most appropriate for the research questions was a single case descriptive study (Yin, 2009) of one participating teacher who implements text-reader matching strategies in the social studies classroom. Several intermediary units of analysis were used, including weekly interviews, think-aloud protocols, and constant collection and subsequent analysis of student work samples. Different data collection techniques and analyses were necessary to confirm and triangulate findings and to understand the full complex nature of the instructional unit. Corbin asks researchers to clarify between research that sets out to build theory and research that is meant to describe and analyze (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This

research was done to offer a rich description and analysis of one teacher's process in assigning differentiated text in the content area classroom.

Researcher's Role

The researcher acted as a non-participant observer in order to give full attention to the acquisition of thorough field notes. The researcher did not interact with the students or the teacher during instructional time other than common courtesy. The researcher conducted and audiotaped all interviews and think-aloud protocols. So as to not affect the teacher's perspective or decisions, the researcher kept opinions of the case personal until the conclusion of data collection. The teacher participant was invited to review the manuscript as it neared conclusion to supplement or challenge any inferences made by the researcher.

As reflexive practice, as is commonly suggested in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007), it is helpful for researchers to examine their own histories before embarking on case study research. This reflexive practice illuminates bias and informs the scholar's reading of others' research in order to get a more complete understanding of the phenomena being investigated. The researcher is a 39 year old Caucasian female of Euro-American descent. A professed academic aliterate for a short time as an adolescent, the researcher chose to teach English after being encouraged to do so by a respected English teacher. After majoring in English with a concentration in British literature and earning a minor in Secondary Education, she took classes while teaching to earn a M.Ed. in Educational Leadership. For the purposes of reflexivity (Cresswell, 2007), the following short section will be presented in a first person narrative point of view. This is consistent with Hall's (2007) IRA's dissertation of the year.

A formative experience occurred in 1996, in my third year of teaching. Having been assigned the “below grade level” twelfth grade students in a public high school, I noted an extreme disconnect between the assigned texts and student interests. Requiring and guiding choice text to students and allowing time in class for reading, it was not unusual to hear seventeen year old students say, “This is the first book I have ever finished.” As a challenge to the required text in the classroom (*A Farewell to Arms*), I suggested that students have an option to read *Fallen Angels* (Meyers, 1988), a now-popular young adult novel about the Vietnam War. After having my supervisor read the text, list each offensive vocabulary word, and refuse to adopt the text, I felt defeated for a short time. The experience has never left me. At the time, I did not know why one text was more readable than the other, but I knew that the students that I taught were not successful with the classic choices and were struggling or refusing to read academic text.

Another formative experience was being trained to teach and then implementing my own curriculum in AP Literature and Composition and AP Language and Composition, courses that I taught for five years. The training empowered me to supply differentiated texts for my students and to stray from a stifling curriculum (Dredger, 2008). A diverse student body and great student success on the exam also gave me more reasoning power with a new supervisor. I began to offer differentiated texts for different learners, even if it meant only two choices.

Often explaining to others that I enjoyed the students more than the content, and being surprised as so many new teachers are by the lack of reading interest and motivation demonstrated by so many adolescents, it seemed a natural fit that I take a position as a “Student

Learning Specialist” after eight years in the high school and middle school classroom. Included in the responsibilities were embedded staff development opportunities that I implemented. These included classroom observations, bi-monthly coaching sessions, exemplar lesson-modeling, and data analysis. Within this career, I became overwhelmed with the number of middle school students who struggled with assigned texts, and began reading current practitioner texts about promoting reading proficiency, especially in the adolescent content area classroom. After two years in a staff development role, I returned to the classroom to teach “on grade level” 10th grade students and began to implement newly acquired strategies to encourage and motivate students to read and achieve. At the same time, I encouraged more students to take AP classes, insisting that the rigorous coursework would benefit even struggling readers. These two experiences, happening simultaneously over the course of one school year, convinced me to pursue further study in the field of adolescent literacy.

Additional formative experiences within the university classroom honed the scope of this research. As a staff developer, an adjunct instructor, and graduate teaching assistant, I was intrigued by the resistance of preservice and inservice teachers to the notion of differentiated text choices in each classroom. Practicing teachers suggested that adolescents would deem the practice “unfair” because of the inequality of the texts. Teachers resisted the idea from a classroom management role, asking me to teach model lessons in which they could observe the practice for themselves. Teachers resisted the idea also because a whole class could not discuss one text, as is traditional teaching practice. One teacher suggested that the students were all preparing for the same test, so they should all read the same books. This research documented

practice in a classroom that differentiates text. It describes one classroom where this occurs, adding to the literature on the subject.

These experiences could have affected my observations in the field as I move to a new and different role as an educational researcher. While not without the potential for bias, case study research is done well when the researcher can be as thoughtful as possible, working fastidiously to gain varying viewpoints and to triangulate data. Because “objectivity in qualitative research is a myth” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 32) and because of my varied experiences, it is possible that I am so vested in the notion of offering differentiated texts instead of traditional strategy instruction alone that I may have analyzed data insufficiently. Stating these perceived biases may limit that. Further, I majored in English literature as an undergraduate and took extensive coursework in supervision and observation of teachers as a graduate student. This may affect my data collection. English teachers are trained to analyze the implications of specific words, and history majors may not generally read with the same intent. Further, courses in supervision and classroom observation focus on evaluation of teachers, and subsequent judgment. A descriptive case study is simply descriptive and includes limited inference until the final discussion stage of data analysis. By stating my education and training, I hope to remind myself and my dissertation committee to guide me in the removal of judgment and evaluation in my field notes.

Research Process

1. The researcher gained IRB approval from the university to begin research [Appendix A].

2. The researcher secured approval from the school district to begin research [Appendix B].
3. The researcher approached the district supervisor and the university supervisor and then a school principal to ask for thoughtful recommendations of mindful seventh grade social studies in the area of literacy [Appendix C; Appendix D].
4. The researcher approached the recommended teacher and secured approval to begin research [Appendix E].
5. The teacher participant determined an appropriate time to begin the unit observation.
6. The researcher conducted initial teacher interview [Appendix F] and subsequent weekly interviews over a seven week time frame.
7. The researcher observed classroom practices [Appendix G] and collected text samples and classroom documents [Appendix H] over the course of the unit.
8. The researcher recorded teacher think-aloud protocols for texts assigned.
9. The researcher conducted the final teacher interview on December 2, 2010.
10. The researcher transcribed interviews, analyzed data, and then presented findings.

Site Selection

As reviewed above in the section on the pilot study, the school and classroom were selected after observation time in the school in the form of invited classroom observations and

supervisory referrals. While it was important that the school be a supportive environment of teachers and students, it was also important for this study that the participant meet characteristics of an excellent literacy teacher, as shown in recent research [Figure 1] (Parris and Block, 2007). The most important aspect of the site selection was that it was in a school that implemented non-leveled heterogeneous classrooms. The participant was invited by the researcher. Seventh grade was the chosen grade for research for two reasons. Seventh grade is the earliest grade that is considered secondary for teacher certification in the state that the research was conducted and thus shows the earliest age at which students may exhibit reading avoidance behaviors, reading struggles, and reading successes in academic text in the field of adolescent literacy. Further, the researcher suggests that a seventh grade teacher may more readily accept the notion that a student not reading on grade level must be supported with differentiated text selections in addition to traditional strategy instruction than might teachers of older students. Additionally, successful readers must be challenged with appropriately rigorous texts to continue to prepare them for academic reading that they will encounter in later schooling years.

This site was also appropriate for study in the support that is offered to teachers and to students with specific literacy needs. Special educators team teach with classroom teachers. The school employs a teacher that support English Language Learners and two full time reading specialists that teach both specific remedial reading courses and are available to pull students out of class for individualized help when requested by classroom teachers. The library in this school is equipped with Scholastic Inventory Informal Reading Inventory (Scholastic, Inc., 2010) software that is available to teachers. While the research questions of this study could be asked

of any secondary teacher, social studies was chosen because of the nature of the content.

Although traditional social studies instruction may include only one whole-class text book, the understandings of the discipline were ripe to be explored with multiple texts.

Participant Selection

After securing IRB approval, the researcher sent a letter of introduction (Appendix A) to the referred seventh grade social studies teacher, proposing the idea of participating in a study of the classroom. Once the teacher participant agreed to be interviewed about understandings of literacy and individual student needs and observed during the course of one unit, the researcher finalized the IRB process. After permissions were granted, the teacher informed the researcher of a convenient time and class period to begin observations. The teacher participant suggested third period because of the appropriate mix of student abilities and suggested that observations occur during the immigration unit that covered approximately seven weeks in the fall of 2010. Each of Mrs. Wolf's units throughout the year included differentiated texts, so the choice of unit was one of convenience as well. The immigration unit followed a unit on the industrial revolution and preceded a unit on the Roaring Twenties. The class period was forty-two minutes from 9:26am until 10:08am.

Data Sources

Data were collected in the form of field notes taken by the researcher, student work samples, text samples of at least 200 words collected from differentiated texts, and transcripts of both interviews and teacher think-aloud protocols. One interview or think-aloud protocol was

conducted each week, lasting no more than one hour. Further, the researcher kept a journal of reflective practices on the research procedures, unexpected events, and perceptions of the research collection process. This journal also served as a place for the researcher to record initial impressions, feelings, and evaluations. Having this emotional outlet during research became a place for the researcher to channel certain observations and evaluations that could be considered in the analysis phase of research but were not appropriate for observations.

Data Collection Techniques

The interviews of the teacher participant, including think-aloud protocols, were recorded with both a hand-held digital recorder and on the researcher's laptop computer, using Audacity software and a Blue Snowball Microphone. Data were collected weekly either after school or during the teacher's planning period determined by the teacher participant. The researcher used a hand-held scanner, VuPoint Solutions Magic Wand Portable Scanner (PDS-ST410-VP) to quickly scan text that was not obtainable elsewhere (e.g. from textbooks). The researcher asked that the teacher supply the researcher with other more easily obtainable texts (i.e. copies of student worksheets). All data were stored in the researcher's locked office or on the researcher's password protected computer.

The researcher journal increased the reliability of the case study. While it is not conceivable that a case study can be repeated with the same results, Yin (2009) suggests that case study researchers work to establish a level of reliability. With transparent, careful attention

to detail, the researcher's journal demonstrates that the operations of a case study, especially the data collection, can be repeated and similar results could conceivably be reached.

Managing and Recording Data

All recordings were made with two technologies so as to minimize the chance of researcher error. Data garnered from text samples were scanned in .pdf format in order to safeguard the documents when there was only one copy available. All data were filed by date for later reference in a locked office. To answer the third research question, the text samples were scanned and stored in a locked office or on the researcher's password protected computer. Text features were listed on Excel spreadsheets to be then statistically analyzed as needed.

Data Analysis Procedures

To answer the first research question, the researcher used constant-comparative analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in order to read and reread field notes, interviews, and think-aloud protocols to determine common codes. The process of taking memos to analyze the data and the emergence of common codes over of period of time allow the researcher to determine themes within and across the collected data. All data were hand-coded.

For the second research question, data were analyzed with the help of Excel Spreadsheets using two variables: mean length of text in words assigned and Lexiles of samples of 200 words of text determined by formulas available at www.lexiles.com. Further, the researcher qualitatively described the texts using Alvermann, Phelps, and Gillis (2010) "Framework for

Analyzing Texts” (p. 164). The data from this framework were reported by the researcher in a written explanation.

Methods for Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Conformability

Because this study was conducted for an independent dissertation, inter-rater reliability was difficult to establish. The researcher and the teacher participant worked closely to establish that the methods and findings were believable. In order to allow another researcher or practitioner to transfer (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) the findings to another setting, extensive details were noted in the researcher’s journal and carefully reported. Again, the researcher’s journal allowed for dependability, as all changes that surfaced were noted and reported. Finally, conformability, often referred to as objectivity were accounted for within the reported methods of research. Constant researcher reflection in the form of a researcher journal was kept about experiences and feelings, and data analyses were not complete until several months after the initial data collection period. This allowed triangulation and for emotional feelings to lessen.

Limitations

The most problematic limitation of case study research is in the interpretation of the study. The interpretations made should not be overgeneralized to other populations. Another limitation is that this is single-author dissertation. The researcher can not work in a team of observing researchers as would be preferable, to increase inter-rater reliability in assignment of codes that emerge from the data. As mentioned earlier in the assumptions section, case study research is only as good as the quality of data collected by the researcher and the following

analysis. The most obvious limitation is in the single case study. Case studies have the potential to be interpreted as generalizable to other populations (what works in one setting will work in all settings) or as reinforcing stereotypes (all “struggling” readers act one way).

Studies and Methods that are Most Pertinent

While all of these studies are discussed in greater detail in the previous chapter, the studies that most inform this proposal are Hall’s 2006 International Reading Association’s award-winning dissertation, *It’s not just the text: Transactions between content area teachers and struggling readers*; Ivey’s 1999 *A multicase study in the middle school: Complexities among young adolescent readers*; and Dennis’s 2009 *‘I’m not stupid:’ How assessment drives (in)appropriate reading instruction*. All three suggest future research in the area of individualized assessment, text selection, and instruction for all adolescent readers and all three use the case study methodology.

Perhaps because of the pervasive use of prescribed texts and curricula, many teachers believe that they are only able to differentiate the instruction in the classroom by varying levels of support and types of activities and assessments. They may not recognize the power of differentiated texts in the classroom (Friese et al., 2008). In a time of standards and prescribed curricula, teachers need to be empowered to advocate for myriad text choices to meet the needs of all readers in the classroom. The heuristic nature of case study research, while not without its limitations stated above, allows for depth of multi-faceted understandings (Dressman & McCarthy, 2004). This research attempts to describe the meaning-making perspectives and processes of reflection that one teacher practices in a sincere attempt to reach all learners.

Potential Impact

In conclusion, this research will document the differentiated texts of one exemplary adolescent literacy teacher in the content area classroom. Case studies have been used effectively to generalize to theory (Dressman & McCarthy, 2004). Parris and Block (2007) state that “such observation and analyses of highly effective secondary literacy teachers can help adolescents and our profession as a whole” (p. 583). Perie, Grigg, & Donahue (2005) ask that researchers observe adaptations being made by classroom teachers to individualize instruction. While this case study was a specific answer to these calls for research, it is difficult to gauge potential impact. Case studies are an effective way to engage preservice and inservice teachers in discussions about literacy in the classroom (Moje & Wade, 1997). Furthermore, issues of text readability and appropriate text as a differentiation tool has only recently reached the literature in the field (Friese et al., 2008). Fisher and Ivey (2007) have challenged the whole-class novel in the language arts classroom, and similar research that challenges the idea of one text in the content area classrooms may open dialogue in the profession about how to best meet the needs of all of our students.

Chapter Four: Findings

As stated in Chapter 1, this study examined in detail the differentiated text choices of one mindful teacher in a seventh grade social studies class grouped heterogeneously. Struggling, reluctant, and striving readers were grouped within one class and taught by the teacher participant, Mrs. Wolf. Third period social studies comprised 25 students. It is important to share that Mrs. Wolf also taught the same group of students in their English Language Arts (ELA) period at other times during the school day. This is of particular importance in the discussion of the first research question. This chapter is organized in terms of the two specific research questions posed in Chapter One. The data analysis procedures are explained in Table 1.

Table 1

Data Analysis Procedures for Study

Data source	How were these data garnered?	How much data were collected?	Why were this data important?	How were these data analyzed?
Text samples when no Lexile level available	The teacher participant supplied this data for the teacher to scan	Each differentiated text	These data were important so that the text characteristics can be described in order to determine the nature of the mindful teacher’s curricular decisions.	Descriptive statistics describe the readability and length of text. Qualitative text aspects are analyzed using Framework for Assessing Texts (Alvermann et al., 2010)

Table 1 (cont.)

Data source	How were these data garnered?	How much data were collected?	Why were these data important?	How were these data analyzed?
Teacher interviews	The researcher audio-taped weekly interviews	Six interviews of approximately one hour	These data informed the researcher on the nature of one teacher’s assumptions and process in text differentiation. These coded data served to triangulate the findings of the interviews and the texts.	Constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to determine analytical memos and subsequent emerging themes.
Daily classrooms observations	Researcher field notes	Daily narrative observation field notes for duration of the unit		
Researcher’s Journal with analytical memos	The researcher reflected on the process daily as necessary	Journal entries were kept approximately three times a week.		
Classroom documents	The teacher supplied this data for the researcher to scan.	As was appropriate for the research question.		
Student work samples				

Research Question 1:

What is the nature of one teacher’s process in assigning differentiated texts to readers within a seventh grade social studies unit?

Mrs. Wolf’s differentiated text instructional lessons comprised five days of class time during the course of the seven-week immigration unit. Additional homework requirements and

time allotted in the students' ELA class also addressed some of these texts, to be discussed later in this chapter. This section is organized by the three differentiated text types that the teacher participant engaged her students in within the course of the unit. These events were the individual historical fiction novels that the students chose from a text set, the jigsaw-grouped expository texts that the students were assigned, and the sampling of text sets that students were provided in the form of picture books, an anthology of poems, essays, and short stories, and four educational magazines.

First Text Set: Individual Historical Fiction Novels

Because Mrs. Wolf also teaches English Language Arts (ELA) to the same students that are in her social studies classes, she conflates skills required in both disciplines (classroom observations, October, 2010) in order to bolster understandings within social studies' thematic units. Within each unit, Mrs. Wolf requires each student to choose from a list of historical fiction titles. While the students have a variety of ways to respond to these novels in different American History units, text sets remain a constant in the curriculum. Within the immigration unit, students were to choose the novel, journal about it for homework, write a poem with the help of a mentor text, and then create a digital poster using glogster.com. In order to guide students in their novel choices, Mrs. Wolf placed six copies of eighteen different novels around the classroom. Students were visibly excited on novel choice days (interview, November 9, 2010). The teacher participant can be compared to experienced wait staff to regular customers at a fine dining venue. Every choice on the menu is of high quality, and the wait staff knows what choices appeal to the customer because of an established relationship. In this metaphor, the

student is likened to the customer at a restaurant. The student chooses the novel, but may ask for suggestions from the teacher.

Because the novel choice day did not occur during the social studies classroom, but instead during ELA class, the researcher was not present on the day that students chose their novels, but was able to observe a later unit novel choice day in order to better understand the nature of the historical fiction novel titles that students chose. This observation occurred during Mrs. Wolf's introduction to a unit on war. Books were organized by historical topic [classroom observation, April 12, 2011] and students wrote down interesting titles with explanations as to why the book was intriguing. Because titles were limited, students listed their first and second choices, and the teacher made the final determination as to the reading choice.

The historical fiction titles can be compared to items on a menu in a restaurant, but Mrs. Wolf admits to steering students in a direction that she perceives as best suiting their reading abilities and preferences (interview, November 9, 2011). In order to understand how the teacher participant introduced the novel choices, the nature of what novels are on the menu within the immigration unit needs to be unpacked.

Data analysis procedures followed methods recommended by Creswell (2007). Data in the form of interview transcripts, classroom observations, classroom artifacts, and the researcher's journal were read and reread as coding was done. Pattern codes emerged that were guided by the research question. As the data were coded, the researcher created memos that served to help tweak the codes and adjust emerging themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These memos summarized, raised questions, and at times demonstrated connections that served to allow the researcher to draw conclusions. One of the difficulties in this coding process is shown

in later tables. It became clear that the interview questions were student driven, while the research question asks about the teacher participant. While those questions were illuminating, the coding needed to be adjusted in order to uncover the nature of the teacher's processes. The interview showed that the teacher participant had an understanding, despite some discussed inconsistencies, of what makes a text appropriate for a given reader. These understandings were often triangulated in the quantitative data found later in this chapter. These understandings were the impetus for much of the recoding and adjusted themes. In essence, the teacher's understandings of her students shaped her curricular decisions. While the characteristics of chosen texts will be described fully later in this chapter in the discussion of research question two, how Mrs. Wolf came to the curricular decision to require that students read historical fiction novels to complement the social studies unit, how the texts that comprise the text set were chosen, and how the students in Mrs. Wolf's classroom choose their texts with her guidance are discussed below.

How Mrs. Wolf came to curricular decisions. Mrs. Wolf's curricular decisions privileged historical fiction novels in the social studies classroom. Interview transcripts were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss; 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967); the researcher conducted the interviews, transcribed, performed initial coding, reread several times, and recoded for emerging themes. In order to connect learning experiences to today and to students' lives (interview, November 2, 2010), Mrs. Wolf required her students to read one historical fiction novel on the theme of immigration. The emerging themes that explain the nature of Mrs. Wolf's curricular decisions are that she had a strong conviction that stories of

individuals are more likely to affect students and a confidence in her varied educational training that gave her a critical voice and an activist spirit.

Codes emerged according to the research questions, and were adjusted as needed. These are explained within each subtopic as presented below, organized by order of perceived importance, and include: participant's belief in the power of the story, participant belief in her self-efficacy, participant as critical consumer of curricula, and participant as activist, shown in Table 2. Coding initially did not show two separate themes for the critical consumer and the activist, but it became clear that the degree of passion and the participant's influence called for this final theme.

Within the constant-comparative method, the shift in themes highlighted in this table represent the researcher's shift in understanding who the participant is as a teacher. She became more than a classroom teacher with a driven affect in her pursuit of differentiated classroom texts. She is also driven by passion for teaching, for literacy, and for all of her students to have immigrant stories that will help them become thoughtful about the plight of the immigrant. She is a teacher activist, which demands more than just being critical in her text choices and critical in uncovering the problems in teaching to a sanitized history text.

Participant's belief in the power of story. Mrs. Wolf shared that she chose the whole-class course text, Hakim's (2003) *The History of US* "because [the author's] writing is like a story" (interview, November 2, 2010). The whole-class text was not analyzed for the purposes of this research study, but the teacher participant's respect for the power of the story underlies her differentiated curricular choices. Mrs. Wolf feels that textbooks offer a "canned history" and that "there are so many stories about the same time period and the same even depending on

perspective” (interview, November 2, 2010). For example, she enthusiastically talked about one of the novel choices: “*Ashes of Roses*, that is so cool. [It is a story] about factory life, and kids, and child labor, stuff like that” (interview, November 2, 2010). She continued, “making learning relevant has evolved over the years for me, although it is difficult to do” (interview, November 2, 2010).

A powerful example that Mrs. Wolf shared on her belief in the power of individual stories is contained in the following excerpt from an interview conducted on November 2, 2010. She voices, “The power and the racism and the sexism in the whole history of our country as people being oppressed is pretty interesting . . . it’s showing that this is humanity and this is what you have to battle. And so the injustices are not allowed to ensue, and why? Because of these brave people. So the more they find out about those people, the more exciting it is.”

Attitude of self-efficacy. Mrs. Wolf has been influential in her school as to course texts, and when I asked her if she felt her own sphere of influence over text decisions, she responded “Totally” (interview, November 2, 2010). It is apparent throughout the interview transcripts that Mrs. Wolf has held a strong influence not only on the curricular choices of her district and school curriculum, but also on her own ability to affect the learning of her students. When she began teaching, she was surprised by the reading difficulties that her adolescent students demonstrated. She chuckles as she reminisces on her early experiences in the classroom. “I was like, ‘Okay, someone needs to help these kids because they really can’t read! Who is going to help these kids read?’ And the answer to that question becomes ‘You!’” (interview, November 2, 2010).

Table 2

Curricular Decisions Coding

Codes	Original Theme	Recoding	Adjusted Theme	Key Analytical Memos
Story	Participants' belief in the power of story	No adjustment made		Participant sees individual stories as a way to affect students (Analytical memo, November, 2010).
Fiction				
Narrative				
Novels				
What she can do	What she sees as her responsibility	She must help because others may not be able to.	Attitude of self-efficacy	Participant knows that she can and does affect student learning (Analytical memo, May 12, 2009).
		She can change the curriculum.		
What she can't do		She may not be able to bring them all up to grade level, but she can make a difference.		
Books mandated	Critical Consumer	Teacher critiqued mandates	Teacher as critical consumer of curricula	Participant is passionate, a degree beyond critical. (Analytical memo, November 9, 2010). Note: This adjusted theme shows a shift from curricula to teacher.
Progression of text choices		How she changed the texts.	Teacher as activist	
Reasons for text		Not accepting of mandates		

Still, she doesn't offer silver-bullet answers, recognizing the complexity of the nature of the adolescent literacy crisis that is the day-to-day struggle of some of her students. "Not being able to read in middle school is urgent, urgent business. I am not sure that we have the answer to that I don't really know that they leave [my classroom] being readers. So I don't know what the answer is. Because I don't think that we have it here." She does, however, share five of her instructional strategies, "teaching reading strategies, giving them an easier text to read, or breaking down [the text] for them, reading short pieces to them, and vocabulary work" (interview, November 2, 2010). The scope of this study falls under her second instructional strategy, Mrs. Wolf's desire to find appropriate texts for her wide variety of learners.

But she perseveres despite these difficulties. And in the face of this optimism, a sad realism sinks in to the interview. She says, "You try and they go on to the next grade level." And when the subsequent teacher confides in her that "So-and-so can't read," she responds with a sad, "Yeah, I know" (interview, November 2, 2010). Ultimately, Mrs. Wolf knows that teachers do make a difference for the students, stating "my role is to provide opportunities for learning to happen" (interview, November 2, 2010).

Hence, Mrs. Wolf's disposition is the crux of what makes her a mindful literacy teacher. She believes that she can make a difference in the learning of her students no matter their reading level or prior experiences. But more than her disposition is her curricular choices. She scours the internet, picks the brains of her teacher colleagues, reaches out to university personnel (interview, November 2, 2010), reads professional literature, and is constantly looking for new ways to expand her teaching repertoire (interview, November 9, 2010). She ruminates, "there are

so many other places where you can get ideas or even from your head” (interview, November 2, 2010).

Teacher as critical consumer of curricula. Mrs. Wolf bristles when she discusses traditional textbooks in social studies classrooms. She rejects the idea of one truth about any historical event. She values “trying to bring questions forward to kids” (interview, November 2, 2010). When she began teaching social studies, she found that the assigned text bored her students. She recognized that she was not inspired to teach from it. So she found herself shopping for a new course text and perused Hakim’s (2003) *The History of US* at the National Association of Social Studies Teachers conference (interview, November 2, 2010). She returned to her home district and was allowed to pilot the new text as one class set, so students were not assigned one per student; the textbooks stayed in the classroom. That worked for Mrs. Wolf, and this decision saved money. The freedom that Mrs. Wolf feels in her curricular choices also resonates in her response to the question of affordability. Mrs. Wolf convinced her administrators and district supervisors to purchase historical fiction, children’s picture books, and non-fiction magazines in place of traditional textbooks. She shares,

And I got to thinking. I was like, ‘You know what? If you are going to be equitable . . . we didn’t spend our textbook money. So I pitched it to [the supervisors] and I said, ‘We want to spend our money on text sets.’ So we put together Text Set Justifications and we put together lists. And we got money two years in a row. . . . But it was \$15000 [for the whole school]. One year it was \$7000. . . . So we put together a list and then it all came down to how much money. . . . Since I teach English, I can do it as a novel unit or whatever. (interview, November 2, 2010)

She concludes.

The whole big undergirding philosophy of being a teacher in the first place it to teach them how to continually learn. And, you know, it's probably just as important as the content that they are learning so that if they do happen to forget details of their content than they know how to access it later. So to have them learn how to learn is a really important thing to be productive citizens in our society. (interview, November 2, 2010).

Mrs. Wolf takes her role as a critical consumer very seriously. Thus, her role as consumer morphs into a more extremely passionate activism in her local district.

Teacher as activist. Mrs. Wolf describes her students as “incensed about big injustices in the world” (interview, Nov 2, 2010). However, within their understanding of global atrocities like “soccer balls being made in Pakistan” (interview, Nov 2, 2010), Mrs. Wolf considers it part of her job to “bring . . . [that sense of injustice in the world] down to their backyard” (interview, November 2, 2010). And this is difficult for Mrs. Wolf, but she wears her activist history on the bumper stickers that adorn her teaching lectern and the peace signs that decorate the walls of her classroom. She describes herself as being inclined toward “political philosophy” (interview, November 2, 2010) that stems from her Political Science major and her involvement in campus politics as an undergraduate. This social justice agenda underlies her need to provide accessible texts to all of her students.

Part of Mrs. Wolf's passion as an activist manifests itself as she rails against standardized testing, which goes against all that she believes in within her differentiated classroom taught in the spirit of and in a place of a nation of immigrants, a place where there is enough for everyone and where differences make all of our nation richer. She says, “Somehow there has to be a stop

to this one-size-fits-all education, which this standardized testing promotes” (interview, November 2, 2010).

When Mrs. Wolf speaks of the enduring understandings that she wants for her students to take with them upon the completion of the immigration unit, she is impassioned. She wants her students to know “that the United States is a nation of immigrants. Has been, always will be. Because that doesn’t arbitrarily end because some people decide that it should . . . that is probably what is just and equitable” (interview, December 7, 2010). She chooses her words and clarifications carefully. She continues, “Immigrants following the first set of immigrants, or colonists, not discoverers, colonists or settlers. That following that wave, every group after that experienced discrimination and Nativist kind of attitudes.” Mrs. Wolf explains:

Because I wanted them to think about it in terms of . . . that what you are not sure about and that when you feel threatened by things and you are not really certain about can lead to fear, which can lead to irrational behavior. Which maybe can then lead to hurtful kinds of actions. I want them to know that the government, even though we have a Constitution, has acted throughout history in very hypocritical ways because it is very difficult to govern, and because that’s kind of human nature and the government is not necessarily above that. . . . That this has been a journey and it continues to be. . . . the same sort of arguments about immigrants and what they bring to our country today, as there were 100 years ago. . . . I wanted them to know that Asian Immigration was a big part of big things that they valued, like the Transcontinental Railroad. . . . I wanted them to understand that a lot of big contributions to our society . . . came from immigrants. (interview, December 7, 2010)

Hence, these themes mirror the sentiment on the Statue of Liberty from the poem *The New Colossus* “. . . and her name / Mother of Exiles. From her / beacon-hand / Glows wide-world welcome; her mild eyes command / The air-bridged harbor . . .” (observation, October 25, 2010; Lazarus, 1883). The theme of immigration that she wants to teach is one of accepting differences and offering to each student opportunities for their success. This American spirit is captured in a differentiated classroom that offers a plethora of texts that are appropriate for each student. Mrs. Wolf offers to meet her students where they are in order to best help them move to increased achievement, in both their literacy skills and their content knowledge in the discipline of U.S. history.

Even Mrs. Wolf’s language speaks of an activist spirit. She uses the word “fight,” saying, “I really like to fight ignorance. I really like to break that cycle that it’s okay to be ignorant, or only functional. Some people are functionally literate, but that’s not even enough in today’s world” (interview, May, 2009).

How the texts were chosen by Mrs. Wolf. Just as was the case for the preceding section, the findings in this section of this study were gleaned from data in the form of interview transcripts only. These transcripts were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967); the researcher conducted the interviews, transcribed, and reread several times, and coded for emerging themes. Within the subsequent recoding process, described below, the codes that emerged as reasons for these curricular choices were grouped within the following themes: Plentiful choice, a variety of immigrant stories, quality choices, and choices that further the teacher participant’s social justice agenda. The progression of these codes and findings is detailed in Table 3. Interestingly, these emerging

themes were shaped within the constant-comparative method for many of the same reasons that the previous section's themes changed. They again represent the researcher's shift in understanding the participant as a teacher. She is also driven by passion for allowing students to have a voice in finding a right fit in a text-to-reader match. Again this showed that her activist spirit, as she showed alignment in philosophy with these award winning books.

Plentiful choices. It is conceivable that for any topic covered in social studies, that the possible text choices could be really large. The chosen text set was comprised of eighteen titles. Mrs. Wolf was able to purchase most of the texts that she and her team wanted, but financial considerations limited what she bought more than curricular choices. She felt that

things that we didn't get were ones that I really, really wanted but they were like big, thick, oral histories from Ellis Island with photos and primary source stuff and they were like \$30 bucks a whack and we were buying six for each teacher. But as far as children's books about immigration, it wasn't like I had a list that was so huge that I had to pare it down And so it's not this huge, you know, huge, huge list. But then I will go to Amazon and read what people say and do other reading about the books, but so it's not like it's this huge thing if I just started at something like Amazon. (interview, December 1, 2010).

This sentiment was again shared in another interview. "You don't ever know it all and you can't possibly know it all. So you just try to find all the voices that you can that are out there that had something to say or that had some kind of document that were exposed, or whatever, to put the story together" (Nov. 2nd interview).

Table 3

How Texts Were Chosen Coding

Codes	Original Theme	Recoding	Adjusted Theme	Key Analytical Memos
How many	Number	No change	Plentiful Choices	How many were not as important as that the offering were saturated: plenty of choices for all students. Still, this needed to be qualified as all choices were carefully made. Hence, the theme of “Quality Choices” emerged, below.
Number		No change		
Book Flood		Lots of choices		
Protagonist	Variety	Where?	Setting Variety	The immigration stories varied in time of place and setting, and the discussion of the protagonist and text accessibility emerged from the transcripts (interview, November 9, 2010). The adjusted theme emerged as original codes were combined in common areas.
Choices		When?		
Readability		Readability	Text Accessibility	
Interest		Length		
Length		Format		
Format		Who?	Protagonist Variety	
Newberry Medals	Quality	Awards	Quality Choices	At initial coding, what seemed as quality could be less objective and it became apparent that the participant worked to present the history of immigration, a highly political topic, in a light that shared her opinions on the topic. It is also possible that award-winning novels are chosen for the messages they promote.
Well-known Authors		No change		
Knowledge of High-quality		No change		
Enduring Books		No change	Furthers an Agenda	

When asked whether she had read the entirety of all the texts that she assigns, Mrs. Wolf unapologetically replied that she had not. She explained, “Ideally . . . you should read every book that you use in your classroom. No doubt about it” (interview, December 1, 2010). But she continues, “I don’t think there is a suitable novel for all seventh graders . . . there is just too broad a difference [because] . . . choice is one hundred percent important” (interview, December 1, 2010). She explains that adolescents chafe at “just the idea” of an assigned book. Choice is “empowering” to them, and that it is more important than that the teacher be situated as the “expert” on every one of the texts (interview, December 1, 2010).

Setting variety. Cognitive flexibility theory suggests that students become more critical thinkers when reading different texts presented from multiple viewpoints. Mrs. Wolf bridges theory with practice as exemplified in the next three themes. She shares, “So, from the get-go I was always looking into other kinds of recourses . . . I tried my best to find other things to pull in” (Nov. 2nd). These texts are analyzed in depth later in this chapter. Broadly, nine nationalities (in order of frequency: Chinese and Russian (4 each), Vietnamese, Mexican, and Haitian (2 each) German, Irish, Cambodian, and Salvadorian (1 each) immigrant stories are told in these eighteen stories and they span from 1900 (Munoz’s *Esperanza Rising* and Lansky’s *The Night Journey*) to the 1990s (Temple’s *Tonight, By Sea*). Mrs. Wolf continues to look for new novels to add: “I have added new novels in the past few years, and these new novels deal with Mexican immigration so it’s more current” (interview, November 9, 2010). She continues, “I want kids to leave with that notion that history is really alive and not [that there is one] book that tells the story. Because there can’t really be one book that tells the story.” (interview, November 2, 2010).

Protagonist variety. Table 4 shows the variety of the protagonists depicted in the historical fiction novels chosen by the teacher participant. Fifteen of the nineteen protagonists are female, and the median age of the protagonist is thirteen. When asked whether it is important that teachers attempt to match the gender or the protagonist with the gender of the reader, Mrs. Wolf shared a story of a boy in her class who complained about the lack of males. She told him about Danny Vo, the main character in *Shadow of the Dragon*, and he did end up choosing that novel, but other boys chose instead *Children of the River*, with a female protagonist. Mrs. Wolf did differentiate between individual readers. “More mature readers,” she said, “don’t care about that” (interview, November 9, 2010).

Text accessibility variety. Mrs. Wolf speaks of variety of covers, varied print, books with photographs, drawings, and varied chapter length. She also addresses text font size (interview, November 9, 2010). She demonstrated how some students act on novel choice day: “Oh! Large print! Nice! Nice!” She further clarifies, “They want to make sure that they will get finished with the book. . . . some want the one that is the easiest, even if that’s not always the shortest one” (November 9, 2010). But for others, Mrs. Wolf knows that she has some who will finish the book within the first two days that it has been distributed. These students can and sometimes do choose additional texts. Another accessibility factor is amount of white space visible and point of view. Mrs. Wolf shared that *Dreams in the Golden Country* is “safe” (interview, November 9, 2010) for some students because it is a diary with many short entries. She feels that students look at a short diary entry and think, “I can do that! I can take 15 minutes and really make some way in here and be at a place that really is a logical place to stop” (November 9, 2010). The length of the novel in its entirety matters also to Mrs. Wolf. She considered *Dragonwings* harder

for students mainly because of its length of 317 pages and *Night Journey* more difficult because of the Hebrew words found within (interview, November 9, 2010).

Quality choices. While it is important that books be accessible, Mrs. Wolf will not compromise on its quality. “It’s already difficult with the social studies concepts that are in the seventh grade curriculum . . . I have looked at graphic novels, and sometimes they are too simplistic for me. For my tastes” (interview, May, 2009). When I probed about some quality graphic novel titles, she did admit that she should look at the genre more closely. One way she did determine quality was by knowing authors. It became clear that Mrs. Wolf is knowledgeable about great authors. She noted that Kathryn Lansky “is an excellent writer” (interview, November 9, 2010), and that Walter Dean Myers is also a respected author. All but two (*Dreams in the Golden Country* and *Journey to America*) of the titles received prestigious book awards, including the Newbery Honor (*Dragonwings*), the Jane Addams Honor (*Dragonwings*, *Taste of Salt*, *Lupita Mañana*, and *Journey of the Sparrows*) and the National Council of Social Studies’ Notable Book Honor (*The Night Journey*, *Dragonwings*, *The Star Fisher*, *In the Year of the Boar*, and *Jackie Robinson*) (Children’s Book Council & National Council for Social Studies, 2010). Mrs. Wolf privileges award winning books in her curricular decisions. For example, of *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*, she says, “It’s not one of my favorites . . . but it gets kids reading and it is an ALA Notable book.” She may have her own strong opinions, but she defers to other outside sources when offering differentiated texts to her students.

Table 4
Protagonist Demographics

TITLE	Protagonist Age	Protagonist Gender	Protagonist Name	Protagonist Race
<i>Taste of Salt: A Story of Modern Haiti</i>	17	Male & Female	D'Jo & Jeremie	Haitian
<i>Shadow of the Dragon</i>	17	Male	Vo Van Duong (Danny Vo)	Vietnamese American
<i>Children of the River</i>	17	Female	Sundara	Cambodian American
<i>Ashes of Roses</i>	16		Rose Nolan	Irish American
<i>Dragonwings</i>	8-16	Male	Moon Shadow	Chinese American
<i>Land of Hope</i>	15	Female	Rebekah Levinsky	Russian American
<i>The Star Fisher</i>			Joan Lee	Chinese American
<i>Journey of the Sparrows</i>			Maria Acosta	Salvadorian
<i>Goodbye, Vietnam</i>			Mai	Vietnamese
<i>Esperanza Rising</i>	13		Esperanza Ortega	Mexican
<i>Lupita, Mañana</i>			Lupita Ortega	
<i>The Night Journey</i>			Nana Sashie & Rachel	Russian American
<i>Journey to America</i>	12		Lisa Platt	German
<i>Dreams in the Golden Country</i>			Zipporah Feldman	Russian American
<i>Letters from Rifka</i>			Rifka Nebrot	
<i>Tonight, by Sea</i>	about 11		Paulie	Haitian

Table 4 (cont.)
Protagonist Demographics

TITLE	Protagonist Age	Protagonist Gender	Protagonist Name	Protagonist Race
<i>The Dragon's Child: A Story of Angel Island</i>	10	Male	Yep Gim Lew	Chinese American
<i>In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson</i>		Female	Shirley Temple Wong	

Furthers an agenda. As stated earlier, this theme emerged from the later rereading and coding as it became clear that Mrs. Wolf feels strongly that the texts that are chosen by a classroom teacher can give different points of view than do perfectly politically correct and sanitary notions of history often shared in textbooks. She shared a poem with the class titled *The History Teacher* by Billy Collins (2005). It begins, “Trying to protect his students' innocence / he told them the Ice Age was really just / the Chilly Age, a period of a million years / when everyone had to wear sweaters” This irony gets to the heart of Mrs. Wolf’s teaching disposition; she is determined to share real stories of the realities of United States history with her students. She says, “I go to those websites because I value their tilt, their slant. [chuckles]. I value those, the . . . how those sites think about education. Therefore, I trust their recommendations” (interview. November 2, 2010). Mrs. Wolf chooses the text based on recommendations from trusted websites that guide her in her selections. She explains,

I have some websites that I value. Southern Poverty Law Center Teaching Tolerance website has a lot of books to use in classrooms and recommendations and little annotations and what-not. So I’ll look there, especially for books like immigration and

Civil Rights. So I'll go there. Then there is Howard Zinn's the Zinn [Education] Project website . . . that's probably the last year or two. That has great resources listed. Then, um . . . Teaching for Change. That is hooked up with, I think with Columbia University is affiliated somehow with the . . . a book store in DC, which I am going to visit someday. *Poets*, something bookstore. They have this incredible resource list too. So what it is, honestly, is that I first go to websites that, um . . . that I feel share in my . . . share in my um . . . mission of social justice kind of teaching. I go to those first. So *Rethinking Schools* would be another one. And they have activities. And Bill Bigelow, I love him, and he writes about all this stuff. And I get *Rethinking Schools* magazine too. And so I always look in there too to see what are the latest resources. And . . . what is that? And *Teaching for Change* has a magazine too and *Teaching Tolerance*. And then you go to Amazon, or Barnes and Noble. And I'll type in 'immigration.' And I'll look through that as well. (interview, December 1, 2010)

Considering the political nature of topics such as immigration, Mrs. Wolf does not shy away from presenting viewpoints that promote social justice. She shares, "When you take out multiple perspectives and you give one story, you are doing what the nationalistic kind of governments want you to do, and you're teaching the kind of history that I was taught. That had no voice but the white, male voice. And I am not teaching that kind of history. I mean, I refuse" (interview, May, 2009).

How the students in Mrs. Wolf's classroom choose their texts. Each student in Mrs. Wolf's classroom chose their text with her guidance. On the day the students choose, Mrs. Wolf allows each student to browse book baskets that are on each instructional table. They browse the

collection and Mrs. Wolf does a short book talk about each title that includes facts about the setting and the protagonist. Mrs. Wolf shares her thinking, “They go back and sit, read the back, open it up, read a paragraph or two and jot down ones that are interesting. They can just keep one. After everyone gets a book, they can just go back and forth as needed. They can trade. When they have decided on a book, I ask them to bring it to me” (interview, November 9, 2010). Themes that emerged were instructional support of the special educator for students with reading disabilities, teacher’s perception of students’ attitudes toward reading, the teacher’s desire for students to enjoy the text, and student differences, shown in Table 5. The shift in themes highlighted in this table show a shift from the teacher’s discussion of the students as she understood them and what that means to the research questions asked in this study. Understanding and meeting student differences is especially challenging in a heterogeneous classroom.

While much of the interview transcripts show the teachers’ student-centered approach, the emerging themes made sense of that student centered attitude and served to answer the teacher-anchored research questions. This differentiated historical fiction novel text choice is different from the other choices offered in this unit, as the student was asked to read the text independently. Students do not have an opportunity to work in groups on this choice; it is a personal decision for each student, and then the teacher guides choices that she believes will work for individual learners.

Use of the special education teacher. It is still important to Mrs. Wolf that the students choose their novels. “That’s where my real concern, with the struggling readers . . . They have actual disabilities” (interview, November 9, 2010). The special educator will pick up on of the

three texts (*Dragon’s Child*, *Goodbye Vietnam*, and *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*) and steer their choice by pointing out parts of the text that he thinks they will like.

Table 5

How Students Chose Texts Coding

Codes	Original Theme	Recoding	Adjusted Theme	Key Analytical Memos
Struggling Readers	Struggling readers	How the teachers support the struggling and disabled readers	Support of the special educator	This code really is more about the support that the special educator can offer than it is about the student (Analytical memo, December, 2010).
Reading disabilities				
Student motivation	Student attitudes	Teacher perception of student motivation	Teacher’s perceptions of students attitudes toward reading	The research question asked about the nature of the teacher’s curricular decisions based on her students.
Student attitudes		Teacher perception of student attitude		
Kids like the book	None originally	Teacher wants kids to like the book	Teacher’s desire for students to enjoy the text	Again, the interview transcripts show questions about students are reflected in the teacher’s attitudes.
Popular choice		No change		
Student differences	Student differences	No change	Student differences with subthemes: struggling, reluctant, and voracious	This answers the research question neatly and remained constant except for the diction. The teacher participant used the word “voracious” so her diction was adopted.

For example, Mrs. Wolf knows that students who are reluctant readers but who like sports often choose to read *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* often simply because they like Jackie Robinson. She explains:

Mr. Gilbert [the special educator] read aloud. [Three boys] would sometimes want to read aloud, but they didn't have that fluency and that rhythm to reading. So to them, listening to him and following along was a very good exercise. And he did that with *Goodbye Vietnam*. . . . And they were otherwise difficult students, because school was hard for them. And they would go to the conference room . . . they would say 'See ya; we're checking in; we're going' They were successful because they had enough support to be successful. Otherwise, if they had read it by themselves without that; I'm not sure.

(interview, November 9, 2010).

But the special educator is not assigned to all classes. She says, "There are other kids that could use more support" (interview, November 9, 2010).

Perception of students' interests and reading abilities. "When they have decided on a book, I ask them to bring it to me. I ask them why. In a few cases, this year, I have said, 'Hm . . . let me recommend this book to you. Will you take a few minutes to take a look at it?' And it was usually the case of someone was choosing something that I considered to be a little bit low level for their reading and I need to [encourage a more challenging text]"

(interview, November 9, 2010). She says to them, "'Not a good match. Trust me.' And they do" (interview, November 9, 2010). When students show interest in a topic that comes up within a text, Mrs. Wolf encourages that curiosity. A student came in and showed her curiosity about

Khmers. So the teacher says, “Okay, so let me talk to you about the Khmer Rouge. And I have another book” (interview, November 9, 2010).

Desire for students to enjoy the text. This theme emerged later in the process because it became clear that the teacher participant conflated student enjoyment with student motivation when it comes to reading. “The kids love [*Ashes of Roses*] . . . They love this book because her story is so compelling. . . . I mean, she describes the voyage. They are all making all kinds of connections with this book” (interview, November 9, 2010). She also shared, “*Dreams in the Golden Country* is always popular for reluctant readers” (November 9, 2010). While it was clear that the offerings were of high quality and helped students to gain enduring understandings about immigration, it was important that students enjoyed the books they read, and even when the text is difficult, an engaging topic motivated students to persevere. Even when cultural or foreign language vocabulary is part of the book. “But kids, I don’t think that they really mind,” Mrs. Wolf explained. “They seem to compensate for that and really enjoy those books” (interview, November 9, 2010). She also shared about a time when she had a group of struggling readers who would go with the special educator to read *Goodbye, Vietnam*. “They like it. They enjoyed it,” she shared (interview, November 9, 2010).

Respect for student differences. “My philosophy is that all kids can learn. They all learn at different paces and in different ways. They have different strengths and different weaknesses. So the challenge becomes knowing them as a learner and how to figure out how to tap into all the different leaning styles of 25 students. And I do believe that ideally the best approach to take is to look at students individually” (interview, November 2, 2010). Within this theme, three subthemes emerged: struggling readers, reluctant readers, and voracious readers. These preset

codes based on the research questions only changed in the diction. Mrs. Wolf used the term “voracious” to describe what I had called “striving.” I chose to honor the semantics of the teacher participant in this case study.

Struggling readers. When Mrs. Wolf began teaching, she was “shocked” to realize that some of her students “couldn’t read” (interview, November 2, 2010). She said, “It became apparent to me, like slowly unfolded, that there were kids that really, not just didn’t like to read, really couldn’t read. They’re doing everything in their power to camouflage” (interview, November 2, 2010) their lack of reading ability. Mrs. Wolf is respectfully empathetic. She asks, “Who wouldn’t? You can see that your peers, most of them, can read; that’s not a comfortable place to be” (interview, November 2, 2010). She bases her novel choices on this fact, stating that she purposefully included books that were appropriate for “lower level readers” (interview, November 9, 2010). She considers four novels easier than others: *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*, *Night Journey*, *Goodbye, Vietnam*, *The Dragon’s Child*. *The Dragon’s Child*’s author found success in the YA market with *Dragon-* (e.g. *Dragonwings*, *Dragon’s Gate*) books and she surmises that he wrote this specifically for struggling readers or for English Language Learners.

“There are . . . books that you can pick for struggling readers [that are accessible to them but patronizing]. But, by the time that they are in middle school, that’s going to make them struggle even more. Because it’s insulting They don’t want to be reading books . . . that are considered ‘sissy.’ For example, *Goodbye Vietnam* is easy to read, and short, but the stories are not insulting to them. That is why they work” (interview, November 9, 2010).

In an apparent inconsistency, the teacher suggests that students “don’t want to be . . . reading books that set them apart from their peers” (November 9, 2010) but the lengths of these four texts are noticeably shorter than others. In addition, she “tells them not to pay attention to the covers, and I don’t really think they do . . . but she noted that *The Dragon’s Child* has a “cool cover” (interview, November 9, 2010) and that *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* does not. Most troubling of all of the inconsistencies was in the teacher participant’s assertion that the texts “generally are independent reads” but that students “could use more support” (interview, November 9, 2010).

Reluctant readers. “*The Dragon’s Child* is a good one for reluctant readers too. It’s a great story. There is a lot of space in between. That is something with readers that, or maybe struggling readers I am talking about more . . . but even reluctant. Sometimes those two can go together” (Nov. 9th). This idea of text font size and density is discussed more below in the discussion of research question three. Mrs. Wolf makes a point of building prior knowledge and connections between course lecture slides. She also defines some of her reluctant readers as those “not trusting themselves right now” despite gifted label (interview, November 9, 2010). She explains that *Dreams in the Golden Country* is a safe choice for some of her reluctant students because they are journals, are in first-person narrative, short entries. “There is the size of the book. That is very important. “They want to avoid reading. They want . . . with some, it might not be that they just want to make sure that they will get finished with the book. But more than not, in seventh grade, more than that situation would be that the students just want to pick the one that is the easiest. . . . I try to tell them that it’s not always the easiest book [that is] the shortest” (interview, November 9, 2010). Reluctant readers will sometimes switch books as

“avoidance” or an “excuse” as to why a reader didn’t finish. In contrast, voracious readers who “are vested don’t mind finishing a book they didn’t like” (interview, November 9, 2010).

Voracious readers. “Even kids truly who are really, really sharp readers, it’s good for them to talk about what they do when they read. So that when they get to more difficult text, that they have the tools as well. So you know, I think it’s important to that even if I had students that didn’t have trouble reading to still be a reading teacher of sorts. To still talk about how we learn, how we comprehend” (interview, November 2, 2010). She continues, “When I have kids I want to push, I say ‘I think you really need to stretch yourself’ and she then suggests appropriate titles (interview, May, 2009). For example, she deems as appropriate the titles *Shadow of the Dragon*, *Ashes of Roses*, or *Children of the River* for voracious readers “because these novels were more complex and more difficult reading levels There is more depth to the stories; they are more compelling, but you also have to be willing to obtain more background knowledge in order to really get into them” (interview, November 9, 2010). She felt that you need background knowledge in order to understand boat people, reeducation camps, history of immigrants in the Houston area. She also felt that maturity is needed to read about gangs or thwarted sexual assault. So if they came to me with *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*, the I was like ‘Let me give you a couple of novels to look at.’ They knew” (interview, November 9, 2010). *Children of the River* readers need to be curious, she said, “But voracious readers are usually curious.” And when students came to her wanting to learn more, she would give them non-fiction books that fulfilled that desire for new knowledge kindled by the historical fiction novel (interview, November 9, 2010).

Within this subtopic, inconsistencies did arise. One text, *Ashes of Roses*, is one that she suggests is good for voracious readers, but then admits, “*Ashes of Roses* is probably not as difficult to sink your teeth in to for readers . . . This one kind of fits in with the industrial revolution. . . they do know about the conditions in factories. They do know about the safety issues and they do know that immigrants came for work in the factories so they do have that basic schema in there. Those little hooks in there to hang more information on. So this one would be a little bit easier than these two to read, I do believe” (interview, November 9, 2010). Other inconsistencies in the teacher participant’s reflections came out when talking about prior knowledge. In conjunction with the reading, the teacher lectures and the students discuss, which builds their knowledge, but it is hard to assess whether students have enduring understandings that the teacher stresses that they need. She says that they need “prior knowledge that they are getting right now” (interview, November 9, 2010) and one wonders if it is prior knowledge if a student is just being presented the information.

Second Text Set: Short Primary Source Narrative Non-Fiction Texts

In a short, less-defined curricular choice, Mrs. Wolf randomly assigned students into pairs and had them read one or two of nine immigrant oral histories excerpted from the National Park Service’s documentary *Island of Hope, Island of Tears* (1989). These texts comprised of five to fourteen sentence passages, and are introduced in Table 6 and will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Each student worked with another student and was assigned text randomly. Most of the texts reported a sequence of events, but three answered “how” or “why” questions about their immigrant experiences. In response to these texts, students work in pairs to pretend they are immigration officials and get to determine whether each of the people are admitted into

America. After reading and time for collaborative discussion, they take turns explaining to the class their decisions.

Table 6

Short Primary Source Non-Fiction Narratives

Author	Country of Origin	Gender	# of sentences	Text Structure
Fannie	Russia	Female	14	Narrative
Stanley	Russian Poland	Male	12	
Stella	Russian Poland	Female	8	
Rosa	Italy	Female	7	
Charles	Austro-Hungary	Male	8	
Esther	Sweden	Female	6	Descriptive Narrative
Arnold	Russia	Male	10	
Michael	Greece	Male	5	Expository Narrative
Helen	Russia	Female	7	

Third Text Set: Jigsaw-grouped Expository Texts Assigned To Students

The three-day differentiated text lesson. The following differentiated text set and the three days of instruction that support it is described in a narrative fashion that is typical of case studies. The narrative is based on field notes of Thursday, November 11, 2010 to Monday, November, 15, 2010.

Day One. Students entered the classroom on this Thursday morning as they usually did, generally well behaved and purposeful. Most remembered to retrieve their interactive notebooks from the bookshelf as they went to an assigned seat. Seats had been assigned based on reading

levels, determined by the teacher participant, but the students were not explicitly informed of this. On the table of the most voracious readers (seven girls) were copies of the text “The House on Lemon Street.” (Fleming, 2000). On the table of two other groups was “A Rumble in the Mines” (Carnes, 1995). On the table with the struggling readers was the text “Chinese Railroad Workers” (publication information never found). On the Smartboard was projected the day’s objective and agenda [field notes, November 11, 2010]. This is depicted in Figure 2.

The students were asked to “huddle around the document” [field notes, November, 11, 2010]. After discussing the term “boycott” and reminding students to determine the author and point of view of the expository text, the teacher distributed a handout that asked students to “Read your article about an Asian immigration experience carefully using it to complete the graphic organizer below. Complete each section of the graphic organizer using bulleted lists and be sure your phrases contain enough information for you to remember details to share about your article” (field notes, November 11, 2010). The graphic organizer challenged students to find “Something that catches your eye,” “Something that’s shocking,” “Something that’s unfair,” and “So what? What’s the big idea?” [field notes, November 11, 2010] in no particular order. The students were charged with the task of “being experts on” [field notes, November 11, 2010] on one of the three articles. The group that read “The House on Lemon Street” comprised seven girls. One of the two “A Rumble in the Mines” groups was made up of two boys and two girls; the other of four boys.

Figure 2

Smartboard Projection, November 11, 2010

Thursday, November 11th
Veteran's Day

- Place your midterm in the basket!
- Immigration Novel Unit – read and work in your journal each night. Due November 30th.

Today's Agenda

BIG question: Was the Asian Immigrant experience similar to the European Immigrant Experience?

- As a group, check out the document that is on your table. What does boycott mean?
- Today we will explore this question by reading three stories about Asian Immigration experiences in America.
 - Chinese Railroad Workers (1860s)
 - A Rumbling in the Mines (1885)
 - The House on Lemon Street (1916)

While you are reading I will stamp your European Immigration Journal Responses!

The group that read “Chinese Railroad Workers” was made up of two boys and two girls, three of whom were English Language Learners. Students spent the period reading their assigned text and filling in the graphic organizer. They were instructed to “not get bogged down in the minutiae” and that they could whisper collaborate to others in their group as needed. They were not supposed to fill in the final section of the graphic organizer, (“So what? What’s the big idea?”) until they had met with their jigsaw groups and learned about all three of the texts. The class room was generally quiet, and Mrs. Wolf suggested that her college intern join the group assigned to “Chinese Railroad Workers.” He read the text to his group and guided them in completing the graphic organizer.

Day Two. On the following day, the Smartboard projected the same text as the day before, with the following addendum, “Discussion groups --- same text and a jigsaw” and “For

Monday . . . What would Abraham Lincoln say about all of this?" The bottom of the slide read, "Words worth knowing: tenements, ethnic enclave, interrogation, exclusion" (field notes, November 12, 2010). For the first fifteen minutes of class, students work to reread as needed in order to finish their graphic organizers. The teacher participant circulates to offer one-on-one to students as needed. For the next twenty minutes of class, the students were asked to discuss the article in their expert groups. Observations showed one to three students in each group reading their written graphic organizer response to the other members of the group. The college intern stayed with the group "The Rumble in the Mines." In the final ten minutes of class, students were assigned to four jigsaw groups comprised of one to two members of each expert group. Students began taking turns reading their completed graphic organizers to others in their jigsaw group.

Day Three. On Monday, November 15, 2010, the day's objective was again, as usual, projected on the Smartboard. This is shown in Figure 3. During this lesson, students worked in their jigsaw groups. When Mrs. Wolf heard students simply reading their graphic organizer findings to others in their groups, she redirected the whole class, asking them to "Tell a story! Don't just read . . . It's not naptime, and that's what they might do. Tell a story; use your hands if you need to get going. Use your notes to refer back to. Always go back to the text" (field notes, November 15, 2010). One jigsaw group became the focus of my observation. The female student who had read "The House on Lemon Street" told in a soft monotone the story of a "court case . . . The house had to be put in the children's name" (field observation, November 15, 2010). After an awkward silence, one of the boys who had read "A Rumble in the Mines" began to tell the others in his jigsaw group animatedly about "fights in the mine." Joseph (a pseudonym) told

about whites not wanting the work and that the Chinese took the jobs. He said that someone put an ax in another's head and that even women were involved. When it became time for the two who read "Chinese Railroad Workers" to share, a long silence settled over the group. One boy, an Asian immigrant and English Language Learner who was usually very verbal and the object of others' attention because of his "silly" (interview, November 17, 2010) antics, was silent. The girl also sat quietly, her usual demeanor. Finally, both said they didn't remember the contents of the text.

The final assignment for each jigsaw group was to fill out the last box of their graphic organizers, the "So what" question. Students were supposed to collaborate to glean a big understanding from the three expository articles (which will be described in detail below with the second research question). The jigsaw group that I observed couldn't do this because of the limited contribution of three members of the group. Joseph explained to Mrs. Wolf that the group hadn't heard anything about "Chinese Railroad Workers" and she stated firmly, "Well they need to share." Joseph did not follow up, simply responding "okay." The college intern came over to explain the text, and Mrs. Wolf moved to another group that was having a similar problem. She told them that they hadn't asked for help in the two prior instructional days, so they couldn't say they didn't understand (field notes, November 15, 2010). Researcher memos for that day reflect the tension surrounding the texts for these students and the supposition that perhaps some of the expository text were "stretch texts" (analytical memo, November 15th, 2010).

Figure 3

Smartboard Projection, November 15, 2010

Monday, November 15th

- Immigration Novel Unit --- due November 30th.
- Immigration Unit Quiz --- Tuesday, November 23rd
 - Study Guide due Friday, November 19th
- Revisit Error Analysis due by Tuesday, November 23rd

Today's Agenda

BIG question: How was the Asian Immigrant experience different from the European Immigrant experience? Why?

- Sit with your "jigsaw" discussion groups from Friday.
- Complete your discussions ---- check out the documents on your table.
- Write your summary statements.
 - Chinese Railroad Workers (1860s)
 - A Rumbling in the Mines (1885)
 - The House on Lemon Street (1916)
- What would Abraham Lincoln Say about all this?

Words worth knowing: tenements, exclusion, ethnic enclave, interrogation.

Analytical memos taken by the researcher after the observation suggested that "some students didn't comprehend the reading despite all of the support" (analytical memo, November 15, 2010).

Lesson Reflection. Perhaps the expert / jigsaw grouping is the most common of differentiated text instructional routines (Fisher, Frey, Brozo, & Ivey, 2010). This instructional strategy provides a way for students to work with different texts within the same instructional theme. Hence, the text or content of the lesson is differentiated, but the process and the product remains the same for each student within a heterogeneous classroom. The one characteristic that makes this text set different than the others is that there is no element of student choice. The teacher assigns the text that she thinks will be most appropriate to each student. A helpful

comparison, in staying with the meal metaphors of this study, is that of a conscientious parent at the family dinner table. Each student is served a healthy food and a healthy portion suitable for each child. This text may have been the vegetables: the students did not have a choice about what they got but they had to eat them for their healthy development. As discussed in chapter two, expository texts are often missing from the school curriculum (Afflerbach & VanSledright, 2001; Boyd & Ikpeze, 2007; Davis & Tonks, 2004) and are even considered to be most enjoyed by students. This lesson showed varied responses from students. Some responded positively, and others showed little appreciation or comprehension of the documents, despite opportunities for peer collaboration, teacher support, graphic organizers, and time for processing. Themes that emerged from this research question are discussed below and are found in Table 7. For clarification purposes, this research question, written specifically for this text set, is “What is the nature of Mrs. Wolf’s process of assigning ‘The House on Lemon Street,’ ‘A Rumble in the Mines,’ and ‘Chinese Railroad Workers’ to differently skilled adolescent readers in one seventh grade class?” The emerging themes that answered this question, a subtopic of research question one discussed earlier in this chapter were Commitment of Classroom Time to the Instructional Process, Belief that One-Size-Fits-All Education is not Fair, Management Issues in the Implementation of the Lesson, and Ability Grouping Based on Labels and Teacher Assessment. As qualitative research is often messy, these themes were adjusted several times as shown in Table 7. Some of the original codes more appropriately answered the second research question and did not develop into themes. These included passion, frustration, and student response.

Commitment of Time to the Instructional Process. Mrs. Wolf explained, “I don’t have three days, really four to spend on those articles in social studies. I don’t have that kind of time

to spend on Chinese Railroad workers or Asian Immigration. As far as factoids, they need to know the Chinese Exclusion Act, 1882. Boom I really could have used even more time on those articles. So, how could I even shorten it at all? Or either, just not use them at all. One or the other. You just have to make choices about that. . . . the curriculum . . . it's too packed . . . for you to have enough time to develop writing skill and reading skills" (interview, November 17, 2010). She did justify her choices saying that she teaches English Language Arts as well as US History.

Belief that One-Size-Fits-All Education is not Fair. This theme ties in with the theme earlier that describes this teacher as an activist, working to improved learning for all students and challenging standardized education in her classroom. Within this theme were discussions of what Mrs. Wolf deemed appropriate for her students. She made a point of sharing that the texts were all covering the same general topic, so they satisfied both the state standards document requirements and gave them appropriate instruction to meet their reading abilities.

Management Issues in the Implementation of the Lesson. The discussion of classroom management is tightly associated with the previous theme because Mrs. Wolf feels that teachers may not differentiate because they think they are not being equal to all students and because they can't manage three texts in one lesson, with three or more groups of students reading different things. Mrs. Wolf felt that the planning of the instruction was difficult, but during the lessons themselves she was available to walk around and support students as they did the work in collaborative groups with first their expert text and then their jigsaw texts.

Ability Grouping Based on Labels and Assessment. Mrs. Wolf was informed by district assigned labels and her own informal assessment of student abilities. One of the ways that Mrs.

Wolf determined that “Chinese Railroad Workers” was an easier text was its alignment with the topics lectured upon and discussed in class. She said that it “tied in tight to what we were studying” in class. “The House on Lemon Street” and “A Rumble in the Mines” were more loosely associated with the classroom slide lectures. And because many of her students were reading the novel *The Dragon’s Child* with the support of the special educator, the text was even more accessible because of the complementary themes of the two texts. The other two texts were set after the time of the railroad so students had to do that extra work (interview, November 17, 2010). “The House on Lemon Street” was deemed the most difficult because it was about Japanese immigrants and about Fair Housing laws. Students were assigned to groups based on their labels (i.e. Gifted, Reading Disabled) and based on what Mrs. Wolf had determined about their reading ability gleaned from course written assignments and class discussions. None of her text-reader matching decisions were based on assessments based on Lexile levels, although these were available in her school library.

Fourth Text Set: Sampling of Picture Books, Magazines, and Anthology

The variety of texts offered to the students continued with baskets comprised of nine picture books, four magazines, and one collection of 25 short stories, poems, and plays that were presented to the students. These books were in five plastic baskets, one on each of the work tables in the classroom.

Table 7

Emerging Codes for Differentiated Expository Text Assignments

Codes	Original Theme	Recoding	Adjusted Theme	Key Memos
Time	Time	Curricular Time Constraints	Commitment of Classroom Time to the Instructional Process	“Three days seems like a lot” (analytical memo, December 15, 2010)
Text Features	Text Quality	Compelling Texts for All Students	Belief that One-Size-Fits-All Education is not Fair	This theme developed after much rereading. While the teacher participant is thoughtful about her choices and is committed to offering the same content to students, she attempts to offer this in different ways as is appropriate to each of her students.
Curriculum Content		Text Choices Based on a Perception of Difficulty		
Different Texts; Similar Themes				
Text Equity	Text Appropriateness	One-size-fits-all Education is not Fair		
Purpose for Reading				
Management issues			Management Issues in the Implementation of the Lesson	“This works because it is well managed” (analytical memo, December 15, 2010)
Reading Disabled	Labels	Limitations of Labels in the Classroom	Ability Grouping Based on Labels and Teacher Assessment	While not an analytical memo, it made sense to conflate these as a theme and to synthesize the concept of perceived abilities.
Gifted				
ELLs				
How Labels are Determined	How Labels are Determined			
Struggling	Abilities	Differently Skilled Readers		
Reluctant				
Striving				

Students in groups of four or five had a whole class period to find words and images that affected their emotions. After compiling these collections of “found” text, students wrote a found poem about immigration. While political cartoons were also part of the curriculum, they were not analyzed for this case study because all of the students read all of the cartoons; hence, this did not qualify as differentiated text.

This set of text choices offered by the teacher was less like a fine dining experience and more like a cafeteria. While all of the offerings were of quality and were thoughtfully added to the menu of options, students were free to peruse all and chose or discard at their leisure during three class periods. These were also consumed in class, instead of the extended reading that the novels required. The students had two class periods to scan whatever looked interesting to them and were free to linger with any one text as long as they wanted before choosing which texts to read in more depth and add to their response page supplied by the teacher. They were then instructed to choose words and phrases from the texts in order to create a “found poem” on important themes in immigration. The Smartboard lesson objectives are shown in Figure 4. The teacher participant gave a brief overview of the texts (observation, November 30, 2010), and pointed out some of the interesting pictures, including a drawing of Grisha, a young Russian, enduring the painful buttonhook eye exam subjected to all Ellis Island immigrants (Woodruff, 22). The content of the texts are explained later in this chapter, under research question three. Mrs. Wolf used picture books as a “way in” (interview, May, 2009) for struggling readers, but she also saw that the conceptual difficulty of the immigration unit made them appropriate for all of her students. Wednesday, December 1st continued the previous day’s lesson. Students read many of the picture books in their entirety and flipped through others (field notes, December 2,

2010). While the struggling readers demonstrated less eyes-on-text attention than did others in the class (field notes, December 1, 2010), all students engaged in the written response activity. In this written response, they were asked to jot down notes pertaining to the following: “Reasons for immigration/emigration, Facts and Statistics, Interesting Tidbits, Life for new immigrants, Famous Immigrants, Favorite Photo, Documenting immigration through photos, This is shocking . . . , I need to know more about this . . . , Laws affecting Immigrants, and Immigrant Contributions to America” (field notes, December 1, 2010).

On Thursday, December 2nd and Friday, December 3rd, the final big question of the unit was asked on the Smartboard projection. Students were asked to finish their Picture Book, Magazine, and Anthology text set exploration and then, “On the back of your graphic organizer respond to the following: Who belongs here?” The subsequent discussion became part of the title of this study. Mrs. Wolf asked whether America is a melting pot or a salad bowl. The answers show the kind of cognitive flexibility and divergent thinking that is fostered in this teacher’s classroom. Joseph stated, “It’s a salad bowl because people have different ideas.” Julie said, “It’s not a salad, because in a salad I can pick out the vegetable I don’t like.” Mai, an Asian American suggested, “It’s both. Because, like me, I try to be American but I still look different.” William’s comment was followed by an appreciative silence from the class and a respectful smile from the teacher. He said, “It’s a stew because the flavors mix and the taste improves” (field notes, December 3, 2010).

Figure 4

Smartboard Projection, November 30, 2010

Tuesday, November 30

Found Poem due Friday, Dec. 3rd

Today's Lesson . . .

- Exploring immigration through text sets
- Graphic organizer – record your discoveries
- Look for any words to add to your found poem

Research Question 2:

What are the characteristics of differentiated texts assigned during the course of one seventh grade social studies unit?

As discussed in the third chapter, this research question will be answered with a mixed-method analysis, using quantitative readability measures using the Lexile measure discussed in chapter three and using qualitative data following Alvermann, Phelps, and Gillis (2010) Framework for Analyzing Texts. In order to supplement these two measures, and in order to lend clarification to the entwined nature of the two research questions, interview data was coded using the Constant Comparative Method (Corbin & Strauss; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The interview transcripts were read and reread by the researcher in order to determine emerging codes. From the emerging codes, themes emerged. Data were recoded and themes adjusted as deemed appropriate. Further, the researcher read each of the eighteen novels, nine picture books,

three expository articles, one anthology, and four magazines in order to triangulate the participant's evaluation of the text and to further understand student response to the text. This research process is clearly mixed-method as determining the characteristic of any text is not a neat process. The themes that emerged from the interview transcripts were corroborated by much of the quantitative data. The quantitative readability data and discussion of format, style, utility, and content also illuminated these emerging themes. All emerging themes ultimately fit into this Framework for Assessing Texts (Alvermann et al., 2010). For example, the teacher participant discussed visual aspects of a text that may have made it more appealing to reluctant readers. This was coded "text density" but fits neatly into the Format section of Framework for Assessing Texts tool. These emerging themes are discussed in detail below. In addition to the quantitative measure of text length and readability, the qualitative themes are content, format, style, and text utility. When the teacher participant addressed these texts in terms of student reading achievement in a differentiated classroom, the texts were sorted and presented according to the way that the teacher participant assigned them to her students. Means are reported when appropriate, and reasons and analysis are described when necessary.

The texts that were differentiated within this seventh grade social studies unit are listed below in aggregate descriptive tables. Disaggregated data follows all aggregate tables. The following data are divided by text event observed in the classroom. These are presented in the order in which they were read by the students. They were Historical Fiction, Expository Articles, and Picture Books, Magazines, and Anthologies.

Historical Fiction

Students were expected to read these texts independently and respond in journals and in a final project create a poem and poster images on the poster creator website Glogster (glogster.edu). These novel choices with theme, setting year, author, and year of publication are found in Table 8. Because there were only eighteen data points (only eighteen novels), this quantitative data is less significant in discussions of page count and chapter length than is the readability data that were reported with at least 200 words.

Page Count. The average length of the young adult historical fiction titles was 187, ranging from 133 (Yep's *The Dragon's Child*) to 317 (Yep's *Dragonwings*). Table 9 shows the page count of the historical fiction designated for struggling, reluctant, and voracious readers. Because the teacher participant mentioned these texts in interviews, they were included. It is important to note, however, that students were not openly labeled, nor were they ever assigned a text. Students were given the choice to read what they chose. These designations were for analysis purposes only and were helpful in answering this research question.

Chapter Length. Mrs. Wolf shared that students who struggle or are reluctant to read gain confidence in shorter chapters so that they can make headway in the text and have noticeable stopping points. Table 10 shows disaggregated data on the average chapter length of the historical fiction texts discussed in terms of text-reader matching. Median is also reported, as one novel, *Dreams in the Golden Country* (Lasky, 1988) became an outlier because it is presented in diary form and has 187 short entries.

Table 8

Young Adult Literature Historical Fiction Choices for Unit

Theme	Setting Year	TITLE	Author	Year of Publication
Asian Immigration	1903-1909	<i>Dragonwings</i>	Laurence Yep	1975
	1920's	<i>The Star Fisher</i>	Laurence Yep	1991
		<i>The Dragon's Child: A Story of Angel Island</i>	Laurence Yep	2008
	1940's	<i>In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson</i>	Bette Bao Lord	1984
	1970's	<i>Goodbye, Vietnam</i>	Gloria Whelan	1992
		<i>Children of the River</i>	Linda Crew	1989
	1991	<i>Shadow of the Dragon</i>	Sherry Garland	1993
European Immigration	1900	<i>The Night Journey</i>	Kathryn Lasky	1981
	1902	<i>Land of Hope</i>	Joan Lowery Nixon	1992
	1903	<i>Dreams in the Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Feldmen, a Jewish Immigrant Girl</i>	Kathryn Lasky	1998
	1911	<i>Ashes of Roses</i>	Mary Jane Auch	2002
		<i>Letters from Rifka</i>	Karen Hesse	1992
	1938	<i>Journey to America</i>	Sonia Levitin	1970
Latino/a Immigration	1930s	<i>Esperanza Rising</i>	Ram Muñoz Ryan	2000
	1980s	<i>Lupita Mañana</i>	Patricia Beatty	1981
	1990s	<i>Journey of the Sparrows</i>	Fran Leeper Buss	1991
Haitian Immigration	1990s	<i>Taste of Salt: A Story of Modern Haiti</i>	Frances Temple	1992
		<i>Tonight, by Sea</i>	Frances Temple	1995

Table 9

Differentiated Novel Choices Disaggregate Data, Page Count

Suggested for	Title	Page Length	Average Page Count of Texts	Avg Page Count of all 18 choices
Struggling Readers	<i>In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson</i>	170	147	187
	<i>Goodbye, Vietnam</i>	134		
	<i>The Night Journey</i>	151		
	<i>The Dragon’s Child</i>	133		
Reluctant Readers	<i>The Dragon’s Child</i>	133	143	
	<i>Dreams in the Golden Country</i>	152		
Voracious Readers	<i>Ashes of Roses</i>	246	258	
	<i>Shadow of the Dragon</i>	314		
	<i>Children of the River</i>	213		

This is one of the reasons that Mrs. Wolf feels that it is accessible to her students, and as such is important data. Still, this high number makes the averages appear higher than is representative of the collection. The reporting of median numbers mitigates this concern.

Text Readability. In the analysis of text readability, it is important to note that Common Core Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010b) suggest that students in grade 6-8 are currently reading within the 860L – 1010L Lexile Band and that appropriate “Stretch” Lexile Bands for grades 6-8 are Lexile Levels between 955L and 1155L. Fifteen of the eighteen historical fiction titles fall below the level of 860L, which is below the 6th grade band. Of those fifteen, fourteen fall within Common Core’s 4 – 5 grade Band. Only one, Yep’s *The Dragon’s Child*, falls below this band.

Table 10
Differentiated Novel Choices Disaggregate Data, Chapters

Suggested for	Title	# of Chapters	Average # of chapters	Avg /median Chapter # of all 18	Avg Chapter Length	Average Chapter Length	Avg /median Chapter Length of all 18
Struggling Readers	<i>In the Year of the Boar . . .</i>	12	15.8	26.7 / 16	14	9.5	11.1 / 9.6
	<i>Goodbye, Vietnam</i>	14			9.6		
	<i>The Night Journey</i>	21			7.2		
	<i>The Dragon's Child</i>	16			7.1		
Reluctant Readers	<i>The Dragon's Child</i>	16	101.5		7.1	4	
	<i>Dreams in the Golden . . .</i>	187			.8		
Voracious Readers	<i>Ashes of Roses</i>	32	22.7		7.7	12.9	
	<i>Shadow of the Dragon</i>	15			20.9		
	<i>Children of the River</i>	21			10.1		

Because the suggested Bands overlap, five of those fifteen fall within the second grade reading band. It must be cautioned that those five (Table 11) are in no way appropriate for children as young as second or third grade. Readability statistics are estimates based on word frequency and sentence length only, not on text content.

Table 11

Lexile Levels and Common Core Complexity Bands of Novels

Title	Lexile Level	Common Core Lexile Band	Common Core “Stretch” Lexile Band	Grade Band
<i>The Dragon’s Child</i>	640L	450L-725L	450L-790L	2-3
<i>Taste of Salt</i>	650L	645L-845L	770L-980L	4-5
<i>Letters from Rifka</i>	660L			
<i>Ashes of Roses</i>	670L			
<i>Children of the River</i>	700L			
<i>In the Year of the Boar and . . .</i>	730L			
<i>Journey to America</i>	750L			
<i>Tonight, By Sea</i>				
<i>Dreams in the Golden Country</i>				
<i>Esperanza Rising</i>				
<i>Lupita, Mañana</i>				
<i>Journey of the Sparrows</i>				
<i>Goodbye, Vietnam</i>	810L			
<i>Shadow of the Dragon</i>	840L			
<i>The Star Fisher</i>	850L			
<i>The Night Journey</i>	860L	860L-1010L	955L-1155L	6-8
<i>Dragonwings</i>	870L			
<i>Land of Hope</i>	880L			

Discussion of content becomes a qualitative measure. Table 11 shows that only three of the eighteen novel choices fall into the Common Core’s suggested Lexile level for the seventh grade. When Table 11 data is disaggregated (Table 12) to reflect the suggested texts by perception of the teacher participant, more inconsistencies arise. While earlier data show that the texts suggested to the struggling reader have fewer pages, this data show that the average Lexile Level of the four titles suggested for struggling readers is actually higher than the average of the three titles suggested to the striving reader.

Table 12

Differentiated Novel Choices Disaggregate Data, Lexile Level

Suggested for	Title	Lexile	Average Lexile of Texts	Average Lexile of all titles
Struggling Readers	<i>In the Year of the Boar and . . .</i>	730L	760L	760L
	<i>Goodbye, Vietnam</i>	810L		
	<i>The Night Journey</i>	860L		
	<i>The Dragon’s Child</i>	640L		
Reluctant Readers	<i>The Dragon’s Child</i>		695L	
	<i>Dreams in the Golden Country</i>	750L		
Striving or voracious Readers	<i>Ashes of Roses</i>	670L	737L	
	<i>Shadow of the Dragon</i>	840L		
	<i>Children of the River</i>	700L		

Qualitative Assessment. The following qualitative data is presented in paragraph form and reflects the perceptions of difficulty of text and follow Alvermann, Phelps, and Gillis' Framework (2010) for text assessment.

Content. Each of the texts were filled with the emigrant's hope for a better life and a love for their adopted America, perhaps best exemplified in Lord's (1984) *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* in which the children's common love of baseball unites them all. All of the texts show the strength in family and the ingenuity of the mind and resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Romantic love is the undercurrent of both *Shadow of the Dragon*, *Children of the River*, and *Land of Hope*, and plays a part in minor characters in *Dreams in the Golden Country*, *Lupita*, *Mañana*, and *Journey of the Sparrows*. The historical fiction texts also all address difficult themes within the scope of the immigration unit. The push factors of immigration (field notes, November 1, 2011) included poor working conditions, prejudice, poverty, famine, and persecution. The emigrants' journeys caused sickness or suffering in all of the novels. Hungry young immigrants make up the character lists of the choices. Many of the fiction choices addressed the prejudice faced by new Americans (i.e. Danny Vo had to justify to classmates that he was not Vietcong) and ignorance from native born citizens (i.e. Jonathan's forward actions toward Sundara, whose Cambodian culture dictated that she not eat lunch with him in *Children of the River*). Many of the narratives chronicled such terrible working conditions for newly arrived immigrants that sickness was common (*Esperanza Rising*, and *Journey of the Sparrows*).

Some of the texts included more difficult themes including separation from both parents (*Children of the River*, *Journey of the Sparrows*, *Journey to America Letters from Rifka*, *Lupita*,

Manana, and *Ashes of Roses*), unnatural death of immediate family (*Dreams in the Golden Country* and *Tonight, By Sea*). Gang mentality causes a death in a love triangle reminiscent of *West Side Story* in *Shadow of the Dragon*. Drug use surfaces in some of the texts. Black Dog, a character in *Dragonwings*, stumbles out of an opium den in a violent haze. Lupita mentions her brother's marijuana use in *Lupita, Mañana*. Lupita also must dress like a boy to ward off possible sexual assaults, and Rose in *Ashes of Roses* survives a thwarted rape attempt at the hands of the owner of the sweatshop where she made artificial flowers for little pay. Maria Ortez, a Salvadorian immigrant, must leave her job as an undocumented worker when faced with the suggestive leers of the boss, because he knows she would have no recourse with the law as an illegal alien.

The language in all the texts is generally school appropriate other than racial slurs couched in ignorance and hatred. D'jo, the male protagonist in *Taste of Salt*, endures utter poverty, slavery, and is then beaten and burned as one of Jean-Bertrand Aristide's revolutionaries in Haiti. Perhaps the most disturbing lines were in Lasky's *The Night Journey*. Nana Sashie shared a persecuted Russian Jew's awful secret that left him a self-loathing loner before helping her family escape the Russian pogroms. "The father fled" (p. 150) illuminates the awful truth of survival in some emigrant stories, the guilt that accompanies the reality that not all of the persecuted were able to protect their families and escape to a better life. For the purposes of this analysis, the texts were sorted into one main theme regarding immigration and are shown in Table 13. Each eighteen novels' main theme (two in some cases) fall into four categories: Persecution before Emigration, The Journey to America (Clandestine or Sanctioned), Working Conditions for the New Immigrant, and Assimilation after Immigration.

In discussion the themes and the mature content of some of these titles, Mrs. Wolf felt that although some of the choices were low-level readers, and could be read by second graders even, she said that the “content is probably too heavy for that [age group]. And [the content] is not insulting for seventh grade. Especially when we are studying this in history. So it’s not insulting to them” (interview, November 9, 2010). In linking this assessment with both research question and the quantitative data above, it becomes notable that the texts that were suggested for voracious readers (*Ashes of Roses*, *Shadow of the Dragon*, and *Children of the River*) may have been deemed by the teacher participant in part because these three novels had protagonists with an average age of 16.6. These protagonists, in comparison to the average age of the protagonists from the novels suggested to the struggling readers (11.5) had more adult issues to deal with, as addressed above. Of those three, only *The Night Journey* had really mature content, and the Lexile Level of 860L places this text as one of the three most difficult in readability of the entire list.

Style. In discussion of *The Dragon’s Child*, Mrs. Wolf shared, “it’s pretty simple prose. I think it was deliberately written to appeal to struggling readers . . . [corrects herself] Younger readers, younger readers. I think it is written for younger readers, but then I can use it for struggling readers. I mean, a nine year old could probably read this” (interview, November 9, 2010). Mrs. Wolf is attuned to questions of style in a text. She read a short section in the interview, and noted accessible vocabulary words. It is important to note that readability statistics usually fall in this section, as style, the words and their arrangement in sentences, is reflected in low- and high-frequency words and numbers of words in a sentence.

Table 13

Immigrant Themes of Historical Fiction Novels

Theme	Title
The Journey to America	<i>The Dragon's Child</i>
	<i>Goodbye, Vietnam</i>
	<i>Ashes of Roses</i>
Working Conditions	<i>Land of Hope</i>
The Clandestine Journey, Working Conditions	<i>Esperanza Rising</i>
	<i>Lupita, Mañana</i>
	<i>Journey of the Sparrows</i>
Persecution before Emigration, The Clandestine Journey	<i>Journey to America</i>
	<i>The Night Journey</i>
	<i>Tonight, By Sea</i>
	<i>Letters from Rifka</i>
Assimilation after Immigration	<i>Shadow of the Dragon</i>
	<i>The Star Fisher</i>
	<i>Children of the River</i>
	<i>In the Year of the Boar . . .</i>
	<i>Dreams in the Golden . . .</i>
	<i>Dragonwings</i>
The Journey, Assimilation after Immigration	<i>Land of Hope</i>

Most of the texts used native vocabulary. Of note were the two Haitian Immigration themed novels. Many Creole vocabulary words are defined in context and again in a glossary (discussed below). While the other novels also incorporated foreign words and sayings (i.e. Yiddish clichés in *Dreams of the Golden Country*), the Haitian texts also included stilted English in the Haitian dialect that could be difficult for some readers.

Format. Alvermann, Phelps, and Gillis (2010) suggest that a discussion of format includes text size and density in addition to graphic aids and illustrations. Mrs. Wolf noted “If you have so much space between the lines, it gives your eyes . . . the flow is easier. It makes it easier to keep up. If you’re a kid, which I think a lot of these kids, they have problems maintaining connection with the text. They might be reading and letting their eyes flow over words, but they may go there, four pages and have no idea what they read” (interview, November 9, 2010). She refers to *The Dragon’s Child* as she states, “you are not struggling so much because you do have that space in between there to read. I don’t know” (interview, November 9, 2010). Her lack of definitiveness is evidence that, as stated earlier, Mrs. Wolf is not a trained English teacher. She is a reflective practitioner working to meet the needs of her students. All of the novels are traditional chapter books with the exception of *Dreams in the Golden Country* from the *Dear America* series, which is in diary format; *The Dragon’s Child*, which has larger font and less density (fewer lines of text on the page); and *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*, which has 17 pen-and-ink illustrations sprinkled throughout the pages of the book. In addition, the chapters in *Dragonwings* each begin with setting dates, supporting the reader with a timeline.

Many of the texts have supplemental text. *The Dragon's Child* includes a bibliography, nine primary source photographs and primary source quotes of the true story on which the novel is based. *Children of the River* includes "A Conversation with the Author," as does Hesse's *Letters from Rifka*. Auch's *Ashes of Roses* includes an Author's Note (p. 247) as does *The Night Journey* (p. 1). Temple's *Taste of Salt* and *Tonight, By Sea* both have a glossary of Creole words and a crudely drawn map of Haiti to support the reader. *Dreams in the Golden Country* includes a plethora of support: thirteen photographs, three maps, a musical score and a recipe. All are primary sources from the setting of the novel. *Land of Hope* includes a two page expository text about Ellis Island written by the author, J. L. Nixon.

Utility. Alvermann, Phelps, and Gillis (2010) define text utility in terms of supporting texts, like teacher's manuals, activities embedded in the text at the end of chapters, and suggested additional reading. Only two novels supply this. *The Dragon's Child* has a suggested list of additional web resources and *Children of the River* has Reader's Guide Questions at the novel's conclusion.

Expository Articles

The three expository articles, discussed in their instructional three day lesson earlier in this chapter, all dealt with the theme of the difficulty inherent in the Asian Immigrant experience in the United States. All three illustrated, with words and pictures, the prejudice Asian immigrants experienced and the strong work ethic of those immigrants despite difficult working conditions.

Page Count. The three texts ranged from four to nine pages, as shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Differentiated Expository Article Data, Including Page Count

Theme	Setting Place	Setting Time	Title	Page Count	Publisher	Publication Date
Japanese Immigrant Housing Discrimination	Riverside, CA	1916	“The House on Lemon Street”	9	Southern Poverty Law Center	2000
Violence against Chinese Immigrants	Rock Springs, Wyoming	1885	“The Rumble in the Mines”	9	Southern Poverty Law Center	1995
Chinese Immigrant Work on the Railroads	California to Utah	1860s	“Chinese Railroad Workers”	4	Not available	Not Available

Readability. These expository articles had much higher Lexile levels than did the historical fiction titles (Table 15). It is important to note that within Mrs. Wolf’s instruction, the historical fiction novels were independent reads for students to read and journal about as homework. These differentiated texts were supported in a three-day class lesson. The text determined to be the most difficult in terms of readability score based on a Lexile measure was assigned to the readers that the teacher had determined to have the most difficulty with text. However, the teacher did explain that the course had offered the most background knowledge for the difficult text, and the difficult text was much shorter, more than half the page count of the other two texts.

Qualitative Assessment. The following qualitative data is presented in paragraph form and reflects the perceptions of difficulty of text and follow Alvermann, Phelps, and Gillis’ Framework (2010) for text assessment.

Table 15
Lexile Levels and Common Core Bands of Expository Articles

Designated for	Title	Lexile Level	Common Core Lexile Band	Common Core “Stretch” Lexile Band	Grade Band
Striving Readers	“The House on Lemon Street”	1140L	1070L-1220L	1215L-1355L	11-CCR
Reluctant or “Not Confident” Readers	“The Rumble in the Mines”	1050L	960L-1115L	1080L-1305L	9-10
Struggling Readers	“Chinese Railroad Workers”	1310L	1070L-1220L	1215L-1355L	11-CCR

Content. Because the two research questions of this study are interrelated, some of this discussion mirrors or supports much of the conversation on these texts that serve to describe the nature of Mrs. Wolf’s curricular decision making and subsequent instruction choices and is found earlier in the chapter. All texts lauded the Asian American immigrants for their work ethic and noted their commitment to their traditional culture. All three texts noted the unethical treatment of workers that pitted against those of another culture, breeding resentment and ignorance of others. “A Rumble in the Mines” contains perhaps the content which needs the most maturity to handle, as the violent deaths at the hands of an angry mob were described after a fight in the mines broke out. Carnes (1995) explains, “when a sojourner swung his pick into a white man’s stomach, other whites tackled the assailant and used the pick to open his skull” (p.

54). All texts tell a story, making them narrative, but the explanatory nature of the commentary make these expository text (Table 16). “The House on Lemon Street” offers two dense expository pages subtitled “At Issue.”

Table 16

Differentiated Non-fiction Expository Article Data, Structure

Title	Author	Non-Fiction?	People	Structure	Text support
“The House on Lemon Street”	Maria Fleming	Non-fiction	Jukichi Harada family	Narrative and expository	4 photographs, 1 document
“A Rumble in the Mines”	Jim Carnes	Non-fiction	Lo Sun Chi, Liu Tieh Pa, Liu Chiu Pu among others	Narrative and expository	4 photographs, 3 drawings 3 document
“Chinese Railroad Workers”		Non-fiction	Charles Crocker and family	Narrative and expository	2 photographs

Style. To an educated adult, this is fascinating reading. While the Lexile levels show that the text is more complex than the historical fiction choices, the inherent nature of non-fiction embodies all that is supportive about any story found in a novel, but is more interesting because they actually are true stories.

Format. The format of these texts are especially supportive, as the headings, photographs and text boxes that hold both primary source documents and expository issue synthesis make the text appear more like a magazine than a textbook. “A Rumble in the Mines” offers the most support, with more photographs and smaller chunks of texts than the other two readings. Based on classroom observations (observation, November 15, 2010), students comprehended this text better than those who read the other two.

Utility. None of the three expository texts include suggested activities, questions, or further readings that would qualify as supportive text utility.

Picture Books, Magazines, and Anthologies

The books shown in Tables 11-12 were chosen by the teacher participant in this study as curricular choices to be read independently. Students were supported with a brief introduction to the texts. Additionally, the teacher was available during the class period to help students as needed. The assignment is described earlier in this chapter. As a reminder, the students were encouraged to ask a peer for clarification when needed. The picture books, magazine, and anthology are described in Tables 17-19.

Page Count. The nine picture books ranged in length from 30 (Woodruff's *The Memory Coat*) to 132 (Murphy's *Across America on an Emigrant Train*), and averaged 52 pages. The anthology selections ranged in length from a 22 line poem (Ling's "Grandma Ling") to a 20 page short story (Juratovac's "Dana's Eyes") and averaged 9.4 pages for each anthologized entry. The magazines ranged from 20 pages to 50, with the average of the four texts being 35 pages. This anthology was presented along with the picture books as an option for filling in a graphic organizer and creating a found poem. *American Dragons*, edited by Laurence Yep (1993), is comprised of "stories, poems, and dramatic pieces that capture the crises and questions of Asian American teenagers" (Metametrics, 2011).

Table 17

Picture Books Content Data

Immigrant Nationality	Setting Place	Setting Year	Title	Pub Year
Cambodian-American	Cambodia to Thailand to New York to Anywhere, USA	1980's	<i>Who Belongs Here?</i>	1993
Russian-American	Russia to Ellis Island, NY	c. 1920	<i>The Memory Coat</i>	1999
	Russia to Ellis Island, NY to a city in USA	c.1920-1990	<i>The Always Prayer Shawl</i>	1994
Japanese American	San Francisco, CA to Japan	c.1920-1945	<i>Tea With Milk</i>	1999
	Japan to San Francisco, CA to Japan	c.1900-1970	<i>Grandfather's Journey</i>	1993
European-American	New York	c.1880-1920	<i>Immigrant Kids</i>	1980
	Ellis Island, NY	1897-1925 mean year: 1915	<i>I Was Dreaming to Come to America</i>	1995
	Glasgow, Scotland to New York to Monterey, CA	1850-1900 Train trip in 1979	<i>Across America on an Immigrant Train</i>	1993
Italian American	USA	1770's to Present	<i>Passage to Liberty</i>	2002

Table 18

Magazines Content Data

Theme	Setting Place	Setting Time	Title	Fiction?	Page Count	Publisher	Publication Date
European Immigrants	New York, NY	1850-1900	<i>Tenement Life</i>	Non-fiction	50	Cobblestone	Feb 2004 (Volume 25, Number 2)
		1609-present	<i>Ellis Island: Gateway to America</i>				Feb 2006 (Volume 27, Number 2)
		1892-1954	<i>Ellis Island</i>				2007
	France – New York	1856-present	<i>Statue of Liberty</i>			Feb 2004 (Volume 14, Issue 2)	

Table 19

Short Stories, Excerpts from Plays, Poems

Immigrant Nationality	Setting Place	Setting Year	Title	Fiction?	characters	genre	Publication Year
Asian-American	varied	modern	<i>American Dragons</i>	Fiction, creative non-fiction	Varied Asian American Teens	Narrative, poetry, play	1993

Readability. The nine picture books ranged in Lexile levels from 450L (Say’s *Tea with Milk*) to 1180L (Murphy’s *Across America on an Emigrant Train*) and averaged 801L. Lexile levels in comparison to Common Core “Stretch” Bands are shown in Table 20. This Lexile Level average reflects the reality that the picture books were estimated to have a higher readability than the novels. Both texts were treated as independent level reading for the students (observation,

November 30, 2010). This observation is corroborated by interview data (interview, November 9, 2010).

Qualitative Assessment. The following qualitative data is presented in paragraph form and reflects the perceptions of difficulty of text and follow Alvermann, Phelps, and Gillis' Framework (2010) for text analysis.

Content. The content of these texts (Tables 17-19) range in breadth of coverage from European to Asian immigration; other than a Nary, a Cambodian in *Who Belongs Here*, more modern voices are noticeably absent. All of the stories celebrate the tenacity and courage of immigrants in the face of difficulty. *American Dragons* (Yep, 1993) introduces content that is best for more mature readers, including the sexual assault of fourteen year old Dana at the hands of her baseball coach. The girl's Chinese mother accuses her of courting the assault, saying "You know better now than to go to practice so early. You so stupid to go and act like little girl, knowing nothing, shaking ass all around" (p. 93) and Dana cries, "It's not my fault" (p. 94). This jarring scene exemplifies the cultural chasm many immigrant children feel between the expectations of their parents and the expectations of the American world. The language could be difficult for some middle level readers, also.

Table 20

Lexile Levels and Common Core Bands of Picture Books, Magazines, and Anthology

Title	Lexile Level	Common Core Lexile Band	Common Core “Stretch” Lexile Band	Grade Band
<i>Tea with Milk</i>	450L	450L-725L	450L-790L	2-3
<i>The Always Prayer Shawl</i>	460L			
<i>Grandfather’s Journey</i>	650L	645L-845L	770L-980L	4-5
<i>The Memory Coat</i>	AD650L			
<i>Ellis Island</i> (magazine)	860L	860L-1010L	955L-1155L	6-8
<i>Who Belongs Here?</i>	AD900L			
<i>Passage to Liberty</i>	920L			
<i>I Was Dreaming to Come to America</i>	950L			
<i>American Dragons</i> (Anthology)	990L			
<i>Statue of Liberty</i> (magazine)				
<i>Immigrant Kids</i>	1050L	960L-1115L	1080L-1305L	9-10
<i>Across America on an Emigrant Train</i>	1180L	1070L-1220L	1215L-1355L	11-CCR
<i>Tenement Life</i> (magazine)	1310L			
<i>Ellis Island: Gateway to America</i> (magazine)	1370L			

Style. The diction in the children’s books is age appropriate, except for isolated text (discussed above) in the anthology. While the Lexile levels show that the children’s books are more complex than the historical fiction choices, the magazines and anthologies offer greater challenge. The language is adult-directed and the language is compelling. The dialogue drives

much of the plot of these stories. One example comes from *The Memory Coat* (Woodruff, 1999). At Ellis Island, “the children were sent to sit on a bench and wait. ‘Why won’t they let Grisha stay?’ Rachel’s younger sister asked. ‘Maybe it’s his raggedy old coat’” (p. 23). The dialogue helps to make the story accessible.

Format. The illustrations and photographs in these books add to the narratives in powerful ways. The beautiful illustrations in Knight’s *Who Belongs Here* (1993) depict children in varied shades of tans and browns. The black and white drawings of immigrants in steerage class reflect the mood of the voyage in *The Always Prayer Shawl* (Oberman, 1994). Cobblestone’s magazines include statistics and facts including the numbers of immigrants and their nationalities.

Utility. None of the nine picture books include questions that would qualify as supportive text utility. The magazines do, however, offer some questions and activities, the most notable being a fill in the blank reading passage, word search (Chorlian, 2004), and an immigrant cookbook. *Passage to Liberty* (Ciongoli & Parinii, 2002) also includes an authentic Italian American recipe for ciannelle, in the form of a primary document and presented in the handwriting of the immigrant. Some of the texts do suggest further reading for both children and adults. Kids Discover’s *Ellis Island* suggests nine books and two websites, none of which are part of the extensive choices already offered by Mrs. Wolf. Cobblestone also suggest “Places to visit” (p. 47) and “more media,” where it suggests that student watch a documentary on Ellis Island.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter presents a summary of this case study and conclusions drawn from the data presented in Chapter Four. It provides a discussion of the implications for action, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks.

Overview of the Problem

Teachers who offer diverse and plentiful texts in the content area classroom to support both disciplinary and literacy needs of all of their learners are worthy of research. A wide variety of classroom texts can help to meet the needs of students who differ in their reading abilities, their interests, their maturity and their tenacity with a text. *Reading Next* (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006) in its vision for action, suggests that student choice within appropriate leveled texts is one of the ways that teachers can support all secondary readers. A major concern of teachers and educational scholars today are the “text-complexity bands” that guide Common Core Standards. Even our best teachers admit their inadequate training to support adolescents who read significantly below grade level and those adolescents who refuse to read. We know that students must keep reading to continue to improve their skills and be ready for the demands of college levels texts. We don’t know how mindful teachers offer diverse texts in a heterogeneous classroom within one unit. Within the theoretical frameworks of the Construction-Integration Model, Cognitive Flexibility Theory, and Matthew Effects, this research considers the nature of one teacher’s process in assigning differentiated texts to readers within a seventh grade immigration unit. This study also describes the characteristics of the differentiated texts offered and/or assigned within the course of one unit.

An embedded single case study approach (Yin, 2009) was used to answer these research questions. As data emerged, it became clear that text events would become the four embedded units of analysis: the student's guided choice of historical fiction independent reading assigned for homework; the short primary text narratives assigned in collaborative pairs and assigned arbitrarily; the purposefully assigned expository texts determined by a perception of text demands and a perception of text difficulty; and the children's books, magazines, and anthology choices offered to all students as in-class reading. The teacher participant was chosen as an exemplary literacy teacher after referrals and observation. The researcher observed the daily lessons of the entire unit (seven weeks) and interviewed the teacher participant weekly for the seven weeks' immigration unit. Interview transcripts reflect over six hours of audiotaped insights. In addition to the researcher's field notes and journal, the teacher participant also supplied the researcher with all course texts, including those published and those created by the teacher. Data was analyzed using Corbin & Strauss (2008) constant-comparative method. Themes emerged within and across data sets and are reported in chapter four. Texts were analyzed in page count, chapter length, readability Lexile scores, and using Alvermann et al.'s (2010) Framework for Assessing Texts.

Major Findings

This study found that the teacher participant came to her curricular decisions in many ways. She chose a wide variety of quality historical fiction novels within immigration themes because she believed in the power of story to affect adolescents' understandings. Mrs. Wolf demonstrated a strong belief too in her own self-efficacy, and was thoughtful about her own

sphere of influence. She thought critically about the curriculum and became an activist in her decision-making and in her motivation to affect others in education. She chose the novels in her unit mindfully, working to incorporate plentiful choices that varied in their themes, setting, protagonists, and accessibility. Findings also indicate that the teacher participant guided the students in their novel choices, making use of the special educator, and incorporating students' interests and reading abilities based on district-assigned labels and teacher's formal and informal assessment. The teacher participant demonstrated a strong desire that her students engage with and enjoy the differentiated texts. While the labels of struggling, reluctant, and striving or voracious readers proved problematic for this research, it became clear that common language needed to be adopted in order to understand the nature of a differentiated classroom as far as literacy instruction is concerned.

The volume and variety of texts in this unit was one of the interesting findings. In addition to one of the eighteen novels from which the students were to choose, they also worked in pairs to read one of nine primary source oral history narratives. These comparable texts and working pairs were assigned arbitrarily. The third differentiated text event was thoughtfully orchestrated. The three-day lesson showed the teacher participant's commitment of time to literacy skills within her content area classroom and her rejection of a curriculum that could have one text as appropriate for all students. This text set also showed that careful planning made the student management aspect of the lesson easier, allowing for few distractions while the teacher circulated to support student reading comprehension. This text set demonstrated students' difficulty with higher-level, expository text.

The integration of picture books in secondary schools is also one of particular interest to practitioners attempting to motivate reluctant readers to regain reading confidence. The teacher participant showed again a commitment of instructional time to literacy work in the content area classroom. Students were free to choose which texts and pictures to peruse, and were again given ample choices and time to make meaning from these sources.

The characteristics of these texts showed the wide range of themes that are encountered within an immigration unit, from push factors such as poverty and persecution before emigration to the difficulty of assimilation for immigrants once here in America. Length of the texts also varied; the longer novels were over 300 pages, while some of the poems introduced in the anthology were only two pages long. While more female protagonists were offered than were male, the immigrant ages and nationalities varied. The novels also varied in content. Maturity was required for students reading about identity issues, violence, sexual assault, and death - all realities of the immigrant experience. The picture books, while accessible to children, depicted disturbing images, and the magazines supported readers with activities and further reading.

Surprises

Current research in the field of content area literacy touts the importance of varied and plentiful texts (Afflerbach & VanSledright, 2001; Guthrie et al., 2004; Hinchman & Zalewski, 1996; Walker, Bean, & Dillard, 2005), but the number of volumes of differentiated texts was a surprise. While the teacher was invited to participate in this study for her pedagogy, her offering of forty-four different texts within four different text sets showed the depth of this participant's dedication to differentiation in her heterogeneous classroom. In a similar vein, only five

classroom days were devoted to the process of teacher use of varied texts within the social studies classroom: a part of one lesson for the primary source oral histories, three days on the expository texts, and two days with the children's books. Ultimately, the dearth of expository texts read in differentiated groupings was a surprise. Much of United States history is delivered in non-fiction stories, but Dreher (2003) found that 75% of secondary students' reading demands are non-narrative. While one of the theoretical frameworks of this study, Cognitive Flexibility Theory (CFT), best supports the use of many different types of text, practice with expository text is important in light of the Construction-Integration Model because student experience with these texts needs to progressively increase as students age (Dreher, 2003). The other surprise of the research was in the low Lexile levels of many of the texts that comprised the course reading lists and the lack of alignment with Common Core Text Complexity Grade Bands (Metametrics, 2011). These findings are discussed in more detail below.

Discussion

Parris & Block (2007) distinguish highly effective secondary literacy teachers from their less effective peers in eight ways (Figure 1, p. 25). While Mrs. Wolf demonstrated all eight of these characteristics, five especially frame the conclusions for this research study. These are divided into subthemes below and include the diagnosis of reading deficits, student-teacher collaboration, implementation of intellectually challenging and widely varied reading activities, the expectation of challenge for themselves and their students, and good management of the classroom. These are organized in the same way Parris & Block (2007) organize their list of ways highly effective secondary literacy teachers can be distinguished from their peers. These

characteristics become a lens to organize the findings of this study and are easily situated within the literature of this topic.

Diagnosis of Reading Deficits

Mindful teachers “can diagnose and teach so students overcome basic reading deficits” (Parris & Block, 2007, p. 583). This study’s findings indicate that Mrs. Wolf has the disposition needed to be considered a reading teacher but she does not have the expertise to diagnose and teach so that students who struggle with difficult text can overcome their deficiencies.

Inexperience in literacy diagnostics is one area where Mrs. Wolf was the least effective. Her basic dispositions—that all students can learn, that all students can improve in their reading, that strategy instruction helps, and that she is responsible for helping students who struggle—aren’t enough. This is evident in her assessment of the texts: while she judges the maturity needed for some of the difficulties that the characters in the texts face, the underlying assumption is that her struggling readers are also immature and this is not always the case (Hall, 2008; Ivey, 1999).

There was also a lack of formal reading assessment data to inform the text-reader match. Brownton Middle School has the Scholastic Reading Inventory (Scholastic, 2011) installed on computers in the library. And while Mrs. Wolf’s aversion to standardized testing has benefitted her students in that she has protected instructional time from the intrusion of the many test days that most public middle school students face in this country (Dennis, 2009), a careful balance may better inform the text-reader match. This is an awkward situation because Lexile data is only an estimate of reading ability. Further, as discussed earlier, it does not take into account student motivation to read or student background knowledge (McNamara, Kintsch, Songer, &

Kintsch, 1996). Mrs. Wolf is a mindful teacher who could use this data as it is intended, as one measure that could be added to her teaching understandings. For example, the findings in chapter four indicated that one of Mrs. Wolf's students, who had been labeled as "gifted" by her school system, struggled with the text assigned to her advanced group. This student was unable to retell the story of "The House on Lemon Street" to her jigsaw group, and so part of a day's instruction was lost, and the other four in her group also suffered because of the instructor's lack of secondary reading specialist training. Because Mrs. Wolf had already noticed inconsistencies between this student's label and her class performance, a Lexile measure would have helped Mrs. Wolf more appropriately group the seventh grader.

Having knowledge of readability data would also have helped Mrs. Wolf assign texts more appropriately. In the expert/jigsaw expository text set: the text assigned to the most able readers was much longer, but actually had a lower Lexile level than the one assigned to those with documented reading disabilities. Mrs. Wolf lamented the fact that the text that she had chosen wasn't as visually appealing as the texts given to the others, and she admitted that the details were less provocative. Qualitative findings in the description of this text showed that the only way that "Chinese Railroad Workers" was more accessible than the other two texts was in its length and its close link to classroom lectures, which would have provided supportive background knowledge to the struggling readers. The literature shows that struggling readers tend to be offered fewer pages to read than more able readers (Allington, 1977; Allington, 2001; Stanovich, 1986). Since more time with appropriate text improves reading skill (Krashen, 2004),

the decision to assign fewer pages to the most struggling readers is understandable, but corroborates Matthew Effects (Stanovich, 1986) in that those who read more improve more.

Mrs. Wolf felt that certain texts were better for her struggling readers. Although these texts tended to have a lower page count than the other texts, the readability levels were not always lower. Furthermore, the analysis of the interview transcripts showed that one of the texts suggested to the struggling readers wasn't a favorite of Mrs. Wolf. Other than page count, the texts suggested to struggling readers tended to have younger protagonists and fewer difficult topics like sexual assaults or gang violence. This issue that Mrs. Wolf may have suggested more sterile, childish texts to struggling readers is concerning because struggling and reluctant adolescents may be motivated by mature topics just as striving readers are. Another finding showed that Mrs. Wolf used chapter length was used to determine whether a text was suitable for a specific reader, implying that tenacity with text is also something that teachers consider when suggesting appropriate texts to students. However, Mrs. Wolf's years of experience in the classroom with these specific texts and her desire for her students to enjoy their independent reading should not be dismissed. Increasing Lexile levels of the choices and dropping some of her favorite texts from the list would be an inappropriate response. Instead, student reading levels and text Lexile levels, as stated before, are an estimate that may inform instruction and must be considered along with other information.

For the most voracious readers, the readability levels of the historical fiction texts were too low to meet Common Core Text Complexity Bands, and this implies that either these students are not being challenged appropriately or that the Common Core Suggested Text

Complexity Bands are wrong for the middle school grades. After an investigation into every text listed in the Lexile database that had the suggested Lexile level and the appropriate theme, only two books were listed (and one was a textbook), which didn't fit the purpose behind Mrs. Wolf's historical fiction assignment, the telling of one compelling immigrant story. While the anthology (Yep, 1993) had a high Lexile level, few students chose to read it when it was presented along with the highly visually appealing picture books. The expository texts that took three instructional days were the most appropriately challenging texts of the unit, and classroom observations showed that even the able readers had trouble comprehending and retaining information. Staying within a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) in adolescents' reading is tricky business—frustration may lead to aliteracy (Krashen, 2004; Stanovich, 1986). Aliteracy was indicated by the silences of some of the students in the classroom.

The silences of the struggling readers in the classroom were noticeable, as shown in the expository text sets. Even with the support of peers in a collaborative group and a college student intern who read the text with students in their expert groups, two students had nothing to share in their jigsaw groups. Silences in the middle school classroom in the area of literacy struggles are well-known by researchers (Hall, 2007) and practitioners (New Jersey Reading Association, 2003). Coping and avoidance behaviors characterize students who have struggled with text and are a challenge to teachers in the heterogeneous classroom who may be distracted by more boisterous able readers (Hall, 2008; Henriques, 2009; Hinchman & Zalewski, 1996; Ivey, 1999). The silence of struggling readers and avoidance of reading was clear in this classroom as well. Support in the form of paired groupings, children's books choices, strategy

instruction, and special educator and intern support may have enabled struggling readers to avoid reading. While reading avoidance and subsequent lack of comprehension would have shown in their written work and classroom assessment data, the verbal silence of these readers may continue through their schooling. Hence, these basic reading deficits may never be overcome in the busy heterogeneous classroom. In summary, Mrs. Wolf is a mindful teacher who has the disposition needed to teach reading in her content area classroom, but she does not have the training of a secondary reading specialist. The implications of this lack of specialist training are discussed later in this chapter.

Student-Teacher Collaboration

Parris & Block (2007) state that mindful secondary literacy teachers “collaborate with students, as most often demonstrated in rich co-constructed instructional approaches” (p. 583). Another classroom silence revealed in this study was the lack of verbal expression from the classroom’s own immigrant students, those who could have enriched classroom talk and the immigration unit generally with their own immigration experiences. Only once, in the discussion where one student created the savory “stew” metaphor, and one Asian student shared her conflicting issues with assimilation, were students prompted to share their own immigrant stories. Within their reading, however, they were partners in decision-making. We know that giving adolescents choice in their reading is motivational (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Kohn, 1993). Mrs. Wolf demonstrates her effectiveness as a literacy teacher in this area. Findings indicate that students could pick their independent reading novel and that the teacher gave special attention to what students chose and what she felt was appropriate for them. This collaboration is not only

motivational, it is beneficial in that students are more likely to reach enduring understandings when involved in curricular decisions (Applebee et al., 2003; Beers, 2000) and has been shown to be effective in exemplary secondary classrooms (Nystrand, 1997; Ostrowki, 2000).

The fourth text set, comprised of picture books, magazines, and an anthology, were presented in plastic baskets and students were given two classroom days to just look, read, and reflect within a general graphic organizer. Field notes showed students engaged and thoughtful during this time. The variety of offerings allowed student autonomy while the richness of quality gave students time to glean big understandings of the unit and provided time with appropriate texts for all students. It is conceivable in this instruction that the most able readers did not have challenging reading (they could have chosen the easiest text), but the qualitative analysis of these texts showed the complexity of theme still inherent in the text set. One thing that content area teachers struggle to balance are the content and skills of their discipline with the content and skills of literacy and text demands (Afflerbach & VanSledright, 2001; Edgington, 1998), especially with students who otherwise struggle (Langer, 2001). Collaborating with students is one way to provide such support.

Implementation of Intellectually Challenging and Varied Reading

Mindful secondary literacy teachers “implement intellectually challenging and widely varied reading . . . activities” (Parris & Block, 2007, p. 584). While this is recursively complimentary to the concerns expressed in the first subtopic above, the sheer amount of varied reading sets Mrs. Wolf apart from other social studies classroom teachers. We know that quantity and quality of motivating texts is important for adolescents (Corbonaro & Gamoran,

2002; Kamil et al., 2008; Moje, 2009). One troublesome part of this is how teachers define “intellectually challenging.” Certainly the conceptual question of “Who Belongs Here?” as the overarching exploration of an immigration unit is intellectually challenging for anyone.

Readability data and emotionally difficult scenarios make this more ambiguous, however. The mix of differentiated reading selections of this unit was large, varying from historical fiction to primary source government-issued documents and interview transcripts, to poems, plays, short stories, essays, picture books, and magazines. These differentiated documents were in addition to the political cartoons, photographs, and text book readings discussed as whole-class readings and not part of this research study.

In reference to intellectual difficulty, the research of Apol et al. (2003) showed some teachers’ reluctance to the critical reading of social studies texts. Mrs. Wolf did not show this reluctance. This large number of offered texts makes it more likely that students gain confidence to filter messages and search for more voices (Apol et al., 2003; Afflerbach & VanSledright, 2001; Hinchman & Zalewski, 1996) in the immigration dialogue. Still, the findings of this research show that Mrs. Wolf’s unabashed activist spirit may also have silenced those who may have disagreed on such a political topic, but Mrs. Wolf did not show awareness that this may have happened in discussing her perceptions in light of the research questions of this study. Her activist spirit directly lead to her varied text offerings in spite of the mandated textbook that she began teaching with. This activism will be discussed in the next subtopic below.

The large number of choices, however, did not necessarily translate into a large amount of reading. Reading researchers are concerned with the amount of reading that students do

(Allington, 1977; Krashen, 2004). Despite the forty-four choices, reluctant readers could have avoided much of it with reliance on the support of the special educator, a collaborative partner, classroom silences, and poor grades earned when class work and homework was not completed and when students could not use text comprehension to apply their conceptual knowledge of text content to class discussions or written assignments. Classroom observations found that avoidance behaviors were evident with the third text set. During the second text set, students were engaged in reading primary narratives of Ellis Island immigrants. They were equally immersed in the fourth text set, the differentiated children's books, magazines, and anthology set. Mrs. Wolf's belief that more quality choices is the best option for all of the students in her classroom is supported in the research (Parris & Block, 2007; Langer, 2001; Allington, 2001). The lack of expository texts is of some concern, however. Moss & Newton (2002) found a dearth of expository texts in the elementary classrooms, but Dreher (2003) suggests that most secondary reading is expository. Considering that Mrs. Wolf teaches her United States history course with a focus on the individual stories of those Americans who shaped history with their lives, it is not surprising that much of the text of this unit is predominately narrative. While varied genres were offered, expository choices may vex struggling readers more than narrative as students get more practice in their schooling years in narrative text (Allington, 2001; Hall, 2007), despite the fact that research shows that critical thinking is fostered through expository text (Boyd & Ikpeze, 2007; Friese et al., 2008; Walker et al., 2005). Since we know that college readiness is dependent on success with expository text, it is important that middle school students comprehend expository texts (Afflerbach & VanSledright, 2001; Hinchman & Zalewski, 1996). What this research shows is that mindful content area teachers work to offer as many texts as

possible to their students. Such choices are not only motivational, it is important for adolescents who are differently skilled and have varied academic aspirations to have a range of selections that fit their individual needs.

Expectation of Challenge

Mindful teachers “hold high, positive expectations for their own abilities and for their students’ capabilities” (Parris & Block, 2007, p. 584). Mrs. Wolf made an otherwise really constrained system work for her. She refused to be limited by historical use of funds for textbooks, by textbooks themselves, or even by text genres. So her students reap the benefits of her commitment to this differentiated text curricula, and they are no longer limited by narrow interpretations not only of history but of even one population’s immigrant experience. They were able to read about what interested them, and they collaborated to teach each other, building their self-efficacy in turn. Often teachers accept the curriculum or state standards as handcuffs (Applebee et al., 2003; Friese et al., 2008). Mrs. Wolf advocated for change based on her professional reading and her experience. She was supported by administrators and district personnel who trusted her classroom expertise. She covered the state standards but felt comfortable going beyond them. Her trust in her own abilities as a teacher led to her dispositional knowing that mandated testing would not change what she knew was right in the classroom. This trust came from her sensitivity and openness to scholars’ opinions in her field. She knows she doesn’t have all the answers, and values the opinions of well-known researchers, writers, and Web sites that share her own personal values and commitment to what seem like

social justice/social equity issues. Her service as clinical faculty at a local university and her involvement in research projects, adjunct work, and inquiry groups all inform her practice.

It is interesting to note that while Mrs. Wolf is clearly an expert in her seventh grade immigration unit, she didn't feel the need to position herself as such, even admitting that it is more important to offer many texts than to have read every single one. She admits that she would like to read all the texts, and that she has read nearly all of them, even if the characters and specifics become blurred in her memory over time. Her assured poise in not knowing everything is evidence of her confidence in her choices. Like "Phyllis," the "interdisciplinary field guide" thickly described by Walker, Bean, & Dillard (2005), and the chemistry teacher Moje (1996) researched, Mrs. Wolf offered conceptually difficult curricula and reading that offered varied entry points for her individual students. Mrs. Wolf is also like the middle school teacher who rejected prescribed curricula (Dennis, 2009) to deliver her own data-driven reading interventions. While much more data-driven than Mrs. Wolf, the positive expectation that a teacher can affect the learning of each of her students individually in challenging ways runs at the heart of this teacher's pedagogy.

Classroom Management

Excellent secondary teachers are "good managers of many types of learning environments" (Parris & Block, 2007, p. 584). This becomes important in light of a classroom that differentiates texts. The findings of this study indicate that managing three different and difficult expository texts within one class period demands a classroom environment that is student-centered but has a culture of respect. Mrs. Wolf managed the classroom in such a way

that she was free to move from group to group, guiding misunderstandings as needed and facilitating understandings. This was also a time that she was free to informally assess student reading comprehension (Tomlinson, 2001; Robb, 2000). Careful planning that used texts with related themes helped Mrs. Wolf to implement differentiated texts in first expert and then jigsaw groupings. This management also showed in the two other class-implemented text events. Students paired to read oral histories using random pairs that had been established as classroom routine. When students were given time to peruse the fourth text set, the room was quiet as the students read and responded to the fourteen text options.

Implications for Action

Policy and Funding

More research is needed concerning text complexity; thus, much of the discussion surrounding age-appropriate text complexity bands, especially those published by Common Core Standards, are premature. This research shows that motivating students to read and to benefit from reading-to-learn practices is challenging in and of itself, when done well by mindful teachers. To suggest that teachers should assign texts based on complexity bands instead of where appropriate for individual learners is careless. We know that many of our adolescents are not reading on grade level. We know that frustrational reading leads to aliteracy.

Text complexity bands are backward-mapped from where scholars (Metametrics, 2011) suggest that students need to be in order to find success with most college reading. These bands are problematic in a few ways. First, children develop at different rates. Pushing them along in

lock-step fashion frustrates those who don't fit into normal development bands. Second, college adults specialize within areas that are of great interest and of which they often have background knowledge (Beers, 2000; Guthrie et al., 2004, which greatly improves reading comprehension. We know that students can more easily access reading that is familiar to them (Alvermann et al., 2010; Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009)

Krashen (2004) continues to advocate against standardized testing and for library funding. Krashen's (2004) research shows that students who have access to a plethora of books of any sort score well on national (i.e., Loomis & Bourque, 2001) and international (i.e., PISA) assessments. This research explores a classroom that privileges text quality and quantity over test data. Deschler (2009) corroborates the importance of lots of appropriately leveled texts for all students, even those reading below a functional level. Our current political climate that suggests that students' growth and learning can be measured on a specific day by a one-size-fits-all standardized assessment is harmful to the struggling reader and fosters aliteracy. Teachers need to be encouraged to use varied texts relating to the themes of instructional units so that students retain big understandings and can think critically across content areas. Local educational funding would be better spent on diverse and plentiful texts in a content area rather than the bland textbooks written by publishers for the mass market.

Staff-Development

Staff development that teaches educators to interpret Common Core Standards with a critical lens based on research-based practices is imperative. Advocating against whole-class texts and challenging districts to offer many texts in a differentiate classroom are two teacher

practices that benefit students in both content specific understandings and literacy skills. Both preservice and inservice teachers should discuss issues about appropriate texts in content area reading courses so that teachers and members of the greater community can enter this discussion with more informed opinions on these issues. Having Lexile levels of course texts available and knowing students' individual reading levels is important, but it cannot be the main measure of text-reader matching. The most important disposition that we can impress upon our teachers is the philosophy that all of our students can improve in their reading ability and that the academic aliteracy indirectly created by our current paradigms is detrimental to students' further academic success, particularly given that reading skills atrophy when not practiced (Broz, 2011; Stanovich, 1986). Staff development can empower teachers to manage a classroom where students are empowered to pick text that is right for them and where teachers guide these choices with informal inventories and assessments that support the text-reader match. Additionally, because effective classroom management is a hallmark of effective literacy teachers with differentiated texts, teachers need to be supported as they develop these skills.

Preservice teacher education. Mrs. Wolf's explained that much of her dispositional nature toward seeing herself as a reading teacher was rooted in her preservice teacher education courses. Moje & Wade (1997) examined teacher dispositions toward content area reading instruction and described the varied ambivalent feelings held by teachers at a time when they were asked to consider themselves reading teachers in addition to content specialists. The implications of this research include the area of teacher education courses. The description of one unit designed and implemented by this teacher participant, a mindful teacher, could be

studied in teacher education courses. Further, as the teacher participant in this study serves as a cooperating teacher, mentoring preservice teachers in their teacher education program, the importance of modeling for preservice teachers in an apprenticeship situation such as student teaching remains a powerful implication of this research. Mrs. Wolf's desire to constantly reflect on her pedagogy in light of current research makes her an inspirational teacher educator. Teacher educators strive to encourage preservice teachers to balance their perceptions of many influential teachers in their search for their teacher identities. Research done in a content area classroom such as this one that implements differentiated texts in the curriculum is not only an example of best practice and fosters learning in a constructivist way (NCSS, 2010), it is not generally considered traditional content area instruction.

Inservice teacher education. Like preservice teachers, practicing teachers within all content areas can benefit from examining the implications of this research. Exemplary literacy teachers like Mrs. Wolf are not perfect. They, like Mrs. Wolf, may not have the expertise to move readers far below grade level into academic level texts that are frustrational for them. They can, however, strive to improve their understandings of reading difficulties as this mindful teacher has, and they can also work to offer different texts to different learners, strengthening students' motivation to read, their cognitive flexibility, and their understandings of the content of their discipline.

Educational Atmosphere

Teachers should feel empowered to offer texts that meet the learning objectives of difficult concepts in their classrooms. Our current political climate that suggests that teachers

are at fault when students are not successful is not conducive to professional risk-taking. A political climate that censors reading choices stymies this type of teaching as well. Teachers who offer diverse and plentiful texts in the content area classroom support both disciplinary and literacy needs of all of their learners. One standard textbook in any content area cannot meet these needs.

Middle School

The teaming model of middle schools (NMSA, 1995) creates a shared responsibility for growth of all student learners. This interdisciplinary model proved to be beneficial in this study. The researcher talked of the collaborative nature of much of her decision-making and her belief that she was responsible for finding appropriate reading material for her individual students. This research shows the non-leveled, heterogeneous classrooms and the successful students in them. While heterogeneous classrooms are currently considered to be the most effective for all learners, current practice does not generally show that this is the norm in secondary content classroom.

Student Readers

Ultimately, this research showed a content area middle school classroom where students were reading a variety of different texts with different levels of support. These students were using appropriate texts to learn the complex content of the discipline. The voracious readers were fed with a variety of independent level choices, and the reluctant and striving readers were supported with shorter texts even when the readability was not always necessarily easier. While

there is much left to understand, the teacher in this study measured difficulty by level of prior knowledge needed and how tightly the varied texts tied into the daily lessons. Qualitatively judging text based on tight links to classroom discussion makes sense. She also considered visual features, like pictures and larger text, to be supportive for students who were reluctant to read. Similarly, shorter chapters and literature that contained male protagonists, for example, were offered for struggling male readers. Students had the opportunity to choose their texts, and this agency motivates and shows respect for student learning styles and preferences, something too often missing from curricula for adolescents.

Recommendations for Further Research

There is much further research suggested by this study. One of the most politically prominent within the policy landscape currently is the question of text complexity. How do we know whether the Common Core Standards Text Complexity Bands are appropriate? Which texts would fit this unit that would also fall into these suggested Complexity Bands? Would the “Suggested Readings” of some of the magazines and novels of this immigration unit have higher readability Lexile levels and would students enjoy reading them?

The question of text-reader match effectiveness was originally considered for this research study. Experienced teachers use many different data to determine good fit. It would be beneficial to the research base to determine how teachers determine whether the text-reader match in a text differentiated classroom is effective. Along the same lines, it would be worthwhile to develop an intensive survey to identify students’ perceptions of the texts they read.

Since the education pendulum currently focuses on testing, more research needs to be conducted to quantify comparisons of students from classrooms where content teachers rely solely on board-approved textbooks and those students from classrooms where content teachers use differentiated texts. Both the NAEP and state mandated standardized tests must be used to make these comparisons. The significant amounts of money donated by Gates, Walton, Broad, and Dell have not made the intended impact in the classroom than was anticipated (Beamish, 2011). Would their funds have made more impact if they had been used to buy differentiated texts for content teachers to use to support mandated board approved textbooks?

Finally, more research in mindful teachers' classrooms is always needed. Recent calls for research (Dressman & McCarthy, 2004; Fagella-Luby, Ware, & Capozzoli, 2009; Moje, 2008) challenge scholars to look closely at classrooms where teachers are facing daily challenges involving literacy achievement. It would be valuable to document how the readability data of differentiated texts coupled with reading levels of real students would change further instruction of Mrs. Wolf or other teachers who are understandably resistant to norm-referenced assessment data but who could best balance this informative data with their own practical skills and knowledge.

Concluding Remarks

Too often, educational research is interpreted by practitioners as silver-bullet answers to society's shortcomings that manifest themselves in our nation's classrooms. All researchers should be concerned that conclusions reached have classroom implications. Too much of the classroom is a messiness that is not easily understood, and classroom teachers today are

particularly demoralized by political decisions that do not include their voices and yet affect their practice. We do not acknowledge the service that classroom teachers do as they strive to hone their craft, and special respect must be given for those who become teacher-leaders in their buildings after decades of experience, as this participant has. Mandating that teachers know students' reading levels would begin an unfortunate spiral of testing and retesting. Mandating that teachers only use texts that they know readability data on would limit teachers' and students' choices. This case study examines one teacher who still feels autonomous in her classroom and who strives to make the best decisions in her differentiated classroom. This case would be an excellent one for study in a reading in the content area course for preservice and inservice teachers that asks what decisions are made in regard to texts and furthers the discussions of the costs and benefits of these decisions. If this research is cited to advocate for more teacher autonomy and more funding for varied texts, good will have been done. If teachers are empowered to question the whole-class novel and one textbook, students would benefit. The most important discussion that could come of this work is the importance that students are able to read their academic assignments and that teachers continue to value student's enjoyment of and motivation to read in the content area classroom and beyond.

Course Texts

Whole Class Text Book

Hakim, J. (2003). *A history of US*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Historical Fiction Novels

Auch, M. J. (2002). *Ashes of roses*. New York: H. Holt.

Beatty, P. (2008). *Lupita Manana*. New York: Harper Trophy.

Buss, F. L., & Cubias, D. (1991). *Journey of the sparrows*. New York: Lodestar Books.

Crew, L. (1989). *Children of the river*. New York: Delacorte Press.

Garland, S. (1993). *Shadow of the dragon*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace.

Hesse, K. (1992). *Letters from Rifka*. New York: H. Holt.

Lasky, K., & Hyman, T. S. (1981). *The night journey*. New York: F. Warne.

Lasky, K. (1998). *Dreams in the golden country: the diary of Zipporah Feldman, a Jewish immigrant girl* (Reinforced library ed.). New York: Scholastic.

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Whelan, G. (1992). *Goodbye, Vietnam*. New York: Knopf.

Yep, L. (1991). *The star fisher*. New York: Morrow Junior Books.

Yep, L. (2007). *Dragonwings: Golden mountain chronicles, 1903* (25th anniversary ed.). New York, NY: HarperTrophy.

Yep, L., & Yep, K. S. (2008). *The dragon's child: A story of Angel Island*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

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Poems

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Lazarus, E. (1883). *Kids Discover* 14(2), 11.

Lyon, G. E. (1993). "Where I'm From." Retrieved from www.georgeallalyon.com.

Picture Books

Ciongoli, A.K., and Parini, J. (2002). *Passage to liberty: The story of Italian immigration and the rebirth of America*. NY: Regan Books.

Freedman, R. (1980). *Immigrant kids*. NY: Puffin.

Knight, M. B. (1993). *Who belongs here?* Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House, Publishers.

Lawlor, V. (1995). *I was dreaming to come to America*. NY: Puffin.

Murphy, J. (1993). *Across America on an immigrant train*. NY: Houghton Mifflin.

Oberman, S. (1994). *The always prayer shawl*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mill Press.

Say, A. (1993). *Grandfather's journey*. NY: Houghton Mifflin.

Say, A. (1999). *Tea with milk*. NY: Houghton Mifflin.

Woodruff, E. (1999). *The memory coat*. NY: Scholastic.

Anthologies

Yep, L. (Ed.) (1993). *American dragons*. NY: Harper Trophy.

Magazines

Chorlian, M. (Feb. 2006). Ellis island: Gateway to America. *Cobblestone*, 27(2). Petersborough, NH: Carus Publishing Group.

Chorlian, M. (Feb. 2004). Tenement life. *Cobblestone*, 25(2). Petersborough, NH: Carus
Publishing Group.

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Appendix A: Virginia Tech Informed Consent

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects
Involving Human Subjects

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 21, 2010

TO: Sara Kajder, Mary Dredger

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires June 13, 2011)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Teaching Differentiated Texts in 7th Grade Social Studies

IRB NUMBER: 10-744

Effective September 21, 2010, the Virginia Tech IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore, approved the new

protocol for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved

protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the

IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes,

regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving

risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at

<http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm> (please review before the commencement of your research).

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved as: **Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 5, 6, 7**

Protocol Approval Date: **9/21/2010**

Protocol Expiration Date: **9/20/2011**

Continuing Review Due Date*: **9/6/2011**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered

under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant

proposals / work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities

included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does

not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol,

and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of Research Compliance

Institutional Review Board

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Blacksburg, Virginia 24060

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Appendix B: Montgomery County Schools Permission to Conduct Research



Laura Williams, Grant Writer/Research Proposals

Montgomery County Public Schools

755 Roanoke Street, Box 1H

Christiansburg, VA 24073

(540) 381-6158

October 7, 2010

Mary Dredger, Doctoral Student
Virginia Tech School of Education
303 War Memorial Hall
Blacksburg, VA 24061

Dear Ms. Dredger,

I have reviewed your research request and this letter serves as notification that MCPS has approved at the district level your proposal to conduct the dissertation study, *Teaching Differentiated Texts in 7th Grade Social Studies*. I understand that your goal in conducting this research is to study the process by which one 7th grade Social Studies teacher matches readers to texts.

According to your proposal, you hope to identify one 7th grade Social Studies teacher to participate in this study. That teacher will consent to weekly hour-long interviews for a period of 8 weeks. In addition, you hope to conduct daily observations of one class period of this teacher's schedule for a period of 6-8 weeks, and to examine differentiated course texts used by this teacher.

This letter gives you permission to contact the four MCPS middle school principals to identify candidates for participation in this study. The decision as to whether to participate will rest with each of these principals, and in turn with any teachers they may recommend. Sharon Zuckerwar, MCPS Supervisor of Social Studies, has agreed to assist you in indentifying potential teacher

participants if principal permission is obtained. If you are able to identify a willing participant, it is our understanding that you will obtain appropriate written consent from the participating teacher, that you will schedule interviews and observations at the convenience of the participating school and teacher, and that you will not identify any individuals or the school in any published works that result from your research.

If you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Laura Williams

Cc: Nelson Simpkins, Director of Secondary Education
Guylene Wood-Setzer, Principal, Auburn Middle School
John Wheeler, Blacksburg Middle School
Ryan Hitchman, Christiansburg Middle School
David Dickinson, Principal, Shawsville Middle School
Sharon Zuckerwar, MCPS Supervisor of Social Studies
Sara Kajder, Assistant Professor, Virginia Tech School of Education

Appendix C: Study Overview

Study Overview

Researcher: Katie Dredger, Ph.D. candidate, Virginia Tech School of Education, under the advisement of Sara B. Kajder, Ph.D. and Patricia P. Kelly, Ph.D.

Katie Dredger worked as a secondary teacher for thirteen years. She has served as a school-based staff developer and university instructor.

Why is this study important?

This proposed dissertation research asks:

What is the nature of one teacher's process in assigning differentiated texts to readers within a seventh grade social studies unit?

How does one teacher evaluate the effectiveness of differentiated text assignments in order to support student understanding?

What are the characteristics of differentiated texts assigned during the course of one seventh grade social studies unit?

Case studies of mindful literacy teachers in the content areas inform scholars and practitioners of the realities of differentiating text in classrooms.

Who?

One reflective seventh grade social studies teacher. This teacher instructs with a variety of texts in the classroom.

What?

This observational case study will allow the researcher to analyze the classroom text choices of a reflective practitioner. The researcher will observe one class period of the participants' choice daily for one unit (approximately six weeks). The researcher will interview the teacher weekly in order to record reflective practice.

When?

This study will take place during the fall of the 2010-2011 school year for the duration of one classroom period. The participant will determine a convenient time and class period for the daily observations.

What are the benefits to the school?

- This study hopes to bridge theory and practice benefiting the students.

Things you should know

- All of the research processes will be the responsibility of the researcher.
- No students will be identified in any way in the gathering of this data.

Appendix D: Introductory Letter to Principals

September 15, 2010

Principal
Blacksburg Middle School
3109 Prices Fork Road
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Dear:

As you know I have admired Blacksburg Middle School for everything about it that makes it great, especially the reflective staff who work to infuse literacy instruction and reflective practice into all aspects of the instruction. This correspondence outlines a request that would allow me to complete approximately six weeks of dissertation research at Blacksburg Middle School. I have many channels of requests to secure before I can begin; as IRB guidelines state, I will also secure permission from Virginia Tech, MCPS, the teacher, and parents and students as needed. Because I have chosen to study mindful literacy teachers within seventh grade social studies, I need recommendations from you. An article is attached that outlines qualities of successful literacy teachers.

OBJECTIVE

I would like referrals of exemplary seventh grade social studies teachers that I may approach to ask permission to observe in the classroom and interview about their teaching practice. To meet the requirements for participation in this study, this highly effective literacy teacher should:

- use a variety of texts to differentiate instruction,
- be highly reflective, and
- demonstrate exemplary practice in moving students forward in literacy and their discipline.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

I ask for your permission to approach the teachers that you refer and to observe classroom practice.

CLOSING

I appreciate the opportunity to conduct research in your school.

Sincerely,

Katie Dredger

School of Education
Virginia Tech

Appendix E: Letter to Prospective Participants

October 12, 2010

Dear.:

This letter is requesting your possible participation in a VT research project. As part of this research, I asked your principal to suggest a highly reflective teacher who implements a variety of texts to promote literacy in the classroom. Your principal suggested that I approach you to ask whether you would be interested in being a part of this research study.

OBJECTIVE

To meet the requirements for participation in this study, this highly effective literacy teacher should:

- use a variety of texts to differentiate instruction,
- be highly reflective, and
- demonstrate exemplary practice in moving students forward in both literacy and their discipline.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

I ask for your permission to observe one class daily for the duration of one unit of your choice and to interview you about your practice weekly during the duration of the unit.

CLOSING

I would like to talk to you more about this research study. If you are interested in being a possible participant, please email me at kdredger@vt.edu and I can answer any questions that you may have. I appreciate the opportunity to possibly conduct research in your classroom.

Sincerely,

Katie Dredger
School of Education
Virginia Tech

Appendix F: Interview Questions, November 2, 2010

- Tell me a little about your teaching philosophy.
- How do you get [students] to use their [reading strategy] toolkit?
- What is it about kids this age that fits you and your teaching style?
- Why do you like social studies?
- Your major was Political Science. You have a Masters of Education in K-8 education, in Curriculum and Instruction. Do you identify yourself as a reading teacher?
- How did you come to the [realization that you have to teach reading to teach anything]?
- Tell me a little about your teaching philosophy.
- Can you recount for me some formative experiences that you have had as a teacher from when you first started teaching until now?
- Tell me about your decision to ask students which text they preferred?
- Why do you like the course textbook?
- What text did you have before this one?
- Why did you switch texts?
- Where did you find these current texts?
- Why was there a [controversy in the adoption of these] texts?
- What about the Kids Discovery magazine? Where did that come from?
- So you have been influential. You feel that you've had some sphere of influence over these decisions. It's not that you have had these texts mandated to you.
- How did you choose the primary source oral histories and how did you choose the student groupings?

Appendix G: Collected Documents other than Texts Cited

	<i># of Assignments or Documents</i>	<i>Related to Text Set? (Blank if whole Class Assignment)</i>	Document Title
Course Syllabus	1		
Daily Objective and Agenda Slides	26		
Primary Source Document – Whole Class	1		
Primary Source Documents – Differentiated	9	(Second Text Set)	“Immigrant Oral Histories”
Notes Slides – Whole Class	3		
Written Assignment – Assigned to Whole Class; Students Responded individually	12		
Written Assignment - Differentiated	2	Third Text Set Fourth Text Set	“Asian Immigration Experience: A Reading Activity” “Immigration”
Multi-genre Assignment – Whole Class	4		
Multi-genre Assignment – Differentiated	2	1 st Text Set	“Immigration Novel Unit Project” “GLOG Evaluation”
Read Synthesis Document – Whole Class	7		
Political Cartoons – Whole Class	19		

Appendix H: Schedule of Observations and Interviews

	Interview Length	Observation Length
May 12, 2010 (Dredger, 2010)	60 minutes	
October 26, 2011		45 minutes
October 27, 2011		45 minutes
October 28, 2010		45 minutes
October 29, 2010		45 minutes
November 1, 2010		45 minutes
November 2, 2010	60 minutes	
November 4 th , 2010		45 minutes
November 5, 2010		45 minutes
November 8, 2010		45 minutes
November 9, 2010	60 minutes	45 minutes
November 11, 2010		45 minutes
November 12, 2010		45 minutes
November 15, 2010		45 minutes
November 16, 2010		45 minutes
November 17, 2010	60 minutes	45 minutes
November 18, 2010		45 minutes
November 19, 2010		45 minutes
November 29, 2010		45 minutes
November 30, 2010		45 minutes
December 1, 2010	60 minutes	45 minutes
December 2, 2010		45 minutes

December 3, 2010		45 minutes
December 6, 2010		45 minutes
December 7, 2010	60 minutes	45 minutes
December 8, 2010		45 minutes