

**TEACHING TO THE TASK:
PRESERVICE TEACHERS' INSTRUCTION
FOR COGNITIVELY DEMANDING WRITING TASKS**

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Susanna Latham Benko, Ph.D.

University of Pittsburgh, 2012

In this study, I examine the instruction of four preservice English teachers (PSTs) for cognitively demanding literature-based writing tasks in order to investigate the types of tasks that PSTs identify as cognitively demanding, how PSTs' instruction for such tasks maintains or degrades the task's intellectual rigor, and possible influences and/or constraints during instruction. Data drew from a) classroom observations of instruction that began at the task's introduction and continued until the students completed the assignment; b) interviews conducted before the task was handed out, after every classroom observation, and after the final task was completed; and c) classroom artifacts such as the tasks, handouts, and other materials used by teachers. Data analysis focused on understanding the teachers' instructional moves and searching for alignment, or in some cases, misalignment, of this instruction with the demands of the writing task. Findings from this study suggest that even though all of the study's PSTs demonstrated a high understanding of "cognitive demand" for writing tasks, they presented tasks of varying levels of cognitive demand during their instruction. Additionally, while all PSTs designed task specific instruction, there was a wide range in the types of instruction provided to support student thinking or student writing. While some of the PSTs' instruction aligned with recommended best practices in writing instruction (e.g., modeling, use of writer's workshop), it was unclear how

such instruction was supporting students to think about the text in relationship to the task and to write in response to the task. Findings from this study suggest that PSTs need the opportunity to closely study writing tasks in order to understand a task's intellectual work and design instruction to appropriately prepare students to write in response to cognitively demanding literature based writing tasks.

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PREFACE

I've found that one of the hardest things about studying writing – and the teaching of writing – is that I feel an insurmountable kind of pressure when I write to find the exact words to perfectly express myself. Finding the right words to acknowledge the people who have supported me in my doctoral journey seems nearly impossible.

First, I am incredibly thankful for my dissertation committee. Amanda Thein has tirelessly mentored me for four years of graduate work. I entered graduate school knowing that I wanted to pursue a PhD, but had no idea what I wanted to study or why. Amanda never pushed me in any particular direction – she listened to any new idea or interest, and gave me suggestions as to how I might pursue study of that area. If she had a dollar for everything that was “interesting” to me in my early studies, she might never have to work again! While I always appreciated her open door and open ears, I realized more fully how much I valued her mentorship after she left Pitt. Even across the country, Amanda is a great advisor – she's open to phone calls, gives helpful and timely feedback, and continues to help me find my own way.

Sarah Scott welcomed me as an advisee when Amanda left, and volunteered to serve as a co-chair of this dissertation. As a new faculty member, Sarah was able to help me cross the bridge from graduate student to scholar with sensitivity to what it was like to be on “the other side” – she mentored me especially through the design of my dissertation and the job search process. Sarah has a meticulous eye for detail and is a sharp editor. To honor her, I've kept this

paragraph as short as possible and avoided excessive use of parentheses... Sarah knows this is incredibly hard for me!

Nick Coles has been a great mentor in the English department; his respect for teachers and their work has been invaluable for me in my own writing. Nick's feedback on earlier drafts and in meetings provided a terrific model for me of how feedback can both challenge and support someone to do their best work, and I hope to give this same kind of feedback to my future students.

It is especially hard for me to find the right words to truly capture my gratitude for my final committee member, Lindsay Clare Matsumura. Learning about Lindsay's work on tasks and teacher quality during my two year fellowship with her largely influenced my own research interests of instruction for particular writing tasks. Beyond helping me find my own interests and space as a researcher, Lindsay has been an incredible mentor on multiple levels, especially after the birth of my daughter. Once, I was talking to a friend about how much I enjoyed working with Lindsay as a graduate student researcher; I was trying to explain how Lindsay had been a model of who I would like to be in my own professional life, and accidentally called her a "role mother" instead of role model. Reflecting on this later, I decided that "role mother" is incredibly fitting. Lindsay has been a model scholar and strong supporter of my work. However, she has also mentored and mothered me when I needed encouragement, and has been an example of the kind of mother I hope to be for my own daughter.

I've often thought that the saying "it takes a village to raise a child" might be well-suited for doctoral studies— I am incredibly thankful for having my own "village" full of people who have helped me along my scholarly journey. In addition to my committee, I've been so fortunate to pick the wildly intelligent academic brains of faculty members at Pitt. Amanda Godley, Sara

Kajder, Linda Kucan, Matt Luskey, and Peg Smith, have been amazing listeners and provided valuable feedback on my work over the past four years. My network of graduate student friends, Justin Boyle, Laura Bray, Allison Escher, Adam Loretto, Stephanie Kane-Mainer, and DeAnn Sloan, have offered an ear when I needed one and support when I was doubtful. I've especially enjoyed the many talks about texts, tasks, and teaching that Elaine Wang and I have engaged in during our work together. I'm thankful for my graduate student friends, now professors, who went before me – Jason Fitzgerald, Megan Guise and Tim Oldakowski provided words of wisdom through all stages of my own doctoral journey and proved that completing the journey was both possible and rewarding. Finally, all doctoral students should be blessed to have an “accountability buddy” and writing partner like Emily Hodge – an unwavering source of support, a brilliant scholar, and a true friend.

My extended family – parents, siblings, nieces, nephews, in-laws – have been incredibly encouraging, although admittedly at times I think they were unsure about what I was actually doing as a doctoral student. Sometimes, so was I. My mother welcomed every phone call home to share good and frustrating news. My dad, who has proofread nearly every paper in my academic life, read much of this dissertation and was quick to catch small mistakes that I missed. Rarely in my life have I been speechless, but I have no words to capture how thankful I am for my parent's love and support.

My husband, Michael, has worn many hats along this journey. He's been my task-sorter, Excel-master, late-night-runner-to-Kinkos and, ultimately, my number one fan. Without Michael's support and encouragement, I never would have started this journey – let alone finished it. Michael believed I could do this long before I ever did. For his belief in me, his

unwavering support, and his commitment to my work and to this journey, I am truly thankful, and I know I am truly blessed.

My daughter, Catherine, was born halfway through my doctoral studies. Although I know that she is too young to understand what this journey has been, I hope someday she knows how she, too, motivated me in this project. She gave me something to look forward to every day and a reason to keep me from confusing my work with my life. As Catherine grows, I hope she finds herself surrounded by people like those I have encountered on this journey – people who encourage, challenge, support, and love her.

Finally, I am incredibly thankful to the group of preservice teachers who participated in this study. All the students in the Teaching Writing class were been incredibly open about sharing their own journeys to becoming a teacher, and I have learned more from them than I ever expected. I am especially and forever thankful for the four brave teachers in this study: Pamela, Melissa, Susan and Andrew. Teaching is hard work, and learning to teach is perhaps the most vulnerable and difficult time of a teacher's life. All four teachers welcomed me into their classrooms and openly offered their successes, missteps, and reflections for me to study. I am deeply thankful for their courage to teach, and their courage to share their teaching with me.

As I close, I know that no words can truly capture the overwhelming gratitude that I feel for those I've thanked and those I'm sure I've forgotten to mention. Yet, for today, I also know these words will have to do. In closing, I share a quote from Charles Kettering that has helped keep me motivated through the final stages of this project:

Research is an effort to do things better and not to be caught asleep at the switch. It is the problem-solving mind as contrasted with the let-well-enough-alone mind. It is the tomorrow mind instead of the yesterday mind (quoted in Wilhelm 2008, p. 54).

I am coming to realize, that someday, these words – and this dissertation – will someday be my “yesterday’s mind” – I hope that in some small way, for today, I have made this work matter. More importantly, I hope that the work that I do tomorrow and in the future continues to build from, reshape, and rethink this work and reflects my honest effort to “do things better” – one day at a time.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Policy reports and standards have attempted to highlight the struggles of American students to develop writing proficiency. In the introduction to *Writing Next* (2007), the president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Vartan Gregorian, warned, “American students today are not meeting even basic writing standards, and their teachers are often at a loss for how to help them” (p. 2). A growing body of research suggests that access to cognitively demanding writing tasks – tasks that ask students to go beyond text summarization and move towards synthesis, analysis, or interpretation – is positively associated with higher outcomes on standardized tests, and may be one way to help improve student writing (Newman, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Matsumura, Patthey-Chavez, Valdés, & Garnier, 2002; Matsumura, Garnier, Slater, & Boston, 2008). However, less is known about how teachers prepare students to respond to such tasks. This dissertation study presents writing instruction cases for Andrew, Susan, Pamela and Melissa¹, four preservice teachers. Each case study presents the writing tasks provided to students and analyzes the cognitive demand of the tasks and the instruction for the tasks.

In this first chapter of my dissertation, I provide a policy-based context, situating the need for this study in reports about the current state of writing instruction and the recent adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which place new and important emphasis on the

¹ All participants, schools, and students are identified by pseudonym throughout this manuscript.

kinds of tasks and thinking expected from American students. Then, I provide an overview of the study, defining key terms like “cognitive demand,” and present a theoretical framework. I outline my research questions and methods, and review the implications of this study both for teacher education and for future research. I conclude by providing a brief overview of the organization of the dissertation.

1.1.1 Current State of Writing Instruction

In 2004, the National Commission on Writing called writing a “threshold skill” necessary for employment and advancement within a corporation; companies agreed that employees, especially salaried employees, need to be proficient in several types of writing, and that a lack of proficiency would undoubtedly make it difficult to get or keep a job (p. 3). While writing instruction has been alluded to in many policy documents over the past 30 years, this issue has more recently come into the spotlight through high profile reports such as *Writing Next* and *The Neglected R*. Across these documents, writing is pinpointed as a skill necessary for students’ future success, and the overwhelming argument is that students are ill-prepared to tackle the kinds of writing necessary to be successful in their futures.

Not only do writing advocacy groups see writing as an area of weakness, but general education groups, like the American Diploma Project, see writing as a critical area in need of improvement for American students. According to the 2009 ACT Benchmark report, only 67% of students meet the English Writing benchmark, indicating that only two-thirds of students taking the ACT demonstrate a readiness to enter a freshman level composition class. Other scholars use NAEP scores to argue that students are not performing at satisfactory writing levels. For instance, in 2007, between 80% and 90% of middle and high school students scored a “basic” level, but only 31% in 8th grade and 23% in 12th grade were at the “proficient” level

(National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007; Applebee & Langer, 2009). This suggests that, while many students are capable of writing in general, very few are able to write at the “proficient” level and “create prose that is precise, engaging and coherent” (National Commission on Writing, 2003, p. 16). Overall, scores like this suggest that students are learning to write, but may not be learning to write in ways that will allow them to be successful in the work place or in college.

1.1.2 Raising the Bar: Common Core State Standards and Writing

These policy reports, painting a bleak picture of students’ abilities to tackle the kinds of writing necessary in their future academic or career experiences, are complicated by the 2010 release of the CCSS. The standards represent a significant shift from current individual state standards and common practices in schools (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yung, 2011; Rothman, 2011). At the time of this study, forty-five states and the District of Columbia had adopted the standards. The CCSS standards draw on research and evidence to be aligned with skills necessary for college and/or career readiness, emphasizing rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order skills. The standards “build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards” and “are informed by top-performing countries so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society” (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010b). One important difference between the CCSS and other literacy-based state standards is that the CCSS are very text-focused: the standards emphasize text complexity, and argue that much of the work students do should be firmly grounded in the text.

The CCSS clearly prioritize students’ abilities to read texts closely; for writing, the CCSS prioritize tasks and student responses that are text-based. The Publishers Guide for the CCSS offers important insight into how these standards should influence writing prompts and tasks,

laying out clear expectations of tasks aligned with the standards (Coleman & Pimentel, 2011). First, questions and tasks should be task-dependent; that is, a student should be able to respond to a task based on information from the text itself. Coleman and Pimentel (2011) argue that because 80 to 90 percent of Reading standards emphasize text-based analysis, an English/language arts curriculum should dedicate an equal amount of time to text-based questions or tasks. Broadly speaking, Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012) explain that “the emphasis on writing standards is parallel to and equal to the emphasis on reading” and, although assessments for the CCSS are still in development, they argue “reading will be assessed through writing, making writing even more critical” (p. 10).

Another expectation of CCSS-aligned tasks is that they “move beyond what is directly stated to require students to make non-trivial inferences based on evidence in the text” (Coleman & Pimentel, 2011, p. 6). To support these inferences, the Publisher’s Guide argues that students need to become more skilled at drawing evidence from texts and explaining that evidence both orally and in writing. Finally, the Publisher’s Guide argues that, while tasks should focus on higher order skills such analysis of arguments, students must also be sure to have a strong understanding of assigned texts before moving on to tasks that require evaluation, interpretation, or other connections (Coleman & Pimentel, 2011).

The CCSS emphasize three types of writing: argument writing, informative writing, and narrative writing. The standards explain that argument writing has a “special place in the standards,” and is necessary in postsecondary education (Appendix A, 2010, p. 24). The CCSS frames argument writing as being logic-driven and text based, relying on “the perceived merit and reasonableness of the claims and proofs offered rather than the emotions that the writing evokes in the audience” (Appendix A, 2010, p. 24). The Publisher’s Guide recommends that

teachers balance these three types of writing in the same way that they are assessed on the NAEP tests: 40 percent should be argument-based, 40 percent should be informative, and 20 percent should be narrative (Coleman & Pimentel, 2011).

Although the CCSS emphasize higher-order intellectual work and set new, high expectations for student achievement, the standards do not articulate pedagogy for meeting such expectations. The introduction to the CCSS explains, “the Standards define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach” (2010, p. 6). This decision was purposeful in the design of the CCSS. They claim to focus on “results rather than means,” and argue, “the Standards leave room for teachers, curriculum developers, and states to determine how these goals should be reached and what additional topics should be addressed... Teachers are thus free to provide students with whatever tools and knowledge their professional judgment and experience identify as most helpful for meeting the goals set out in the standards” (2010, p. 4).

Herein lies a critical concern; these standards not only represent a critical shift in knowledge and skills for students, but also will require substantial curricular and pedagogical changes for teachers. This is especially problematic, as Beach (2011) argues, because “teachers may receive little professional development support for making this transition, given state and district budget reductions, resulting in implementation like that of No Child Left Behind a decade ago, when policy changes were never adequately funded” (p. 179). Moreover, it is even less clear what these standards mean for teachers who are learning to teach. Past research on teacher education argues that preservice teachers are influenced by their own experiences as students (Lortie, 1975; Grossman, 1990) or by curriculum they use as teachers (Johnson, Thompson, Smagorinsky, & Fry, 2002; Smagorinsky, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002). If preservice

teachers' school experiences did not include the CCSS priorities, or if preservice teachers do not have access to curriculum well-aligned with these standards, what does this mean for their instruction?

This study investigates this very issue – how preservice teachers provide writing instruction for tasks that require substantial intellectual work, much like the tasks required by the new CCSS. While this is not a study *of* the CCSS, the types of tasks discussed align well with CCSS-required tasks. In the remainder of this chapter, I provide an overview of this study.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF STUDY

This is a study of cognitively demanding writing tasks and preservice teachers' instruction for them. Specifically, I seek to understand how preservice teachers select and design instruction for cognitively demanding writing tasks. To do this, I observe the instruction of preservice teachers and analyze their instruction in relationship to the demands of the task they've presented.

In this section, I provide an overview of this study. I begin by clearly outlining how I use the term “cognitive demand” in this study. Then, I briefly situate the study within the appropriate theoretical frameworks and literature. Next, I provide an overview of the study design, research questions, and methods. I conclude with a brief discussion of my findings in relationship to implications for instruction and research, and provide readers a road map for the organization of the rest of this dissertation.

1.2.1 Cognitive Demand in Writing Instruction

The existing research uses a variety of similar terms for the level of thinking that a task requires from students, referring to *intellectual demand* (Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2002), *cognitive challenge* (Clare & Aschbacher, 2002; Matsumura, Garnier, Pascal, & Valdes, 2002; Matsumura

et al., 2008) and, in mathematics, *cognitive demand* (e.g., Henningsen & Stein, 1997; Stein, Engle, Smith, & Hughes, 2008; Stein, Smith, Henningsen, & Silver, 2009). This study investigates the instruction for cognitively demanding literature-based writing tasks; broadly speaking in English/Language arts, cognitively demanding tasks:

- Provide opportunities for students to construct knowledge, moving beyond summary or recall, and towards thinking skills such as interpretation, analysis, synthesis, evaluation;
- Provide opportunity for elaborated communication, requiring students to a) make claims, draw conclusions, or make generalizations and b) support conclusions with textual evidence, details, or reasoning;
- Provide opportunity for students to engage in a task that does “real work” in English; the task is akin to something that the student would do in college or if s/he were to pursue a career in English studies.

Throughout this dissertation, I use the terms cognitive/intellectual and demand/challenge interchangeably to refer to the level of intellectual difficulty of the writing task given to students.

It is also noteworthy that the tasks under investigation in this study are literature-based writing tasks. This decision was purposeful in the study design, influenced by the CCSS emphasis on using the text in tasks and writing assignments. However, I do not mean to suggest that literature-based writing tasks are the *only* tasks that are or can be cognitively demanding for students.

1.2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

This study draws on Doyle’s framework for academic tasks (1983, 1988). Doyle (1983) argues that academic tasks are important because they can define the way a student thinks about a particular discipline. For example, if a student only writes the highly standardized five-paragraph essay in English classes, that student might come to think that this type of writing is the only kind of writing in the discipline of English. If one uses this assumption to understand the CCSS, then, these standards define the discipline of English as primarily being the ability to

write arguments and responses to informative texts, and, to a smaller extent, the ability to write narratives. However, Doyle (1983) argues that rather than thinking about the type of task (e.g., argument, informative essay), scholars should consider the cognitive demands of the task. Framing a task by the cognitive demand rather than the “type” can provide a clearer idea about the type of intellectual work in which students might engage. The CCSS provide a good example of this in their differentiation of argument writing from persuasive writing. The standards place a clear emphasis on the differences in the intellectual work of argument and persuasive writing. The CCSS explain that, in persuasive writing, a writer may use a variety of persuasive techniques, such as establishing the writer’s trustworthiness or appealing to the emotions of the reader. A logical argument, however, uses text-based evidence and the ability to make claims and refute counter claims with such evidence. An understanding of this distinction is important when naming these “types” of writing – a teacher might *say* that she is asking students to write an argument, but then accept an essay that relies only on emotional appeals rather than logical text-based arguments. Labeling tasks by their “type” can lead to confusion about the actual intellectual work required; as such, Doyle (1983) argues that one should pay attention to the intellectual work or cognitive demand of a task, rather than only the type of task.

Importantly, studying a “task” involves more than studying curriculum or studying handouts provided to students. Doyle (1983, 1988) argues that a task includes both the level of cognitive demand and the instruction provided; a task may begin at a high cognitive level, but a teacher’s instruction may reduce the demands of the task, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Building on Doyle’s (1988) work, scholars in mathematics argue that a task exists at three levels. The first level is the task as represented in curriculum or curricular materials; this includes the task as it is pre-written in a textbook or curricular guide. The next

level is the task as it is set up by teachers in the classroom; this level includes the instruction provided by teachers to support students' understanding of the task. The final level is the task as it is taken up by students in the classroom (Stein, Grover, & Henningsten, 1996). This framework for studying tasks is important because it emphasizes that a teacher's instruction might significantly change the cognitive demands of a task. This study seeks to understand how the instruction of four preservice teachers helps support, or in some cases diminish, the cognitive demands associated with their respective tasks.

This study sits at the intersection of cognitive and sociocultural theories of writing instruction. Specifically, the study of cognitively demanding writing tasks fits well within cognitive theories of writing instruction. Greeno, Collins, and Resnick (1996) explained that research assuming a cognitive view of learning assumes "that children's learning must be viewed as transforming significant understanding that they already have, rather than as simple acquisitions written on blank slates" (p. 18). This view of learning aligns with the various definitions of intellectually demanding writing tasks, emphasizing that through responding to these tasks, students in some way transform or deepen their learning (Doyle, 1983, 1988). Emig (1977) argues that writing "represents a unique mode of learning" in part because "writing is originating and creating a unique verbal construct that is graphically recorded" (p. 7-8). She argues that this act of "originating and creating" rather re-creating or retelling makes writing a valuable way to learn. This study focuses on tasks that emphasize what Emig might consider "originating and creating" – for example, tasks that require analysis, interpretation, argumentation, or evaluation versus summarization or memorization. Other studies have been conducted using this cognitive view of writing (e.g., studies of "writing-to-learn"), finding that

this type of writing has been associated with student gains on achievement tests (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, & Wilkinson, 2004).

Although a cognitive perspective on writing instruction is useful for contextualizing the study of tasks and has been used in many studies to examine instruction in studies of writing (e.g., Graham & Harris, 1993, 1996), I situate this study within sociocultural perspectives of teaching and learning to provide a more nuanced understanding of preservice teachers' knowledge for teaching these tasks. Sociocultural theories focus on the role that contexts play in a person's learning and on factors or tools that mediate their learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). When a researcher spends time in a teacher's classroom, she recognizes that the teacher's context (the school and classroom) and the tools and activities within that context (e.g., curriculum, handouts provided for students) directly influence her instruction for students. The study described here is situated in preservice teachers' student teaching placements; as such, it is important to recognize how a variety of factors, including the placement site, the contexts of their individual schools, and their university learning might influence preservice teachers' instruction.

1.2.3 Study Design

This study explores the instruction of four preservice teachers, using empirical data such as observations of teaching, interviews, and artifact collection, in order to understand preservice teachers' understandings of and instruction for cognitively demanding writing tasks. I sought to investigate the following research question: How do a small set of preservice teachers who have demonstrated a high level of understanding of cognitively demanding writing tasks enact writing instruction for such tasks? Three sub-questions guided this line of inquiry:

- What is the nature of the task that the preservice teacher independently identifies when asked to identify a cognitively demanding writing task?
- What is the nature of enactment for these tasks?
- What influences or constrains preservice teachers' planning for and enactment of these tasks?

This study uses qualitative methods to understand the particular situations of four preservice teachers providing instruction for cognitively demanding tasks. I seek to understand how individual contexts and participants' understandings of tasks and instruction influenced their teaching. Case study methods are used as a means of understanding both the phenomenon, or instruction for a cognitively demanding writing task, and the contexts, the student teaching placements, of such instruction (Yin, 1989). This study is "particularistic" in that I focus on a particular type of task, tasks with a high level of cognitive demand, and on instruction in relationship to this task (Merriam, 1998). Because I wanted to focus on cognitively demanding writing tasks, I took great care to select participants who demonstrated a strong understanding of such tasks and who had access to this type of task in their student teaching placements.

One might wonder why preservice teachers, rather than experienced writing teachers, were selected for participants in this study. Shulman (1987) explained that studying novice practice can provide important insights into the work of teaching, noting that "the neophyte's stumble becomes the scholar's window" and argues that such study "exposes and highlights the complex bodies of knowledge and skill needed to function effectively as a teacher" (p. 4). Especially in light of the CCSS, it seems important to understand what successes and what struggles preservice teachers encounter when designing and enacting instruction to support students responding to challenging writing tasks. Such information can help scholars and teacher educators understand the kinds of preparation and professional development new teachers might need in order to design instruction to meet the CCSS.

1.2.4 Findings and Implications

Through the cases of four preservice teachers who demonstrated prior understanding of cognitively demanding tasks, I examine the cognitive demands of tasks they selected or were required to teach. I analyze the demands of the task and their instruction relative to these demands, as current research on cognitively challenging tasks in English/Language Arts places more emphasis on the tasks as written by teachers and the tasks as taken up by students, but does not investigate in detail the instruction provided by teachers for these tasks (Newmann, Lopez, & Bryk, 1998; Matsumura, Garnier, Slater, & Boston, 2008). In this manuscript, I will argue that understanding the components of a cognitively demanding writing task is an important first step for preservice teachers, but – mirroring findings in mathematics – the ability to demonstrate an understanding of a cognitively demanding task does not guarantee that a preservice teacher is able to select such tasks or to maintain the level of the task in her instruction (Henningsten & Stein, 1997; Stein, Grover, & Henningsten, 1996). Especially in the cases of preservice teachers who had tightly managed curricula and pre-determined final tasks, a clear understanding – or misunderstanding – of both the demands and focus of the task were influential in planning instruction. As such, preservice teachers might benefit from a careful analysis of the tasks they provide to students, whether they are tasks designed by the preservice teacher or tasks required by a standardized curriculum, to first identify the demands of the task and plan instruction accordingly to meet these demands (Smagorinsky, 2008).

I also argue that understanding – or not understanding – the demands of a task will shape the task specific writing instruction that the preservice teachers design for their students (Smagorinsky & Smith, 1992). All preservice teachers in this study designed instruction to help build students' declarative knowledge, or their ability to identify particular features of good

writing, and build students' procedural knowledge, their ability to use these characteristics in their writing (Hillocks, 1995). However, the four teachers in this study provided different types of instruction, varying in their emphasis of form and content (Hillocks, 2006). Some preservice teachers emphasized form and writing, providing attention to conventions of particular types of writing (e.g., the five paragraph essay) or skills necessary for completing the task (e.g., integrating quotes). One preservice teacher spent more time helping her students understand the demands of the task in relationship to the text that they studied, focusing more on the content of the text and how that text related to the writing prompt. All preservice teachers in this study provided instruction that in some ways supported students to write in response to the assigned task. However, no preservice teacher provided task specific instruction that both supported students to make sense of a cognitively demanding writing task in relationship to the texts under study and also provided writing instruction to help support student writing in response to such a task.

Finally, I conclude by considering the implications of this work for teacher education and for research. Given the findings in this study, teacher education programs should consider the role of tasks in teacher certification programs, ensuring that new teachers leave certification programs with a strong understanding of cognitively demanding literature-based tasks and the ability to identify the intellectual work that the task requires of students. Identifying this intellectual work is a precursor to designing lessons to appropriately scaffold students' abilities to complete such tasks. Teacher education programs also need to help teacher candidates develop appropriate pedagogical content knowledge in order to teach concepts, such as what it means to use textual evidence to advance a position or a claim, that are critical for successfully writing in response to cognitively demanding writing tasks. Teacher education programs might

also consider ways to help disrupt or problematize preservice teachers' existing beliefs about writing instruction. For researchers interested in pursuing questions about writing instruction for cognitively demanding writing tasks, I offer considerations for designing studies, such as intervention studies or collecting data over multiple years in order to understand how learning about cognitively demanding writing tasks in education preparation programs may influence teacher practice over time.

1.3 ORGANIZATION OF DISSERTATION

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter two reviews literature related to the study of tasks, writing instruction, and teacher education. Chapter three presents the methodological design of this study, describing the measures used to select participants, and to collect and analyze data. Chapter four presents descriptive cases for each of the four participants. For each participant, I provide an overview of the writing instruction and writing task, analyzing the cognitive demands of the task. Then, I describe the preservice teacher's instruction in relationship to the task, and describe influences and constraints on his or her instruction. Chapter five briefly summarizes individual case findings, and discusses findings about tasks, instruction, and influences across case study participants. I close with implications for teacher educators and researchers interested in this line of work.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The act of writing is well-recognized in the literacy community as a complex activity (Bereiter & Scardamaila, 1987; Emig, 1971; Flower & Hayes, 1981). For example, Fredericksen and Dominic (1981) argue:

As a cognitive activity, writing involves the use of specific kinds of knowledge that a writer has and is able to discover in constructing meanings and expressing them in writing. Underlying and enabling this use of knowledge are a variety of cognitive processes including: discovering or generating an intended propositional meaning; selecting aspects of an intended propositional meaning; selecting aspects of an intended meaning to be expressed; choosing language forms that encode this meaning explicitly and, simultaneously, guide the reader/writer through different levels of comprehension; reviewing what has been written, and often revising to change and improve meaning and its expression (cited in Doyle, 1983, p. 172).

In ideal circumstances, writing provides opportunities for students to use specific kinds of knowledge about a particular content and engage in processes where they work to construct their knowledge into coherent prose for a particular audience and with a particular purpose. Writing, then, is a vehicle for learning about content and learning about the process of writing. However, not all writing experiences allow for these two learning opportunities – in order for rich, rigorous learning to occur, students must have the opportunity to respond to a task that provides space for this type of learning.

The purpose of this chapter is to review theory and research surrounding challenging literature-based writing tasks, instruction for such tasks, and how new teachers learn to teach

writing. Broadly speaking, cognitively demanding writing tasks a) push students beyond summary or recall towards analysis, argument, or interpretation, engaging students in some kind of knowledge construction, b) ask students to make original claims, and c) require elaboration or evidence to support their claims. I begin by warranting the study of writing tasks and instruction in theories about academic tasks and sociocultural theory. Then, I review prior research from mathematics about tasks and instruction; this research is important because as a field, mathematics is far beyond English/Language Arts in terms of their study of cognitive demand with an emphasis on instruction. Next, I root the study of cognitive demand in writing in current research and explore outcomes of cognitively demanding writing tasks for student learning. I review the limited literature about writing instruction for cognitively demanding writing tasks. Finally, as this study is designed to examine the instruction of preservice teachers, I situate the consideration of writing instruction for such tasks within the context of teacher education. I then conclude with a rationale for the present study.

2.2 TASKS AND INSTRUCTION: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the following section, I provide a rationale for studying cognitively demanding writing tasks, both as tasks alone and as enacted (or taught) by teachers to students. I begin by outlining a theoretical framework for examining tasks based on Walter Doyle's (1983) conceptualization of academic tasks. Then, I align the study of instruction for such tasks with a sociocultural perspective on teaching and learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985).

2.2.1 Framework for Academic Tasks

The notion of studying academic tasks was first presented by Doyle (1983), who provided a theoretical framework for thinking about tasks across disciplines. He uses the term *academic*

tasks across disciplines to focus attention on a) the product students are asked to produce (e.g., an essay, a lab report); b) the operations used to create that product, and c) the givens, or the resources that are available to students when they are learning. Later, Doyle (1988) also argued that the “significance or ‘weight’” of tasks was a fourth important part of academic tasks. In other words, academic tasks include the answers students calculate or the texts they write, the routes that students take in solving the task, and the importance of the task within the classroom context. Thinking about tasks in this way is important because it calls attention to the role of the teacher in not only selecting the tasks that students will work on, but also for selecting the ways to assist students in completing the work.

Doyle (1983) argued that thinking about the cognitive demands of academic tasks, rather than thinking about tasks in broad, general terms or types of tasks (e.g., grammar, multiplication problems) is a necessary distinction. First, traditional ways of thinking of tasks – by type, or category – do not provide any information about the type of work a student is being asked to do to solve the task at hand. Second, thinking about tasks by considering both the level of cognitive demand *and* the instruction provided for the task is useful because it gives a better sense of the intellectual work that a student must go through in order to complete the task. Doyle uses the example of a teacher who asks students to write a short descriptive paragraph. The intellectual work in which the students engage can be very different depending on how the teacher structures the task. For instance, if the teacher requires all paragraphs to be five sentences long and provides a sentence-starter for each sentence, the teacher’s instruction significantly reduces the demands of the task because students no longer have to compose their own sentences. This is similar to Applebee’s (1982) notion of *writing without composing* where students are writing answers or responses, but not really engaging in any thoughtful meaning-making in the writing

process. In this example, if teachers or researchers only considered that students were engaging in “writing a paragraph”, information about the cognitive demands of that task would be missing.

Doyle distinguished the different cognitive demands placed on students by different types of tasks: those driven by memory, procedures, comprehension, and opinion. Drawing on cognitive psychologists (Anderson, 1972; Brown, 1975), he argues that memory tasks direct students to focus on surface-level features or sentence-level features of a text or writing task, while comprehension tasks direct students to attend to conceptual structures and textual meaning contained within sentences. He also argues that when students are presented with difficult concepts, they often resort to memorization (e.g., memorizing a sentence to define the hydrologic-cycle rather than forming a deep understanding of how the cycle works). Similarly, procedurally-driven tasks would direct students to follow a pre-determined process to solve a problem; comprehension-driven tasks might use procedures (especially in mathematics, for example), but would direct the students to understand why a particular procedure actually works or when it is appropriate to use such a procedure. Doyle argues that “comprehension is a *constructive* process” and a higher-level process than memorizing or following a set of procedures (1983, p. 166).

2.2.2 Framework for Academic Tasks in Writing

Doyle (1988) argued, “the work students do, which is defined in large measure by the tasks teachers assign, determines how they think about a curriculum domain and come to understand its meaning” (p. 167). Writing tasks, then, have potential to shape the way that students learn about both the process of writing and the content that they are writing about. Emig (1971) states that writing is an active process in which the writer makes associations about content and organizes that content in a way that makes sense. The notion of “writing to learn” is well

supported in the literature. Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, and Wilkinson (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of 64 studies that investigated the effects of “writing to learn” on school achievement. They concluded that writing could have a positive impact on student achievement, but that particular kinds of writing yield greater effects. Strongest effects were associated with tasks that elicited metacognitive strategies during writing, or tasks that guided students to evaluate their current understandings, confusions, or feelings while they were writing.

Researchers have described the ways that writing assists student thinking and learning. Smagorinsky and Smith (1992) offer three main theories about the relationship between writing and transfer of knowledge. First, they argue that students, especially at the elementary level, need general, broadly applicable knowledge about writing, such as understanding the writing process. The second theory is that the knowledge needed for writing is task specific, and that students need both content area knowledge (knowledge about the topic) and form-specific knowledge (knowledge about the ways they want to communicate their ideas). The third theory is that advanced writing is task specific and also highly contextualized; writers must have task and content specific knowledge but also knowledge of the communities for which they write. As such, Smagorinsky and Smith (1992) argue that there is a “curricular path” in students’ writing development, and that teaching general, process-based knowledge about writing is not enough. Eventually, students need “task specific knowledge to successfully meet the demands for writing that they encounter;” in other words, teachers must help build students’ knowledge about writing in relationship to particular kinds of tasks (p. 299).

If the knowledges students gain through writing is dependent on the task, then careful consideration should be given to the tasks that teachers provide. Greeno et al. (1996) explained “children’s learning must be viewed as transforming significant understanding that they already

have, rather than as simple acquisitions written on blank slates” (p. 18). With this idea in mind, writing tasks can provide opportunities for students to transform/shape/mold their thinking in new ways rather than simply re-stating ideas from the text or reporting events as they happen. Scholars in English have explored the connections between writing and thinking. Applebee (1982) argued that, in writing, the topic should raise questions that have not been fully explored in the past, so that writing and written language become tools for ordering and clarifying relevant knowledge and experience. Writing, then, becomes a process of discovery and reformulation. “Relationships among concepts are being discovered rather than recited and when the writing is over, we can say that the writer has learned something new” (Applebee, 1982, p. 367). However, these relationships among concepts will not naturally arise; they are dependent upon the task provided by teachers. Applebee (1984) argued that writing tasks that emphasize finding relationships between ideas or applying knowledge to new areas are more likely to lead to better understandings of those relationships than tasks that focus on summarization or repetition.

One assumption underlying the notion of cognitively challenging writing tasks is that “the extent to which information is manipulated enhances topic understanding” (Newell, 2006, p. 238); therefore, these tasks are important for student thinking and learning. Langer and Applebee (1987) explained that academic writing can be used in three ways: to acquire knowledge that will prepare students for new learning; to review and consolidate what has been learned; and to reformulate and to extend thinking to new ideas. Challenging tasks, like analytic writing, demand more effort and “lead students to complex manipulations of the material they are writing about while other tasks lead them to move more rapidly (and more superficially) through larger quantities of material” (Langer & Applebee, 1987, p. 136). In sum, scholars suggest that writing has the potential to shape students’ thinking about the discipline of

English/Language Arts and, under proper circumstances, can make a difference in student learning. However, not all writing is associated with student learning. For instance, Bangert-Drowns et al. (2004) noted that achievement outcomes for students who engaged in only personal writing were no different from the outcomes for students who did not engage in personal writing.

The study of intellectually demanding writing tasks aligns with cognitive theories of writing instruction because of the emphasis on how writing shapes thinking, but the study described here differs from other research on writing instruction conducted under the same framework. For example, studies of cognitive strategies or teaching strategies in writing instruction (such as strategies for planning an essay) are often oriented under a cognitive theory of writing instruction. These models can advocate for the instruction of very particular strategies to be used for approaching writing. One well-known example of this is the self-regulated development model (SRSD, Graham & Harris, 1993; Harris & Graham, 1996), which provided students with step-by-step strategies for planning, drafting, and revising and practiced procedures for regulating the use of the strategies during writing. For example, one part of the SRSD highlights steps that students can use to plan an essay, using the mnemonic PLAN (*pay* attention to the prompt, *list* main ideas, *add* ideas, *number* your ideas) to help students come up with topics and sub-topics that they might use for their essay (De La Paz & Graham, 2002). Like these other studies of writing instruction, I draw on cognitive theories of writing to frame this work; however, the idea of this proposed study is not to uncover a step-by-step set of strategies for responding to cognitively demanding writing tasks, but to understand the intellectual complexities that are involved in the enactment of writing instruction for such tasks. To do this, I use a sociocultural framework to guide my investigation of writing instruction

2.2.3 Framework for Studying Instruction: Sociocultural Theory

One important feature of sociocultural theory is the analysis of context. Studying writing instruction for a challenging writing task assumes a careful study of the writing task but also the context (the classrooms) in which instruction occurs. Vygotsky (1978) contended that learning happens first as a result of interactions between people and then is internalized by an individual child, and argued “all higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals” (p. 57). In a classroom, then, the interactions between teachers and students are a foundational place for students’ individual learning to occur.

In addition to considering context, sociocultural theory assumes that learning is distributed across and mediated by tools, activities, and interactions (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 2003; Wertsch, 1985). In studying instruction for cognitively demanding writing tasks, one might seek to understand how a teacher uses particular tools, activities, and interactions to support students in their learning. Grossman, Smagorinsky, and Valencia (1999) explain that preservice teachers use *conceptual* and *practical* tools in their teaching. Conceptual tools guide a preservice teacher’s thinking, such as beliefs, theories, or frameworks. For instance, a teacher might take up a reader-response theory and try to enact it in her classroom; this conceptual tool would guide her instruction. Practical tools are hands-on classroom resources, such as curriculum materials or guides, handouts that teachers use, or other resources available to teachers in the classroom. Both conceptual and practical tools, and the teachers’ use of them, can influence classroom instruction.

Finally, one often cited feature of sociocultural theory is that student learning happens when students are challenged to move beyond what they already know. Underlying the assumption of cognitively demanding tasks in all disciplines is Vygotsky (1978)’s work on the

zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky writes about this zone as “*the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers*” (p. 86, italics in original). In essence, a student’s ability to learn exceeds what she already knows – the ZPD is the space between what she knows and what she *may come to know* through guidance. Wertsch (1985) noted that a student’s ZPD “is jointly determined by the child’s level of development *and* the form of instruction involved (p. 70-71, emphasis mine). When a student is given an assignment that is just outside his or her ZPD, the teacher’s instruction scaffolds student performance (Applebee & Langer, 1983).

To summarize, this study is situated within work that argues for a close study of academic tasks (Doyle 1983, 1988) and within cognitive perspectives of writing instruction, which argue that writing is an important way that students learn about the content they are studying and about the writing process more broadly (Applebee, 1982, 1984; Smaroginsky & Smith, 1992; Bangert-Drowns et al., 2004). However, this study is also rooted in sociocultural perspectives of learning, which argue that learning is mediated by particular environments, contexts and situations (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985); in this view, one must understand not only *what* tasks that are presented to students but also *how* these tasks are presented and what kind of instruction accompanies them. In the following section of this literature review, I explore studies that take up both these questions.

2.3 COGNITIVELY DEMANDING TASKS

Researchers in mathematics have studied the cognitive demand of mathematical tasks and instruction for the past twenty years. Because similar research in English/Language Arts is much

newer, I begin by reviewing studies in mathematics. Then, I review research for cognitively demanding writing tasks and writing instruction. I begin by reviewing studies that focus specifically on the cognitive demand or intellectual challenge of tasks provided to students. Then, I explore the various ways that scholars have defined “intellectual demand,” “cognitive demand,” or “intellectual work” in literacy instruction. Finally, I review outcomes of cognitively demanding writing tasks for student learning.

2.3.1 Studies in Mathematics

One might wonder why research in mathematics is relevant to the study of writing instruction. Lindemann (1982) argues “writing is a process of communication which uses a conventional graphic system to convey a message to a reader” (p. 11). Within this system, a writer must attend to issues such as the reader, the message and context, which “offers students a useful model for defining the problem a writing assignment must solve” (Lindemann, 1982, p. 12). Lindemann positions writing, in a way, as a “problem” – a rhetorical problem – for a writer to solve, considering what to say, how to say it, and to whom the message will be sent. Viewing writing in this way provides a lens for thinking about how studies about cognitively demanding tasks in mathematics might provide useful information for scholars in the field of literacy.

Scholars in mathematics have investigated the level of cognitive demand, or cognitive rigor, in mathematics class for the past decade. There are obvious distinctions between the academic disciplines of math and English/Language Arts; however, the work in mathematics provides a window into instruction for cognitively demanding tasks and how these tasks have been useful for teacher learning. Much of the work related to cognitively demanding mathematical tasks stems from Silver and Stein (1996)’s QUASAR (Quantitative Understanding: Amplifying Student Achievement and Reasoning) Project, a reform-based endeavor designed to

improve mathematics instruction in low-achieving schools. A feature of the QUASAR program was careful attention to the tasks used by teachers in the classroom, under the premise that students in low achieving schools were likely not exposed to challenging and meaningful learning opportunities; as such, research stemming from this project focused on mathematical tasks in the classroom and teachers' use of them. The authors argue that students should have access to high level tasks, or tasks that focus more on conceptual understanding and reasoning than on memorization and rule-following. In essence, Silver and Stein (1996) explain that many students expect to solve a mathematical problem by applying a teacher-provided formula in a singular solution path. Instead, the authors argue that mathematical tasks should allow for multiple solutions, and that students should have the opportunity to explain their thinking or reasoning for their particular solution.

The QUASAR project allowed researchers to study hundreds of mathematical tasks and categorize these tasks by cognitive demand. To categorize these tasks, researchers created levels of cognitive demand ranging from low levels (e.g., memorization or following procedures without making connections) to higher levels (e.g., procedures with connections or “doing mathematics”) (Stein, Smith, Henningsten, & Silver, 2000/2009). Recognizing that teachers needed support in order to identify high-level tasks and enact these tasks in classrooms, researchers have engaged teachers in various types of professional development to increase awareness of high-level mathematics tasks and their implementation. For example, Arbaugh and Brown (2009) describe a study designed to help teachers critically examine mathematical tasks and to consider how they might use such tasks in their instruction. In this research, tasks were used to build teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (Schulman, 1986) of curriculum and curricular materials (Grossman, 1990). Arbaugh and Brown (2009) argue that teachers who

learned about the different levels of cognitive demand in professional development settings were able to select higher-level tasks for their classroom. Other publications, such as *Implementing Standards-Based Mathematics Instruction: A Casebook for Professional Development*, aim to provide teachers with rich descriptions, or cases, of classroom teachers' practices to show what the enactment of these tasks might look like in classrooms.

Other research on the QUASAR project focused on the enactment of mathematical tasks in the classroom. For example, Stein, Grover, & Henningsten (1996) performed an analysis of 144 mathematical tasks used by teachers, examining the cognitive rigor of these tasks, the teachers' implementation of them, and the way that they were taken up by students. Building on Doyle's (1988) conceptualization of academic tasks, Stein, Grover, & Henningsten (1996) argued that student learning can be influenced by the way that a mathematical task is set up in the classroom and by the way that it is implemented by students (See Figure 1). They were interested, then, in the cognitive demands of a task as it was set up by a teacher, and the cognitive processes in which students engaged when solving the task.

Figure 2.1 clearly represents Stein et al.'s (1996) uptake of Doyle's (1988) three ways of conceptualizing tasks. Doyle (1988) argues that tasks exist at multiple levels – “the task as announced by the teacher, the task as heard and interpreted by each student, and the task as reflected in the products accepted by the teacher” (p. 170); Stein et al. (1996) add a focus on the task as it exists in the curriculum, and then consider the factors that influence these levels of the task. The shaded boxes in Figure 2.1 are the areas that Stein et al. (1996) focused upon in their research; however, as I will detail later, the field of English does not have enough research to understand the factors that influence implementation of cognitively demanding tasks in English/language arts classrooms.

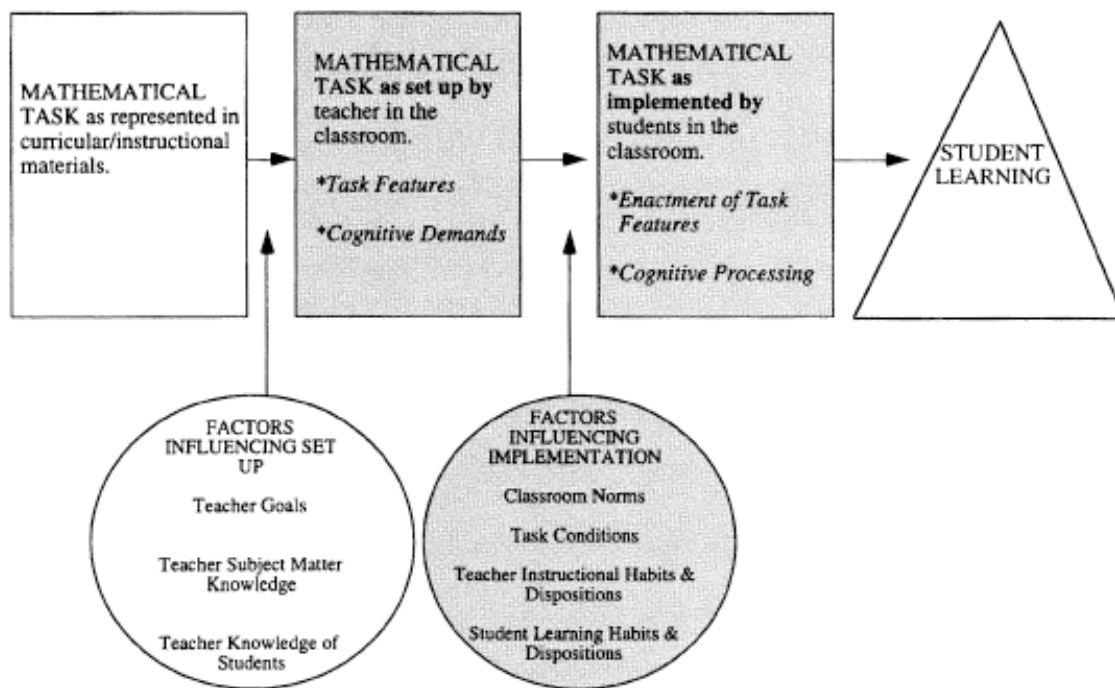


Figure 2.1: Relationship among various task-related variables and student learning

Stein et al.'s (1996) study exemplified an important problem for teachers enacting instruction for cognitively demanding tasks. Of the 144 tasks in this study, roughly three-quarters of the tasks were “high level” tasks: they engaged students in “doing mathematics” or in tasks requiring mathematical procedures with connection to concepts, understanding, or meaning. However, researchers found that during implementation of these tasks, it was likely that the cognitive demand of the task declined; the classroom teachers’ instruction reduced the intellectual difficulty of the task. This happened in a variety of ways; for example, teachers may have over-simplified a problem or emphasized the correctness of answers rather than the process by which students arrived at the answer. Other factors of decline included lack of student

engagement and, to a lesser extent, various classroom factors such as too much or too little time for the task and classroom management problems. Teachers who maintained a task's cognitive demand during instruction built on student prior knowledge, allowed appropriate time for students to engage in the task, included scaffolding and teacher-modeling, and pressed students to explain their thinking and work. In essence, Stein, Grover, and Henningsten (1996) argue that the classroom environments shaped the way that tasks were carried out. Silver and Stein (1996) argue that the "kinds of tasks that scholars and reformers have suggested as most essential for building students' capacities to think and reason mathematically are the very tasks that QUASAR students and teachers had the most difficulty carrying out in a consistent manner" (p. 513).

In sum, the research in mathematics to date suggests first and foremost that both the task *and* the task's instruction (including the task set up and classroom environment) are important when considering the intellectual work that students actually do. Additionally, tasks provide a useful framework for teachers to reflect on their own teaching and learn more about their curricular materials.

2.3.2 Cognitive Demand in Literacy Studies

Scholars in writing instruction have long suggested that writing can prompt students to engage in rich writing and thinking processes (Bereiter & Scardamaila, 1987; Langer & Applebee, 1987). For instance, Bereiter and Scardamaila (1987) differentiated between opportunities for *knowledge telling* and *knowledge transforming*, arguing that the latter encourages students to engage in writing as a constructive process and think deeply about a subject area. When writers engage in this process of knowledge transforming, they develop elaborate goals for their writing and use some kind of problem-solving to decide how they can best meet these goals in writing.

Knowledge telling, on the other hand, is a process often used by novice writers where ideas are generated by the idea that preceded it. In other words, students write in a more linear way, without careful planning about the content or rhetorical strategies they might use (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). While these terms were never categorized by the authors as more or less cognitively demanding, the processes that they describe set the stage for thinking about cognitive demand in literacy.

A small body of research has focused directly on the cognitive demand or rigor of writing tasks and the potential for these types of tasks to affect student thinking and learning. These studies look at the levels of intellectual work demanded from teachers' tasks and categorize these levels in hierarchical ways. However, they use slightly different frameworks for defining "cognitive demand."

One example of research about intellectually demanding academic work comes from the Consortium on Chicago Schools Research (Bryk, Nagaoka, & Newmann, 2000; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Newmann, Lopez, & Bryk, 1998). Researchers spent three years in multiple schools in Chicago seeking to promote "more ambitious intellectual work" for all students (Bryk et al., 2000). They collected "typical" and "challenging" tasks in English/Language Arts and mathematics in grades 3, 6, and 8, examining the intellectual demands placed upon students with these tasks. In ELA, researchers assessed a task's "authenticity of intellectual work" and students' responses to a task in three ways. First, they examined the extent to which tasks asked students to construct knowledge (how tasks directed students to "interpret, analyze, synthesize or evaluate information ... rather than to merely reproduce information") and the extent to which students demonstrated an ability to do this in their writing (Newmann, et al., 1998, p. 17). Next, they looked for evidence of elaborated

written communication, when students were asked to “draw conclusions or make generalizations or arguments and support them through extended writing” and examined how students used examples, illustrations, details, or reasons in their written responses (Newmann et al., 1998, p. 17). Finally, they looked at a task’s value beyond school or connection to students’ lives, considering the extent to which the task directed students to connect the topic to their own lives, and examining students’ ability to demonstrate proficiency in standard conventions of English writing.

Guided by previous work from the Consortium on Chicago Schools Research, the Gates Foundation also investigated the notion of academic rigor and relevance in assignments given to students (American Institute for Research, 2005, 2007). In their reports, they compared the rigor and relevance of assignments collected from both traditional schools and schools that were redesigned as a part of a grant from the Gates Foundation. The Gates scoring criteria borrowed from Newmann et al. (2001) and defined rigorous assignments as ones that called for construction of knowledge and elaborated communication (AIR, 2005, 2007). Additionally, assignments were scored for relevance, or the degree to which the assignments emphasized real-world connections or focused on real world audiences and allowed for student choice in their writing. Unlike Newmann, however, the Gates Foundation also placed emphasis on students’ correct conventions and effective use of language (AIR/SRI, 2004; 2005).

Another example of scholarship investigating cognitive demand is in the development and implementation of a tool called the Instructional Quality Assessment (IQA) (Clare, 2000; Clare & Aschbacher, 2001; Matsumura et al., 2006). In literacy, the IQA was developed to investigate and measure students’ opportunities to learn, and to understand the level of teacher-provided support for writing assignments and classroom discussions. The IQA rubric examined

writing assignments for the level of challenge or the level of thinking demanded of students and the extent to which students had an opportunity to engage in high-level thinking and reasoning (Clare, 2000). Drawing on levels of comprehension from Bloom (1956), the IQA is comprised of four levels of cognitive demand. Like Newmann et al. (1998), the highest levels of cognitive demand on the IQA rubrics require students to apply their knowledge in new ways or engage in analysis, synthesis, or evaluation. Importantly, the IQA examined writing assignments in order to understand how assignments supported students' reading comprehension. As such, using the IQA requires that assignments are text-based and direct students to write about the text. Additional rubrics are used to assess the academic rigor of the text and the rigor of teacher expectations for student work.

The Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observations (PLATO, Grossman, 2009), a recently developed tool for measuring instructional quality in English/Language Arts classrooms, also identifies “intellectual demand” as an important feature of high quality classrooms, focusing upon “the nature of the task and the degree to which it represents a developmentally appropriate stretch or reach for the specific students” (Grossman et al., 2010, p. 8). To earn the highest score for intellectual challenge using the PLATO, a teacher must “consistently engage students in rigorous activities or assignments that require sophisticated or high-level analytic and inferential thinking...(by) focus(ing) on analysis, elaboration, clarification, and specification” (Grossman, 2009, p. 26). While this tool is still in early stages of use, the framework provides useful information about what intellectual demand means in English/Language arts both in terms of the tasks provided to students *and* in the kinds of activities and thinking in which a teacher engages students during a lesson.

Across these studies, scholars have slight variations in their measurements for definitions of cognitive/intellectual demand. For instance, the IQA and PLATO do not include “relevance” or “connection to students’ lives” as a criterion for cognitively demanding work, as other scholars do. However, several key features cross all three groups and suggest that cognitively demanding writing tasks should:

- Ask students to engage in some type of rigorous thinking about a text that goes beyond summary or recall;
- Engage students in some kind of knowledge construction where students can come away with a new understanding (of a text or an event) from completing the assignment
- Require substantial elaboration or use of evidence from texts.

In the section that follows, I review findings from this research on cognitively demanding writing tasks; I also include findings from other research that focuses on writing tasks that falls into the above criteria for cognitive demand.

2.3.2.1 Cognitively demanding writing tasks and student achievement. Here, I review major findings from research on cognitively demanding writing tasks, which suggests that such tasks correlate to increased quality of student work, increased student achievement on standardized test scores, and increased opportunities for complex thinking.

2.3.2.1.1 Increased quality of student work. Research designed to specifically examine the relationship between a particular kind of writing task – one that is cognitively demanding – and student work/student achievement has provided some important insights about the benefits of such tasks. First, evidence across research on cognitively demanding writing tasks suggests that these tasks are associated with increased quality of student work (American Institutes for Research, 2005, 2007; Bryk, Nagaoka, & Newmann; 2001; Clare & Aschbacher, 2001; Matsumura, Patthey-Chavez, Valdés, & Garnier, 2002; Newman, Lopez, & Bryk, 1998).

Recall that in all cases, researchers collected the tasks given to students *and* students' responses to these tasks. As such, they were able to evaluate the quality of student work. For example, Matsumura et al. (2002) found that the rigor of assignments predicted a small, but significant, portion of the variance in the quality of students' writing defined as the extent to which students addressed a topic and used appropriate and accurate supporting details from a text to support their assertions. Bryk et al. (2001) found that students who were provided with more demanding classroom tasks were able to demonstrate more complex intellectual performance in their work, submitting work with a greater number of elaborations and construction of new knowledge. Newmann et al. (1998) found that students in eighth grade classrooms who had the most authentic-intellectual assignments scored forty-eight percentile points higher on scales of AIW than students who were assigned the least demanding tasks. In situations where students were exposed to higher-level tasks, they submitted higher-quality work; in other words, students are unlikely to challenge themselves beyond what the task asks them to do.

Other studies about writing instruction in History, while not designed specifically with the aim of examining cognitive challenge, echo these findings (Green, 1991; Voss & Wiley, 1997). For example, Greene (1991) compared the writing of fifteen undergraduate students assigned to one of two conditions in a History class studying the European Recovery Program. One task was a report-based writing task, asking students to summarize the major issues of ERP. The second task was a problem-based writing task, asking students to consider the major issues of the ERP and propose additional options or conditions that could have been attached to this program to improve the way it was taken up and implemented. Greene (1991) found that students who responded to the problem-based task included more causal connections and transformations of the reading material than students who wrote a summary.

2.3.2.1.2 *Student gains on standardized tests or post-tests.* Cognitively challenging assignments have also been associated with student gains on standardized tests (Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Matsumura et al., 2002; Matsumura, Garnier, Slater, & Boston, 2008). Newmann and colleagues (2001) noted that students who were exposed to intellectually demanding assignments in grades three, six, and eight were more likely to have greater gains on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) than students who were not exposed to such assignments. They also noted that students who received these intellectually demanding assignments surpassed the average score of students taking the ITBS. Also, students with both high and low prior achievement who were exposed to challenging writing tasks showed gains on the ITBS. Matsumura et al. (2008) found that assignment quality positively and significantly predicted all reading comprehension outcome scores (for reading comprehension, vocabulary, and total reading) for sixth and seventh grade student performance on the Stanford Test of Achievement, 10th edition (SAT-10).

Other studies in writing instruction suggest similar benefits. For instance, Applebee (1984) reviews early studies on the effects of writing activities on student learning of new material. He argues that tasks that required students to engage in “any manipulation (or elaboration) of material being studied tend(ed) to improve later recall, but the type of improvement is closely tied to the type of manipulation” (p. 584). In studying factors of English instruction that impact reading scores, Carbonaro and Gamoran (2002) found that the content of assigned tasks had far greater effects on students’ reading achievement than other features studied (such as opportunity for student voice or quantity of writing produced). Analytical writing tasks had the largest effect on student achievement.

2.3.2.1.3 *Advantages for student-thinking.* Finally, challenging tasks provide opportunities for student learning in ways that standardized tests cannot measure. These tasks require students to wrestle with ideas and make meaning from texts in ways that less-challenging tasks do not. For example, Langer and Applebee (1987) argue that tasks that demand more effort, like analytic writing, “lead students to complex manipulations of the material they are writing about while other tasks lead them to move more rapidly (and more superficially) through larger quantities of material” (p. 136). This type of work is especially important in English/Language Arts, where close-readings and in-depth analyses are types of thinking that are valued. In sum, challenging or intellectually demanding tasks have been associated with improved student work, student gains on standardized tests, and with promoting disciplinary thinking necessary in English/Language Arts.

2.3.2.1.4 *An infrequent difference maker.* It must be noted that across these studies, cognitively demanding writing tasks were not commonly assigned (American Institutes for Research, 2005, 2007; Newman, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Matsumura, Garnier, Pascal, & Valdes, 2002; Matsumura, Garnier, Slater, & Boston, 2008). Bryk, Nagaoka, and Newmann (2000) noted that 55% of sixth grade and 44% of 8th grade writing tasks collected showed minimal or no challenge at all. Matsumura et al. (2008) found that only one quarter of writing assignments in sixth and seventh grade prompted analysis or interpretation or required students to use evidence in their writing. Using recent NAEP data, Applebee and Langer explained that “although ...there has been some increase in the writing students are doing, many students seem not to be given assignments requiring writing of any significant length or complexity (2009, p. 21). Applebee and Langer (2006) argue that most high school students are too rarely assigned activities of the complexity and length that might prepare them for AP classes, college, or higher

salaried jobs, despite research that suggests that students from all levels of prior achievement benefit from these types of tasks (Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 1998).

In summary, cognitively demanding writing assignments make important differences in the quality of student work and student learning. However, the lack of such assignments in today's classrooms are concerning. Moreover, the tasks alone cannot be expected to make a difference; teachers' instruction for the tasks can maintain or degrade the quality of the tasks. In the section that follows, I discuss writing instruction in relationship to cognitively demanding writing tasks.

2.4 WRITING INSTRUCTION AND COGNITIVELY DEMANDING WRITING TASKS

Very few studies of writing in English education focus on the *instruction*, or the day-to-day teacher-student interactions, for cognitively demanding writing tasks (Applebee, 2011, personal communication). In this section, I briefly review literature that is relevant to writing instruction for such tasks. I begin by discussing research on writing and large-scale studies of writing instruction. Next, I discuss the relationship between writing and thinking in English/language arts. Then, I review a very small number of studies that examine instruction for what could be classified as cognitively demanding writing tasks. Finally, I conclude with complications of instruction for cognitively demanding writing tasks.

2.4.1 Writing and Writing Instruction

To date, studies that research overall dimensions of task quality in terms of rigor or cognitive demand have examined the tasks provided by teachers and student work for these tasks (American Institutes for Research, 2005, 2007; Bryk, Nagaoka, & Newmann; 2001; Clare &

Aschbacher, 2001; Matsumura, Patthey-Chavez, Valdés, & Garnier, 2002; Newmann, Lopez, Bryk, 1998). In these studies, student work is often used as a lens for understanding the task, rather than a vehicle to provide insight into students' writing processes. Other studies have focused on student processes while writing (e.g., Hayes & Flower, 1980; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1981). Hayes and Flower (1980), for instance, pioneered research that focused on the way that students took up various writing tasks. Their work identified four major processes in which students engage while writing, including planning (coming up with ideas, setting goals for writing), translating (using the plan to write text), reviewing (making broad revisions or surface level corrections of error), and monitoring (using metacognitive processes to oversee the process of planning, translating and reviewing) (Hayes & Flower, 1980). While this work was critical to understanding students' writing process and has been incredibly influential in the field of English Education, the focus is on the students' writing process rather than on the writing instruction provided to these students.

Other studies of writing instruction consider how different types of writing assignments affect the way students think (e.g., Applebee, 1981, 1984; Britton, Burgess, Martin, McCloud, & Rose, 1975; Durst, 1987). For instance, Durst (1987) examined the cognitive processes in which twenty students engaged when responding to one analysis and one summary task, in an attempt to better understand the critical thinking students use when responding to both types of tasks. He reviewed think-aloud protocols from students writing analysis and summary essays, and found that when students wrote analysis essays, they engaged in significantly more varied and complex cognitive operations (such as evaluating their knowledge, planning their essay, and constructing new knowledge). Additionally, students engaging in analysis tasks were more likely to consider the overall framework of their writing; therefore, the students engaged in thinking about specific

processes for writing, such as supporting a thesis or finding support for a claim. In summary writing, students were more likely to report only what they had read in a chronological order. Durst (1987) concludes that students writing analyses “formed and supported generalizations, made inferences, devised plans, asked complex questions and attempted to answer them, and spent considerable time assessing the quality and appropriateness of their ideas and language” (p. 373).

Recall that Doyle (1988) describes three important aspects of academic tasks – the task as written in the curriculum, the task as introduced to students by teachers, and the task as taken up by students and deemed acceptable by teachers’ standards for quality. Much of the work in the field of writing has focused on the student: the students’ thinking (Applebee 1981, 1984; Britton, Burgess, Martin, McCloud, & Rose, 1974; Durst, 1987) or the students’ writing processes (Emig 1971; Hayes & Flower, 1980; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1981), but not on the instruction provided to students. More research and work is needed to understand how cognitively demanding tasks are introduced to students by teachers; what does writing instruction look like for cognitively demanding tasks?

First, one must understand the current state of writing instruction. Large-scale studies focused on writing instruction (Graham & Perin, 2007; Hillocks, 1984) recommend effective approaches or best practices for writing instruction. Hillocks (1984) characterized four different types of instruction modes across 60 studies, and emphasized that environmental instruction, or instruction that balanced interactions between teachers, students, classroom activities, and the task at hand, yielded significantly higher student achievement effects than any of the other modes (Hillocks, 1995, p. 221). The other three modes – presentational (where teachers controlled most of the classroom), individual (work was done on a one-on-one basis), and natural

(very little instruction was provided; time was less structured and more organic) did not correlate with significant gains on student achievement. Graham and Perin (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of their own, including 123 studies of writing instruction (many of which were included in Hillocks' 1984 study), and concluded with eleven recommendations for best practices in writing instruction: (1) writing strategies, (2) summarization, (3) collaborative writing, (4) specific product goals, (5) word processing, (6) sentence combining, (7) prewriting, (8) inquiry activities, (9) process writing approach, (10) study of models, and (11) writing for content learning. However, while both Hillocks (1984) and Graham and Perin (2007) have provided useful insights into effective writing instruction, neither study included an analysis of the types of tasks to which students responded in the studies they reviewed.

Other recent studies of writing instruction shed light on the state of writing instruction broadly, but say little about the cognitive demand of tasks to which students respond. For instance, Applebee and Langer (2009) used NAEP data from 2007 to paint a picture of writing instruction in schools, arguing that student achievement has remained mostly flat (showing no significant gains or regressions) and that many students are not writing at any great length – 40% of twelfth grade students reported never or hardly ever being asked to write a paper of three or more pages. In a follow-up study, Applebee and Langer (2011) visited 260 classrooms across disciplines in 20 middle/high schools known for high quality writing instruction. In these visits, they observed and interviewed teachers and students about their writing instruction and experiences. Applebee and Langer (2011) observed that many of the teachers “report emphasizing a variety of research-based instructional practices” such as those presented by Graham and Perin (2007) (Applebee & Langer, 2011, p. 24).

Applebee and Langer (2011) also briefly discuss the differences in writing tasks seen in the last major large-scale study of writing instruction across disciplines (Applebee 1981) and writing tasks today. To make their point, they provide two examples of tasks from social studies classrooms. They argue that, in their earlier study, teachers often gave students a task that was “in many ways an impossible task, requiring a book-length treatment to be handled well (and only becoming) a possible task when it is seen as a request for a summary of material that has already been covered by the teacher or the textbook” (p. 24). In contrast, in their present study, they found that some tasks are “considerably more difficult;” their sample task asks students to analyze new material in relationship to what they’ve already learned and provides built-in scaffolding, giving suggestions as to how they might go about completing the task. Applebee and Langer caution, though, that most tasks still point students towards summary writing and often towards generic or formulaic writing, such as the five-paragraph essay. However, Applebee and Langer (2011) do not discuss how these tasks were introduced to students or what kind of instruction students received other than the task itself.

2.4.2 Tasks to Support Student Thinking

The English discipline values interpretation and inquiry, which aligns well with skills required for cognitively demanding writing tasks. In a statement on the “Essentials of English,” the National Council for Teachers of English argues, “because thinking and language are closely linked, teachers of English have always held that one of their main duties is to teach students how to think.... The ability to analyze, classify, compare, formulate hypotheses, make inferences, and draw conclusions is essential to the reasoning processes as adults” (NCTE, 2008). However, these types of thinking skills are often emphasized in the context of thinking or talking about literature, rather than writing about literature. For instance, the Great Books

Foundation (1999) emphasizes “shared inquiry” discussions as a means of helping students interpret texts and construct meaning from literature. These discussions promote looking closely at texts to understand things such as character motivation, important details, or connections between passages or characters. The Junior Great Books Foundation provides detailed examples of how a teacher might write interpretative questions and lead an inquiry-based discussion of texts; such questions should come from a position of genuine doubt and provide students opportunities to make text-based claims or interpretations.

Although there is a call in the professional field to find ways for the English discipline to support student thinking, this call can be clouded by a common tension in writing instruction: the tension between having students focus on writing that is grammatically correct versus writing with rich and interesting substance. The two ideas are not mutually exclusive, but teachers tend to prioritize one over the other. Hillocks (2006) summarizes this long-standing divide, noting that “for many years, the teaching of writing has focused almost exclusively and to the point of obsession on the teaching of forms of writing.... (and) teachers of and textbooks on writing have treated substance as though it were of little or no importance” (p. 238). In their policy statement about beliefs on writing instruction, the National Council for Teachers of English (2008) stated that “each teacher has to resolve a tension between writing as generating and shaping ideas and writing as demonstrating expected surface conventions.” This “tension” indicates where a teacher may choose to spend her time – developing ideas and content, or developing grammatical correctness (Writing Beliefs). NCTE (2008) also urges teachers to consider how conventions of writing and issues of “form” are best taught “in the context of writing” and that “achieving correctness is only one set of things that writers must be able to do; a correct text empty of ideas or unsuited to its audience or purpose is not a good piece of writing” (Writing Beliefs).

Knowledge of “form” and “content” are both considered important in writing instruction. Smagorinsky and Smith (1992) explain that a writer might have knowledge of content, “which is not merely one’s factual knowledge of information but also the knowledge of one’s own personal experiences” (Smagorinsky & Smith, 1992, p. 281). One might also have knowledge of form, or the knowledge that allows a person to focus on the features of something to identify the type or kind of writing under study. A current example of knowledge of form would be the knowledge of what makes an opinion-based persuasive essay versus a fact-based argument – a distinction strongly emphasized by the Common Core State Standards. Smagorinsky and Smith (1992) also argue for a third type of necessary knowledge called conditional knowledge – knowledge of when it is appropriate to apply what one knows about content or form. For example, use of dialogue is often marked as an important feature of narrative writing, but dialogue might be less appropriate in a research brief.

Smagorinsky and Smith (1992) explain that knowledge of form and content require procedural and declarative knowledge (Hillocks, 1986). Procedural knowledge, or knowledge of “how to do things,” differs from declarative knowledge, or knowledge “that teachers hope will result in procedures even though teachers do not engage students in the procedures as a means of teaching what is to be learned” (Hillocks, 2005, p. 242). Hillocks argues that teaching strategies that emphasize declarative knowledge often are form-based, such as teaching students grammatical rules or maximums. He believes that a focus on form continues to dominate over a focus on content because (a) teachers assume that effective writing requires knowledge of only a few basic principles, (b) schools and teachers are incredibly pressured by high-stakes testing to teach students to write in order to be successful on these tests, and (c) such tests actually cause

teachers to “teach to the test,” thus reducing the complexity of types of tasks and instruction provided by teachers (Hillocks, 2006).

In sum, recommendations from large-scale studies in writing instruction shed little light on instruction for cognitively demanding writing tasks. Despite calls from professional organizations, little is known about how particular tasks and writing instruction can support student thinking and knowledge development.

2.4.3 Writing Instruction for Challenging Tasks

A small number of studies have focused on writing instruction for tasks that might be classified as cognitively demanding, though these researchers did not identify them in this way. For instance, scholars in writing instruction call attention to the ways in which a teacher can provide assistance, or scaffold student performance, for challenging tasks. Applebee (1986) pointed out that scaffolding can take place in “immediate interactions between the teacher and student” (p. 109). Beck and Jeffery (2009), for example, suggest that teachers might provide opportunities for students to first engage in more creative writing assignments, such as creating a visual representation of significant moments from a piece of literature, and then use these assignments as a spring board for a deeper written analysis later. Monte-Sano (2008) compared two History teachers’ writing instruction and found that both teachers provided equal opportunities for reading and writing, but students in Mr. Bobeck’s class significantly improved their scores from the pre- to post-test; Monte-Sano argued that the teaching practices of Mr. Bobeck provided better opportunities to support students’ writing development. Mr. Bobeck scaffolded writing opportunities for students, and used instructional strategies (modeling, explicit instruction, coaching, and written feedback) to assist students with their writing, reasoning, and argumentation. The other teacher, Mr. Rossi, assigned broad writing prompts (e.g., “analyze and

discuss”) but offered very little guidance about how students might respond to this prompt. Monte-Sano’s (2008) work provides a reminder that the teacher’s instruction really matters, especially when the task is beyond students’ initial capabilities, as many cognitively demanding writing tasks will be. Students cannot be left alone to “analyze” – teachers provide instruction to help students understand what it means to analyze, and to help them begin to do this work. Scaffolded instruction can take place in many different forms (e.g., via the assignment or via a teacher’s instruction) and can help students complete challenging tasks.

Teachers’ instruction can also influence the way a student takes up a cognitively demanding task. For instance, Newell (1996) presents a case study of one teacher who uses two types of instruction about literature: a) reader-based, which centers on the students’ and their interpretations of texts and b) teacher-centered, which guides students toward one particular interpretation (the teacher’s) of a text. Newell was interested in understanding how these different approaches shaped students’ understanding of a text and their responses to the text in an essay. Newell collected quantitative data (student scores on post-tests, student writing samples) and qualitative data (retrospective interviews with four focus students, classroom observations). Newell found that the kind of reasoning in which students engaged came not only from the final writing task, but also by the “types of instruction the students encountered in preparation for the writing task” (Newell, 1996, p. 166). This “pattern for responding to the writing task was set in the early stages of writing” (Newell, 1996, p. 162). What is needed, then, is a better understanding about what this pattern for responding might look like, and what teachers can do to support students to respond to these tasks.

2.4.4 Complications of Instruction for Cognitively Demanding Tasks

Considering writing instruction for cognitively demanding writing tasks means that one must also consider how instruction might support or reduce the level of challenge required by the task. Doyle and Carter (1984) argued that because academic tasks usually take place in evaluative settings (e.g., classroom context where a grade is involved), these tasks occur under conditions of *risk* and *ambiguity*. The amount of task *ambiguity* refers to the degree to which the task has a “right” or clear answer or solution path. The amount of task *risk* refers to the rigidity of evaluation criteria and the chances that the evaluation criteria can be met. Doyle and Carter (1984) explained, “tasks which require students to construct rather than reproduce answers are high in both ambiguity and risk because the precise answer cannot be fully specified in advance and (the) constructive process can sometimes be unreliable” (p. 131). The students in Doyle and Carter’s (1984) study often urged their English teacher to make tasks, especially the more demanding tasks, more explicit, reducing or eliminating the difficult, sense-making aspects of the task.

Stein, Grover, and Henningsten (1996) suggest that mathematics teachers struggle to manage enacting tasks at high levels while also managing other aspects of the classroom. Also, “task researchers have noted that high-level tasks are not associated with quick student engagement”; this poses yet another challenge for teachers hoping to use these types of tasks in their classrooms (Stein, Grover, & Henningsten, 1996, p. 461). In mathematics, particular classroom-based factors can be associated with the maintenance or decline of cognitive demand. Factors that contribute to the decline of cognitive demand can include (a) routinizing or proceduralizing a task, or when the teacher “takes over” the thinking to tell students what to do; (b) shifting the emphasis away from meaning or concepts and towards correctness; (c) allowing

an inappropriate amount of time – too much or too little – to solve a problem; (d) having difficulty controlling the classroom; (e) misjudging the appropriateness of the task and giving students a task that is not engaging or for which they do not have appropriate prior knowledge; or (f) not holding students accountable for high-level products or processes (accepting work where students do not meet the demands of the tasks set forth). Factors associated with maintaining a high level of cognitive demand, in mathematics, can include: (a) scaffolding student thinking or reasoning; (b) providing students with strategies to monitor their own thinking (e.g., metacognitive strategies); (c) modeling high-level performance; (d) pressing students to explain their thinking or reasoning; (e) building on prior knowledge; (f) drawing frequent connections between related concepts; or (g) allowing enough time to explore the concepts at hand (Stein et al., 2009).

2.5 PRESERVICE TEACHERS AND WRITING INSTRUCTION

Given the well documented importance of cognitively demanding writing tasks in the research, and knowing that both research and practitioner-based literature offer much in way of “best practices” for writing instruction, I turn briefly to understanding how new teachers learn to teach writing. Shulman’s work (1987) highlights the need for teachers to go beyond basic knowledge of their subject matter and include, as well, pedagogical content knowledge – knowledge of the subject matter needed for teaching. It is important to consider various spaces where new teachers gain this pedagogical content knowledge. Here, I briefly review three places where preservice teachers acquire knowledge needed for teaching English: in their experiences as students, in their methods-based education courses, and via curricular materials made available

to them in their own teaching. I conclude this section by briefly discussing challenges to supporting PSTs in developing this knowledge.

2.5.1 Beliefs and Experiences as Students

Hammerness et al. (2005) argue that it is challenging for new teachers to think about teaching in ways that differ from what they experienced as students. Lortie (1975) referred to this as the “apprenticeship of observation” – the fact that new teachers have at least twelve years of schooling that inform their development and understanding about what it means to be a teacher. Although these experiences are not a “true apprenticeship,” since the new teacher observes the teaching only from the position as a student and is not privy to things like teachers’ goals or objectives, these experiences provide a strong foundation new teachers’ understanding of teaching (Grossman, 1990). Additionally, new teachers often rely on their own memories of themselves as students, considering things that helped them in their own learning (Grossman, 1990). More troubling is that new teachers may assume that their own experiences represent the experiences of all students and project their own needs as learners on to their perceptions of students’ needs, when often the two are quite different.

2.5.2 Methods Courses

Smagorinsky and Whiting (1995) surveyed 81 university-based English methods programs, examining syllabi from courses in which preservice teachers were enrolled. This study aimed to understand (a) the overall approaches to methods courses, (b) the type of work preservice teachers do in such courses, and (c) how the courses do (and do not) provide opportunities for preservice teachers to practice their learning in contexts with real students. The authors found that roughly two thirds of methods courses took up a “survey model” or “workshop model” – each with its own problems. For instance, courses in the survey category often took a

“coverage” approach, including a wide variety of information about teaching English, but often neglecting to make connections between concepts. Workshop-oriented courses “allowed students to learn in an environment that modeled many of the teaching and learning strategies advocated in course texts” – in these courses, students designed lessons collaboratively, shared their work, and taught demonstration lessons with their peers (Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1995, p. 4). However, the authors argued that because the majority of these teaching experiences presented the “best-of-all-possible-worlds” environments, they might not prepare students for the difficulties that they would encounter when teaching in real classroom environments. Few of the methods courses observed by Smagorinsky and Whiting included what they considered to be a “best” methods course – one involving elements of a workshop-based course, but also including opportunities for learning important educational theories, engaging in critical reflection, and having the opportunities to work in real classroom settings with children.

In a study of six teachers, three of whom took non-traditional routes to teaching English and three of whom participated in an English education certification program, Grossman (1990) found that teacher education has the potential to shape the way that new teachers approach teaching English. Students who took non-traditional routes to teaching often drew on their own beliefs and knowledge about literature and writing, formed during their English major studies. On the other hand, students prepared in an English education program thought about English from a perspective of a teacher and made pedagogical choices that seemed more student-centered, drawing on students’ prior knowledge to help them access material. Grossman (1990) argued “subject specific teacher education coursework can help teachers construct conceptions of what it means to teach a subject, conceptions grounded in current knowledge about teaching and learning specific content areas in secondary schools” (p. 143).

Grossman, Valencia, Evans, Thompson, Martin, and Place (2000) conducted a longitudinal study following ten elementary or secondary language arts teachers from the last year of a preservice teacher education to the first two years of full time teaching. In this study, they found that the use of tools – both conceptual and practical – assisted preservice teacher learning; and when conceptual tools were coupled *with* practical tools, they seemed to have the greatest impact. For instance, two conceptual tools that the majority of preservice teachers took up in their practice were the process-approach to writing instruction and the concept of instructional scaffolding. Participants, especially at the secondary level, commented that concepts such as instructional scaffolding were not taught explicitly enough – they learned *about* the concept, but “were not explicitly taught *how* to scaffold students’ writing” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 26). The authors argued that the methods courses for these students “were not necessarily buttressed with a range of practical tools” and, as such, students “eagerly sought materials and methods from other sources” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 27).

2.5.3 Curricular Materials

Research on teacher education also suggests that curriculum which teachers, especially new teachers, encounter can deeply influence their learning. In an interview study of over 50 first and second year teachers across multiple schools, grades, and content areas, Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, and Peske (2002) found that most new teachers were given little to no guidance about what to teach or how it might be taught. Moreover, they also found that many teachers seemed to crave such specificity, feeling overwhelmed by the daily demands of deciding what to teach and how to teach it (Kauffman et al, 2002). Grossman et al. (2000) explained that the ten teachers in their study adopted a wide range of curricular materials, from rubrics to writing programs (e.g., 6+1 Traits) or more scripted programs (e.g., the Shaffer five paragraph model);

they argue that “as the teaching of writing can be a messy, chaotic endeavor, the appeal of a package approach cannot be ignored” (Grossman et al., 2000, p. 30). In addition to the convenience of packaged materials for writing instruction, other preservice teachers might turn to more scripted curricular models because they believe such models might help improve student achievement. While some argue that a more specified curricula might help preservice teachers develop “capacity to exercise greater professional discretion in the future” (Kauffman et al., 2002, p. 294), others caution against curriculum that is too well-specified. For instance, Apple and Junk (1990) suggest that although teachers – especially newer teachers – might find curricular packages to be helpful, “in the broader context, it deprives teachers of a vital component of the curriculum process. Over time, these short term compensatory practices function as deprivations because they limit the intellectual and emotional scope of teacher’s work” (cited in Kauffman et al., 2002, p. 293).

In areas where teachers are given more guidance with a curriculum, research suggests that these teachers have to decide how to negotiate their own beliefs about teaching with the expectations and demands of curriculum. Some research suggests that new teachers may struggle to balance their own beliefs about teaching with curriculum required by their districts. For example, Smagorinsky, Lakly, and Johnson (2002) explored the experience of one first-year teacher, Andrea, in order to understand how her teaching identity was affected when she attempted to integrate her own beliefs about teaching with her school district’s highly scripted curriculum. Andrea’s beliefs were influenced by her teacher education program, but she felt that the tightly managed district curriculum limited her ability to enact student-centered pedagogies she learned about in her student teaching placement. This study examined her accommodations, acquiescence, and resistance of the curriculum. At times, she gave up her own

beliefs in order to enact the already-written curriculum (i.e., acquiescence); at other times, she outwardly resisted the curriculum (e.g., selecting books that were not written in the curriculum). Ultimately, the curriculum often stood in the way of the types of teaching that Andrea hoped to do in her classroom; in these instances, she had to decide if she was going to adapt her teaching to comply with the curriculum or openly resist and do something else. The curriculum was less of a place for Andrea to develop pedagogical content knowledge, and more of a place for her to understand her own beliefs about teaching in relationship to the curriculum, which she disliked for its standardized, scripted nature, and its lack of student-centeredness. In a similar study, Johnson, Thompson, Smagorinsky, and Fry (2002) investigated the decision of an early-career teacher to teach the strict five paragraph essay to her eighth grade students. They concluded that the teacher's decision to rely on the five paragraph form with her students was not due to intellectual shortcomings, but due to the PST's belief in the utility of the five paragraph form, based on her own positive experiences with the form as a student.

2.5.4 Challenges for Developing Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Juzwik (2010) acknowledges that one challenge for all teachers is making sense of what seems to be sometimes competing visions of knowledge needed for teaching writing. She explains that, in writing instruction, researchers often come from different traditions (e.g., drawing on cognitive theories of writing compared to sociocultural theories of writing instruction). Such competition can sometimes cause scholars to become “overly territorial” about their own work and lead them to “devalue important work of other traditions” (Juzwik, 2010, p. 266). To provide an example of this, she describes what she called a “chilly reception” given to *Writing Next* (Graham & Perrin, 2007) from some scholars in rhetoric/composition and English education programs. Some criticized the credentials of the authors of the report, who had backgrounds in educational

psychology rather than rhetoric/composition; others criticized what Juzwik (2010) referred to as the perceived “obviousness of what the report found” (p. 267). This difference in perspectives is also represented in questions about curriculum for teachers; texts written for a teacher audience about writing instruction often seem to value teachers’ sole creation of tasks, workshops, and overall curriculum (e.g., Atwell, 2005; Kittle, 2008). However, the research described earlier in this section suggests that preservice teachers are often faced with pre-existing curriculum, to a variety of extents, and have to figure out how to navigate this curriculum in their own teaching (Johnson et al., 2002; Smagorinsky et al., 2002). Juzwik (2010) offered these examples of differences in perspective in order to challenge readers to consider how professional development and teacher education might “mediate the discourses of research and teaching” and cultivate an awareness of multiple perspectives about the theoretical traditions and beliefs about writing (p. 270).

2.6 NEED FOR PRESENT STUDY

Grossman and her colleagues (2010) argue that “identifying classroom practices associated with high student achievement gains, and then targeting these practices in teacher education and professional development, provides a potential avenue for improving the quality of instruction for all students” (p. 3). Cognitively demanding writing assignments have been associated with high student achievement gains (Newman, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Matsumura et al., 2002; Matsumura, Garnier, Slater, & Boston, 2008) and the quality of student work (American Institutes for Research, 2005, 2007; Bryk, Nagaoka, & Newmann, 2001; Clare & Aschbacher, 2001; Matsumura, Patthey-Chavez, Valdés, & Garnier, 2002; Newman, Lopez, & Bryk, 1998). However, research in mathematics and limited research in English/language arts suggests that

studying the implementation of such tasks is key to understanding the type of work that students are actually doing.

Knowing that cognitively demanding tasks are important and matter for student learning is not enough – we must better understand the instruction for these tasks. Newmann, Bryk, and Nagaoka (2001) state that “no particular kind of teaching or strategy assures that students will undertake work that makes high-quality intellectual demands on them” (p. 31), but they argue that instructional pedagogy is important. However, to date, no studies have examined instruction for cognitively demanding writing tasks. Stein et al. (2009) argue that studying cases of cognitively demanding mathematics tasks might “take readers beyond the generic notions of ‘effective teaching behaviors’ and lists of ‘teacher shoulds’” (p. xix) and in to complexities of instruction for such types of tasks. It is my hope that studying instruction of cognitively demanding writing tasks might provide the same kind of complex view of writing instruction. Moreover, researchers have called for a clearer understanding of what teachers are doing in lessons when they are *teaching writing* rather than lessons when students *are writing* (Grossman et al., 2010, Working Paper). The purpose of this study is to examine the instruction that preservice teachers provide for cognitively demanding writing tasks in order to begin to understand the complexities and challenges of instruction for these tasks, and to investigate what kind of pedagogies foster, or perhaps hinder, complex thinking in middle and high school students.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

During the 2011-2012 academic year, twenty-six preservice teachers (PSTs) participated in a range of tasks in order to allow me to select four PSTs to participate in observations and interviews designed to explore their understandings and enactments of cognitively demanding writing tasks. In this section, I detail the research questions, the framework that guided the design of the study, and provide detailed information about the participants, procedures, measures, and data analyses for the study. A summary table of all data sources and related analyses is included in Appendix A.

This study was designed to address the following question: How do a small set of PSTs who have demonstrated a high level of understanding of cognitively demanding writing tasks enact writing instruction for such tasks? Three sub-questions follow:

- What is the nature of the task that the PST independently identifies when asked to identify a cognitively demanding writing task?
- What is the nature of enactment for these tasks?
- What influences or constrains preservice teachers' planning for and enactment of these tasks?

This study is of qualitative design, as I am primarily interested in participants' understandings of particular phenomenon in particular contexts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). In this case, the phenomenon under investigation is primarily the PSTs' instruction in the context of their student teaching placements.

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMING OF STUDY DESIGN

3.2.1 Qualitative Paradigm

In essence, qualitative research focuses primarily on understanding particular situations rather than generalizing to universal situations (Erickson, 1986). This study is well suited for a qualitative paradigm because the heart of my interests lies in understanding how a small number of preservice teachers enact instruction and in understanding their purposes for choices during instruction. In this study, I do not intend to generalize about how all preservice or new teachers understand such tasks or enact writing instruction, nor do I aim to evaluate or rank the participants in my study. Rather, my purpose was to examine the complexities and nuances and various experiences that these new teachers have with cognitively demanding writing tasks and when providing instruction for these tasks.

This study meets the four criteria that Merriam (1998) cites for qualitative work. First, a qualitative researcher is interested in understanding the meaning that participants have constructed. The research questions in this study focus first on the understandings that preservice teachers hold about a particular kind of writing assignment. Such questions seek to understand local meanings made by the participants; this is a hallmark of qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Erickson, 1986). Merriam's (1998) other three criteria explain that qualitative studies often use the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection, usually involve fieldwork, and primarily employ an inductive research strategy. These criteria fit nicely with the methods used in this study, which relies heavily on observational and interview data that were collected and interpreted by the researcher.

3.2.2 Case Study Research

The study relies primarily on case study methods, which have been deemed appropriate when the “investigation must cover both a particular *phenomenon* and the *context* in which the phenomenon is occurring” (Yin, 1989, emphasis original). This study takes place in middle and high school classrooms – a necessary context for studying writing instruction. Research has acknowledged the extent to which schools and/or districts influence teachers’ instruction and development (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1993; Grossman & Thompson, 2004). Additionally, because this study examines PSTs’ understandings and teachings, context is especially important. Preservice teachers are likely to be influenced by the settings in which they are teaching, as well as other factors such as their coursework and their own experiences as students (Johnson, Thompson, Smagorinsky, & Frey, 2002). The case study method, then, is an appropriate qualitative method for helping to understand the context in which the instruction will occur.

The phenomenon under investigation is the enactment, or teaching, of cognitively demanding writing assignments. Narrowing the focus of this study to the instruction for a particular type of assignment resonates with what Merriam (1998) refers to as being “particularistic”; instead of examining writing instruction broadly, I seek to understand instruction for a particular type of writing assignment.

This study employs the use of four cases, with each case representing an individual preservice teacher. Miles and Huberman (2002) explain that in case study research, there is “no ideal number of cases” but that often between 4-10 cases work well, noting that fewer than 4 cases often does not provide sufficient complexity for theory building and more than 10 cases

often provides a “difficult...volume of data.” (p. 27). Within each case, multiple kinds of data, including observations, interviews, and artifact analysis, are used to try to understand and represent the complexities of the enactments of these tasks.

More specifically, this study is designed using replication logic. Yin (1989) explains, “multiple-case studies should follow a replication, not sampling logic. This means that two or more cases should be included within the same study precisely because the investigator predicts that similar results (replications) will be found.” (p. 34). This study is based on this type of logic in two ways. First, in all cases, preservice teachers provided instruction for a similar type of task – a task that has been deemed to be cognitively demanding. Second, all participants in this study were preservice teachers who have demonstrated a strong foundational understanding of “cognitive demand” in respect to writing. Therefore, I hypothesized that the tasks and the basic knowledge of the participants in each individual case are somewhat similar.

3.2.3 Role as Researcher

Qualitative research assumes a relationship between the “inquirer and the ‘object’ of inquiry” and assumes that both will influence each other throughout the study (Lincoln, 1985, p. 94). In this study, it is important to note that my presence as a researcher undoubtedly played role in the way the participants taught in the lessons that I observed. The “objects” of inquiry in this case are the tasks, preservice teachers’ enactments of tasks, and preservice teachers’ reflections on these enactments. Because my study directs PSTs’ attention towards the levels or kinds of thinking with which students must engage when writing, it is possible that the participants are influenced by this focus.

It also must be noted that the participants in this study are enrolled in a teacher education program in which I was an instructor. At the time when the teaching observations took place, I

had taught these students for two semesters, and was beginning a third semester of teaching with them. As Graue and Walsh (1998) note, the researcher's role can be "negotiated by/with the participants"; I was quite aware that my participants saw me as an instructor in addition to a researcher. I was careful not to collect data in any of the classes that I was teaching, so as to avoid a perceived conflict of interest. During data collection, especially during interviews, my participants were often eager to hear my advice or insights into their teaching. Primarily, these conversations occurred after the interviews took place, but it is important to note that these preservice teachers undoubtedly saw me not only as a researcher, but as their teacher and as someone whom they felt comfortable asking advice.

In my observations of PST instruction, I was not trying to avoid researcher bias – rather, I was careful to consider my roles as a researcher and as a teacher in my analysis of data. During the observational phase of this study, it is also important to acknowledge my subjectivity and my continued struggle to understand PSTs' instructional goals, instruction relative to these goals, and instruction relative to the cognitive demand of the task; my intentions were not to evaluate PSTs' goals or instruction. However, as a former high school teacher and a teacher educator within their certification program, I held several assumptions about expectations for instruction for these tasks. During my observations and data analyses I was careful to acknowledge and consider these assumptions so that I could take a more descriptive, rather than evaluative, stance about their teaching.

3.2.4 Adding Knowledge, Not Passing Judgment

Importantly, this study was not designed to study the effectiveness of the teacher education program in which participants are enrolled or to study the effectiveness of the specific preservice teachers who participate in the study. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) explain that a qualitative

researcher's "primary goal is to add knowledge, not to pass judgment" on a particular setting or participant (p. 33). I seek to better understand the way that new teachers interact with and understand cognitively challenging tasks, building off of the research cited in Chapter two that clearly articulates a strong rationale for the importance of these types of tasks. Merriam (1998) argues that case study is "a particularly appealing design for applied fields of study such as education. Educational processes, problems and programs can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice" (p. 41). It is my hope that this study contributes to our understanding of how new teachers understand, plan, and teach lessons for cognitively challenging writing tasks and, as such, that the findings from this study might be able to affect or even improve teacher practice.

3.3 STUDY DESIGN

In the following section, I describe the study and its overall design. Primarily, this study is an observational study of four participants using qualitative methods and analysis. However, my selection of these four participants was quite careful. In this section, I describe my methods for selecting the four participants in the study. Then, I describe in great detail the methods for data collection and analysis of the observational study.

3.3.1 Phase One: Selecting Participants

The first phase of my study was conducted to select preservice teachers to participate in the observational study. Because the intention of this study was to understand how preservice teachers planned and implemented instruction for a particular type of task – tasks which were cognitively demanding – it was critical that I select teachers who were able to identify cognitively demanding writing tasks and who had access to such tasks in their classroom. In this

section, I describe my methods for determining what teachers met these two criteria. Although the data from phase one is not analyzed in detail in this study, it was important to select participants for the second phase, thus it was critical to the overall design of the study.

3.3.1.1 Rationale for studying preservice teachers. The participants in both phases of the study were enrolled in programs to pursue teaching certificates in English Education. Understanding preservice teachers' conceptions and enactments of cognitively challenging writing assignments, rather than practicing teachers' same conceptions and enactments, is important. Shulman (1987) argued that studying novice teachers can be useful as "error, success, and refinement – in a word, teacher-knowledge growth – are seen in high profile and in slow motion. The neophyte's stumble becomes the scholar's window" (p. 4). Because so few studies exist about instruction for cognitively demanding tasks, it is important to understand what new teachers do and what is difficult for them as they attempt to provide writing instruction for such tasks. Sleep (2009) argues that studying the teaching practices of novice teachers, rather than experienced or expert teachers, is important because novice teachers "do not have as many established instructional routines as experienced teachers" and, as such, they might be better able to be more deliberate in their planning of and reflections about their lessons (p. 65). At the time of this study, all PSTs were still enrolled in coursework that prompted careful and purposeful planning; they were expected to be able to provide rationales for their lesson planning and instructional choices. In this study design, I hoped that the newness of teaching for these PSTs would require this careful and deliberate planning, and that such planning might be more visible to an observer than that of a more experienced teacher.

3.3.1.2 Initial participant sample. I selected my participants during the 2011 fall semester at a large public university in a rust belt city in the eastern United States. Because I planned to study

writing instruction, I approached all preservice teachers enrolled in the university's certification program ($n = 26$) in a course called Teaching Writing, a required three-credit class for all students pursuing secondary English/Language Arts teaching certification. I invited all students to participate in this research study, and explained to them that there were two phases. My emphasis in the first phase was to understand the PSTs' conceptions of "cognitive demand" and to select participants who a) understood what a cognitively demanding task was and b) had access to such tasks in their placements.

All students enrolled in Teaching Writing agreed to participate. First, preservice teachers participated in a task sorting activity with the purpose of beginning to understand how PSTs classify and identify cognitively demanding tasks. The 18 literature-based writing tasks included in this activity were purposefully created based on categories of the Instructional Quality Assessment (Matsumura et al., 2006) in order to represent a wide range of cognitive challenge. Preservice teachers were asked to sort these tasks three times: first, in to categories that made sense to them (e.g., "persuasive tasks" and "personal writing"); second, by cognitive challenge as they perceived it; and third, into the categories of the IQA.

Second, as part of an assignment for the course, PSTs provided a copy of a writing assignment from their student teaching placements that they believe to be cognitively demanding. Additionally, they wrote a reflection that addressed (a) why they feel this assignment was cognitively demanding, and (b) what kind of support or scaffolding they felt their students needed in order to do the assignment well (hereafter, I refer to this writing assignment and the PSTs' analysis of it as the "curriculum analysis task"). The purpose of the curriculum analysis task was to understand the type(s) of assignments that PSTs identify as cognitively demanding

and to begin to understand their reasoning, through their written reflections, about why they believe these tasks to be cognitively demanding.

3.3.1.3 Tools in phase one. The first phase of this study employs the use of two tools: the task-quality rubric from the Instructional Quality Assessment (Matsumura et al., 2006) and a task-sorting activity designed specifically for this study. Each tool, and its role in the study, is detailed below.

3.3.1.3.1 Instructional Quality Assessment (IQA). One important tool to be used in this study is the Instructional Quality Assessment (IQA, Matsumura et al., 2006). The IQA was developed by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh in order to assess the quality of English/Language Arts instruction. The full version of the IQA looks at the overall quality of texts used in classrooms, the quality of classroom discussions of text, and the quality of writing assignments given to students and the assessment criteria used to score their writing. For this study, only the rubric used to rate the cognitive demand of writing assignment is used. This rubric has been validated in multiple studies (Clare & Aschbacher, 2001; Matsumura, Garnier, Pascal, & Valdes, 2002; Matsumura, Garnier, Slater, & Boston, 2008).

Specifically, the IQA rubric for writing tasks ranks the cognitive demand of the task on a scale of 1-4. Low-scoring tasks (earning a one) are tasks that ask students to respond to text in an isolated way or recall fragmented information about the text (e.g., answering disconnected questions on a worksheet). Tasks earning the score of a two begin to guide students towards creating a coherent mental model (Kintsch, 1998) of the text. Level two tasks generally ask students to construct a literal summary of the text, but do not guide students to use evidence from the text. To earn the score of a three, a task asks students to engage with an interpretative or analytical question about the text, guiding students to engage with nuances that might exist

within the text. Although these tasks guide students to a more difficult kind of question, level three tasks may provide limited opportunity for students to think about the text (e.g., asking a challenging question but requiring a very structured or limited response). A task receiving the highest score – a four – asks students to engage with an interpretative or analytical question about the text (like tasks that earn the score of a three), but *also* requires students to support their ideas with detailed evidence from the text. Additionally, tasks earning a four require an extended written response from students.

It is important to note that this tool was designed and validated as a means of assessing the quality of a teacher's overall instructional practice (Matsumura et al., 2008). However, in this study, this tool is being used not to assess the overall quality of preservice teachers' instructional practices, but rather as a means of assessing the cognitive demand of writing assignments that PSTs select. This tool will be used several times throughout the study. First, it was used in the development of the task-sort activity, described below, to ensure that the tasks included a wide range of difficulty. The IQA will also be used to assess the level of cognitive demand for the tasks that preservice teachers identify as cognitively demanding as part of the assignment for their Teaching Writing class. Finally, this IQA rubric will also be used to assess the tasks nominated by individual preservice teachers for the second phase of the study.

3.3.1.3.1 Task sort: Justification and design. Task sorts, or card sorts, have a long history in qualitative research. They have been used, for example, to provide career counseling (Goldman, 1992; McMahon & Patton, 2002), to understand teachers' beliefs about inquiry-based learning (Harwood, Hansen, & Lotter, 2006), to understand children's perceptions of bullying behavior (Gamiel, Hover, Daughtry, & Imbra, 2003), or to understand mothers' concerns during the postpartum period (Lagina, Nystrom, Christenssom, & Lindmark, 2004). A typical card

sorting activity provides participants with a set of cards, and asks the participant to order or sort the cards in a way that makes sense to them. For instance, Goldman (1992) describes the Vocational Card Sort (Dewey, 1974; Dolliver, 1967; Tyler, 1961), used to assist individuals in choosing an occupation. Goldman (1992) argues that one strength of the Vocational Card Sort is that it is “open-ended, somewhat projective in nature, (and) encourages the client to develop an idiosyncratic classification of (their) work values, preferences and needs” (p. 616). In this study, the task sort is used in an open-ended way to try to understand how preservice teachers think about a set of tasks and how they think about cognitive demand of tasks.

The design of the task sort used in this study was inspired by work done in mathematics (Stein, Smith, Henningsten, & Silver, 2000/2009; Arbaugh, 2000). Briefly, I summarize this work, as it was influential in my own design and creation of the task sort activity. In studies in mathematics (Stein et al., 2009; Arbaugh, 2000; Arbaugh & Brown, 2005), task sort activities have been used in professional development settings to raise awareness of how mathematical tasks might differ with respect to levels of cognitive demand (Smith, Stein, Arbaugh, Brown, & Mossgrrove, 2004). As such, a task-sort activity helps practicing teachers learn to think about “the kind and level of thinking required of students in order to successfully engage with and solve (a) task” (Stein et a., 2009, p. 1). In the task sort activities in Arbaugh (2000), for example, teachers were given a set of mathematical tasks and asked to sort the tasks into categories of teachers’ own making. The teachers and researchers discussed the reasoning behind sorting tasks in this way. Then, the researcher used these tasks to introduce teachers to four different levels of cognitive demand used in the study. Stein et al. (2009) describe the benefits of a task-sorting activity:

The long-term goal (of a task sorting activity) is to raise teachers' awareness of how mathematical tasks differ with respect to their levels of cognitive demand, thereby allowing them to better match tasks to goals for student learning. A task sorting activity can also enhance teachers' ability to thoughtfully analyze cases (of instruction) ... and ultimately, to become more analytic and reflective about the role of tasks in instruction (p. 8).

Building off of the work in mathematics, a task sort activity was designed specifically for this study; the design of the task sort and its role in the study design are described in this section.

For this activity, I created eighteen writing tasks from four pieces of literature with which I knew a majority of the participants were familiar, as they had read these novels during their summer and/or prerequisite coursework for the English Education programs. The four texts were *The Giver* (Lowery, 1993), *Wintergirls* (Anderson, 2005), *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007) and *The Book Thief* (Zusak, 2005). I based the selection and design of the tasks on the Instructional Quality Assessment rubric for task quality, being sure that all levels of cognitive demand were represented. To test for validity, a second rater independently rated each task. After the initial second scoring, the raters were in agreement on thirteen of eighteen tasks, for reliability of .733. The raters met to discuss the five tasks on which they did not agree and modified these five tasks so that they could reach a consensus score.

When designing the tasks, it was important to present preservice teachers with tasks that ranged in cognitive demand, but also to be sure that the tasks differed in other ways. For example, Arbaugh (2000) described how Smith (2000) used mathematical tasks that “varied with respect to cognitive demands and what you might call ‘reform features’ (in mathematics) (e.g., used manipulatives, involved a calculator, required a diagram)” (Arbaugh, 2000, p. 48). In other words, when designing the task sort, researchers had to consider other ways that the tasks could be sorted. In considering the design of the tasks for this study, I wanted to be sure that, in

addition to representing a range of cognitive demand, the tasks represented a range of recognized important task features in English/Language Arts. As such, I drew on work from the National Council for Teachers of English (Gardner, 2008) and the National Writing Project (Nagin 2003) for features of effective writing assignments. To ensure variety across levels of cognitive demand and other important features of writing tasks as identified by NCTE and NWP, I designed a matrix to indicate how writing tasks might fit across multiple features identified (See Appendix C).

After developing the task sort, the activity was piloted to ensure that directions were clear and that tasks could be sorted in multiple ways. This pilot test also allowed me to modify my directions of the sorting task. I clarified my directions for the first sort to ask participants to organize the tasks into *mutually exclusive* categories; for the second sort, I asked them to organize tasks in some kind of hierarchy or continuum of cognitive demand, rather than sorting by cognitive *skill* (e.g., analysis).

Preservice teachers were asked to complete the task sort during phase one of this study. They sorted the tasks three times, with a separate set of instructions for each sort. I summarize the sorting process here. First, packets including all the tasks were handed out to PSTs. Then, preservice teachers were given fifteen minutes to familiarize themselves with the tasks. After these fifteen minutes, they were asked to sort the tasks into as many or as few mutually exclusive “categories of their own making.” They were encouraged to give each category a title (e.g., “Tasks that focus on characters”), and list the letter of each task that they put in the category under the title. The purpose of this first sort was twofold. First, it served as a “warm-up” for PSTs, allowing them to become familiar with the tasks. Also, this sort was meant to provide PSTs with a space to practice sorting tasks into different categories. The preservice teachers

took about ten minutes to sort the tasks. They wrote their answers on a sheet of paper that I provided.

When it appeared that all PSTs were finished with the first sort, the instructor of the class collected their papers. Then, we moved on to the second sort. Students were reminded that a focus of their teacher education program was that they use “high cognitive level tasks” in their classroom. In the second sort, students were asked to create their own categories of cognitive challenge or difficulty, considering the kind or level(s) of thinking with which a student might engage when completing the task. The purpose of this second sort was to introduce the idea of “cognitive demand” to PSTs, and to ask them to begin to think about the tasks in relationship to this topic. Essentially, this sort served as a kind of intellectual warm-up for the final sort they would complete. Again, PSTs wrote their answers on a blank sheet of paper, which I provided. PSTs took less time on this task, finishing in about seven minutes. When they were finished, the instructor for the course collected the student papers.

Preservice teachers engaged in one final sort. For this sort, they were told that some scholars have studied the cognitive demand of writing tasks in specific ways. For this final sort, they would sort tasks into pre-provided categories of cognitive demand.

Each student received a piece of paper that had a chart with two rows and four columns. Each level of the IQA was a separate column. The top row listed the level (1-4) and a brief description of the category, obtained from the IQA rubric. The purpose of providing students with the IQA and asking them to sort tasks by cognitive demand in this way was twofold. First, it gave PSTs a framework for thinking about cognitive demand that may have been different from their own initial frameworks. Second, it provided me with a clear way to organize students’ abilities to sort tasks based on the cognitive demand of the task.

Importantly, the purpose for using a task sort in this study differs from the way that many researchers in mathematics have used the same type of activity. In the mathematics studies described here, a task sort activity was often used as a means of helping teachers learn about the levels of cognitive demand used in the Mathematical Task Framework. In this study, the purpose of the task-sort is to understand whether or how PSTs can categorize a set of writing tasks by cognitive demand, not to test their ability to learn a certain way of categorizing tasks. Recall that the major goals of this study are to examine how a group of PSTs a) begins to think about writing tasks, and b) provides instruction for a cognitively demanding writing task. In this study, the task sort is used first as a window in to how these teachers think about a group of tasks, and to see how – or if – preservice teachers initially think about cognitive demand of writing tasks. Additionally, this task sort activity is used as one means to identify participants for the second phase of the study.

3.3.1.4 Purposive sampling. For the first phase of the study, all preservice teachers enrolled in the Teaching Writing course were invited to participate ($n = 26$). To select participants for the second phase of the study, I used information from the task sorting activity and from the PSTs' writing assignments and reflections. Without reviewing PSTs' task sorts or writing tasks and reflections, an assistant scanned all data and stored electronic copies as back-ups. The assistant also randomly assigned each PST an identification number (1-26), and replaced the PSTs' names with this identification number on the task sort and writing assignment activity. As such, I was able to score both activities and select participants for the second phase of the study without knowing the identity of the participants.

3.3.1.4.1 Scoring the task sort. For the task sorting activity, I used data taken from Sort 3, where students sorted the eighteen tasks based on the IQA's definitions of cognitive

demand. My aim, in this sort, was to understand the degree to which preservice teachers were able to identify tasks that have been rated as cognitively demanding using a validated instrument. First, I scored each PST's third sort for exact matches to the IQA. All PSTs were able to correctly score at least one-third of the IQA tasks; most PSTs were able to correctly identify about half of the tasks based on IQA scores (mean = 9.7 tasks correctly matched), but no PST was able to correctly identify more than 14 tasks. Upon further consideration, using exact-match data seemed a bit unfair, as the IQA is a complex tool; when used in research, raters received extensive training on the tool, and then had the opportunity to practice using it to rate tasks and establish reliability with other raters. I felt that assessing PSTs on the number of exact matches for each category was not the best way to assess their understanding of cognitive challenge in this study. I collapsed score categories of the IQA into two separate categories – more cognitively demanding (IQA scores of three and four) and less cognitively demanding (IQA scores of one and two). Then, I sorted the PST data by near-matches for each task based on these two categories. For example, if a PST identified Task A as a 3 (Task A has an IQA score of 4), it counted as a “near match” because it was in the more cognitively demanding category of three *or* four. When sorting for near matches, PSTs were better able to use the IQA to identify higher and lower level cognitive demand (mean = 14.5 tasks correctly identified).

3.3.1.4.2 Scoring the curriculum analysis task. The curriculum analysis task provided important information about the student teaching placements for the PSTs. In this study, I need to determine whether or not a PST a) can identify tasks as cognitively demanding (using the task sort), and b) has access to cognitively demanding tasks in their student teaching placements (using the curriculum analysis task). Recall that this task required preservice teachers to provide a copy of a cognitively demanding assignment from their student teaching placement

and write an analysis of this task, describing why they felt it was cognitively demanding and the kind of scaffolding their students might need in order to complete the task.

To score this task, I asked the instructor of the Teaching Writing course to provide blinded copies of the curriculum analysis task for all PSTs. I used the IQA to score the assignments, and a second rater scored these tasks to ensure reliability (reliability was .846). The curriculum analysis task revealed a wide range of tasks available to them in the various curricula of their schools. Just over half of PSTs turned in tasks with a high level of cognitive demand – the mean IQA score was 2.6. I used the data provided from both the task sort activity and the curriculum analysis task to determine participants for the second phase of the study (Table 4). I sorted the data first on total matches for high and low level IQA scores from highest to lowest, and sorted the data second on the IQA scores from the curriculum task analysis.

Table 3.1: PST Participant Selection: Task Sort and Curriculum Task Analysis

| PST ID | Total match for high AND low tasks (<i>n</i> = 18) | IQA Ratings |
|---------------|---|--------------------|
| ID 01 | 17 | 3 |
| ID 16 | 17 | 3 |
| ID 24 | 16 | 4 |
| ID 19 | 16 | 3 |
| ID 23 | 16 | 3 |
| ID 15 | 15 | 4 |
| ID 26 | 15 | 4 |
| ID 13 | 15 | 3 |
| ID 05 | 15 | 2 |
| ID 07 | 15 | 2 |
| ID 09 | 15 | 2 |
| ID 11 | 15 | 2 |
| ID 20 | 15 | 2 |
| ID 21 | 15 | 2 |
| ID 25 | 15 | 2 |
| ID 03 | 14 | 3 |
| ID 17 | 14 | 3 |
| ID 18 | 14 | 3 |
| ID 10 | 14 | 1 |
| ID 04 | 13 | 3 |
| ID 06 | 13 | 3 |
| ID 12 | 13 | 3 |
| ID 02 | 13 | 2 |
| ID 08 | 13 | 2 |
| ID 22 | 13 | 2 |
| ID 14 | 11 | 2 |

To determine the participants for phase two, I narrowed my focus to PSTs who correctly matched fifteen of eighteen high and low level tasks. I chose to look at these students as their scores of 15 correct matches were above the class mean score (14.5). Then, I removed PSTs whose curriculum task analysis score was less than 3 since I hoped to observe instruction for cognitively demanding writing tasks, which I considered to be an IQA score of three or higher. Using these criteria, eight participants remained. From these eight students, three students were

eliminated. Two students were enrolled in a certification-only program and would not be student teaching at the time of the study. One other was eliminated as she was recently removed from her teaching placement and placed with a new mentor – because her curriculum analysis task came from her first school, I was unable to determine if she had access to high level tasks at her new placement. Additionally, since she was just becoming accustomed to her new placement, I did not want to disrupt her phase-in to teaching by inviting her to participate in this study. In the end, five preservice teachers were invited to participate in the second phase of my study; four of these teachers agreed. This number fits well within Miles and Huberman's (2002) recommended number of cases for study; four cases provide adequate complexity without providing an overwhelming amount of data. I describe data collection for phase two of my study below.

3.3.2 Phase Two: Observations of Teaching for Cognitively Demanding Tasks

The second phase of the study involved a subset of PSTs who demonstrated a strong understanding of cognitively demanding writing tasks as evidenced by their task sort activity and their writing assignment and reflection. This phase included observations of PSTs enacting instruction for a cognitively demanding writing task at their student teaching/internship placements and also included multiple interviews with each of the PSTs during various phases of the research process. Below, I detail the data collection plan for this subset of preservice teachers.

3.3.2.1 Participants. All four participants in the second phase of this study were pursuing their Masters in the Art of Teaching (MAT) at a large, public, urban university in a rust belt city. In this section, I briefly describe the participants.

Andrew, a male participant in his early 20's, was an intern at Jefferson School, teaching language arts in grades 6, 7, and 8. Prior to coming to the teacher education program, Andrew

had double majored in English and Philosophy. He started his educational studies at a small university on a volleyball scholarship. However, he transferred to a community college near his hometown, and later transferred to the same university where he pursued his MAT to finish his undergraduate education. Andrew noted that he saw writing as an important part of his life; he wasn't sure he considered himself a writer, but he did write often. He kept a journal ("a captain's logbook, I call it", Interview PreInstruction), and very recently had begun writing poetry more often. He noted that he admires writers because he values anyone "who takes the time to think about how words matter ... (because) writing is the only way in our society you can take a step back and think about what you want to come out in words" (Interview PreInstruction). Andrew had an interest in language and the role of language in writing. Andrew's his father spoke Farci, but he never learned the language as a child. He was raised Muslim, and had learned to write Arabic; at the time of the study, he was beginning to teach himself Farci, and often liked to practice writing in the language he was learning. During my observations of his teaching, I often noted that he had written short lines of Farci, almost as doodles, in his planning notebook.

Susan, a female participant in her early 20's, was an intern in at Parkside Traditional Academy, teaching grade 7 Scholars language arts, a class that is similar to an honors track. Susan completed her undergraduate degree in creative writing at the same university where she pursued her MAT. Born and raised in the same city where she went to school, Susan described herself as one who "never really liked English class," but eventually found that she enjoyed "creative or analytical tasks... (where she) felt like (she) was exploring something new or discovering something new in the book" (Pre-observation Interview). She noted that for her, writing was a way for her to begin to appreciate literature, and that she had always enjoyed

writing more than reading. She felt that students needed to understand the purpose for writing so that, regardless of how much they “liked” writing, they could “at least learn to appreciate what they are doing” (Pre-observation Interview).

Pamela, a female participant in her early 20’s, was teaching 7th grade at Fairview Accelerated Academy. Pamela was born in Brazil and immigrated to the United States when she was five years old, knowing nothing of the country or the language, and describes one primary way she learned to speak English was from watching television with subtitles. She describes knowing that she wanted to become a teacher when she was in a high school English class, and “had chills up (my) spine” when they read Whitman. She describes herself as loving language, especially poetry. She studied English literature in a university on the east coast, graduating in three years rather than four, and immediately went to graduate school to pursue her MAT.

Melissa, a female participant in her mid-20’s, was also placed at Parkside Traditional Academy, teaching the 8th grade language arts class. Melissa grew up on the east coast and began her university studies in education at a “tiny school in costal Maine.” However, she participated in an exchange program with another university and spent a semester in a “Study of Women and Gender” department, and decided that it was “more what (she) needed at the time,” and transferred to the new university to major in Women’s Studies. After her undergraduate studies, she engaged in community development work in small towns that were a part of a national rails-to-trail bike trail. In this work, she engaged in a great deal of “real world” writing and research, which Melissa described as “a lot of e-media stuff, blogging, monthly e-newsletters and press releases” (Interview PreInstruction). She enjoyed the writing, but realized that she had “always wanted to work with kids” and decided to “go back to the original plan that I had when I was 18”, and made the decision to pursue her teaching certificate. Since Melissa’s major was in

Women's Studies (rather than English Literature or writing), she spent a year taking prerequisite classes before entering the Masters in the Art of Teaching program.

3.3.2.2 Settings. The case studies in this research took place in three different school settings. These settings were based on the student teaching placement of the selected preservice teachers, since the preservice teachers were the subject of the research rather than the schools or districts. All three schools served students in kindergarten through eighth grade, but the observations took place in grades seven and eight only. In this section, I briefly describe the three schools where the preservice teachers were completing their internships. A summary table of the PSTs and their placement sites can be found in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: PSTs and Student Teaching Placements

| Name | School | Grade |
|---------|------------------------------|--|
| Andrew | Jefferson School | 8 th grade |
| Susan | Parkside Traditional Academy | 7 th grade "scholars" track |
| Pamela | Fairview Accelerated Academy | 7 th grade |
| Melissa | Parkside Traditional Academy | 8 th grade |

Jefferson School is a tuition-based laboratory school affiliated with a local university, serving approximately 400 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Their website notes that their major functions include "the development of new and innovative practices in education; research; inquiry; the development of theory; the preparation of new teachers, and most importantly, the education of children according to the best-established principles of education and our philosophy of educating the whole child" (Website 2012). Jefferson School prides itself on being child-centered, and has a great deal of continuity between teachers and students. In the middle school, for instance, the regular English teacher teaches students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. Since the school is affiliated with a local university, it is also

welcomes preservice teachers and researchers. The school's website notes that every year, "58 faculty and staff members work with more than 15 (preservice) teachers, 4 student teachers, and a varied number of practicum students, researchers and visitors." Andrew noted that every content-area classroom teacher he knows has an intern or student teacher in addition to the regular classroom teacher.

In the school mission statement and philosophy, Jefferson School emphasizes their value of experiential education, progressivism, constructivism, and critical thinking. These ideals are evident in their middle school curriculum via emphasis on "experiential learning, group work, problem solving and critical thinking", with the hope that the students leave the school "as competent thinkers and problem solvers who have the skills to match their keen insights" (Curriculum, 2012). Their curriculum overview for middle school language arts emphasizes inquiry-based instruction and that skills and content are "inextricably connected." Each teacher is responsible for developing his or her own curriculum; they do not work under a standardized curriculum system.

Parkside Traditional Academy is a magnet middle school situated within a large, public urban school district, City District. City Public Schools enroll over 25,000 students in 59 schools. Parkside Traditional Academy is located in a large school building that houses students in grades kindergarten through eight; however, the building is divided into two schools with independently operating offices, principals, and teachers. One school, Parkside Traditional Academy K-5, serves kindergarten through fifth grade and is located on the ground floor, first floor and second floor of the main building. The second school, Parkside Traditional Academy 6-8, serves grades six through eight and uses the third and fourth floor of the main building, as well as a second, smaller building. All students share common areas of the school, such as the

library, gym, cafeteria, and pool. The middle school serves 363 students: 63% were black, 26% were white, seven were multi-racial, and approximately four percent were Asian, Hispanic, or American Indian. Of the students enrolled in the middle school, 80% are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Because Parkside Traditional Academy is a magnet school, parents must apply for their students to attend. The school emphasizes traditional values and structure. Students in all grades wear uniforms – navy slacks and white shirts – and carry daily agenda books in which they write assignments. A major goal of Parkside Traditional Academy 6-8 is to “prepare all students for academic success.” The school emphasizes academic achievement, structure, discipline, character development, technology proficiency, and community responsibility.

Fairview Accelerated Academy, also situated in City District, serves 709 students in kindergarten through grade eight. The student population is roughly 39% African-American, 41% white, eight percent Asian, five percent Hispanic, and 7 percent designated “other.” Of the students enrolled, 33% qualify for free or reduced lunch. The middle school has its own wing, an extension off of the main building of the school. Fairview is an “Accelerated Learning Academy”, which means that their school day is extended 30 minutes beyond the regular day in the district, and their school year is eight days longer than the regular year in the district. In addition to the extended school day, Fairview School has a new partial immersion foreign language program and English as a Second Language Center.

Fairview has implemented the America’s Choice reform model in an effort to raise all students’ performance levels and graduate rates. This program focuses on administering standards-based assessments to monitor student performance and inform instruction, aligning instruction and standards to improve student performance. Additionally, this reform model and

Fairview stress parent involvement; the school has a staff member who serves as the Parent Engagement Specialist, acting as a liaison between parents and the school.

A final important feature of Fairview is that, in addition to their extended school day and school year, they have added a period called “writer’s workshop” to the ELA curriculum. Students at Fairview have a block of English Language arts (2 periods, approximately 84 minutes of instruction) and in addition have a 42-minute period of time set aside for writing instruction. Pamela, who was completing her internship at Fairview, explained that sometimes they use this writer’s workshop as a time to catch up on things in the curriculum that needed attention or to work on the culminating assignment for the unit.

3.3.2.2.1 Curriculum in City District. Both Fairview Accelerated Academy and Parkside Traditional Academy’s instructional programs were designed around a comprehensive curriculum used by the entire school district. This curriculum, the Core Curriculum, is used in all classrooms across the district. On the district website, City District explains that such a curriculum helps to provide consistency for students, so that all students experience similar curriculum as they move from one classroom to the next, and consistency for teachers, by giving them common structures and routines that will be used across classrooms. The curriculum was developed in partnership with the school district and a major testing company and was written by teachers within the district. In language arts, teachers are provided with numbered units, to be taught in order during predetermined grading periods. Teachers are given curriculum guides, which include suggested pacing or time periods for the unit, required texts and supplies for the unit, day-by-day lesson plans for the unit, and sample worksheets which could be used during instruction. Each unit is organized around a conceptual theme or question (e.g., “How does poetry grow out of experiences?”) and includes several smaller overarching questions to guide

the unit. At the end of the unit is a culminating project or final assignment that students must complete. In this study, all observations of lessons were when preservice teachers were preparing students for these culminating projects. In the units observed in this study, the culminating projects had several parts – a personal writing or creative writing of some kind, and a more traditional-type response to literature that asked students to analyze or interpret something that they have read.

3.3.2.3 Data collection. This phase of the study involved the collection and analysis of three main sources of data: a) audio-recordings and observations of instruction, b) classroom materials and artifacts used during instruction, and c) interviews with the preservice teachers about their instruction. Each of these data sources is described in further detail below and summarized in Appendix A.

3.3.2.3.1 Audio-recordings and observations of lessons. Participants nominated a set of lessons where they would be providing writing instruction for a cognitively demanding writing task. For this study, instruction for the cognitively demanding task was observed from start to finish, meaning that observations began when the task was given to students and observations ended when students submitted a final copy of the task or when the teacher was no longer providing time in class for instruction on the task. Observations were conducted on all days when writing instruction occurred for the task. Importantly, this means that observations were not conducted on days when PSTs were conducting reading lessons or doing other instructional activities. I will return to this point when I discuss limitations of this study. For all observed lessons, PSTs were audio-recorded, using either a small recorder placed at a central location in the room (for days when there was more whole-class instruction) or wearing a small lapel microphone (on days when more on-on-one instruction was present).

Participants' lessons were audio taped and later transcribed for analysis. To supplement the audio recordings, I observed instruction for this writing task from beginning (the assigning of the task) to end (the collection of the final draft). During my observations, I took careful jottings, and wrote up these jottings as field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). The purpose of these field notes is, as Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw note, "to discern local knowledge and meaning... by indirectly and inferentially looking for perspectives and concerns embedded and expressed in naturally occurring interaction" (1995, p. 28). In these observations, my attention was primarily focused on the instructional moves of the PST, looking specifically for things that could not be captured via the audio recordings, such as the way a PST physically set up the space of a writing conference.

As is to be expected in collecting data in schools, the process sometimes was not straightforward or was messy. For instance, on my second scheduled day for observation with Pamela, there was a two hour delay and her mentor was out sick; as such, we re-scheduled the observation, since Pamela said that they would not have much, if any, time for writing instruction. So, there were three days (a Friday snow day and a weekend) between the task's introduction to students and her continued instruction. I have provided instruction overviews for each PST in the analyses chapter. In these overviews, I review my classroom observations for each day and briefly summarize the PST's instruction.

3.3.2.3.2 *Classroom materials and artifacts.* I collected daily lesson plans, handouts, and any other resources used during instruction. Importantly, these varied among the PSTs. For instance, Andrew did all of his planning by hand on a yellow-legal pad; often his plans were only a short bulleted list of what he wanted to accomplish in class. Pamela, on the

other hand, typed detailed agendas of what she planned to do, and then wrote hand-written notes on top of this agenda.

Other collected items included copies of the tasks given to students, graphic organizers used during planning, and handouts that included “tips” for students when writing. Instructional handouts and lesson plans were collected on the days that I visited the classrooms. PSTs were asked to provide me with a copy of whatever type of lesson plan was typical for their placement; these lesson plans looked quite different for each participant. In the cases of Pamela, Susan, and Melissa, I obtained copies of the City District curriculum for their unit.

3.3.2.3.3 Interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews with each PST at least three times over the course of this study. For Andrew, Susan, and Melissa, the first interview was conducted prior to observing instruction. Due to a scheduling conflict with Pamela, our “introduction” interview happened after my first day of observation. The goal of this introduction interview was to learn more about the PST’s background and beliefs about high quality writing instruction (See Appendix A, interview questions 1, 2, and 5) and to discuss the writing task. The introduction interviews lasted between 45-75 minutes.

After each lesson, the PST was interviewed about the instructional decisions he or she made in that lesson in an attempt to understand why he or she made these choices. (See Appendix A, interview questions 3, 4, 11 and 12.) In these post-instruction interviews, I also asked questions about instruction in order to more clearly understand each PST’s purposes or goals by their instruction. These interviews were conducted on the same day as the instruction, most often immediately afterwards in another room at the placement site of the PST; in rare cases, they were conducted later that same day at the university campus. One exception was my interview after Day 4 with Susan. As we sat down to begin our interview, a fire alarm sounded,

and Susan had to assist with monitoring students who gathered outside the building. Instead, I emailed questions to her and she replied via email. We used these questions as a starting point for our interview, which was held several days later.

Finally, after instruction for the task was finished and all student work was turned in, the PSTs participated in final interviews, where they reflected upon their instruction over the course of the entire writing task (see Appendix A, interview questions 6-10). The purpose of these interviews was to delve deeper into teachers' instructional choices, and to understand the third sub-question of the main research question. During this phase, I asked PSTs questions about their instruction, at times playing devil's advocate about their instructional decisions, in order to better understand their rationale behind the choices that they made. Johnson, Thompson, Smagorinsky, and Frey (2002) describe this process as understanding the "process through which the teacher adopts ways of thinking prevalent within specific cultures" (p. 143). These types of questions are essential in order to try to understand where teachers acquire important knowledge that they use to make instructional decisions. Although I outlined questions for each interview, unscripted probes were used to encourage elaboration, to clarify important points, or to follow-up on a participant's response (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). When possible, interviews included reviewing transcripts or audio recording from the instruction.

Fontana and Frey (1998) call interviewing "one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to understand our fellow human beings" (p. 47). Interviews are important in this study because they helped me understand the preservice teachers' rationales and thinking behind the instructional choices that they made in their actual lessons, and will help me address my third sub-question research question, "Why do PSTs make these instructional choices? To what or to whom do they attribute the reasoning behind their choices?"

3.3.2.3.4 *Researcher journal and memos.* Over the course of this study, I kept my own research journal and wrote memos about events as they occurred. Emerson et al. (1995) suggests that writing interpretative memos over the course of a research project is a useful way to note ideas of what might be happening in the data. Throughout the course of the study, I wrote memos to myself during the data collection and analysis processes. I also often created voice-memos, using an audio recorder, as I was traveling from my observation site. Primarily, these memos helped explore relationships between concepts and categories (Maxwell, 2005) and helped me consider and reconsider my role as a researcher in the study. These memos became a part of my data, and will help track my own thinking and evolving understandings as I pursue my research questions.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected in this study was analyzed to address the three sub questions of the primary research question. To describe qualitative data analysis, Miles and Huberman (2002) explained:

Like the phenomena they mirror, (qualitative data) are usually complex and ambiguous and sometimes downright contradictory. Doing qualitative analysis means living for as long as possible with that complexity and ambiguity, coming to terms with it, and passing on your conclusions to the reader in a form that clarifies and deepens understanding (p. 394).

Data collected in this study was viewed and reviewed often. In keeping with the qualitative research tradition, data was coded throughout the study (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). My first set of observations was conducted in November 2011, and the last three sets were not conducted until early 2012; in the time between observations, I reviewed the first set of data (transcripts from observations and interviews, field notes, teaching artifacts) in their entirety to

come up with a preliminary coding scheme. This coding scheme was revised throughout the collection of the second and third sets of data, and by the fourth set of data seemed to work well.

Emerson et al. (1995) explain that coding usually happens in two different phases. During early passes through data, I read through the data several times without a predetermined set of codes, with the purpose of looking for “salient patterns” across the data (Graue & Walsh, 1998, p. 163). I coded interactions using grounded theory, focusing on bottom-up, open coding (Charmaz, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to help identify emerging patterns from the data.

3.4.1 Coding Cognitive Demand of Writing Tasks

Using features of cognitively demanding writing tasks described in Chapter Two, I devised four criteria for such tasks. These criteria, and definitions for each criteria, can be found in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Coding for Cognitive Demand

| Feature | Definition | Research |
|---|--|---|
| Construction of knowledge | Task provides opportunity for students to interpret, analyze, synthesize or evaluate information, rather than to re-state, summarize, or reproduce information. | Newmann et al. (2001); American Institute for Research (2005, 2007); Clare, (2000); Clare & Aschbacher (2001); Matsumura et al. (2006); Grossman (2009) |
| Elaborated communication | Task provides opportunity for students to a) make claims, draw conclusions or make generalizations and b) support conclusions with textual evidence, details, or reasoning; requires extended writing | Newmann et al. (2001); American Institute for Research (2005, 2007); Grossman (2009) |
| Relevance beyond school/Disciplinary authenticity | Student has the opportunity to engage in a task that does “real work” in English; the task is akin to something that the student would do in college or if s/he were to pursue a career in English studies | Newmann et al. (2001); American Institute for Research (2005, 2007) |
| Opportunity for student choice | While not related to “cognitively demanding” tasks, significant literature argues that students should have the opportunity to “own” their learning and to be engaged/interested | National Writing Project & Nagin (2006); Gardner (2008) |

3.4.2 Coding for Content of Instruction

To address the second sub-question (what is the nature of instruction for cognitively challenging writing tasks?), I began by separating complete transcripts into instruction episodes. The idea of creating “episodes” has been used by other researchers (Lewis & Ketter, 2004) to note sections of talk that related to the same topic. Any time there was a shift in the topic of instruction or conversation, I created a new episode. I kept track of these episodes by labeling, using the first initial of the PST’s name, followed by the day of instruction, then the numerical order of episodes. For instance, episode A.1.3 would refer to the third topic of conversation from the first day of instruction in Andrew’s classroom. After identifying episodes, I moved to identify *instructional episodes*. I define “instruction” as interactions between students and teachers around content. Not all of the episodes identified were instructional; for example, some episodes related to students asking to use the restroom or sign out a computer; other non-instructional episodes may have been classroom management-related (such as asking a student to stop doing pull-ups in the classroom doorway). Instructional episodes were the episodes coded in-depth in this study.

With my data divided into episodes, I first set out to understand the content of PSTs’ instruction. I read and re-read transcripts, in order to understand the subject areas of discourse (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). One category of talk that emerged from the data centered on helping students understand the task requirements, the prompt itself, and the assessment criteria for the task. Another category that emerged was talk that was, in some way, supposed to help students complete the task. While coding for the content of instruction, I was interested in what this instruction looked like – was it *general* instruction that could take place in any English classroom or for any lesson? Was it *task specific*, supporting either the writing or the thinking

that was necessary for students to complete this particular task? The code “task specific” was inspired by Smagorinsky and Smith’s (1992) claim that writing knowledge is task specific and requires “specific procedures or strategies for dealing with content and form necessary to produce the required product” (Hillocks, 2006, p. 69). As such, this code was used to capture either product-specific strategies, such as how to cite evidence for a particular paper or to capture content-specific knowledge, such as making connections between a text’s characters in a way that would support students’ responses to their writing prompt. The third code under “content of instruction” was trying to capture talk where the teacher was trying to build students’ knowledge of *the writing process*. Talk in these three areas made up the larger category of “instructional talk.” Finally, there were two types of talk that did not fall into the categories listed above. At times, PSTs seemed to use talk to motivate, support, or encourage students, almost to cheer them on and help them keep going. The majority of this talk was too general to fall into “instructive”; as such, I set it apart in its own category. Second, PSTs, especially Melissa, Susan, and Pamela, often referenced particular tools for students to use during task completion. Given the importance of tools in PST learning for writing instruction (e.g., Johnson, Thompson, Smagorinsky, and Frey, 2002), I gave this talk its own category. A summary of the categories, codes, definitions, and examples of talk for the content of instruction can be found in Appendix D.

3.4.3 Coding for Instructional Moves of Teachers

Coding the transcripts for teacher moves to support student writing, I was guided by idea that teachers provide assistance to students via *scaffolding* – a metaphor that is often used in conjunction with preparing students to write in response to tasks that are challenging. Some scholars have suggested that the metaphor is too broad and, thus, can be problematic (Stone, 1998; Dyson, 1990). It’s true that researchers use “scaffolding” in many different ways. I draw

on a Vygotskian (1978) perspective of “scaffolding” in that I assume that scaffolding necessitates a challenging task (within a student’s *zone of proximal development*) and is mediated by interactions between teachers and students around content. Langer and Applebee (1986) have outlined features of scaffolding that are specific to the discipline of English/Language Arts. In their understanding of *instructional scaffolding*, a teacher can assist students’ performance in five ways:

1. Selecting a task that is *appropriately* challenging given the students’ abilities;
2. Providing opportunities for student *ownership* in the writing task – that is, allowing students to have some kind of choice in the terms of the mode, audience, or topic of their writing;
3. Organizing the *structure* of their lessons so that students can integrate new learning in relationship to things they have learned before and things they might learn in the future – in other words, teach skills in the context of an assignment so that the skills can transfer to other work (rather than being isolated to one particular instance);
4. Approaching students in a *collaborative* way, emphasizing working with students rather than evaluating students;
5. Aiming towards student *internalization* of the learning – the ultimate goal of instructional scaffolding is for students to be able to complete the task on their own and understand how and why they have made the choices they made along the way.

Langer and Applebee’s (1986) scaffolding features are useful for understanding the metaphor in more detail. However, I was especially interested in how a teacher might *structure* her lessons, and the pedagogical choices she makes within the classroom settings. Knowing that I was attempting to study instruction, or the interactions between teachers, students, and content within a particular context, I wanted to examine this notion of *structure* further, and more completely understand the interactions between teachers and students that could assist students in their learning. I turned to Wood, Burner, and Ross’s (1976) seminal study of scaffolding to better understand what these interactions might look like. Although they studied a tutor’s interactions with three-, four- and five-year old children, Wood et al. (1976) detail six features of interactions

between the tutor and children that assisted, or scaffolded, children's performance on a challenging task. These features were:

1. *Recruiting* students to participate in the task – helping them get interested or excited about the task at hand;
2. *Marking critical features* of the task – directing students' attention towards important parts of the task necessary for understanding to complete the task;
3. *Reducing degrees of freedom* – narrowing the focus of the student so that he could pay attention to one sub-component of the task in order to master a smaller part before moving on to the greater whole;
4. *Direction maintenance* – keeping the students from getting stuck or, if a student seemed to stall, encouraging the student to refocus and move forward;
5. *Demonstrating* or modeling possible solutions to a task;
6. Helping to *control frustration* – if a student was overwhelmed with the task, the teacher might help the student calm down so that s/he could proceed.

These scaffolding features are important to detail because they shaped my coding of the data for “instructional moves.” The middle four interactions (marking critical features, reducing degrees of freedom, providing direction maintenance, and modeling) were especially helpful because they were concrete ways to describe specific types of interactions I was seeing in instruction.

3.4.4 Discriminating Specific Nature of Instructional Moves

After initial coding, however, I realized that these codes were not specific enough because they did not help me to discriminate between interactions that seemed to mirror the scaffolding literature and interactions unrelated to scaffolding literature. To further understand the kinds of PSTs' scaffolding moves, I returned to the literature to add another lens to the codes.

3.4.4.1 Coding scaffolding for recruitment. Both Langer and Applebee (1986) and Wood et al. (1986) recognize that scaffolding begins by luring a student to the task – providing opportunities for student ownership and/or recruiting the student to the task. All tasks have to be introduced to students in some way, but scholars argue that students must be genuinely engaged in the task. In

my codes for teachers' introduction of the task (recruitment), I needed to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate ways of luring the students to the task. Any interaction that authentically provided opportunity for student ownership or authentically recruited students to the task was coded as "authentic" (e.g., tasks that connect to student interests or relate to prior learning; tasks where students are given opportunity to choose the audience, topic, or mode of writing). Interactions that attempted to "lure" students in some other way (e.g., threatening with a due date, simply telling students that they are starting a new writing task) were coded as "inauthentic."

3.4.4.2 Coding scaffolding during instruction. Four of Wood et al.'s (1976) scaffolding methods take place after students are recruited to the task: reducing degrees of freedom, marking critical features, direction maintenance, and modeling. Hillocks's (1995) discussion on discourse knowledge in writing instruction helped me think more clearly about my expectations for teachers' instruction after the task had been assigned. He summarized what many writing teachers see as a catch-22: to teach knowledge about discourse in writing can often lead to formulaic writing, but without knowledge of what "good" writing might include, it is difficult to imagine that a student could ever learn to be a good writer. He defines two dimensions of discourse knowledge – *declarative knowledge*, in which a writer is able to identify specific characteristics about a piece of writing, and *procedural knowledge*, which enables students to actually be able to use these characteristics in their own writing (Hillocks, 1995, p. 121-122). Hillocks (1995) summarizes procedural and declarative knowledge: "It is clearly important for writers to recognize the qualities of good writing, as those qualities vary from task to task, (but) they also need to produce them if they are to be effective. This is the difference between declarative and procedural knowledge" (p. 143). Procedural knowledge is explicit – it is clear

and specific to a particular task, and helps students understand why they should do something or how they might go about doing something. Hillocks clearly values procedural knowledge over declarative knowledge, but he argued that both are critical for student writing development. As such, rather than coding for appropriateness/inappropriateness of scaffolding moves during instruction, I used both these terms in order to understand the balance of types of discourse knowledge being elicited during instruction.

Hillocks argued that procedural knowledge is best shared with a learner as the learner is trying to do something. In the case of writing, then, a teacher might notice that a student has written a paragraph where he summarizes a conversation. The teacher could use this opportunity to help the student write dialogue in order to bring more life to the characters. In such a lesson, the teacher might help the student discern how each character might speak, how they might react to one another, or how to punctuate their language for particular emphasis. In this example, the teacher would be assisting the student to use important knowledge on how and why to use dialogue, rather than simply identifying an example of dialogue or encouraging the student to “incorporate dialogue” without helping the student actually understand how to do so.

3.4.4.3 Coding instructional moves for frustration control. Likewise, I needed to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate frustration control. In some cases, this was difficult for me as I did not have insider knowledge of students. A teacher may know that a student has very low self-esteem and needs lots of encouragement; to an outsider, this encouragement may seem excessive. For this reason, I tended to give PSTs the benefit of the doubt when coding for appropriateness of frustration control. I only coded these interactions as inappropriate if the teacher was trying to motivate or support the student by making part of the task easier when

there was no evidence that the student was feeling stuck or needed assistance. A chart providing the definitions and examples of these scaffolding types is available in Appendix E.

3.4.5 Analyzing Influences and Constraints

To understand influences on PST instruction, I primarily relied on the interviews conducted throughout the study. I read the transcripts multiple times, first looking for patterns and themes on factors (positive, negative, or neutral) that seemed to play a role in the PSTs' instructional decisions. However, rather than rely on the frequency of the emerging themes, I used these themes to draw attention to critical incidents – critical moments that presented an everyday event that stood out (Martin, 1996) or beliefs or happenings in the interviews that seemed significant or memorable (Brookfield, 1995; Woods, 1993). Specifically, I used these moments as an analytical tool, as a means of documenting, representing, and interpreting what seemed to be important factors in PSTs' instruction.

3.5 RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND GENERALIZABILITY

An important part of any research study is to be sure that the collected data and analysis of it is trustworthy. Often, especially in quantitative research, researchers discuss reliability, validity, and generalizability of their findings. Miles and Huberman (2002) argue, for qualitative research, that there are many ways of “getting analyses ‘right’ – precise, trustworthy, compelling, credible” (p. 394). I believe that these terms – precision, trustworthiness, and credibility —are a useful way of thinking about the traditional terms of reliability, validity, and generalizability for qualitative research; in the following section, I describe how my study addressed these important criteria.

Generally, the term “reliability” refers to the degree to which findings or observations will be the same, or consistent, across multiple researchers or by one researcher over time. Borgen and Biklen (2003) explain that reliability in qualitative research focuses on the *accuracy* and *comprehensiveness* of data or as “a fit between the record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations” (p. 36, emphasis added). In this study, I used multiple sources of data in order to increase the reliability of my data. For example, in the observational phase, field notes were accompanied by audio-recordings of actual lessons and interviews after the lesson. My hope is that these multiple sources of data will present the most precise, accurate, and comprehensive picture of preservice teachers’ understandings and enactments of these tasks.

Validity, in qualitative research, examines the relationship between the data collected and the plausibility of the claims drawn from the data (Maxwell, 2002, p. 41). As such, it is important that qualitative researchers let readers “see” data for themselves (Wollcott, 1994, p. 350) so that the readers can trust the claims being made by the data. I seek to establish validity within this study by being transparent about my analysis methods and including as much raw data within my findings as possible.

Qualitative studies, such as a case study, are not designed to yield generalizability in the sense that one particular finding applies directly to other populations not included in the study. However, some researchers suggest that some principles of generalizability are useful in qualitative research. For instance, Stake (1978) suggests that researchers might consider “naturalistic generalization,” which allows researchers to take findings from one qualitative study and imagine how they might be applied in a *similar* situation (cited in Schofield, 2002, p. 179).

In considering generalizability for this study, it is important to call into question how findings may fit across different school contexts. Lincoln and Guba (1985), for example, suggest that rather than thinking about generalizability between two contexts, researchers might consider the degree of *transferability* between two contexts. The degree to which findings might be transferable is dependent upon how similar the contexts are – the *fittingness* between two contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 124). When two contexts are a good fit, Lincoln and Guba contend that a “working hypothesis from the sending originating context *may* be applicable in the receiving context” (p. 124). In this case, it is important to consider the similarities between contexts to understand whether or how findings from one study might fit another.

However, Schofield (2002) believes that one useful way to think about generalization in qualitative research is to think about *what is* (p. 179, italics original). She argues that qualitative studies might seek to better understand *what is* by looking at multiple sites, selecting sites for typicality. Although results likely will not carry over directly to all contexts, Schofield contends that studying several different sites “makes multisite studies one potentially useful approach to increasing the generalizability of qualitative research to *what is*” (p. 180). Here, it is important to consider whether or how differences between contexts might help explain the bigger picture.

I see my study fitting between these two aspects of generalizability. My study is small, and purposefully so – the smallness allows me to study PSTs’ enactments of tasks in greater detail. My hope is that because all PSTs are working with similar types of tasks – tasks that have a high level of cognitive demand – there is some degree of fittingness between contexts. However, because the PSTs are working in different schools, in different sites, and with different contextual constraints, I understand that my findings may not (and should not) be a perfect fit

across all contexts. In this way, I hope my findings speak in a credible way to a larger idea of what exists in preservice teachers' writing instruction or "what is" across multiple contexts.

4.0 FINDINGS FOR INSTRUCTION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I present findings from my four cases, presenting each preservice teacher (PST) individually. For each case, I first provide a brief overview of instruction, introduce the writing task, and explain how the task qualifies as cognitively demanding based on the criteria described in Chapter three. Next, I provide a description of the PSTs' instruction, relying on coding methods established in Chapter three. Following the presentation of the task analysis, I closely examine episodes of instruction that seem especially critical in relationship to the cognitive demand of the task. Finally, I conclude each case with a discussion of critical incidents (Brookfield, 1995; Martin, 1996; Woods, 1993) from interviews and observations that illuminate influencing or constraining factors on PST instruction. The goal of this chapter is to describe each PST's tasks, instruction, and relationship of instruction to the task's demands. The final chapter will address task and instruction trends across studies.

4.2 ANDREW

4.2.1 Overview of Instruction

I observed Andrew's teaching in his 8th grade classroom at Jefferson Laboratory School for a culminating project on the play *Inherit the Wind* (Lawrence & Lee, 1955). Andrew's 8th grade language arts class included 17 students and lasted 44 minutes, taking place in the middle of the

day. The task was given on Tuesday, November 22, 2011, and the final draft was collected on Friday, December 16, 2011, with 17 class sessions between the task's introduction and due date. Of these 17 days, only six days were used for actual task-related instruction. The task was introduced to students on Tuesday, November 22. Andrew briefly reviewed the requirements and told students to begin outlining their thoughts over the upcoming Thanksgiving break. After reviewing the assignment, students watched the movie *Inherit the Wind*, which was based on the book. Students continued the movie (without instruction about the task) on the following day, and were off school for two days due to the Thanksgiving holiday. Upon their return on Monday, Andrew reviewed the task requirements again and students finished watching the movie. Four days (Tuesday – Friday) were used for writing instruction on the assignment. On Tuesday, Andrew reviewed common mistakes that students made in their previous writing assignment, providing a handout about these mistakes. On Wednesday, Andrew put students into groups and had them talk through their outlines. On Thursday, students were given individual writing time while Andrew monitored their discussion and work, meeting with groups of students and asking follow-up questions about their discussion. There was no instruction for this assignment on Friday or the following Monday. On the following Monday, Andrew began a new novel with the students. A draft of the paper was due on Tuesday, Dec. 6; students turned in the papers and continued work on their new unit. On Wednesday, Dec. 7, Andrew met individually with each student to discuss his feedback on their rough drafts. Final drafts of the paper were due on Friday, Dec. 16, with no writing instruction between Dec. 7 and Dec. 16; these days were dedicated to their new unit of study. A brief summary of Andrew's instruction is provided in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Summary of Andrew's Instruction

| Day | Date | Summary of Instruction |
|-----|----------------|---|
| 1 | Tues. 11/22 | Introduces task to students (15 min). Watches movie for <i>Inherit the Wind</i> . Homework: Outline responses to three questions for one quote. |
| 2 | Mon. 11/28 | Brief time for students to ask questions about task; outlines are due following day (10 minutes). Continue watching movie. Homework: Continue to work on outlines – due Tuesday 11/29. |
| 3 | Tues. 11/29 | Outlines <i>not</i> collected – due date extended to 11/30. Review three “Common Mistakes” from prior writing assignment – whole class reviews handout that explains these mistakes; outlines (due this day) were not addressed. |
| 4 | Wed. 11/30 | Students bring outlines to class and share outlines with small groups. Students work with peer groups on developing ideas in outlines. |
| 5 | Thurs. 12/1 | Students work on drafts on computer. Homework: Rough draft is due Tuesday 12/6. |
| 6 | Wed. 12/7 | Teacher returns rough drafts with teacher comments to students. Students conference one-on-one with teacher. Homework: Final papers due in one week. |

4.2.2 Andrew's Task

In their unit of study for *Inherit the Wind*, Andrew and his mentor chose to study the text by examining the arguments and claims made by various characters throughout the play, identifying rhetorical ways that characters manipulated their words or arguments in order to achieve a certain goal. Early in the unit, Andrew provided the class with a list of fifteen common fallacies of argument and included these fallacies on the task sheet provided to students. For example, the

first identified common fallacy was “hasty generalizations,” defined as “drawing conclusions based on insufficient evidence.” This focus on fallacies was important for the culminating assignment: students were given four quotes from the play and asked to select two quotes and a) identify the type of fallacy being used in the quote, b) identify why the character might choose to use this fallacy or argument tactic, and c) analyze the effect of this fallacy on the play, the character speaking or other characters in the play. Andrew added that he expected students to “answer the three questions fully” and “use textual evidence to support claims.” The final product, according the assignment sheet, was to be two to three pages long. Andrew’s task is available in Appendix F.

4.2.3 Cognitive Demand Analysis

This assignment can be considered cognitively demanding for several reasons. First, students were asked to closely analyze parts of the text that they had not closely analyzed before. In their analysis, students were to identify the common fallacy used by the character, discuss the character’s purpose for using this fallacy, and analyze the effect of the rhetorical strategy. To do this, students needed a foundational understanding of the events in the text. However, the question guides students to think beyond what is written in the text, and to consider how characters’ words and arguments affect other events and other characters in the play. Because these connections are not explicitly made in the text, this task prompted students to read closely and look for implicit connections. Additionally, Andrew was open to students’ interpretation of the quotes that he gave them. He was not looking for them to identify a “correct” fallacy – rather, Andrew wanted students to make a claim (name the fallacy) and support the claim (explain why they picked it). Importantly, Andrew saw the assignment as interpretive in that he was not looking at students’ ability to identify the “right” fallacy, but he was expecting students

to be able to justify their selection and explain how they saw their identified fallacy as driving later events in the play. Additionally, Andrew assigned a longer essay with the expectation that the length would require students to articulate their thinking. A summary of the cognitive demand of Andrew's instruction in relation to the cognitive demand features discussed in Chapter 3 can be found in Table 4.2. From this table, it is clear that Andrew's task easily qualifies as cognitively demanding.

Table 4.2 Cognitive Demand of Andrew's Writing Task

| Task Name | Construction of knowledge about text | Opportunity to make claims | Opportunity to support claims with evidence | Length | Disciplinary authenticity or relevance | Opportunity for student choice/buy-in |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|------------------|---|--|
| <i>Inherit the Wind</i> | Yes | Yes | Yes | 2-3 pages, typed | Yes | Choice (of passage) |

4.2.4 Analysis of Andrew's Instruction

Andrew's instruction for this writing task (225 episodes total) included 69 instructional episodes for the whole class; approximately 39% of his overall classroom time was spent helping students understand the task or providing instruction to help develop student writing. Broadly speaking, about one-third of this instruction was related to understanding the task or the prompt, and the other two-thirds were related to actual writing instruction, as indicated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Content of Andrew's Instruction

| | Code | Instructional Episodes (N = 69) |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Talk around task | Clarifying Requirements | 6 (8%) |
| | Clarifying Prompt | 12 (16%) |
| | Clarifying Assessment | 7 (15%) |
| Talk around instruction | General instruction | 5 (7%) |
| | Task specific instruction | 19 (26%) |
| | Writing process | 17 (23%) |
| Other | Supporting students' motivation and engagement | 3 (4%) |
| | Use of Tools | 0 |

What is especially noteworthy about Andrew's instruction is the balance of his instruction across days. Of the six days of instruction, three days (day two, five, and six) had very little whole-class instruction at all. On the second day, less than five minutes was spent reviewing the task before Andrew began the movie and no other instruction took place during the period. On the fifth day, when students spent the majority of the period working on drafts, Andrew spent five minutes at the beginning of class quickly reviewing the expectations and asked a few students to share goals about what they planned to complete during class. There is only one episode on the fifth day that focuses on the content of students writing – in the last four minutes of class, Andrew briefly talks to students about introductions for “academic papers” and explains to students that he wants them to “get (the teacher/reader) excited about the topic” in the first paragraph. On the sixth day, a day for students to revise/edit their rough drafts and

conference with their peers, Andrew very quickly highlights two “things he saw” in their writing that he wanted to call attention to – “the lack of introductions” and “use of textual evidence.” He spends two minutes talking to the whole group about these things, and then begins writing conferences. Taken in sum, the whole-group instruction on these days represents roughly 15 minutes of the three class periods. Table 4.4 provides a summary of the codes for the content of Andrew’s episodes across the six days of instruction.

Table 4.4: Andrew’s Content of Instruction Across All Days of Teaching

| | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 | Day 6 | Total per content |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Instructional episodes focused on understanding the task | 11 (20%) | 1 (1%) | 2 (3%) | 9 (13%) | 2 (3%) | 0 | 25 (37%) |
| Instructional episodes focused on developing writing or interpretation | 4 (6%) | 5 (7%) | 18 (26%) | 7 (10%) | 3 (4%) | 4 (6%) | 41 (59%) |
| Instructional episodes focused on use of tools or supporting student engagement | 1 (1%) | 0 | 0 | 1 (1%) | 1 (1%) | 0 | 3 (4%) |
| Total instructional episodes | 16 (23%) | 6 (9%) | 20 (30%) | 17 (25%) | 6 (9%) | 4 (6%) | 69 (100%) |

Of these six days, the majority of writing instruction took place on days one, three, and four. On day one, Andrew’s goal seemed to be to ensure that students understood the writing prompt and what they needed to do in order to answer the prompt. On day three, Andrew reviewed “common mistakes” that he observed in a previous writing assignment, and guided students through thinking about and correcting such mistakes. On the fourth day, when students brought outlines, Andrew again spent time reviewing the task requirements. In the following

section, I describe in greater detail Andrew's teaching during episodes where he attempted to help develop students' writing.

4.2.4.1 “What I’m going to fix” ... The majority of instructional episodes focused on writing development took place on Andrew's third day of instruction, when he gave students a handout that highlighted three “common mistakes” he had noticed on previously-submitted student papers. He explained to me, “I realized that I was giving so many students the same advice that I might as well give them all the tangible piece of paper that they can hold onto and say, “OK, this is what [my teacher] said I need to fix, so this is what I’m going to fix” (Interview, Day 3). Andrew had taken great care to notice trends in his students' writing, to use these trends to guide his subsequent teaching (Atwell, 1998), and to provide opportunities for students to practice revising some sample sentences (Graham & Perin, 2007). However, this instruction was concentrated into one class period. This contradicts best practices research in writing instruction, which suggests that writing instruction should be integrated within the work or the writing that students do in the classroom (Langer & Applebee, 1986; Atwell, 1998). Although the mistakes that Andrew names are authentically grounded in students' actual needs as writers, the proximity of instruction to student writing may be problematic.

In terms of developing student writing, Andrew does clearly identify topics that he'd like students to fix. Coding suggests that roughly 40% of Andrew's instructional moves made during writing instruction were coded as “marking critical features” or focusing students' attention on important parts of writing. However, though Andrew very clearly focuses students' attention on important declarative aspects of their writing like conciseness or academic tone, he seldom provides procedural knowledge about how they might do this. Below, I provide an analysis of episodes that align with the three “common mistakes” that Andrew identified. I use this analysis

as a means to represent how Andrew's instruction focuses on naming what to fix rather than explaining how to do it.

4.2.4.1.1 *Not beginning with 'because' and not using 'like'.* The first “mistake” that Andrew addressed is using “because” to start a sentence or using “like” in a written essay. Although the two topics seem unrelated (the first seems to deal with dependent/independent clauses; the second seems to deal with tone in academic essays), Andrew linked them together as mistakes that reduce the general academic tone and nature of the type of essay his students were writing. Andrew explains the first “mistake” as one that is “not that hard to fix”:

Andrew: The first one, starting with “because” and using “like.” This is very easy to edit your paper for. You can start a sentence with “because,” grammatically it can work, but it's not something I would have you do right now. (*Speaking to mentor*) You don't want them using “because” to start a sentence?

Mentor: Yeah, exactly. It's also convention, but it's also “because,” “so,” “and,” any of them at the beginning like that, we just want to stay away from them.

Andrew: Or “but.” Don't start your sentences with those. It can be done grammatically, it can be done correctly, but try to stay away from it. So if you see one of your sentences start with “because,” just X that “because” out and start a different way. (3.3)

This was the first episode in a series of five in a row that talked about either using “because” or “like.” Instructionally, this move was categorized as marking critical features. Although he begins by emphasizing both “because” and “like”, the heart of this episode deals with not beginning a sentence with “because.” He is telling students what to avoid doing – “don't use these words when you start a sentence” – even though it “can be done grammatically.” Had he wanted students to understand *how* it could be done grammatically, Andrew could have led students on a mini-lesson focusing on using subordinate clauses in their writing, and how one might punctuate such a sentence. Alternatively, he might have focused on

how beginning with a subordinate clause might lead to a sentence fragment if students aren't careful. However, Andrew's goal in this instance seems not to be helping students understand how to use "because" correctly, but instead to teach them to avoid its use all together. It is also important to note that while he tells students to "start a different way," he offers no examples of alternative ways to begin. This is important because a student could use a word other than "because," yet still fall into the trouble of beginning a sentence with a subordinate clause. This is further evidence that Andrew likely did not aim to teach students about the useful or problematic aspects of subordinate clauses in writing, but instead aimed to make his students stop starting a sentence with "because." After discussing the use of "because" at the start of sentences, Andrew continues discussion and shifts the focus to revising a sentence that begins with "because":

Andrew: So let's figure out this—I want everyone to write down the sentence we're going to come up with as a class in these lines. "Because Mary was engaged to Cates, like, she was really manipulated." This isn't an exact sentence that was in anybody's paper, but these are sentences like sentences I found in people's papers. When you use the word "like" like this, it's as though you're having a conversation. If I was talking to you about this play, I can imagine using the word "like." Maybe I would use that word in this way. But when you're writing a paper, it should not be in there in that way. Like, do not start your sentences with "like."

Student (suggesting an alternative): "Since"?

Andrew: You can start a sentence with "since," but – (*speaking to his mentor*) what do you think of "since"?

Mentor: Let's not put it there.

Andrew: Yeah. "Because" and "like," stay away from that. (3.5)

At this point in the conversation, neither Andrew nor his mentor provide an opportunity for students to understand how starting with "since" is similar to starting with "because" – both are subordinating conjunctions and both would necessitate proper punctuation and a dependent

clause to follow. In these interactions, Andrew has managed to focus students' attention on this issue. Although Andrew's instruction may lead to overall better quality writing in this instance, his instruction does not help students understand the purpose for avoiding "because" or "since," causing one to question how students will use this information in future writing.

In the conversation that follows, Andrew continues to collect possible alternatives for beginning a sentence.

Student: I think you could say, "Mary is engaged to Cates, so she could be easily manipulated because she loved him," or something like that. I think also that instead of saying, "Because Mary was engaged to Cates, like, she was really manipulated," I think I would say, "Because Mary was engaged to Cates, she was, like, easily manipulated." I would revise it first, so, "Mary is engaged to Cates, so she is—"

Andrew: "Mary's engagement to Cates—"

Student: Yeah, "Mary's engagement to Cates means that she can be manipulated because she loves him."

Andrew: Mary, how would you start this sentence?

Mary: I think it's the same thing, but I would say something like, "Mary is engaged to Cates, therefore she is manipulated." (*Andrew writes on the board, "Mary is engaged to Cates, therefore..."*)

Andrew: Jane?

Jane: I have, "Mary is engaged to Cates, which leads to—"

Andrew: Don't worry about that right now, it's just an example. I was just trying to come up with something quickly. So take away the "because" at the beginning and don't use "like." Jerry?

Jerry: "Mary is engaged to Cates and this leads—"

Andrew: So this could be—or you could say, "Due to Mary being engaged—" (*He writes "Due to Mary being engaged..." on the board*) So write one of these down. Write whatever you think is best in these things as we go over it. Robert?

Robert: Since.

Andrew: Try not to use “since.” Just stay away from that. We’re not going to come up with a huge list of things you can and cannot do, it’s a good practice to stay away from “since.” Jane?

Jane: Could you write it backwards, like, “Mary is easily manipulated because she is—”

Andrew: Exactly. You could just switch the sentence around. “Mary is easily manipulated because—” So these are all things you could use for this first sentence. Do not start your sentences with “because” and do not use “like.” I have it written down. You are scholars. If a scholar writes a paper, they’re not going to throw in “like” or “whatever.” It’s not a conversation. (3.6)

There are several noteworthy aspects to this section of conversation. First, although Andrew is eliciting responses from students, notice that twice he shifts the content of students’ responses. In response to the first student and to Jerry, Andrew takes the answers and modifies them, without explication of why his version may be better and without pointing out the differences between the two versions. Second, in the examples provided by the first student and Mary, both students are switching the order of the sentence to begin with a dependent clause and ending the sentence with a subordinate clause (e.g., “Mary is engaged to Cates, *so* she could be...” “Mary is engaged to Cates, *which leads to...*”). In this exchange, Andrew’s focus is on phrases to avoid in order to help students’ essays be more academic in tone, but his instruction does not help students understand how certain phrases (like “because”) might cause writing to sound more colloquial. Andrew might have used this opportunity to help students understand the difference between subordinate and dependent clauses, and how one could use both together to create a complex sentence; both student suggestions would work well as examples of how to write such sentences. However, Andrew does not take the opportunity to point this out— he even seems to brush off Jane’s alternative, and says they are just “coming up with (examples) quickly.”

Overall, it seems like Andrew's goal is really to have students substitute the words "because" and "since" with something else. Although Andrew is collecting and writing possible alternatives for starting a sentence without "because", these interactions do not support students to do this independently. He does not provide the necessary procedural knowledge for students to fully understand the circumstances under which this might be possible or the ways that they might do so.

4.2.4.1.2 "Trim the fat". In his second series of instructional episodes, Andrew again very clearly marks the important topic for students. He introduces the notion of "trimming the fat" as one that is "fairly difficult to master," and explained to students that since it was a difficult thing to do, it was important to start early. He told students:

I remember one of the rules that (we discussed) for poetry was, "Trim the fat." Same goes for writing essays. Trim the fat. (*Reading from handout.*) Many people put a lot of extra wording in front of their main point. Pretend this is a telegram. (*Andrew notices that students are looking at him as if they don't quite follow what he is saying.*) There used to be these things called telegrams. You'd send somebody a telegram and you had to pay per word. (*Reading from handout.*) Pretend you're paying per word. (*Speaking to students.*) Each word you write down, you're paying for. So you don't want to write that many words in your sentences. If you don't need a word, take it out. (3.7)

Here, Andrew is marking this particular feature for students by relating it to the same rule in poetry, studied earlier in that school year. He continues to tell students what people do when they write too much ("put a lot of extra wording in front of their main point") and what to do about it ("if you don't need a word, take it out"). With this emphasis on what to do, this example falls under eliciting declarative knowledge. Also noteworthy is that Andrew tries to encourage students to "pretend this is a telegram." This example may not have been as helpful as it could have been, however, since it was clear from students' reactions that they weren't quite sure what

a telegram was. Andrew's example didn't build on students' prior knowledge and was likely not helpful.

Next, Andrew referenced an example that he had provided on the handout for students. The example sentence read, "While I was reading the play, I felt like, especially at the beginning of the play, Mary is so easily manipulated because her father has been pressuring her ever since she was a child." Andrew asked students to consider this overly wordy sentence in the conversation that follows:

Andrew: What words can we take out of here? How can we make this a stronger sentence? Jerry.

Jerry: You could just take out, "At the beginning of the play."

Andrew: So we don't need the part, "While I was reading—" is what you're saying? OK. Christa.

Christa: You could say, "Mary is easily manipulated—"

Andrew: Yeah. You could just take out that entire first (part). "Mary was so easily manipulated because her father has been pressuring her ever since she was a child." Jane.

Jane: You also say, "While I was reading the play, I felt like at the beginning of it—"

Andrew: You're getting into the same trap, though. There's so many words in there. All that stuff does not need to be in there. That is extra wording. You just get to the point. Say what you're going to say. Trim the fat. So everybody, I want you writing down a sentence in here, how would you trim the fat. (3.8)

Notice that the interactions between Andrew and his students in this episode closely mirror the interactions from the episode where Andrew and his students discuss alternative ways to begin a sentence without "because." In these interactions between Andrew and his students, Andrew is collecting possible ways to revise the wordy sentence. These possible revisions serve as very short demonstrations or models of how to better write the sentence. Andrew elicits responses from three students. However, the way in which Andrew collects responses is noteworthy. In

response to Jerry and Christa, Andrew did nothing to elicit student thinking about why they decided to take out particular words, nor did he offer his own thoughts as to how taking out these words makes it a “stronger sentence.” When Jane offered her sample sentence, like her peers, she was removing certain words, but Andrew responded that she’s “getting in the same trap” with “extra wording.” However, he did not offer any kind of explanation as to how Jane’s example differs from the prior two students’, nor did he help students understand how the words removed or kept might make the writing “stronger.” Because of this, Andrew is again eliciting declarative knowledge. Using student examples, he worked to build an understanding of what do to (or in this case, what not to do), but he did not explain how to decide what “fat” to trim or why cutting certain words is more effective than cutting other words.

Andrew provided students with just over one minute to revise the sample sentence on their own. In this minute, he checked in quickly with three students. Then, when wrapping up this topic, he turned to students and explained the following:

When it comes to these, it’s not about so much that I don’t want to read these words, it’s that your words are going to be stronger if you don’t have all that extra stuff in there. When I read your sentences and there’s not all that extra fluff, your paper is going to be that much stronger. A lot of times, when you can condense your words like this and you get to each point very quickly, it’s easier for the reader to read. (3.12)

Andrew closed his instruction on this topic by explaining to students one reason why this conciseness matters. He explained that being concise is considerate for the readers and makes their papers “stronger” and “easier” to read. He also works to help the students understand how a reader might understand their writing based on its conciseness. This episode gets closer to what Hillocks (1995) describes as procedural, as Andrew is calling attention to a purpose for conciseness in writing.

4.2.4.1.3 “Explaining quotes”. Andrew’s strongest instances of providing procedural knowledge came when he described how to explain quotes in their writing. Just as he did with the first two topics, Andrew began by clearly marking the discussion topic. He also set a purpose for explaining quotes, telling students that this would matter in high school, college, or any future research papers. Andrew was trying to emphasize that using quotes was not something that will only happen in their 8th grade class, but that it will serve them in their future academic writing, too. Then, Andrew refers to the handout:

Andrew: I wrote on (this handout), “Try to explain the importance of the words in the quote.” Many times you can take a few words from a sentence and say, “These words are important because—” Or say, “Here we see that blank is using the word blank which shows blank.” A few words is all you need.... Let’s say I was answering the question, “How do stage directions develop characters?” I would say something like, “When Brady uses the words ‘instructing as if he were a child,’ it shows that blank is how he’s acting towards Drummond,” or “He sees himself as *blank*” in terms of Drummond.

Student: Superior.

Andrew: You could use a word like “superior,” exactly. So, notice how we’re not using the whole entire quote – we’re just saying that these few words show that Brady thinks he is superior to Drummond. (3.15)

Andrew provides a clear strategy in explaining quotes – to focus on a few words within the quote that advance the purpose for using the quote and explain why those words are important. In this way, he is providing procedural knowledge by giving students a strategy and a clear “how” to use the strategy. He gives students time to write down their possible answers on the handout, and then explains that there are many other ways to integrate quotes into a paper. He ends his instruction by telling students, “[Sometimes teachers] say just use textual evidence, and then I for some reason just expect that you should use textual evidence, but that’s not always the case. You have to understand how to use it” (3.22). Here, Andrew is the clearest and most explicit that he’s been in all of his writing instruction. He tells students it isn’t just having quotes,

but understanding how to use quotes that is important. However, it is noteworthy that his instruction focuses on how to explain a quote, but not necessarily how to use that explanation in a larger paper.

The instruction discussed thus far has focused on writing. By addressing these “common mistakes,” Andrew seemed to want to strengthen students’ overall written responses to literature. However, none of his instruction was directed to help students decide how they would select their fallacy or explain why they selected that fallacy. The instruction also doesn’t help students think about how they might use textual evidence to explain why they selected the fallacy. Andrew did begin to help students understand how to explain a quote, but this instruction is not connected to the actual work that students will be doing in this particular assignment – performing a close analysis of rhetorical strategies within the text and making an argument about how these rhetorical strategies impacted the outcome of the play.

4.2.4.2 “I want to see that you’ve done a process.” Unlike Andrew’s instruction for particular skills or strategies, episodes that were coded as “writing process” were interspersed throughout six days of his instruction. Andrew was constantly reminding his students about a process approach. Beginning on the first day of instruction, and several times throughout the first three days, Andrew reminded the students what he saw as their writing process for this assignment: they would begin with an outline for one excerpt, they’d review that outline with peers in class, then they’d type a rough draft, get feedback, and type a final draft. The brief discussion below is representative of the majority of Andrew’s talk about writing process.

Andrew (explaining when students hand in work): When you hand to me your outline, your rough draft, not today, but with your final, when you hand me your final essay, you’re going to hand your outline, your rough draft back and your final. It’s a process.

Student: Can I make it neater? It’s messy.

Andrew: No, no, if it's messy, it's messy. It's fine. I'm not going to be reading it, I just want to see that you've done a process and you've done work. (4.28)

The instructional move here, like the majority of the moves when Andrew is discussing the writing process, was direction maintenance – Andrew is using the writing process as a vehicle for helping students understand the progression of their own writing, and helping them understand what is coming up in the future, to give them something to work towards. Like Andrew's writing instruction, this episode focuses mostly on providing declarative knowledge to students. He wants students to know that writing *is* a process and wants to see the work they've done along the way. Note that Andrew says "I'm not going to be reading it, I just want to see that you've done a process." This statement suggests that, although Andrew is trying to help his students understand that writing is a process, he is communicating that he, as the teacher, isn't interested in the student writing throughout the process. He seems most interested in the student product that comes at the end of the process. Andrew's goal does not seem to include teaching the usefulness of the writing process or how this process might support them in thinking about or responding to this cognitively demanding task.

Andrew had several instances where he lead students to consider their goals for daily writing. This goal setting prior to writing was another way that Andrew tried to help students think about their writing process, or think about what they wanted to accomplish. Near the beginning of Andrew's lesson on the fifth day, he asks students to set goals for what they hope to get done during the writing period.

Andrew: So to start out, I want somebody to tell me, one volunteer to tell me what they're going to do today to start off their writing. Gary.

Gary: I'm going to work on the outline of the—I was going to work on the outline.

Andrew: If you want to continue working on that, just because the laptops are here doesn't mean you need to be typing today... John?

John: I'm going to be editing the five questions (*referencing a previous writing assignment that he has not yet turned in*).

Teacher: Can we stick with (*the fallacies assignment*) today? I'll talk to you about this today, but can we stick with working on this today? Charles.

Charles: I'm going to start writing up my rough draft for the essay.

Teacher: Good. These are things we can work on today. Writing your rough draft, outlining, taking notes. What else can you work on today? (5.4-5.6)

From here, students begin working and Andrew checks in with students one-on-one; students say they are going to “work on (the) outline and start the questions,” “start the paper,” and “write my rough draft.” As noted before, Andrew leads students in a kind of serial sharing of goals. He collects goals from three students and then summarizes the three responses by repeating what types of things students might work on during the day's lesson. These goals are quite general, and he offers no sense of how to do them. For instance, he might have asked Charles to talk through his process of using his outline to form the basis of the rough draft. Which of the three sub-questions of the task, for example, did Charles feel he had the strongest evidence to support? Did any of the sub-questions need re-thinking or new evidence? Hillocks (1995) argues, “when we set objectives, we attempt to determine specifically what (desirable) qualities” of good writing we intend to be working on and argues that “simple statements (e.g., “to write a better paragraph”) are not simply useless but harmful (because) they hide the complexity of the tasks they represent” (p. 143, 145). A “rough draft” is too vague and does not help the student think about the complex tasks that Andrew has asked the students to consider in his prompt. In all of Andrew's talk about the writing process, there are no episodes where he models part of his

writing process or walks students through any processes that more skillful writers might use to generate ideas, revise ideas, or produce drafts. Broadly, it seems that Andrew's goal is to get students to produce something (the draft, the outline, the final product); he does not seem to be focused on supporting students' literary interpretations or to help them think about how they are going to make or support claims about the rhetorical strategies being used in the text.

4.2.5 Constraints and Influences

In this section, I briefly describe two notable influences on Andrew's instruction: his development of goals for student work and his beliefs about writing.

4.2.5.1 Teaching thinking. On the surface, it seems like Andrew does not provide much writing instruction, and when he does, he seems to focus on helping his students think more about "what" to do rather than "how" to do it. But in his discussions with me, and with his students, Andrew repeatedly demonstrated that he valued the way that writing makes a person think carefully about what they are saying. In the interview before instruction, he said, "writing is the only way in our society where you can take a step back and think about what you want to come out in words. [When I write,] I try to think about what I want to communicate with people in terms of not just an immediate answer. It's like, "This is what I've *thought* about." When he described for me what he thought about a cognitively demanding writing assignment, he said that such assignments would require students to "synthesize different ideas in their heads" and produce something so that a reader would "not be confused by [the writer's] thoughts" (Pre-observation interview).

In his actual instruction, Andrew was focused on ideas over writing. He told students that the purpose of their outlines was to "get a thought process down" (Post-Instruction Interview 4). On the fourth day of instruction, when his students were reviewing each other's outlines, he

noted that he did not want his students to be thinking about writing at all. The day, as he saw it, was a chance for students to “just talk about their ideas”; he hoped students would be giving each other feedback that would “help convey their ideas better to a reader” (Post-Instruction Interview 4). When talking to a student about how to introduce the paper, Andrew encouraged the students to do what “makes it easier for you to organize your thoughts” (5.31).

In our final interview, Andrew was critical of much of the English instruction he received as a student and said that he felt that many English papers were “fluff without substance.” He credited his philosophy classes for teaching him how to write well. He explained to me,

I think something that is lacking in writing in the field of English in general is, ‘I think A. I also think B. A causes B because of this...’ I think a lot of English papers are like the fluff without substance. You can have fluff in everything and you can make things look good and sound good, but there’s also very little substance to most things that I did, at least, in English until I—I went on this website that was like, “How to write philosophy papers.” They said, “Listen, you need to say what you think right away and then say why you think that and what inferences you’re making.”

To give me examples of what he meant, Andrew continued to talk about students who did a nice job of making “good” inferences. Despite Andrew’s commitment to the thinking process, in all observed lessons, there was no instruction on how students might make inferences or connect their ideas about the play. The closest instruction on this was the prompt itself, which asked students to identify a fallacy of logic and explain the purpose and effect of using that particular rhetorical strategy. In this way, the prompt was the most noticeable instruction. Andrew provided an opportunity for students to make inferences and connect their thinking in a way that he clearly valued. However, the students were, in some ways, left alone to do this kind of thinking, because his instruction did not seem to focus on the thinking aspect of the writing process.

Even in his assessment of student work, Andrew continued to value student thinking over their writing. In discussing his feedback on student work in his final interview, Andrew noted that he enjoyed one paper because he “liked [the student’s] thoughts a lot” and gave the student feedback that said “You have incredible thoughts on this paper – they are clear and interesting.” Andrew talked about other student work as having “good progression of thoughts” and “step-by-step train of thought.” Andrew told me, “I think it’s more important for (my students) to have thoughts that build on one another rather than to be able to do compound sentences” (Final Interview). One interpretation of the fact that Andrew didn’t provide much actual writing instruction is that he seemed to care more about students’ thoughts than the quality of the written product; he was most concerned about how he could understand students’ thoughts as they expressed them in writing.

4.2.5.2 Developing goals in media res. Another challenge for Andrew was that he seemed to develop clarity about his intentions for the assignment and his instruction as he continued teaching, in a sort of trial-by-fire way. For instance, Andrew’s instruction on “trimming fat” prior to draft writing came up on the fifth day of instruction, when most students were working on revising drafts. Andrew approached a student to talk over his draft.

James: I was trying to—I’m trying to make these a little shorter, because mine were a little too long.

Teacher: Don’t worry about it. All right... I just want to make sure—for the rough draft, it’s better to get more ideas out there than fewer ideas. So don’t worry about shortening it in terms of your ideas. If there are more ideas out there, I’d rather see all of your ideas and then tell you to shorten it than you shorten it beforehand. Does that make sense?

Here, James seems to be doing what he thought he was to do, referencing the handout that Andrew had provided. However, Andrew clarifies in his discussion that he would prefer

that the student work on developing his ideas in the initial draft, and then work on tightening the essay later. This idea runs parallel to many of my conversations with Andrew where he places clear value on the quality of student ideas and thinking – he wants students to get “all of their ideas” out in an initial draft. However, it does not align with the earlier instruction about “trimming the fat.” Andrew positioned this topic of conciseness prior to the generation of drafts; he did not realize that by positioning this topic early in his instruction, it could actually impeded students’ initial development of ideas, which he so clearly valued.

Another example of Andrew’s development of goals in the middle of instruction centered around the topic of introductions. Although Andrew implicitly imagined this assignment to be a traditional paper with an introduction, he never stated this expectation to students; neither his instructions nor his draft mentioned an introduction. On the fifth day of instruction, when Andrew’s students were working on their drafts, he realized that some students had interpreted the three questions of the task as worksheet-type answers, and were numbering their paragraphs “1,” “2,” and “3” or writing “In this paper, I will talk about...”. Andrew, though, had imagined the paper to be an essay about “how fallacies affected the world and the play” as was written on task sheet, and expected students to write an introduction to lead in to their discussions of specific examples. Less than two minutes before the fifth class was over, Andrew addresses the whole class,

Robert and I were having a good conversation about introductions. Introductions with academic papers are in this sort of middle ground where you don’t know how bland you should be. “In this paper I’m going to write that there is a common fallacy in these things,” and so on and so on. And a lot of times even when I’m writing academic papers, I get caught up in this thing where I just do that. But I had this professor in one of my classes, it was a small class, he said, “Listen, guys, I still have to read these papers, so kind of get me ready to read these papers when I’m reading them. Get me excited about it in your first paragraph. I still have to want to read your paper.” So think about how you’re going to get your reader sort of excited about fallacies of arguments. And the best

way I can say that is, explain to me in a few sentences, I know you could write a whole paper on this, why they're important and why we're even talking about fallacies. Talk about how they influence the play, how they're a big part of society, how we need to think about them or how in politics they're a big problem. We've been talking about fallacies for so long now that you can tell me why fallacies are important. If you have a problem with that, we can talk about it and think about it, but intrigue me. Tell me why we're talking about fallacies. Does that make sense to everybody?

Studying fallacies of logic had been something that students had been doing throughout the unit, and Andrew felt confident that students understood what they were and how they were used in society. He did not consider that students might not write an introduction until he saw their initial drafts, and did not clearly articulate his expectations for an introduction until he saw students doing something that he did not want them to do. He wanted students to use some of that knowledge to "get the reader excited" about reading the paper. The content of his talk about introductions explains these expectations, encouraging students to think about how fallacies matter either in the play or more broadly in life; however, it is noteworthy that such instruction occurred only after he realized that students had not included an instruction, on the second to last day of instruction.

In our interview of the fifth day, I asked Andrew to talk to me about his instruction for introductions. He said that he felt like introductions in academic writing were a "gray area" because, as a student, he felt like "if it is an academic paper, it's going to be boring anyway, so why does it matter?" When I asked him why he waited to discuss this until the last day before drafts were due, he said that he hadn't anticipated needing to address it until he saw some of the students' writing because he hadn't seen any papers where they had written an introduction. Andrew told me he didn't "know what [students] usually do" for academic writing (Post-instruction Interview 5). It seemed like Andrew was waiting to see what students did to understand whether or not it aligned with his expectations, and, when it didn't, tried to help

students re-think about how to write introductions. Importantly, in his assessment of student work, Andrew did not mind if students had an introduction or not. One student, who earned a 47 out of 50 points, “didn’t do an introduction, really,” but “had such solid progression of thought” that Andrew was not bothered by the lack of introduction (Final Interview).

4.2.6 Summary

In sum, Andrew spends roughly 23% of his time engaging in writing instruction, but I observed no episodes in which Andrew provided whole-class instruction to help support the cognitive demands of the task (e.g., supporting students to explain why they had selected a particular fallacy or connecting how the fallacy affected plot events or other character’s actions). The majority of Andrew’s whole-class writing instruction took place on one day out of six days of instruction; however, instruction coded as helping students take or understand a process-based approach to writing was interspersed throughout all six days. In his teaching, Andrew most often uses the scaffolding move of marking critical features for students (Wood et al., 1976); he focuses students’ attention on a particular area or aspect of their writing in order to speak to them about something he has decided is important. In his writing instruction, Andrew mostly attempts to build students’ declarative knowledge – their abilities to recognize ways that they should not start a sentence, and recognize that sentences should not be too wordy. Less frequently, Andrew builds procedural knowledge, helping students understand how to use quotes in their writing beyond simply including the quote. Andrew’s belief that writing is very much about representing thinking on paper and his development of expectations for quality work as he continued teaching might have driven some of his instructional choices.

4.3 SUSAN

4.3.1 Overview of Instruction

I observed Susan's teaching in her 7th grade "scholars" classroom at Parkside Traditional Academy. The 7th grade Parkside students were housed in a different building from the students in 6th and 8th grade. This was important because transitions to and from class for Susan's students seemed to go smoothly – she was able to get them settled and working very quickly. The "scholars" classroom in this district is akin to an "honors" track classroom; however, students are placed in the "scholars" program based on standardized test scores in mathematics, and were grouped in "scholars" classes for both English and math. Susan noted that she felt like there were still "many levels" of students within her class, and that it was a struggle because "the kids who are strong are always talking and participating every day, and the kids who are perhaps a little lower just kind of get lost" (Pre-observation Interview). Her language arts class included 25 students; class met daily for 95 minutes in the two periods right before lunch. The assignment, a response to literature essay based off of the novel *Tangerine* (Bloor, 2006), was given to students on Tuesday, January 10, 2012 and was collected on Tuesday, January 17, 2012. I observed instruction from Tuesday, January 10 through Friday, January, 13. On the following Monday, school was not in session for a holiday, and assignments were due on Tuesday, January 17.

On the day the assignment was distributed, Susan spent approximately 25 minutes reviewing the assignment and its criteria. Then, she reviewed a model of a "response to literature" assignment – the same type of task Susan's students were about to begin, but for a different novel. After reviewing the model, Susan handed out the district rubric and asked students to assess the model. Students assessed the model and reviewed their decisions for the

scores they gave. Finally, Susan gave students time to start working on graphic organizers and brainstorming the thesis sentence for their papers. On the second day of instruction, Susan gave time to continue working on graphic organizers at the start of class while she reviewed the task's requirements with a small group of students who were absent the previous day. Then, she worked with the whole class on writing thesis sentences. She gave an extensive mini-lesson on writing introductions, and briefly reviewed writing conclusions, then gave students time to work on their drafts. On Thursday, Susan began class with a chance for students to explain what was confusing about the prompt, and to ask questions. Then, she walked the class through one student's introduction and first body paragraph as a means of a) giving feedback on the student's work and b) showing other students what to include in an introduction and first body paragraph. Next, she asked students to work on their own papers. Students who were finished with their own papers exchanged papers with a peer and made "glows" and "grows" comments, giving feedback on what they did well and what could be improved. On Friday, the last day devoted to working on the assignment, students were to bring a rough draft to class. Susan began class asking students what was easy and hard about the assignment, and what they learned about the book from doing this assignment. Then, she passed out a 4-page (front-to-back) self-assessment sheet that guided students through looking at each paragraph of their paper and making sure it met the requirements that Susan had laid out for the students. The class worked silently on the self-assessment, during which time Susan met with individual students to answer questions that they had on their drafts. Final drafts were due the next time that the students were in class, which was the following Tuesday. A summary of Susan's instruction is in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Summary of Susan's Writing Instruction

| Day | Date | Summary of Instruction |
|------------|-------------------|---|
| 1 | Tues. 1/10/12 | <p>Teacher introduces the writing task.</p> <p>Teacher reviews a model (teacher generated) of what final writing assignment might look like.</p> <p>Teacher introduces rubric; students practice rating the model with rubric.</p> <p>Teacher reviews graphic organizer to be used with this assignment.</p> <p>Homework: Complete graphic organizer.</p> |
| 2 | Wed. 1/11/12 | <p>Teacher reviews thesis writing.</p> <p>Students have individual time to practice thesis writing.</p> <p>Teacher introduces structure for introduction paragraphs.</p> <p>Students have time to work on writing introduction.</p> <p>Homework: Write introduction.</p> |
| 3 | Thurs. 1/12/12 | <p>Teacher conducts formative assessment of students' understanding of the task, reviews questions.</p> <p>Teacher and students study a model (student-generated) of an introduction and first body paragraph, reviewing structure of introduction and student's use of quotes.</p> <p>Loosely structured peer review of drafts so far, focusing on ideas students have developed.</p> <p>Homework: Rough draft.</p> |
| 4 | Fri. 1/13/12 | <p>Reflective self-assessment writing prompt, "What was hard/easy about this task?" Students share answers.</p> <p>Students complete a self-assessment (4 pages) of their completed drafts and, if they finish, review a peer's paper with a similar version of the same assessment.</p> <p>Teacher conferences with individual students and answers questions while they work on the self-assessments.</p> <p>Final drafts are due Tuesday, 1/17/12.</p> |

4.3.2 Susan's Task

Susan's assignment was part of a unit of study on the novel *Tangerine*. The culminating project for this unit consisted of three written parts: a newspaper article about their own school, a creative poem, song or jingle about the novel, and a "response to literature" essay for the novel. I observed instruction only for the response to literature essay. The prompt for this essay, as represented in the curriculum, reads as follows:

Write a Response to Literature of no less than 500 words which [sic] addresses the following prompt: *Are the families Bloor creates in the novel Tangerine effectively "realistic"? Justify your response with textual support and reference Bloor's use of literary techniques (e.g., characterization, mood, tone, figurative language, motif, etc.).* Include textual support for your claims in the piece.

In the district curriculum, the directions prompted students to take a "position" – that the families were or were not realistic – then to state that position in a thesis statement. Then, the task directed students to "think through the order of your essay and what details you will include. Then, think through how you will close, or wrap-up, your argument." It is important to note that the curriculum clearly lays out this essay as needing to have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Susan explained that the curriculum expects students to write this essay "in [standardized test] format, which is very similar to a five-paragraph essay." Although the task itself does not mention the five-paragraph form, the graphic organizers provided in the curriculum supported this structure, and Susan's instruction set up the task in a very structured, five-paragraph form.

Susan was skeptical about the prompt because it did not tie into the conceptual theme or overarching question for the unit, which was "Does secrecy promote, postpone, or prevent conflict?" However, despite her uncertainty about the task, Susan was careful to say that she was

not going to make any changes. “If it were my own classroom, I would [make changes],” she told me, “but because it’s not, I’m not going to make any. I don’t want to mess anything up.” (Pre-observation Interview). Susan was worried that if she modified the task, it might reflect poorly on her mentor teacher or make people think that her mentor “dropped the ball” (Pre-observation Interview). Ultimately, Susan felt like she had the flexibility within her curriculum to change the day-to-day lessons as needed, but felt that she had to comply with the final task as it existed in the district curriculum.

4.3.3 Cognitive Demand Analysis

Recall that Doyle (1988) argues that a task exists on multiple levels: as written in the curriculum, as introduced by teachers to students, and as taken up by students and accepted by the teacher. This study focuses on the first two levels of a task’s existence: the task as it exists in the curriculum and as taken up by the teacher. As such, it is important to consider Susan’s task, which came from the standard district curriculum, on both levels.

In the curriculum, this task embodies many of the features of cognitively demanding writing tasks. Students are constructing knowledge by studying the way that the author portrayed families within the text *Tangerine*, and writing about the author’s use of literary techniques. This requires students to think not about the events of the text, but about the author’s way of representing the events. Students have to extract these techniques from the text, and use them to make an argument as to whether or not the author realistically portrayed the families. This involves making a claim, that the families are or are not realistic, and supporting that claim with evidence from the text, locating places where the author has used certain techniques to make families “real”. To do this, students need to first decide what they think a realistic family might be, and then use their understanding of the story to find evidence on why the families in

the book fit or do not fit their understanding of “realistic.” The prompt also asks students to consider the author’s craft and the extent to which the author uses certain techniques to create a realistic portrayal of family. The emphasis, then, is not only on if the student thinks the families are realistic, but also on evaluating the extent to which the author portrayed the families in a realistic way. This evaluation of author’s craft is akin to something that students might be asked to do in a high school or college English class.

Although Susan felt that she did not make any changes to the prompt, Susan’s presentation of the task to the students differed from the task as it was represented in the curriculum. The handout that she provided for students represented a slightly modified version of the prompt, which read:

Are the families Bloor created in the novel Tangerine effectively “realistic”? Discuss how Bloor uses characterization (with all you’ve learned about it), the plot and setting to develop the families in the story. Explain your response with text support.

At first, this task seems to be asking the same thing as the prompt in the curriculum. However, there are a few important differences that change the work of the task. First, the curriculum prompt asks students to think about “literary techniques” such as characterization, mood, tone, or figurative language. Susan’s revision prompts emphasizes only one literary technique (characterization) and invites students to also consider the plot and setting. The district curriculum includes aspects such as plot or setting under “literary elements” rather than “literary techniques”; emphasizing literary elements rather than techniques allows the task to be somewhat less interpretive. The district curriculum suggests that literary elements exist in the story – elements like plot or setting are included in a story. Susan’s slight revision in wording focuses students’ attention on details of the story or the setting, and leads students towards re-telling aspects of the plot or setting, allowing the task to become more summary oriented. As

such, the task as presented by Susan to the students does not allow students the opportunity to analyze the ways that the author created such families; instead, it seems to want them to reference or explain certain things that happen in the text to justify their own opinions about how “realistic” families were or were not. Although Susan’s revision of the task still allows students to make claims about the realistic nature of the families, students rely on plot or setting-based evidence to justify opinions, leaving less room for students to use such evidence to support their claims.

Susan’s emphasis in the revision of this task was on the idea of a “realistic” family; ultimately, she ended up emphasizing students’ opinions as to whether or not the families presented in the book were realistic rather than emphasizing how the author used particular techniques to create realistic or unrealistic families. She noted that, although she thought this paper would be challenging for students, she did not like the task – she felt it was a bit opinion-oriented and that it did not invite multiple possible responses. However, in her teaching of the prompt, she was very open to how students took up the idea of “realistic” and also let them write about whether or not certain events in the text were realistic, such as a student dying after being struck by lightning. She also tried to be open to what “realistic” meant with her students, and told them that what one student thought was “realistic” about a family (e.g., realistic families sit down and eat dinner together) might not be realistic for another student. In this way, Susan tried to take a task that she saw as somewhat “closed” and tried to make it a bit more interpretative. In our discussions about the task, Susan focused more on whether or not families were realistic and less on how the author used particular techniques to portray the families in a realistic or unrealistic way.

Susan's enacted version of the task is also limited by the structured format. A five-paragraph essay, especially the type with a highly structured layout can reduce the degrees of freedom for a student writer so much that little thinking is required in the writing process; instead, students can simply fill in particular parts of the five paragraph formula. In my initial interview with Susan, I learned that she wanted to set up the task in the "standardized test format" but I was unsure about how scripted that format would look in her classroom. Susan kept the length requirement the same as the curriculum and noted that she felt this length would be a challenge for her students. As shown in Table 4.6, the task provided in Susan's curriculum was an example of a cognitively demanding writing task, as it encouraged students to think about *Tangerine* in a new way, emphasizing the author's craft, and provided opportunities for students to construct knowledge about the text and make and support claims using evidence. However, Susan's slight modifications of the prompt reduced the cognitive challenges associated with the task, placing more emphasis on students' opinions and finding straightforward evidence to support the opinions.

Table 4.6: Cognitive Demand Analysis for Susan's Curriculum and Modified Tasks

| Task Name | Construction of knowledge about text | Opportunity to make claims | Opportunity to support claims with text | Disciplinary authenticity or relevance | Opportunity for student choice/buy-in | Length |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|---------------|
| <i>Tangerine</i> Curriculum Task | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes (choice of position) | 500 words |
| <i>Tangerine</i> Susan's Modification | No | Yes | No | No | Yes (choice of position) | 500 words |

4.3.4 Analysis of Susan's Instruction

In sum, Susan’s instruction for this writing task (413 episodes total) included 147 whole-class instructional episodes. This means that roughly 36% of her total overall classroom time was spent helping students understand the assignment, the rubric used to assess the assignment, or in helping to develop writing. Table 4.7 shows that the majority of this time was spent on task specific writing instruction.

Table 4.7: Content of Instruction

| | Code | N of instructional episodes (N = 146) |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Talk around task | Clarifying Requirements | 13 (7%) |
| | Clarifying Prompt | 8 (5%) |
| | Clarifying Assessment | 12 (8%) |
| Talk around learning to write | General instruction | 7 (5%) |
| | Task specific instruction | 88 (60%) |
| | Writing process | 7 (5%) |
| Other | Supporting students’ motivation and engagement | 7 (5%) |
| | Use of Tools | 4 (3%) |

Susan spent approximately 20% of her instructional episodes engaged in talk around the writing task, which is nearly one half of Andrew’s 39% of time in this same area. It makes sense that Susan spent less time helping students understand the prompt. Susan saw it as a “closed” task and assumed that students would be deciding that the families were or were not realistic; thus, she may have thought students would need less help understanding what they were being asked to do. Susan told students that they would need to decide what realistic meant to them, as they

understood their families, but did not spend any time talking about how the author portrayed the families in this way.

The majority of Susan's instructional time was dedicated to task specific instruction focusing on the form of students' responses, which makes sense given the instructional emphasis on the five-paragraph essay. It was important to Susan that students be able to understand the "general structure" of the essay. She noted that "I wanted them to know that we start really broad and then the last sentence should be your thesis...and then in the paragraphs after that, you have a quote in each paragraph and the paragraph is explaining that quote and how that relates back to the thesis" (Post-instruction Interview 1). Susan's emphasis on the five-paragraph theme largely drove her instruction.

An important distinction in Susan's instruction was that on day four, she created an eight-page handout for students to use as an instructional checklist when reviewing their drafts; the first four pages of the handout included questions for self-assessment, and the last four pages included the same questions for a peer to answer in a peer-review. The last four pages were completed only if students finished the self-assessment in class; most students ended up having to do the peer-review outside of class. Because students were working silently on the four-page self-assessment while Susan met individually with students, there was very little whole-class discourse to code. However, since the handout was being used as a tool that actually was providing written instruction for all students in lieu of verbal instruction, I coded this handout in the same way I coded classroom talk. Table 4.8 provides a summary of Susan's instruction across the four class periods including the self-assessment handout on the fourth day of teaching.

Table 4.8: Susan's Content of Instruction Across All Days of Teaching

| | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 discourse | Day 4 handout | Total per content |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Instructional episodes focused on understanding the task | 17 (12%) | 4 (3%) | 10 (7%) | 2 (1%) | 0 | 33 (22%) |
| Instructional episodes focused on developing writing or interpretation | 19 (13%) | 25 (17%) | 32 (22%) | 3 (2%) | 23 (16%) | 103 (70%) |
| Instructional episodes focused on use of tools or supporting student engagement | 8 (5%) | 0 | 3 (2%) | 0 | 0 | 11 (7%) |
| Total instructional episodes | 45 (31%) | 29 (20%) | 45 (31%) | 5 (3%) | 23 (16%) | 147 (100%) |

4.3.4.1 “You’ll see what I mean”: Task specific writing instruction. In the case of Andrew, only 26% of his instructional episodes were writing instruction specifically related to the assigned task. Susan, on the other hand, spent roughly 60% ($n = 88$) of her total instructional episodes on task specific writing instruction. Susan spent a good deal of this instruction directing students’ attention to particular features of the writing task, which makes sense given the highly-structured nature of the type of essay she was teaching. The majority of her moves, though, did not support students to understand the “hows” or “whys” behind what they were doing with the hopes that students would “see what (she) meant” to understand what to do. Below, I focus on two topics of Susan’s instruction, teaching students to use quotes and teaching

students to write broad introductory statements, to illustrate Susan's task specific writing instruction.

4.3.4.1.1 *Using quotes.* In their essays, Susan expected students to use quotes to support their claims as to whether or not the families in *Tangerine* were realistic. Prior to her teaching, I asked Susan what a successful student essay in response to the prompt would be. She expected students to use quotes and "explain the quotes well enough that it connects back to the thesis" (Post-instruction Interview 2). To Susan, this meant more than "just putting a quote in." She wanted students to explain how the quotes served a particular purpose – in this case, how the quotes supported the position on how realistic or unrealistic the families in the novel really were. In her instruction over all four days, Susan talks to her students about quotes. However, unlike Andrew, Susan does not provide a strategy for how they explain the content of the quote. Although she addresses the use of quotes in her talk and in the guided-self-review handout, the majority of Susan's instruction about quotes focuses on how many quotes to use and how to correctly cite quotes in their papers.

Susan's primary goal in teaching her students about quotes was to be sure they understood how many quotes should be used in their papers. On the first day of instruction, she provided a model of a response to literature essay that she had written about a different novel; this model is discussed in greater detail later in this section. She introduced the idea of integrating quotes in the following discussion:

Susan: I'm not gonna make you read all of this, but for my body paragraphs, what I did, if you just want to look at one just to skim it, you see on this first one I have a few sentences to set up what I'd like to argue. And then I have a quote. I have one quote per paragraph. I'd like you to write down in your notebook to use one quote per paragraph, and you will be writing three paragraphs. So how many quotes will you have in your paper.

Student: One.

Student: Three.

Susan: Three. You have to use three quotes in your paper. If you'd like to write more, that's another paragraph. When I give you the organizers, you'll see on the organizers there is space for three paragraphs. (1.25)

The clear emphasis here is on making sure students understood how many quotes to include. This is evidenced in Susan's suggestion that students skim the paragraphs, taking note only of how many quotations are used rather than looking more closely at how the quotations are used to support interpretive point. Susan also emphasized that the graphic organizer has space for three paragraphs. Before they have the opportunity to think about how they might select quotes to advance their position about the families, or before they have the chance to think about what it means to explain the quote so that it supports their claim, the emphasis here is squarely on how many quotes to "have" in the paper. Making students aware of this requirement, while useful, does not move students toward a better understanding of how to leverage quotations toward accomplishing a goal, such as using quotes to provide details or explain a claim.

On the third day of instruction, Susan asks David, a student who has finished a large section of his rough draft, if the class could read his introduction and first body paragraph. In their study of his first body paragraph, she discusses his use of quotes. The excerpt below is a summarized version of the classroom conversation about David's use of quotes.

Susan: Let's look at this paragraph and we'll talk about how David used quotes. David said that in his paper he explained what happened and then gave the quote. That is the perfect structure. You should have maybe one sentence of information framing the quote, telling us what's happening when this quote happens. It's a convention of the writing. You'll see it.... He has a quote down here that says, "Mike Costello is dead, Mom, he died today in practice." And then dot-dot-dot, and "Kaboom!" (*Speaking to David*) For the dot-dot-dot here, is that when you skipped?

David: Yes.

Susan So David did it correctly here, and I've been trying to show you when I write quotes. If you're skipping some text in the quote but you'd still like to cite something, you use dot-dot-dot. In the book it doesn't go, "He died today in practice," and then the next sentence is "Kaboom!" That's later on the page, so he put dot-dot-dot so that he wouldn't have to quote the whole page. He could just quote what he wanted to use. Is that clear why he used the dot-dot-dot? *Students nod.* OK. So at the end of this quote, what should go here?

Student: Page.

Teacher: Page number. At the end of your quote, remember? There's a set of parentheses, the page number, and then the period comes here. (3.34)

While it is possible to use this conversation with David as a place to help students understand how David's quote related to his thesis statement so that students could "see" how to use the quote, Susan's instruction does not seem to be focused on this. After reading David's example, Susan's emphasis turns immediately to helping students understand how to use the ellipses to skip text when quoting. This is task specific because it focuses on the use of quotes in their writing, and elicits procedural knowledge by showing *how* to use ellipses, but it does not help students think about the particular quote David has chosen or how the quote helped advance his argument that the families' reactions to the deaths in the novel were realistic reactions. Instead, Susan might have seen this as an opportunity to help the class think through how David could use evidence to support this claim, since the quote he used describes one of the deaths rather than describing a family's reaction to the death. Susan might have used this as an opportunity to highlight the main point of the quote and then return to the thesis statement and decide if they were aligned. Instead, she focuses on the form and conventions of using quotes – how to use ellipses to skip text, where to put the quotation marks, and where to put the periods. This instruction builds students' procedural knowledge of how to correctly use quotes or ellipses,

but, like earlier instruction, it does not help students pick an appropriate quote or unpack a quote using a strategy like focusing on a few words.

In other instances, Susan made more pointed efforts to show students *how* to use quotations. However, like Andrew's instruction, Susan's often seems to be "off the cuff" or in the moment so it is unclear how useful this instruction was to students. For instance, when a student asked Susan how to support the stance that the Fishers, a family in the text, are realistic, Susan replied that they should find quotes where they "think the families are realistic, and then say, 'Seeing in this quote that the family ate dinner together...'" Susan pauses, then told the students, "Don't use that quote, because that's not gonna help you very much..." (1.43). Here, Susan gave the student a hypothetical quote from the book that described an action in the text. Not only is her example hypothetical, and thus likely unclear to the students, but her example ignores part of the prompt that asks students to focus specifically on how the author represents the family as realistic or not. Later, when she worked with a different group, she told students their thesis might include that the Fisher family is realistic because they eat dinner as a family – "This is my example, and it's not a good example, so don't copy off of it," she told them. Then, she explained, "I'm going to give a quote about where they are eating dinner together" (2.10). These examples, while self-proclaimed "not good" examples, focused students on what the quote might possibly say. However, the example did not support the cognitively demanding work of the writing prompt, which asked students to discuss the extent to which the author did or didn't create realistic families using literary techniques like characterization. Susan's examples focused on finding content that supports her sample thesis but not on analyzing that quote for what moves the author made to portray a realistic or unrealistic family. Because Susan was coming up with

these examples in the middle of her instruction, it makes sense that they were not high quality examples that clearly articulated how students could use a quote to advance a claim.

On the final day of instruction, most of the class instruction was guided by the use of Susan's self-review sheet, which asked students to read a question about their writing and decide if the answer to the question was "yes" or "no." If the answer was no, it gave students a set of directions to help them improve the area being examined. The questions on this handout provided direction maintenance for students; not only did the questions included on this sheet focus students' attention on particular features, but it also gave them specific things to consider about each of the features. These items were coded as "reducing degrees of freedom" in the explicit ways that they focused attention and provided guidance for what to do in each particular area. The handout included 23 questions total, divided among six sections – one section for each paragraph of the essay, and a final "Overview" section. Each of the three body paragraph sections included the same three questions about quotes (nine questions total). One question focused on correct citation, again, emphasizing use of quotation marks and page numbers. However the other two questions provided a bit more procedural knowledge for students. The first question asked students if they used a sentence to "frame the quotation... to let the reader know what is happening in the scene." If students checked "no", the question guided them to "add a brief, one or two sentence set-up for your quote so that your reader would not be confused about the context of your quote" (Unit Self-Review Sheet). Although there is no example here for students to see, Susan is at least giving them guidance as to what they can do. In this way, the student is first checking to decide if they have used a framing sentence. If not, the italics help them understand that they are to help the reader get a sense of where the quote came from in the story.

The third question relating to quotes on the self-review sheet asked students to assess the quality of their quotes and whether the students a) talked more about the plot to show how the quote “relates on a ‘deeper’ level” and b) connected the quotes back to the thesis statement. If the student decided that they did not do one of these things, the review sheet suggested the following:

... revise your explanation either so that it now explains the quotation on a deeper level, or so that it now relates back to your thesis stance. By “deeper level” I mean that you are not just restating the plot events (the gist), but that you are adding your own inferences (you are creating a significant moment). (Unit Self-Review Sheet)

This is the first time in Susan’s instruction that the concept of a “deeper level” comes up; however, she relates the idea of “deeper level” to curricular norms that students are familiar with, such as “getting the gist” and locating “significant moments”. Having spent time in this district before, I knew that “significant moments” was a routine part of the curriculum. Pamela explained in an interview that students found “parts of the text that were important or revealing”, wrote down the line or the quote, and then “had to explain why that moment is important” (Pamela, Interview Post Day 1). When curricula have built-in routines and structures such as this, it provides the opportunity for students to build their way up to doing complex intellectual work (McConachie & Petrosky, 2010). To connect the idea of analyzing quotes to the familiar topic of “significant moments” makes great sense. Realizing that this was a logical connection, I re-read my field notes and transcripts, looking for other points where Susan may have made this connection for her students. However, there was no evidence of Susan relating quotes to finding significant moments in the transcripts from audio-recorded instruction or in my field notes; this instance on the self-review sheet seems to be the first and only time that students have seen this connection.

In our interview after day four, which did not occur immediately after instruction due to a fire drill, Susan told me that she had a chance to look at a few student papers and that students were not “analyzing” or “integrating quotes” very well. Integrating quotes, in her view, was simply introducing them correctly and using the correct page numbers – the things that the first two questions on the self-review sheet were asking students to do. However, she was also disappointed with students’ analyses of quotes and noted that it was something they would “need to work on” when they got to the next poetry unit. In this interview, she described how she aligned “analysis” with “writing down significant moments,” where students are asked to “discuss why (a quote) is important in a way that can’t be plot-based.” Susan explains, “I did tell them that that’s what they do... but I should stress it more clearly. Not all of them are doing it” (Interview 4). Susan’s reflections indicate that, for her, the self-assessment sheet was just as much an instructional tool as it was a review to check their work. She expected that the students would make connections between the information conveyed to them via the tool and previous discussions and examples. She also notes that “she told them what to do”, which suggests that she felt like “telling” students is enough to expect that they should do it in their writing. In our fourth interview, Susan mentioned that during their reading of the novel, prior to my observations, they often would talk about these “significant moments” from the text and would write them down in their readers/writer’s notebooks, as well as write them on large chart paper that hung on the walls during my observations. But, in my observed instruction, Susan referenced these significant moments to the whole class only once. It seemed as if she expected students to make connections on their own between the significant moments and the way that they were to analyze quotes. In Susan’s view, many students were not making these connections.

Using quotes in this essay was important to Susan, and she made many attempts in her instruction to focus students' attention on quotes. However, her instruction mostly builds students' declarative knowledge and relies on models and examples that don't support students' understandings of how to use quotes to advance their theses— or how to do this well – in their writing.

4.3.4.1.2 *"I had an idea, but then you told me it had to be broad."* Susan felt it was important that students followed the upside-down triangle structure for the opening paragraph essay. This model, widely used in schools, generally starts with a very general, or broad, topic and gradually becomes more specific, eventually ending in the thesis sentence, the most specific sentence in the introduction. When she passed out the model to students, she explained that the essay is about *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960), which they will read in high school. A student asked Susan what the book is about, and she said that the student will know a little bit about the plot based on the model. Then, marking an important feature of the "response to literature" essay, she directed students to take notes. The first note they took was that "in a response to literature essay, you will be writing to an audience – you're pretending that the person who reads your paper... knows a little bit about the basic plot but doesn't know everything" (1.15). From here, she introduced the model.

OK. So what I'd like to do now is, I'd just like to read you the introduction paragraph, and I want you to notice that at the very beginning, in the first couple of sentences of my introductory paragraph, actually in this one right here, the first one, I don't mention the book. It's very broad. So what I want you to think about when you are writing your introductory paragraph is starting kind of broad and then becoming more specific in your writing. And you'll see what I mean when we read this. *Reading the model essay*, "In today's society, open-mindedness is incredibly valued." *To students*, That's very broad, right? *Continuing to read*, "People of all ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientations, genders, and ages are encouraged to exhibit their freedoms in both the private and public sectors." *To students*, This is also broad, but it's becoming a little more specific. I'm talking about open-mindedness more specifically. *Reading*, "Those who

oppose granting these inherent freedoms are considered to be close-minded and intolerant, just as readers may view certain characters in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*." *To students*, So there I've made it more specific and I'm going to be starting to talk about the book. *Reading*, "Many who read this may view Atticus Finch as a hero fighting for equality between races. However, many may overlook his heroism in fighting for equality for his daughter Scout against traditionalists like Aunt Alexandra." (1.18)

This is the first time that Susan introduced the concept of being "broad" to her students, using this model specifically so students "will see what she means" by the term. In other words, Susan used a model to help explain and identify the term, but her efforts seem to fall short because she was hoping students would see what she meant without clarification. After reading the first sentence of the essay to students, she asked, "that's very broad, right?" However, recall that none of the students have read *To Kill a Mockingbird*; without background knowledge about the text, students struggled to understand how the idea of open-mindedness could be a broad topic. It was unclear whether the students were able to understand whether or not the example was broad, and if it was, what made the statement broad in relation to the book.

After providing this sample in introduction, Susan asked students if they had questions. A student replied, "First I had an idea, and then you told me it had to be broad, and I don't understand that." Susan replied, "We'll work on that more tomorrow. Right now, just think of that as the rule, but tomorrow when we write, we'll work on it more closely." The student's question makes it evident that she is confused about what it means to be broad. Susan's answer suggests that her goal was not to give students a well-defined understanding of "broadness" in an essay – instead, she's giving them a rule that she wants them to follow. With the rubric, Susan briefly mentions that one requirement is that students "connect the book to the world" – "that's why they want you to start broad, so you can connect the book to the world" (1.23). Susan provides a *rationale* for why to be broad: it will help make wider connections beyond the text

and is a requirement for assessment. However, without the understanding of what it means to be broad, this information seems unhelpful to students.

In the fifth episode on the second day of instruction, where Susan was trying to explain the concept of “broad” to her students, one student expressed frustration and confusion:

Susan: When I say a broad topic, what do I mean?

Student: I don’t know. I hate that statement, “broad topic.”

Susan: The broad topic might not be so descriptive. For mine, I was saying that the Fisher family was realistic because they eat dinner together, the boys fight, and the parents bicker. So if that’s my thesis statement, if that’s the most specific thing I will be saying in my paragraph, what might I say for the most general statement that will still connect to it but won’t be so specific? What could I talk about?

Student: Why can’t you just talk about the book?

Susan: You will, but in these papers, they want you to start a little more broad for a sentence or two and then go into the book and then talk about the specifics of the book. (1.68)

What is notable about this example is that the student is both expressing her frustration about not understanding what a broad topic is – she “hates” the statement – and also her confusion about why a person would need to use a broad statement. The student wants to “just talk about the book,” and the idea of opening with something that connects to the world is lost on her. Susan attempted to manage the student’s frustration by pointing to her specific thesis statement, and trying to get the student to work backwards to think about possible broad statements. Susan’s justification for why the broad statement is necessary – “they” want students to write this way – was even harder for the student to understand. Susan did not specify who “they” is, and, interestingly, doesn’t own the pronoun herself, even though she had said to me in several interviews that she wanted students to learn to write this five paragraph essay and she felt like this was asking them “to do more” than write a typical essay (Post-instruction Interview 2).

In our conversations, it seemed that Susan saw writing a five paragraph essay as something that her honors level students should be able to do – it was more challenging than a typical essay.

A shift in Susan’s instruction about the concept of “broad” came when Susan stopped referring to examples of “broadness” or talk about what it meant to be broad and modeled what this might look like in practice. After her student asked “why can’t you just talk about the book?”, Susan turned to the board and drew an upside down triangle. She said to the students:

Let me just clarify something for you. Your whole first paragraph should not be broad. What they did for us when I was learning this in school was, they drew us a picture to think about this. They said your introductory paragraph should be like an upside-down triangle. Down here, this is your main point, get it, haha, it’s the point of a triangle? This is your main point. This is where your thesis goes. But this is going to be the most specific because it’s the smallest part. This (*pointing to the upper, wider part of the triangle*) has to be a little more broad to start out because it’s the biggest part of the triangle, and then it will become more specific as you continue the paragraph. So my first sentence from my imaginary paper might be something like, “Families today often fight.” Is that a very specific statement? Am I talking about any specific family? Am I talking about families in general? Yes. So that would be my first sentence. Then my next sentence would be a little more specific. “Oftentimes when they fight, they will argue or physically hurt one another, but they still love each other. I said “oftentimes.” That’s not all the time. That’s not every family. Often. That’s slightly more specific, but it’s still broad. So my next sentence would be the sentence to start talking about the book, because it’s slightly more specific, but we need to start talking about the book. So I could write something like, “Edward Bloor’s novel *Tangerine*, the Fisher family is an excellent example of this sort of family.” And then from there, I could even go into my thesis statement and write, “The Fisher family is realistic because they eat dinner together, but they bicker and they fight.” (2.68)

In this example, Susan is still not helping students understand *why* they should open with a broad statement, but she is helping them understand *how* they might do so. To do this, she drew on her own experiences as a student and used the upside-down triangle as something that “helped” her as a student, in hopes that it would help her students. Susan worked backwards from the “point” of the triangle or the thesis statement, using the drawn triangle to help illustrate

the wide scope of the beginning. She talks the students through an example of how they could work from a broad topic, like “family,” to a specific topic, like the Fisher family in *Tangerine*.

A close study of the episodes where Susan’s instruction focused on the concept of “broadness” bring an important point to light: marking critical features, a move that is suggested in the scaffolding literature as having potential to support student learning, may not always be the most effective way to teach students something new, especially if the teacher is using this scaffolding move to limit the thinking involved in the writing process. Susan’s goal with teaching “broadness” overall seemed to be to tell students what to do at the beginning of their essay, but she did not help them understand why she thought this was an appropriate strategy; as such, the move kept students from thinking carefully about how they might begin an essay in a way that would be interesting and engaging to the readers. Additionally, she struggled to explain this concept to students in a clear way. A teacher’s ability to represent content has been called critical to the success of student understanding (Grossman, 2009). Though Susan’s emphasis on the concept of a broad introductory statement clearly marks the content as important, she struggles to represent this to students via clear explanations and concrete examples. Susan’s explanations do seem to strengthen as she continues to explain the concept, but at what cost? In the first episode where she introduces the topic, a student noted that she “had an idea” until she learned that she had to open with a broad statement. Rather than helping the student understand how her idea could connect to something bigger, Susan moved forward and did not explain the content to the student – and perhaps the idea was lost. Moreover, without a clear explanation of how and *why* they might begin with something broad, the instruction is not helpful for students if they encounter a similar expectation in a future writing assignment.

4.3.5 Constraints and Influences

Across both interviews and observations of Susan's teaching for this essay, it is very clear that she was influenced by her own experiences as a student and her belief in the importance of the five-paragraph essay. In an interview mid-way through her teaching, she recalled a conversation that she had with other students and instructors in her Teaching Writing class:

We had a big discussion about the merits or the downfalls of the five-paragraph essay, and it's something that I said and I stand by until the day that I die, that the five-paragraph essay has taught me how to organize my thoughts, and now I can organize my thoughts in ways that aren't a five-paragraph essay, but I keep going back and thinking, "OK, are we going to do point-by-point, block? What are we going to do?" And I think about how I would organize it in a five-paragraph essay and then I work from there. (Interview 2)

Here, Susan makes it very clear that she feels like learning to write in the five-paragraph essay style is important and essential – her stance seems quite strong. It is interesting, too, that she came away from the discussion in the Teaching Writing course with such a strong stance, as the course syllabus provides a set of readings intended to problematize the five-paragraph model and complicate students' thinking about the excessive use of it in secondary schools. Susan also believes that this model has taught her to be successful at other kinds of writing: it helped her learn to "organize her thoughts" and she uses it as a way to organize all her other writing.

Susan also felt like the five-paragraph essay was something important to teach her students because they were in the scholars track. She told me, "Because they are the scholars, I'm teaching them the five-paragraph essay. But for the class that is a little lower, we are just focusing on the barebones," describing barebones as just having an introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusions (Post-instruction Interview 2). Given the formulaic nature of the five-paragraph essay, I was surprised that she felt that it was more appropriate for students in the advanced track and not appropriate for other students. She also drew on her own experiences as

a learning writer to figure out how to provide certain instruction. In her instruction on how to write the introduction, she tells students that the upside down triangle was something that helped her when she was learning to write the same kind of essay. Although her university coursework was designed to interrogate the usefulness of the five paragraph model, Susan's own experiences as a student seemed most influential for her use of this model in her teaching.

Susan had difficulty in clearly communicating her expectations for the essay because she used a model based on a text that students did not understand. It turned out that Susan had access to models of student work, but she didn't learn that until after her first lesson. On my second visit to her classroom, I noticed that a bulletin board had been created at the back of the classroom with a large title that read, "Check it out! Work that meets or exceeds the standards!" Under this title were four examples of student papers in response to the prompt, and the City District Rubric for each of the student papers (Field Notes, Day 2). She explained to me that she didn't think the student models were "very good" since they weren't written in the five paragraph form. The models, from a previous group of students, focused on the "barebones," with an introduction, a body, and a conclusion, and they didn't have the "broad" beginning or the three body paragraphs that Susan expected in her students' work. Susan's belief in the importance of the five paragraph structure kept her from using models of student work that would have at least allowed the students to understand the content of the essay, unlike the model she presented.

Another influence on Susan's teaching was the district curriculum. Susan noted that she had mixed feelings about the district curriculum. She told me, "It's pretty strict, and at first I didn't like it, but I'm learning to work with it and now it's my friend." Her primary critique was that "a lot of the curriculum assumes that [the students] are learning something without us

teaching it. A lot of the inquiry-based discussions will be, “What have you learned?” and that assumes that they have learned something” (Pre-observation Interview). This seemed important because it indicated that curriculum was serving Susan’s learning. She seemed to feel like the curriculum was missing certain things, which might explain why she made certain modifications to the task. However, she seemed to feel that she had more freedom to modify the daily lessons rather than the final task, and her task modifications ultimately made the task less challenging for the students. The City District curriculum was guided by backwards design principles, sequencing lessons to support students in completing a task at the end of the unit (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). However, Susan seemed to question the structure of the lessons – specifically, what students were to learn in individual lessons and how this learning might relate to their final task.

4.3.6 Summary

Initially, Susan’s quantity of task specific writing instruction seemed promising. She clearly dedicated much of her instructional time to addressing particular writing strategies (using quotes, writing introductions) necessary for the successful completion of the task. Specific teaching of writing strategies is well supported in literature on writing research (e.g., Graham & Perrin 2007, Dean, 2010), and has the potential to support students’ writing abilities. However, Susan’s case reminds us that it is not the quantity or type of instruction, but also *how* the instruction is enacted and how it leads students towards being able to understand how and why to use particular strategies. Overall, the majority of Susan’s task specific writing instruction encouraged students to follow a particular set of steps without having them think about why they were doing so; this ultimately resulted in lowering the level of difficulty initially associated with the task. In addition, Susan struggled to provide appropriate content explanations in her task specific writing

instruction, either over-simplifying, providing an example that did not relate to students' knowledge, or providing a self-proclaimed "not-good" example as a model.

4.4 PAMELA

4.4.1 Overview of Instruction

I observed Pamela's teaching in her 7th grade classroom at Fairview Accelerated Academy. All instruction took place over a 43-minute period called "writer's workshop," which followed the regular 86-minute Language Arts block; students, then, were in Pamela's class for 129 minutes of English instruction each day. Like all schools in City District, Pamela's school used the district-wide curriculum; however, because most schools did not have a writer's workshop, there was no standard curriculum for these 43 minutes. There was an expectation that writer's workshop would utilize a workshop model structured in three parts (e.g., Atwell, 1996; Calkins, 1986, Graves, 1994). It began with a mini-lesson, a brief instructional period about a particular skill, strategy, or new idea for students to practice. Next, substantial time was provided for students to write. Finally, towards the end of the period, time was allowed for students to share their work. The time spent in workshop was to be used for tasks that came from the district curriculum. However, Pamela had a great deal of freedom in the topics covered in mini-lessons and how she chose to present these topics to students.

Pamela's instruction for this task took place over ten non-consecutive days between January 19 and February 10, 2012. The seven non-instructional days in this time period included a snow delay where writer's workshop was cut from the modified schedule, three in-service days, one sick day, and two days at the end of instruction where Pamela moved on to the next unit in class, but students were able to work on their drafts at home. Pamela's class was small,

with only sixteen students when all students were present. One day per week – three of the ten instructional days I observed – three students from Pamela’s class went to another school for an honors program; sometimes Pamela repeated instruction two days in a row or conferenced individually with the three students who missed class for the honors program.

Pamela’s task was situated at the end of a poetry unit, after students had read a variety of poems. During the first two days of instruction, students worked in groups to determine the theme of fifteen possible poems that might be used for the task, and shared these themes with the class. The next instructional day, Pamela introduced a graphic organizer to organize their ideas before they began writing. The fourth instructional day, Pamela presented a mini-lesson on using quotes in body paragraphs. On the fifth day, Pamela’s mini-lesson presented students with the district rubric that would be used to score their tasks, and then students had time to write their body paragraphs. On days six and seven, Pamela’s mini-lesson was about writing introductions and conclusions. On the eighth day, students completed a peer review handout, created by Pamela. Students had the ninth and tenth days of class to work on publishing their drafts. Table 4.9 provides a summary of Pamela’s instruction during writer’s workshop.

Table 4.9: Overview of Pamela's Instruction

| Day | Date | Mini-lesson topic/Instruction | Student work | Student sharing |
|------------|----------------|---|---|--|
| 1 | Thurs. 1/19 | Define "theme," hand out writing prompt | In groups, identify themes of 3-4 poems | None |
| 2 | Mon. 1/23 | Review themes of poems from previous day. Explain graphic organizer to use to choose poems | Individually, students decide what poems to use and begin working on graphic organizer | None |
| 3 | Wed. 1/25 | Review expectations for graphic organizer Review drafting process (from prompt handout) | Individually, students spend time working on graphic organizers. A small number of students begin writing paragraphs. | All students shared their topic choices ("theme") and poems that they planned to use |
| 4 | Thurs. 1/26 | Review instruction from Day 3 Mini-lesson on how to use quotes in writing | Individually, students begin to write body paragraphs | None |
| 5 | Fri. 1/27 | Review of "Proficient" column from district rubric | Individually, students continue to draft body paragraphs | None |
| 6 | Wed. 2/1 | Mini-lesson on writing introductions | Individually, students work on introductions | None |
| 7 | Thurs. 2/2 | Mini-lesson on conclusions | Individually, students continue to work on their introductions and/or conclusions | One student shared introduction |
| 8 | Fri. 2/3 | Review of peer-review handout | In pairs, students read each other's papers and give feedback using peer review sheet | None |
| 9 | Tues. 2/7 | None | Students use computers and work on publishing for entire period | None |
| 10 | Wed. 2/8 | None | Students use computers and work on publishing for entire period | None |

4.4.2 Pamela's Task

The assignment for which I observed Pamela's teaching was one of a three-part culminating project for a 3-week poetry unit. This assignment was a "response to literature" essay and worth half of the students' grade for the entire culminating project. Pamela presented the task to students on a handout, which read: *In a formal essay, write about how a common theme is represented in 3 poems. You will choose these 3 poems from the poems we have read this semester. In this essay you will make a broader claim that connects the theme to a life lesson in each of the poems.* On the same handout, Pamela included a pre-writing checklist, guiding questions, a drafting checklist, and a list of the poems students had read. She returned to these other items, especially the guiding questions and drafting checklist, throughout her instruction; as such, I discuss their use in the analyses and do not consider these resources part of the task itself.

Pamela presented the task to students in a much simpler way than the task handout included in her district's curriculum. The district task handout, that Pamela did not give to her students, called the task an "interpretive essay" and required students to pick a theme ("e.g., love, nature, animals") and "write about how the poems deal with the theme and use quotes from the poem to support your interpretation." The district prompt also reminded students to use several of the district curriculum tools such as editing checklists and standardized graphic organizers throughout their drafting and writing. These tools included writer's notebooks that all students were required to keep as they read and wrote about literature, class notes, the standardized district graphic organizer for a response to literature, and the standardized district rubric. Pamela did not include any of these instructions in her prompt to students, but, through her instruction, she encouraged the use of some of these tools and also other tools not listed on the handout.

Pamela also noted that she “wasn’t a big fan” of the prompt and that she felt it was almost too open, not providing enough structure for students. Although she was glad that the prompt allowed for student choice – students could pick any theme and poems to support that theme – Pamela felt it was not specific enough. She told me, “I like to write an essay where you’re not answering a question but where you have questions to think about” (Post-instruction Interview 1). In other words, Pamela felt like there needed to be questions to support students’ thinking about the main idea of themes across the poems. This position makes sense in light of the “guiding questions” that Pamela created to accompany the prompt, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

4.4.3 Cognitive Demand Analysis

On the surface, both the task as presented in the curriculum and the task as presented by Pamela initially seemed to meet many criteria for cognitively demanding writing assignments. They claimed to be interpretive tasks that required writing about multiple texts; however, a closer examination revealed problematic aspects of both tasks.

The task as presented in the district curriculum asks students to write about poems with a common theme. Initially, this seems like it may offer students opportunity to construct knowledge about multiple texts, since often “themes” are considered to be morals or lessons taken out of a story – they are interpreted by the reader. However, the curriculum task goes on to define the term “theme” as “e.g., love, nature, animals.” Framing the term “theme” in this way suggests that students’ essays should focus on poems with a similar topic. Students were guided to name simple topics as themes for poems; for example, students called Edgar Allen Poe’s (1849) “Annabel Lee” a poem with the theme of “love.” Naming topics, rather than themes,

does not direct students to construct new knowledge about the text; instead, it directs them to address the poems in a very general sense, which leans in the direction of summary writing.

The second misleading aspect of the curriculum task is that it asks students to write about multiple texts. Putting multiple texts in conversation with one another can undoubtedly be a complex cognitive task. However, the curriculum task does not ask students to write about the texts in relationship to one another. Students are instead asked to consider how each poem “deals with” the theme. There is no specific expectation of writing about the poems in relationship to one another. It seems that students could write about each poem in isolation, further leading students to summary-writing rather than knowledge construction through intertextual interpretation.

Although the curriculum prompt does ask students to “use quotes from the poems to support your interpretation,” it seems that students are not actually interpreting much through this prompt. For instance, if students were to make the claim that “Annabel Lee” is a poem about love, a student might quote the line, “We loved with a love that was more than a love” to support their claim. However, using this quote to suggest that the poem is about love is a cognitively simple task that requires little in the way of nuanced thinking or analysis. Students aren’t interpreting, they are summarizing or re-telling something that the text has already clearly stated. So, although the task does require students to use evidence, students are not using such evidence to support interpretations or claims about the poem; instead, evidence is being used in a superficial way. Finally, tasks that ask students to interpret literature are considered an authentic task for English students; if this task would have been more of a truly interpretive task, it might be considered authentic to the English discipline. However, it seems that the task is actually

asking for small summaries of various poems. Such a task would be unlikely in a college English class.

Pamela’s modification of the task, in some ways, seemed more promising; she asked students to “make a broader claim that connects the theme to a life lesson in each of the poems.” However, on the “pre-write check list” below the prompt, Pamela told students, “possible themes might be love, nature, animals, urban life, family, identity and/or school.” These were the same possible themes listed on the curriculum task. Additionally, in her instruction, as I will discuss below, Pamela reverted to emphasizing the poem’s subject, directing students more towards summarizing than interpreting the poems. Moreover, when she did focus on the poem’s life lesson, she focused on broad, universal experiences rather than nuanced experiences that might be addressed in specific poems. Pamela’s modification of the curriculum task had the same limitations as the original task; like the original task, Pamela’s task asked students to write about three poems but did not require students to put the poems in interpretive conversation with one another.

Although initially both tasks seemed promising, neither the curriculum task nor Pamela’s modification of it met the criteria for cognitively demanding writing tasks. A summary of the analysis for this task is available in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Cognitive Demand Analysis for Pamela’s Curriculum and Modified Tasks

| Task Name | Construction of knowledge about text | Opportunity to make claims | Opportunity to support claims with text | Disciplinary authenticity or relevance | Opportunity for student choice/buy-in | Length |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|----------------|
| Poetry Curriculum Task | No | No | No | No | Yes (choice of poems) | 5 paragraphs |
| Poetry Pamela’s Modification | No | No | No | No | Yes (choice of poems) | 4-5 paragraphs |

4.4.4 Analysis of Pamela's Instruction

Across transcripts from days two through ten, Pamela engaged in 168 total instructional episodes with students, which amounts to about 33% of her total episodes ($N = 504$). No classroom talk was analyzed for the first day of instruction due to the malfunction of audio equipment. A summary of her instructional episodes can be found in Table 4.11. It should be noted that the quantity of talk about the task, especially about the prompt, would likely be higher if the audio-recorder had worked on the first day.

Table 4.11: Content of Pamela's Instruction

| | Code | N of instructional episodes (N = 168) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Talk around task | Clarifying Requirements | 0 |
| | Clarifying Prompt | 12 (7%) |
| | Clarifying Assessment | 9 (5%) |
| Talk around learning to write | General instruction | 1 (.01%) |
| | Task specific instruction | 66 (36%) |
| | Writing process | 8 (5%) |
| Other | Supporting Students | 45 (27%) |
| | Use of Tools | 27 (16%) |

From the table above, it is clear that Pamela spent the most significant amounts of instructional time engaged in task specific writing instruction, supporting students, and discussing how students might use particular tools including graphic organizers, their “sourcebooks” or writer’s notebooks, and a handout with guiding questions. Many of the episodes for “supporting students” were instances of Pamela providing out-loud, whole-class encouragement during the

student work-time. She would often interject, telling the class that she was proud of their work, or reminding them how much time they had left to write. The majority of her talk for “supporting students” wasn’t necessarily instructive – she just wanted to encourage students to keep writing during the writing period. Although Pamela did not talk much about the writing process with students, the sequence of her instruction attempted to lead students through a variety of writing activities including prewriting, drafting, and revising, which align with scholars’ visions of a process-based approach to writing instruction (e.g., planning, translating, reviewing, Flower & Hayes, 1981).

Looking across Pamela’s instruction in Table 4.12, it is clear that Pamela provided more instruction immediately after the task was assigned, and stepped out of the picture towards the end to provide students with more time to write.

Table 4.12: Pamela's Content of Instruction Across All Days of Teaching²

| | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 | Day 6 | Day 7 | Day 8 | Day 9 | Day 10 | Total per content |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
| Instructional episodes focused on understanding the task | 7 (5%) | 1 (1%) | 2 (1%) | 10 (6%) | 1 (1%) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21 (13%) |
| Instructional episodes focused on developing writing | 21 (13%) | 6 (4%) | 17 (10%) | 3 (2%) | 10 (6%) | 6 (4%) | 9 (5%) | 2 (1%) | 1 (1%) | 65 (39%) |
| Instructional episodes focused on use of tools or supporting student engagement | 11 (7%) | 20 (12%) | 7 (5%) | 9 (5%) | 8 (5%) | 7 (5%) | 2 (1%) | 6 (4%) | 2 (1%) | 72 (43%) |
| TOTAL instructional episodes for day | 39 (23%) | 27 (16%) | 26 (15%) | 22 (13%) | 19 (11%) | 13 (8%) | 11= (7%) | 8 (5%) | 3 (2%) | 168 (100%) |

4.4.4.1 Task specific writing instruction. Pamela's task specific writing instruction was distributed over the middle of her instruction. In this section, I describe two important aspects of Pamela's task specific writing instruction. First, I discuss Pamela's instruction that set the expectation for "theme," which occurred on days one, two, three and four, and her use of guiding questions. Pamela's instruction for both topics helps illuminate her own difficulties understanding the task she was asking students to complete. Then, I describe Pamela's use of

² Due to audio-equipment malfunction, there was no audio recording for this day of instruction; as such, I could not transcribe or code the instruction and relied on field notes to analyze the first day.

mini-lessons as a structure for organizing her teaching. I suggest that, although Pamela's use of mini-lessons is aligned with best practices in writing instruction, the instruction seems be misaligned with the cognitive demand of her writing task.

4.4.4.1.1 Setting expectation for "theme". Pamela began by helping her students understand the literary element "theme" on the day she assigns the prompt. The following excerpt, taken from my field notes, depicts this introduction.

Pamela asks for students to share their definition of theme. One student volunteers that a theme is the main idea of the story. Pamela hesitates, then suggests that a theme is more than just the main idea, and calls on another student. The second student says that a theme is a moral or lesson from a story. Pamela affirms this answer, and tries to link together that the main idea and the lesson are kind of similar. Then, Pamela offers an example of a theme that fits the definition of a lesson learned from a poem they have read. She begins to write on the post-it, narrating as she writes, "For example... we should all be writing this down... one of the themes in 'Rikki Tikki Tavi' is to have a sense of adventure or to be brave."

In the excerpt above, the theme example Pamela provides more closely aligns with the definition of "theme" as a life lesson, albeit a rather surface level life lesson. In a previous unit, students read "Rikki Tikki Tavi." The story is about a family's pet mongoose who ultimately fights and kills two cobra snakes who were plotting to kill the humans. The story certainly represents the virtue of courage or bravery. After using this example to establish the definition of theme as a message from the story, Pamela divided students into groups and asked them to re-read two or three assigned poems, and identify the themes of the poems. However, as Pamela walked from group to group, she told students to "be general about [the theme]" (Field Notes Day 1) and directed them to look at the pre-write checklist from the prompt sheet, where she gave theme examples such as nature or family. After her instruction, I asked her about the concept of theme, and she said:

Pamela: I was originally wanting them to go deeper into the poem, but when I looked at the clock—I had originally set out fifteen minutes in group work, but when I looked at the clock, I thought they weren't gonna have enough time to go into it deep enough to just pick out a deeper theme. So I was like, "It's OK if you just do the main idea and focus on the words that I have on the front page and just start there and be general and simple." That's what I told the students when I went around to each group.

Susanna: So in the end, when they write the essay, what do they have to do?

Pamela: Well, I want them to start off with the main idea and go into it a little bit more and talk about how the themes were presented through the main idea, you know what I mean? (Post-instruction Interview 1).

This dialogue with Pamela is an example of her own struggles on how to define the term "theme." She seems to believe that the "theme" is different from the main idea or topic when she says that she wants students to talk about "how themes were presented through the main idea." But when she felt constrained by the short amount of work time, Pamela decided to modify the definition of theme to something more general and simple so that students could complete the task in the allotted time. In their written response, Pamela wanted students to return to the "deeper meaning"; her pre-write checklist told students that they should "think about how the theme connects to a life lesson. This is where you take a simple theme like 'family' a step further and write about what that theme represents... for example, what is the poet saying about family?" (Task handout). This kind of emphasis on theme – looking for the message that a poet is trying to convey about a particular topic – is closer to cognitively demanding, interpretive work as long as it is not something simply stated in the poem. However, this emphasis on theme in the task handout was not the message communicated by Pamela through her instruction or her directions to students.

Pamela gave students fifteen minutes at the end of the first class day to review the poems in groups and identify the "subject theme." On the following day, students shared the theme they

identified for each of the seventeen poems that had been studied in the unit. However, some students presented “subject themes” and other students presented “life lessons.” Pamela offered little guidance as to which type of theme the students should be considering. For instance, for Robert Frost’s poems “The Pasture,” “A Minor Bird,” and “The Runaway,” students offer the themes of nature and animals; Pamela agrees, and tells students to write these things down. Later, when discussing the poem “Annabel Lee” by Edgar Allen Poe, students have the following discussion:

Student 1: I said it was about never letting love die.

Pamela (to different group): What did you guys say it was about?

Student 2: Just love.

Pamela: (to class) So write that down for number ten. (2.22)

Here, the students are giving two very different answers. The first student suggests a theme that is closer to a “life lesson” of never letting love die, even after the death of a person you love, as happens in the poem. The second student, however, suggests the more subject-oriented theme of love. The first student’s response is closer to the “deeper meaning” that Pamela seemed to want from students. However, she doesn’t specify to students that she prefers the first response. For instance, she could have pressed the first student to talk about how she arrived at the interpretation of “never letting love die,” or asked what in the poem led her to think about this as the “lesson.” Instead, Pamela invited her students to write down both responses, suggesting that her primary goal was to collect a list of possible themes – subject themes *or* life lesson themes – for students to consider.

Perhaps the most telling example of how this theme identification did not support students in interpreting the poems came in a discussion of Langston Hughes's poem "Harlem Night Song":

Pamela: What was it about? (*Students do not respond.*) Love? ... "Harlem Night Song" is about love. (*Students are quiet.*) Do you not understand, Tom? Is there something a little bit more than that?

Jill: Family.

Pamela: Nice job, Jill. Is it also about family, is that what you're trying to say, Tom?

Tom: It's more about (inaudible)....

[many students start talking]

Pamela: Wait, wait, wait. Let's get back on track. Are we confused about "Harlem Night Song"? Frances, you were saying something, and I'd like to whole class to hear what you said. Can you say it again?

Frances: I said I thought it was more like love for a city.

Pamela: I think that's a good way to see it. Remember, there's multiple themes to one poem. We're just giving you one theme. There could be more. You'll have to go back and reread the poem to know for sure. (2.28)

This episode suggests that Pamela wanted students to know that there could be more than one theme to a poem; she did not want to limit students by providing only one theme. However, it also illuminates Pamela's unclear definition of theme. Until this point, students have been suggesting subject themes of nature, family, or animals. In discussions with me, Pamela said that she values the "deeper meaning" of theme, but when students do not offer a theme for this poem, she suggests a "subject" theme of love. Then, when students present multiple possible themes, Pamela does not press the students to explain how they arrived at these themes, nor does she describe how she arrived at her own suggestion of "love." When Francis offers a more nuanced version of Pamela's theme of "love," and suggests that the poem is about a "love for a

city,” Pamela adds this to the list of possibilities, but does not press the student to discuss why he felt this way. Although it does not seem to be her intention, as evidenced through conversations with me, Pamela seemed to be simplifying the demands of the task. She allows the “theme” to remain at a simple subject level, and when students identify a more “life lesson” type of theme, she doesn’t ask them to explain what in the poem helped them arrive at this interpretation.

Of the seventeen poems discussed, the majority of poems were given subject themes. A summary of these themes is provided in Table 4.13. It is worth noting that there are really only three subject themes that are included in three or more poems – nature, love, family. Since the task requires students to write about three poems, it is hard to imagine how students would be able to write about other identified themes like truth, identity, or school. Also, it is important to note that some of the subject themes seem very surface level. For instance, “I Ask My Mother to Sing” includes several family members, specifically a mother and grandmother, in the opening of the poem. However, the poem is really about the place that the women sing about, and the memories associated with the place. The subject of “family” does not truly embody the content of the poem, except on the surface, but it may seem like a reasonable theme, given that the title includes the word mother.

Table 4.13: Poems and Subject Themes from Pamela's Instruction

| Theme | Poem(s) |
|----------|--|
| Nature | "I Am of the Earth" (Anna Lee Walters) "The Pasture" (Robert Frost) "The Runaway" (Robert Frost) "A Minor Bird" (Robert Frost) "Winter Moon" (Langston Hughes) "I Ask my Mother to Sing" (Li-Young Lee) "Early Song" (Caroll Arnett) |
| Love | "I Am of the Earth" (Anna Lee Walters) "Harlem Night Song" (Langston Hughes) "Ode to Photographs" (unknown author) "Annabel Lee" (Edgar Allen Poe) |
| Family | "Ode to Photographs" (unknown author) "I Asked my Mother to Sing" (Li-Young Lee) "Harlem Night Song" (Langston Hughes) "Sarah Cynthia Syliva Stout" (Shel Silverstein) "Father William" (Lewis Carroll) |
| Animals | "The Runaway" (Robert Frost) "A Minor Bird" (Robert Frost) |
| School | "Principal's Office" (unknown author) |
| Identity | "I'm Nobody" (Emily Dickinson) |
| Truth | "Tell the truth" (Emily Dickinson) |

On the third day of instruction, the last day that Pamela tries to help students understand theme, she gives students a graphic organizer to brainstorm ideas about the poems. On the graphic organizer, students are to name the subject theme *and* life lesson or moral. She tells the students:

It's OK if when you go into the poem a little bit deeper, say you pick *Winter Moon* and that's about nature, when you go into it a little bit deeper and you pull out something else about nature, what is it saying about nature? Try to connect it to a life lesson or a moral. Try to go into it a little bit deeper. It's OK to have it be slightly different from what the other two poems are gonna be about, when you connect it to that life lesson and when you try to look at the theme a little bit deeper. It's OK to be different from the other ones,

as long as the subject of the theme is the same, which is nature. OK? Any questions about that? (3.6)

Here, Pamela is trying to push students to think past the subject theme and decide what the poem is saying about the subject theme. Her goal is to push students to think more deeply about the poem; however, she has not provided any instruction to help students think “deeper” about it. It seems like Pamela would like students to make some kind of interpretation or claim about what the poem is saying, which aligns with expectations for a cognitively demanding writing assignment. However, instruction to support this expectation was not evident in my observations.

Ultimately, Pamela seemed to have conflicting ideas about theme and unclear expectations about what she wanted to see from students’ “theme.” In conversations with me, it was clear that she wanted students to go beyond the subject level theme and towards a bigger message. However, in her whole-class instruction, Pamela seems to accept subject level themes from students, and does little to support the development of deeper interpretations.

4.4.4.1.2 Guiding questions. Examining Pamela’s “guiding questions” is especially important because of their relationship to the cognitive demand of the writing task. Pamela noted that she “wasn’t a big fan” of the prompt and felt it was almost “too open” for students. Although she was glad that the prompt allowed students to choose both the poems and the theme to address, she felt the task was not specific enough. She told me, “I like to write an essay where you’re not answering a question but where you have questions to think about” (Post-instruction Interview 1). She didn’t want to limit the students by providing only one question, but she did want to give them “questions to think about.” So, Pamela created her own guiding questions, included in Figure 4.1 below. She hoped these questions would to “help get [students’] brains thinking about what they want to write before they even start their task” (Post-instruction

Interview 2). However, these questions were more than just thinking points; students were required to answer one or two of these questions in their graphic organizer charts.

Guiding Questions (Not necessary to answer all in your paper, just to help you through the writing process):

- What is the theme present in 3 poems?
- What are the similarities in the 3 poems? What are the differences?
- Which poem is most effective in relation to the theme?
- How does each poem develop the theme? (Does it use figurative language to develop the theme? Does it use sound devices to develop the theme?)
- Is the theme discussed in the same tone in all 3 poems? How is it different?

Figure 4.1: Guiding Questions from Pamela's Instruction

Pamela felt it was important to provide students with choices, but it is worth noting the differences in the questions she provided. For instance, the first question (“What themes are present?”) is required by the prompt. Students have to choose three poems on the same theme, and so this question doesn’t really guide them to think about the prompt in a deeper or clearer way. Instead, it is asking them to do something that they have to do already. The third question (“Which poem is most effective”) requires the selection of only one poem; the question itself doesn’t help students think about why one poem is *more* effective than others. The second, fourth, and fifth question all address all three poems. In her instruction, though, Pamela told students, “you don’t have to answer all these questions, (they are) just to get you started” (3.7). The next day, when reviewing the questions with students, Pamela told them, “so you could pick one question and it’ll apply to all three poems, or you could pick another one and it’ll just apply to a singular poem. So you don’t have to do all the same questions for all three poems. It can be

different or the same. It's up to you. And you don't have to do all of them. You have some choice in this" (4.5). Later, she told students that it "might make more sense to do one question for all three poems" but encouraged them to do what they wanted – one question or a different question for each poem (4.26). She told me that the question(s) answered should depend on the poem, which explains why she left them as broad as she did. "For some of them," she said, "tone is really important. Or the figurative language in the nature poems is more important. But I don't want to say that, because then they'll just listen to me... I don't want to push them in any direction" (Post-instruction Interview 3). While providing choices can be one way to make the task relevant to students' own interests or lives (American Institutes for Research 2005, 2007; Gardner, 2008; National Writing Project & Nagin, 2006), the choices given here show variety in terms of the intellectual work required – students who select the question "which poem is most effective in relationship to the theme" are essentially are less challenged than students who talk about the development of the theme across various poems. Moreover, if students choose to answer three different questions for each poem, their essay would seem somewhat incoherent. Pamela seemed to develop these questions to provide support, but the variety in questions seemed to send students in many possible directions.

In her final interview, Pamela reflected that, in hindsight, she felt that these questions could be improved. She pointed to the fourth question as the strongest, but noted that she would keep the second, fourth and fifth, as they address all three poems. The fourth question ("How does each poem develop the theme") is very similar to the district prompt, "How does each poem deal with the theme?" Pamela also said that when she wrote these questions, she wasn't sure of their purpose in her instruction. "I think when I came up with this I wasn't even sure when I wanted them to answer it or if they were gonna do all of them. I wasn't sure where I was going

with it quite yet, and then I decided that they were only gonna do, like one or two” (Final Interview). She made the decision to have students answer them on the second day of instruction, when she handed out the graphic organizer. A clear idea of *how* this tool would be used in instruction might have helped Pamela decide on the kind of questions to include in her handout.

4.4.4.2 Mini-lessons as structures to support instruction. Pamela’s teaching was guided by the writer’s workshop model, which provided a framework for how to organize her instruction. Pamela began each day with a mini-lesson, covering a topic that she felt was important for students in their work. Here, I use examples from mini-lessons about introducing quotes and writing introductions to highlight how these mini-lessons helped Pamela structure her instruction in ways consistent with research on high quality writing instruction. However, although Pamela’s instructional moves are well-supported by research, in both mini-lessons, her instruction is not clearly connected to the demands of the task that she had given to students.

4.4.4.2.1 Mini-lesson: Using quotes. On the fourth day of instruction, Pamela wanted to teach students to integrate quotes into their writing, since it was a requirement of the essay they were working on. She wrote a short poem on the board, and then read a model paragraph to students where she had integrated a line from the poem into her paragraph. After reading her sample poem, she asked students what they noticed about the paragraph. One student replied that there are quotation marks. Another student noted that the paragraph includes a good explanation, and Pamela prompts the student to continue:

Pamela: Can you point out the explanation, can you read it to me?

Student 1: This passage shows how the exaggeration of a man’s growing beard is used to create imagery. The internal rhyme in this line also gives the poem a lyrical tone like a song.

Pamela: Why is this a good explanation?

Student 1: It refers back to the poem, (and tells) how the author exaggerated.

Pamela: That's right. I explained the quote a little bit more. I explained almost why I chose to put it in here by talking about what it's doing for the poem. So what I see a lot in your guys' writing is that you'll put in a quote, like for the *Tangerine* essay, and that's great, but then you won't really talk about it, you'll just kind of put it there and you won't kind of explain anything about the quote. (4.17)

Pamela pressed this student to go beyond saying there was a good explanation; she asks him to mark exactly where he saw an explanation, and asks him to explain why he thought it was good. This elaboration is important because it helps mark for students exactly where Pamela explained the quote and linked the words from the poem with the idea of imagery or a mental picture. Pressing the student to elaborate helps provide a "social scaffold" so that other students can understand how the first student is making sense of the explanation in the paragraph (Khun & Udell, 2003).

Pamela continued to ask students to share what they noticed about the paragraph. Students pointed out her use of the phrase "for example" as a way to mark the quote she is going to use, and the fact that she introduced the author's name and title of poem within the paragraph. After collecting student ideas about the paragraph, Pamela directed students to take out their Writer's Workshop sourcebooks to write down three notes about using quotes. The first is that students are to "introduce the quote." She reminded students of possible ways that they can introduce the quote, and that they should "Use the author.... [you] can say 'wrote' or 'in the poem'," (4.20). The second note is about how to cite line numbers. Pamela explains that they need to use quotation marks and include the line number in parentheses because "that's how you

guys are gonna start learning to do it in high school” (4.21). Finally, she told students the “most important step” was to explain the quote. She asks students to consider the following:

What is this quote saying? Why is it important enough to be in your essay? You don’t just kind of lay a quote there and leave it be. You have to go into a little bit of detail. Notice how I started explaining. I say, “This passage shows—” You can say, “This line shows—” “This excerpt shows—” “This passage explains—” Anything like that, that will go into some detail. (4.22)

Here, Pamela is providing several sample phrases that students might use in order to explain to the reader why the quote matters in their essay. However, it is important to note that she provides only the sample language to introduce this explanation; she is not breaking down the actual process of explaining the quote.

In this mini-lesson, Pamela was able to share some of her expert knowledge and expectations, yet she was able to do it in an interactive way, where students had the opportunity to participate in the meaning-making process (Atwell, 1996). The three features that she marked for students had been brought up first by students in the classroom. Pamela included these responses in her sample paragraph for the students to reference as they wrote. Here, Pamela was not only marking important features of using quotes but she was also providing very specific rhetorical moves for introducing and explaining quotes. These sentence leads reduce students’ degrees of freedom by focusing their attention on one particular way to discuss quotes, which Pamela had told me was an area where students greatly struggled in their previous response to literature essays (Wood et al., 1976). After the lesson, she annotated her chart example, clearly marking the sentences that introduced the quote, used the quote, and explained the quote, and hung the chart on the wall for students to refer back to while they wrote. In this mini-lesson, she was working towards building students’ declarative and procedural knowledge, leading students

to be able to identify what quotes in a paragraph should look like, but also how they could use quotes and explain them in their own writing (Hillocks, 1995).

4.4.4.2.2 *Mini-lesson: Teaching introductions.* Pamela began her mini-lesson about introductions by asking the students to take out their sourcebooks to take notes. Then she told students that they would be talking about introductions, “Just in general, what is an introduction’s purpose? What is the purpose of having an introduction in an essay?” (6.4). Students contributed answers such as “tell what your paper is going to be about”, “hook the reader”, and include a thesis sentence. Pamela encourages students to write these ideas down but does not write them down herself. Later, she told me that she purposefully did not write these ideas down because she felt that students needed to take more ownership of their learning – that they rely too much on copying down exactly what the teacher writes down, and don’t really listen to their peers (Interview 6). In this part of the conversation, Pamela was eliciting declarative knowledge from students – getting them to focus on what should be included in the introduction.

Then, Pamela flipped to a page on the large chart at the front of the room that had been prepared for this mini-lesson. On the left hand side of the chart, written in black marker, was the word “Structure”; under this was an upside down triangle, divided from top to bottom in four sections. The header on the right hand side of the chart read “Examples”, and below that was left blank. Pamela directed students to copy the triangle into their notes, creating four rows, or sections, as she had in her example. Pamela took a blue marker and wrote “1. Broad statement” in the widest box at the top of the upside down triangle. Then, she discussed with her students what a “broad” statement might mean.

Pamela: Who can tell me what that means when I say “broad statement”?

Student: Smart?

Pamela: Not smart. What does “broad” mean?

Student: Strong?

Pamela: I want it to be strong, but that’s not what “broad” means. What does “broad” mean?

Student: Big?

Pamela: Yes, big, like a big statement. Think of an umbrella, something that encompasses a lot, like a big, big statement, OK? So if we’re thinking about a big statement that talks about a lot, let’s say the theme of the essay I am writing about is about friendship. What’s a big, simple statement about friendship?

Student: True friends will always be there for you?

Pamela: True friends will always be there? I like that, but that seems a little bit too narrow for me. So I’m gonna say something like—tell me if you guys agree with me—“Friendship is something that most people have in their lives.” Is that a broad statement?

Student: Some people don’t have any friends.

Student: She said “most people.”

Teacher: “Friendship is something that most people have in their lives.” Is that broad? That encompasses anything that I want to talk about, so I can talk about true friendship, I can talk about friendship when you’re a child, I can talk about friendship that leads to love. Just saying that big umbrella statement will give me room to talk about whatever I want to talk about. (6.7-6.8)

Here, Pamela is working with students to create a definition of broad – she is unpacking it for students as a “big” statement or an “umbrella” statement. Unlike Susan’s initial introduction of broad, Pamela attempts to first define broad as a “big” statement before moving forward to give students an example. From here, Pamela explained that from this broad statement on friendship, they now have the freedom to talk about many aspects of friendship, and asked students how they might narrow this sentence further. At first, students struggled to understand what she is

asking them to do, so she suggests they “break it down” and think about what they’d like to talk about under the topic of friendship. One student suggested that there are many different kinds of friendships; many students took this idea and spoke at once – they began shouting out possible “kinds” of friendships, like romantic friendships, friends online, friends that they don’t know very well “like acquaintances” or friends in school versus friends at home (6.11). Pamela discussed the remaining three parts of the introduction in a similar fashion, naming the part of the introduction and writing an example. A photograph of the finished chart is provided in Figure 4.2.

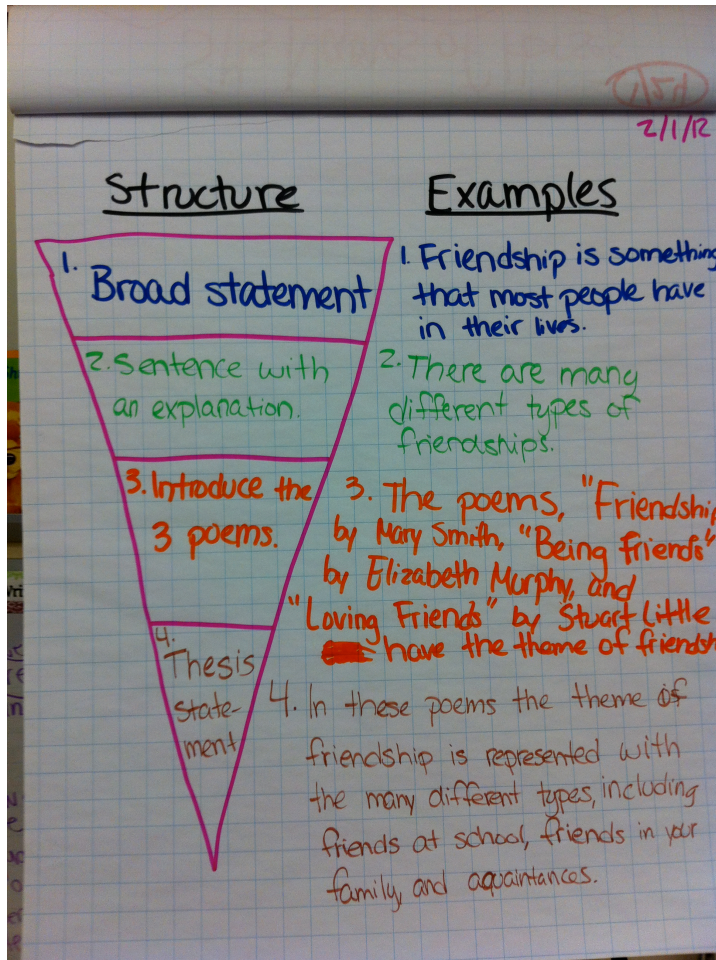


Figure 4.2: Pamela's Chart Paper for Introduction

Most of Pamela's instruction in her mini-lesson about introductions was classified as marking critical features of the introduction (Wood et al., 1976), naming the important parts of the paragraph that she wanted students to include. This instruction helped develop both declarative and procedural knowledge about these features (Hillocks, 1995). She first named them with students, and then provided an example of the feature in a model paragraph. Although she created the model with students, she did not often step back and reflect on how she decided upon

the explanation or how to determine the topics for the thesis sentence. In essence, this example provided students with a clear, color-coded, example of an introduction paragraph, naming the parts of the introduction in conjunction with the example.

In all, Pamela's instruction in mini-lessons about using quotes and writing introductions seems to be supporting students to think about how to integrate quotes in their writing; she marks critical features of using quotes and writing introductions, presents a model of what both might look like in practice, and gives students a specific set of steps to introduce quotes and to write an introduction. However, in both mini-lessons, Pamela's instruction does not seem to connect specifically to the task she is asking students to complete; I discuss this disconnect in the section below.

4.4.4.3 Relationship of Mini-Lessons to Cognitive Demand. Pamela's instruction in these examples, while instructive for how to integrate quotes and write introductions, were limited in its ability to help students' address the cognitive demand of the task at hand. In the mini-lesson about integrating quotes, Pamela's sample paragraph was not related to theme or to the assigned task. Her sample paragraph read:

Silverstein's poem "My Beard" uses hyperbole and internal rhyme to paint a picture in the reader's mind. For example, Silverstein wrote, "My beard grows to my toes" (line 1). This passage shows how the exaggeration of a man's growing beard is used to create imagery. The internal rhyme in this line also gives the poem a lyrical tone like a song.

When I asked Pamela how she thought her sample paragraph related to the prompt, she said, "It doesn't. I didn't want to do something that was about theme because I didn't want them to just copy down the stem phrases that I was using.... I tried to make it similar enough that they could get it but not so similar that they would just copy what I said" (Post-instruction Interview 4). Pamela's rationale suggests that she chose to focus her example on imagery and rhyme in

order to avoid giving students an example that they could simply copy. However, the model Pamela provided actually demonstrated a different kind of intellectual work; Pamela's model asks students to think about how an author is using certain literary devices in order to create vivid mental images for the reader. The model is more cognitively demanding because it requires students to think about an author's craft and the effect of the craft on the reader. The task Pamela asked students to complete expected students to use quotes to support their determination of themes in the poems – a task that does not require attention to the effect of craft on the reader.

Similarly, Pamela's mini-lesson about introduction seems to align well with best practice literature. She is clearly providing a model for students, generated with students, to support their own writing of introductions (Graham & Perin, 2007; Hillocks, 1986; Monte-Sano, 2008). However, although she provided a very clear structure for an introduction, Pamela's mini-lesson here seemed to reinforce that she was expecting students to write about the subject-level theme. Her thesis sentence is about the different kinds of friends a person might have in their life, which is also the topic of her hypothetical poems. Without any substance to the poems, as they are imaginary, it's hard to imagine how Pamela might have tried to model anything beyond the topic of the poems. The quality of Pamela's model may have supported students' understanding of the structure of an introduction, but it did not seem to support students to do any kind of in-depth thinking about lessons or morals to be taken from a poem.

In her exit interview, Pamela said that she felt the students' use of quotes in their essay had improved from their previous attempts. Pamela's instruction on quotes differs from both Andrew's and Susan's instruction on the same topic. Andrew, for example, provided students with procedural knowledge when he gave students a particular strategy for focusing on just a few

words; however, he did not address how to actually integrate quotes into students' written responses. Susan, on the other hand, focused on how to cite quotes or correctly punctuate quotes within a paragraph, but did not focus on how to explain the importance of the quote. Pamela's example was supporting a different kind of claim (how an author uses imagery), rather than supporting the claim of the assigned task (identifying the "subject theme" of a poem). As such, there seems to be a mismatch in her example, and it is questionable as to how her instruction could support students to do any meaningful work in their assigned task.

After her lesson on introductions, I asked Pamela where her upside down triangle came from. She said that she had first learned of it in her university's Teaching Writing class. I was surprised, as I knew that her instructor had an aversion to such structured writing. When I asked her to tell me more about it, she said that she got the sense that it was "frowned-upon" and that she doesn't really like the idea of having so much structure, but "after reading [student] essays, they just don't know what to do if we give them too much freedom. I think they need much more structure ... and then they can break free" (Post-instruction Interview 6). Pamela was conflicted about the amount of structure and noted that she did not want the structure to constrain the students; however, she noted that their previous essays had included a "mish-mash of, like, nothing" in the introduction, and she wanted to give them a way to create something a bit more organized (Post-instruction Interview 6). Given her assessments of previous student work and student confusion about how to start this essay, Pamela felt like they needed a clear structure and a clear model, marking the important parts of an introduction paragraph. Pamela's teaching of the introduction seemed to include many important aspects of scaffolding such as marking critical features, modeling, and providing procedural knowledge for students. However, it reinforced the simpler definition of theme as a subject and also provided a very formulaic

method for an introduction, allowing students to decide what to insert for each of the four spaces. Reinforcing this subject-theme and breaking down the introduction into such a simplistic and formulaic way kept the writing assignment at a lower level of cognitive demand.

4.4.5 Constraints and Influences

One factor that seemed to constrain Pamela's instruction was that the curriculum prompt was limited to begin with. The prompt seemed to suggest that it was an interpretive prompt, but required little by way of interpretive work, and provided a problematic and overly simplified definition for the key term of "theme." Pamela began with a problematic prompt, and then lacked understanding of how to tackle the prompt in a meaningful way. She seemed to want to make important changes to the prompt, such as re-defining "theme" to mean a lesson or moral; however, in her instruction, she was unable to provide consistent, whole-class guidance to help students understand how to write about the poems in a "deeper" way as she wanted.

Unlike other participants in this dissertation study, Pamela used a writer's workshop model for her instruction, as required by her district and the general structure of their Language Arts Instruction. This model served Pamela as a conceptual tool to help her make instructional choices (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). Although Pamela's fidelity to the workshop model as advocated by experts is questionable, the presence of this model provided her with a framework for thinking about her instruction and deciding what to teach on different days (e.g., Atwell, 1997; Calkins, 1996). However, when I asked Pamela where she had learned about the workshop model (such as by reading some of the "big names" in writer's workshop such as Nancie Atwell or through district professional development), she told me that she had not read anything or attended any professional development. Basically, she just copied what she saw her mentor teacher do. She knew that the workshop period needed to be divided into three

sections – a short instructional session, time for students to work, and time for students to share. Pamela was copying her mentor’s moves, and designing her own instruction in a way that seemed to fit with the “parts” of the workshop that she observed. In other words, the overall organization of the workshop provided her a predefined structure for designing her instruction, but within this workshop she had freedom to design mini-lessons as she saw fit for her students.

Speaking broadly, Pamela’s instruction encompassed the main components of a workshop model – beginning with mini-lessons, giving time for students to write, and, sometimes, sharing student work. However, the extent to which she used these elements frequently and routinely is a bit more questionable. Pamela very seldom had students share their work with each other, which is immediately obvious in Table 4.8 presented earlier in this chapter. Proponents of writer’s workshop explain that these sharing sessions are important to validate student work and work-in-progress and also for teachers to model how to respond to peer writing (Calkins, 1994). On several occasions, I asked Pamela why she didn’t have students share at the end of class. She responded that she wanted students to spend as much time as possible writing. She noted that students were “cranky about having to do drafts for homework” so she wanted to “just let them write” (Interview Day 5); ultimately, she felt that the students valued “have[ing] more time to write, really, than share” (Post-instruction Interview 6). On day five, her mentor suggested that Pamela select students with high quality introductions to share at the end of class. However, since Pamela had not yet had time to talk about introductions with the whole class, she felt that sharing might “confuse” students (Post-instruction Interview 5).

Beyond the lack of student sharing, Pamela also took up the mini-lesson portion of the workshop in ways that slightly differ from what some experts would expect. While she did have several days where she conducted mini-lessons very directly related to student writing (e.g., days

4, 6 and 7), and also had days for students to work together to locate information that they needed to complete the task (days 1, 2), she also spent a fair amount of time that seemed to be simply relaying information to students about the drafting process (days 3, 4), the rubric (day 5), or the peer review expectations (day 8). She also had two days where she had no instruction at all (days 9 and 10). To be fair, lessons on these days were shorter than other days, but the difference between these types of mini-lessons and the others she provided are important. Atwell (1996) describes mini-lessons as being *interactive* and providing ample opportunity for students and teachers to develop knowledge together about writing, as well as procedures for writing or criteria for good writing. Pamela's instruction on the days listed above, where she was mostly giving information to students, differed from Atwell's description of opportunities for students to share what they knew.

Overall, the workshop model supported Pamela in thinking about how to structure her lessons and in enacting several mini-lessons, especially for introductions and using quotes. This really seemed to support students' thinking about certain structures of their paper, namely what should be included in an introduction or how to set up a quote within a paragraph. However, these mini-lessons seemed to be scratching the surface of these topics and did not allow students to explore them in great depth. Additionally, without a rich understanding of the workshop model, she left out critical parts of the model, such as providing time for students to share their work.

4.4.6 Summary

Pamela provides writing instruction that aligns with some research on high quality writing instruction and aligns with Wood, Bruner, and Ross' (1976) scaffolding features – she models frequently, provides students with examples of *how* they can do things in their writing, and helps

students understand critical features of writing introductions and including quotes in their writing. However, Pamela provides such instruction for a less challenging task. By allowing the “theme” to remain at a subject level and providing guiding questions that vary in cognitive demand, it is difficult to imagine students taking up this writing task in a way where they are constructing knowledge about the texts, making claims, or supporting claims with evidence. Pamela helps students to learn how to write, but the prompt, and her understanding of the prompt, preclude her from supporting student thinking or their abilities to interpret or analyze.

4.5 MELISSA

4.5.1 Overview of Instruction

I observed Melissa’s teaching in her 8th grade language arts class at Parkside Traditional Academy. Melissa taught on a block schedule and had the same students for fifth and sixth period. Fifth period met for 42 minutes, then students went to lunch for 42 minutes. Students returned back to Melissa’s class for sixth period, which ran from 1:32 until 2:14 PM. Melissa admitted that although sixth period started at 1:32, the “unofficial” start time was at 1:40, since it usually took students a long time to make it back to the fourth floor classroom from the cafeteria, leaving them 34 minutes for sixth period. The instruction I observed was for a writing assignment for a novel called *Chain of Fire* (Naidoo, 1989), which was required by the district’s curriculum. *Chain of Fire* told the story of a small village in South Africa during apartheid. Under government rule, citizens of the village are being forced from their village to a government sponsored “homeland” located in a dry, barren part of Africa. The novel follows the story of a young girl, Naledi, and other of the citizens as they try to resist the government’s plan.

The American Library Association named *Chain of Fire* a “Best Book for Young Adults” in 1990.

My observations of Melissa’s writing instruction took place in early February; both Melissa and her mentor teacher began *Chain of Fire* in early December. Melissa’s mentor disliked the book and had stopped teaching the book “sometime before Christmas Break” (Final Interview), and had students read short stories and work from their literature anthology. Melissa recalled that her mentor introduced the novel with, “This is a crappy book but we have to read it” (Final Interview). Melissa also said that she wasn’t sure how long the book had been in the 8th grade curriculum, but that she knew her mentor never finished the book with the students (Pre-observation Interview). *Chain of Fire* seemed generally disliked by other teachers, too. When I was observing Susan, in the same school at 7th grade, a 7th grade teacher told me she was thankful when it was moved from the 7th grade curriculum to the 8th grade. In the other section of 8th grade, the Language Arts teacher read the entire book with students, but gave the students a final test on the book instead of assigning the writing task. Students, too, seemed to hold an unfavorable opinion of the text. In an observation of Melissa’s teaching prior to the writing task, I happened to talk to one of her students, who echoed similar sentiments about *Chain of Fire*. Below is an excerpt from my field notes, which retells the conversation.

I strike up a casual conversation with a student sitting close to me about her response to the journal prompt. She explains that she doesn’t like the journal prompt, but she does like Melissa as her teacher. Then the student tells me, “You know what I don’t like? This book,” holding up *Chain of Fire*. I ask her what she doesn’t like about it, and she says that it is “long, drawn out and dramatic.” I try to play devil’s advocate, saying that some people like stuff that are long and dramatic and that drama can be interesting, but she tells me the book is “not for me.” Then she whispered that she felt like Melissa “tries to make it OK for us, but it just doesn’t grab me, you know?” She explained some of the strategies that Melissa was using, like turning the text into a play to help engage them a little more, but that she and her class just aren’t interested in the text (Field notes, 12/20/11).

Thus, Melissa faced challenges before beginning instruction for the task, largely related to what her mentor and the students considered to be an uninteresting book. Melissa, too, expressed frustration with the text, especially that it was set up for students as a “bad” book. However, although Melissa felt that the text wasn’t “a very well-written book,” it allowed for “interesting room to explore themes [related to] apartheid” (Pre-observation Interview).

Despite the fact that her mentor stopped teaching the novel relatively early, Melissa continued with instruction, determined to finish the book. As such, the students in Melissa’s section were pressing on with the novel, but students in other sections taught by her mentor were not. Melissa wanted to try to finish the book with students, and continued reading, even though it was “a real challenge... to get through” (Pre-observation Interview). Sometimes, students would read with partners but most often, they would read the text together as a whole class. Melissa noted that students struggled with the text and were often confused about characters. For instance, she said that she was constantly reminding students that Naledi, the main character, was female rather than male. Later, at the advice of a university professor, she decided to try to turn chapters of the book into scripts for students to read in order to help them understand the plot, a strategy similar to strategies of using drama presented by Wilhelm (2008). Melissa had mixed feelings about this strategy; she felt that it increased student engagement, but limited opportunities for students to think beyond the plot of the text. She explained, “students did like that, and it did help them get through it, but it takes out the whole element of them being able to find those text-based significant moments. But they still get the plot, and they’re getting the plot a lot more than they were at the beginning” (Pre-observation Interview).

Melissa's instruction for the writing task took place over four days. On the first day, which was a Monday, Melissa explained to students that they were not going to read the last four chapters of the book, as she recognized that "everyone was ready to move on" (1.21). Instead, she summarized for them the events at the end of the book. Then, she told students that she wanted to take an opportunity to share "all the great things that they got out of the book" and played a game where they reviewed important aspects of the setting and plot (1.23). This game served as a review of what students knew, and also as an introduction to the writing task. After the game, Melissa passed out folders to students that included the writing task, rubric, a model of the finished product, and a brainstorming sheet to help students get started. She reviewed the prompt in detail, then asked students to do the brainstorming sheet for homework. Importantly, all of the instruction on the first day took place in the period before lunch; after lunch, students watched a movie version of the text. On the second day, Tuesday, Melissa reviewed the rubric and the model. Then she gave all students a card sorting activity that she had created to help students think about important plot events and important features of the setting. Students were given small stacks of three-by-three inch cards; on each card, Melissa had written an important detail about the setting or an important event in the plot. On a separate card, students wrote the name of the character that they were writing about. The goal of this activity was to provide students with a tool that they could physically manipulate in order to think about the relationships between characters, plot, and setting. Melissa modeled for students how they might use these cards to come up with ideas for their own writing, and invited another student to share how he might use the cards.

On Wednesday, day three, Melissa required the students to work silently on their drafts for the whole period. She had been frustrated with their behavior on the first two days and felt

like they needed a “chance to really have some good, quiet thinking time” (Post-instruction Interview Day 3). As students worked, Melissa walked around the room, answering student questions and redirecting students back on task. Students had two additional days, but no additional class time, to work on a rough draft, which they turned in on Friday. Melissa read their drafts over the weekend, and passed back their drafts with short feedback from her on Tuesday. She wrote her feedback, generally two to four sentences, on a post-it note, and attached the note on students’ essays. Her feedback generally helped re-focus students’ attention on the prompt, or asked them questions about what they had written. Students used class time on Tuesday to work on their drafts. Students who had not turned in complete first drafts got feedback on what they were missing. Students who had turned in complete drafts had the opportunity to assess their drafts using the rubric and review a peer’s paper as well. After this fourth day, there was no in-class time dedicated to the writing assignment. Melissa noted that she felt pressured to finish the writing assignment quickly, since the other language arts classes had moved on to the next unit, so she did not spend any more class time on the assignment. A summary of Melissa’s instruction can be found in Table 4.14.

Importantly, Melissa also felt that her students’ behavior was a form of resistance to the book and characterized the classroom environment as toxic. She wondered if the students were angry with her for making them read the text, when other eighth grade teachers had abandoned the book. Student behavior was a major challenge for Melissa during her instruction.

Table 4.14: Summary of Melissa's Instruction

| Day | Date | Summary of Instruction |
|-----|------------------|---|
| 1 | Mon 2/6/12 | <p>Teacher explained the last five chapters of the text (that students would not be reading); teacher and students played game with students to get students to brainstorm important plot events and places in the setting.</p> <p>Teacher provided folder which included a) task prompt, b) model/example of final product, c) rubric and d) guiding questions (for homework) to help students think about how they will approach the task.</p> <p>Students watched a movie version of <i>Chain of Fire</i> after lunch.</p> <p>Homework: Complete handout with brainstorming questions about task</p> |
| 2 | Tues. 2/7/12 | <p>Teacher reviewed the prompt questions and important requirements (e.g., writing in first person).</p> <p>Teacher very briefly read rubric to students. Then reviewed model, pointing out how the model answers the questions from the prompt.</p> <p>Teacher handed out packet of papers that includes a card-sorting activity with different settings and major plot events, and a worksheet for students to take notes about the card-sort.</p> <p>Teacher modeled how to use card sort, has student also model for class, gave students time to use cards on their own.</p> |
| 3 | Wed. 2/8/12 | <p>Very briefly reviews prompt questions.</p> <p>Students wrote quietly for entire period, using the card sort, or the handouts to help them with their ideas and writing.</p> <p>Teacher walked around the room to answer questions as students worked.</p> <p>Homework: Rough draft is due on Friday, 2/10/12</p> |
| 4 | Tues. 2/14/12 | <p>Students receive drafts back with teacher feedback on purple post-it note.</p> <p>Teacher leads students through self-review using task rubric, then splits students into two groups:</p> <p>Group A: Students have turned in an incomplete draft or have lots of work to do on developing their draft. Group A students are given a handout to help guide their thinking and writing and they work independently the rest of the period, conferencing occasionally with teacher</p> <p>Group B: Students have turned in a complete draft and do a self-assessment (provided by teacher), then trade with a partner and give partner feedback.</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | Homework: Final drafts are due Tuesday, 1/17/12. |
|--|--|--|

4.5.2 Melissa's Task

Although both the task in Melissa's curriculum and the task that she provided for students required students write about novel *Chain of Fire*, the tasks were very different. The curriculum task was a "response to literature" and focused on the author's use of literary elements such as characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone, or style. Students were required to select three elements, describe how the author used them, and analyze the relationship between the three elements. The curriculum prompt provides the example, "If you choose characterization, plot, and setting, you would explain how the setting affects the plot and characters, how the plot affects the setting and characters, and how the characters affect the plot and setting."

Melissa took up this task in a slightly different way. Her task asked students to write from the first person point of view as one of the characters in *Chain of Fire*, providing students with the choice of five major characters in the text. Then, from the perspective of that character, students were asked to write a speech, letter, or journal entry, choosing three questions from Figure 4.3:

- What your character needs (Think about our unit question: What do all people need?)
- How has the setting (a village in South Africa during Apartheid) shaped your character?
- How has your character changed (or tried to change) the setting?
- How have the events in the story impacted your character?
- How has your character influenced the events that happened in the story?

Figure 4.3: Melissa's Questions from Writing Task

Melissa included the first question, “What does your character need?”, because it referred to the overarching question of the unit, “What do all people need?” Melissa felt that her students had a good understanding of what kind of needs, both physical and emotional, various characters had in the text, and felt that the curriculum task did not provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate that knowledge. The final four questions are very similar to the prompt from the curriculum; the biggest difference is that Melissa asked her students to respond from a first person point of view. She explained her rationale for making this change:

I chose first person... because I had given them another writing assignment that was about narrative point of view, and they had to write in either third person or first person. They did a really good job with it, and I felt like I really understood where they were with the book. So I’m hoping that if we do first person again, it’ll give them a way in, more so than them trying to talk as an outsider about all of these different things. (Pre-observation Interview)

Melissa felt that the curriculum prompt was “really abstract and kind of complex” and that it required students to draw on “significant moments” that they had pulled out throughout their readings of the text. However, her modified instruction had limited students’ opportunities to focus on these moments in their reading, and she wanted to make sure that the task was something that would be accessible to them. Her main goal in modifying the task seemed to be to make it accessible and “give students a way in”; she believed that since they resisted reading the book so much, this revision would give them a chance to “really put themselves in the book” (Pre-observation Interview). Melissa expected the written responses to be three to five paragraphs, and requested that students “be creative” when they wrote from the perspective of their chosen character.

4.5.3 Cognitive Demand Analysis

The task required by the curriculum is complex, but it is unclear how such work leads students towards knowledge construction about the text. The emphasis of the curriculum task, which was called a “response to literature,” seems to be removed from the actual text and instead focuses more on the author’s craft of the text. In responding to such a task, a student would be able to demonstrate knowledge about the literary elements, but their opportunity to interpret or analyze events from the text is limited. Additionally, the curriculum task does not direct students to make claims or draw conclusions about these literary elements. The language of the prompt says that students should “analyze the relationship” between three literary elements used; however, the example of what students might consider in this “analysis” focuses on characters in the text rather than the author’s representation of these characters and seems to be leading students towards more of a summary of the characters, setting, and plot.

Melissa’s modification of the curriculum task changed the demands associated with the task. By shifting the perspective of the writing to first person, students have the opportunity to take on a new perspective and make inferences about the character’s intentions or feelings. This information is less readily available in the text; as such, to complete this assignment, they have the opportunity to construct new understandings, especially of the particular character they have chosen. Melissa’s modification also gives students a chance to make claims about their selected character. The first question (“What does your character need?”) requires students to make decisions about what is necessary for the character in order to have a more full life; this information is not explicitly stated in the text and requires a developed understanding of both the character and the events in the story to determine. Moreover, Melissa is positioning these questions as a way for students to write about relationships between their particular character and

something else from the story. She expected students to think about how events from the story prompted a character to act in a particular way. However, Melissa's task does not require students to use evidence to support these claims. Melissa spoke to me about her own struggle to decide if she should have students use quotes or evidence from the text. In our pre-instruction interview, she explained the following:

I was debating having them pull significant moments [from the text] about their character that could help them write the task, but they're so bad at going back to the book and skimming for different passages that I think it would take up way too much time... Do I have them use specific text examples, or do I have them speak generally about [what happened in the story]? ... I feel like, since we have such a limited amount of time, finding quotes isn't my priority for them ... and because we weren't consistently doing significant moments from the text, I don't think it's fair to force them to find, like, five different moments about their character.

In the end, Melissa made a distinct choice to allow students to speak generally about what they knew about their characters and their character's relationships to the setting and plot. She recognized that, by modifying instruction during the reading of the text, students hadn't been working closely with textual analysis and didn't think it was "fair to force" students to work with the text like that in this writing assignment. As such, Melissa specifically decided not to require students to support their interpretations in an in-depth way, using evidence from the text. Thus, it does not meet this standard for cognitively demanding literature-based writing tasks.

Melissa's modification of the assignment puts a creative spin on the curriculum's assignment; although it is not an assignment that students would likely see in college, she made the choice in order to attempt to increase student engagement and maximize potential for students to be successful. She also expands the opportunity for choice by allowing students to choose from a specific list of characters, allowing students to choose the format of the response,

and choose three of the five questions from the prompt. A summary of the analysis for the curriculum version of this task and Melissa's modification of the task is included in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15: Cognitive Demand Analysis for Chain of Fire Tasks

| Task Name | Construction of knowledge about text | Opportunity to make claims | Opportunity to support claims with text | Disciplinary authenticity or relevance | Opportunity for student choice/buy-in | Length |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|--|---|---|----------------|
| <i>Chain of Fire Curriculum</i> | No | No | No | No | Yes (choice of elements) | 2 pages, typed |
| <i>Chain of Fire Melissa's modification</i> | Yes | Yes | Not required | No | Yes (choice of character, format, and prompt) | 3-5 paragraphs |

4.5.4 Analysis of Melissa's Instruction

Across transcripts from days 1 through 4, Melissa engaged in 137 total instructional episodes with students, which amounts to approximately 43% of her total episodes ($N = 312$). A summary of the content of her instructional episodes can be found in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16: Content of Melissa's Instruction

| | Code | N of instructional episodes ($N = 137$) |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Talk around task | Clarifying Requirements | 8 (5%) |
| | Clarifying Prompt | 24 (17%) |
| | Clarifying Assessment | 13 (9%) |
| Talk around instruction | General instruction | 1 (0%) |
| | Task specific instruction | 27 (19%) |
| | Writing process | 4 (4%) |
| Other | Supporting students' motivation and engagement | 23 (16%) |
| | Use of Tools | 37 (26%) |

Most notable was that Melissa spent a significant amount of her instructional talk focusing on how to use particular tools that she created to help support students' thinking. Additionally, she spent considerable time on task specific instruction. However, both Melissa's use of tools and her task specific writing instruction differs from that of Andrew, Susan, or Pamela because Melissa's instruction focuses much more on the content of the text and much less on actual writing instruction. The summary of Melissa's day-by-day instructional episodes, summarized in Table 4.17, indicates that Melissa's first two days included the most whole-class instruction, which makes sense considering that the third day was mostly used for quiet writing and the fourth day was used for giving feedback on drafts. In the following section, I present Melissa's task specific writing instruction and Melissa's use of tools, focusing on the first two days of instruction where most of her whole-class teaching took place. Additionally, I discuss challenges to Melissa's instruction in relationship to these two major parts of her teaching.

Table 4.17: Melissa's Content of Instruction Across All Days of Teaching

| | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Total per content |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Instructional episodes focused on understanding the task | 10 (7%) | 17 (12%) | 4 (3%) | 14 (10%) | 45 (31%) |
| Instructional episodes focused on developing writing or interpretation | 20 (15%) | 7 (5%) | 1 (1%) | 4 (3%) | 32 (28%) |
| Instructional episodes focused on use of tools or supporting student engagement | 5 (4%) | 35 (26%) | 11 (8%) | 9 (7%) | 61 (41%) |
| TOTAL instructional episodes | 35 (25%) | 59 (43%) | 16 (12%) | 27 (20%) | 147 (100%) |

4.5.4.1 Task specific writing instruction. Many the episodes of Melissa's specific writing instruction took place on her first day of instruction. Four of these episodes involved Melissa

summarizing the end of the book for the students. These were coded as task specific writing instruction because Melissa was providing students with information that they needed to know in order to be able to begin the writing task. After allowing students time to complete their warm-up, Melissa summarized several major events from the end of *Chain of Fire*, then offered brief commentary on the mood of the ending, telling students “it kind of leaves us with a weird ending because we don’t know what’s gonna happen with Naledi and Taolo... [Naledi] gets a letter from Taolo and he says, ‘Hopefully we’ll see each other some day.’ That’s kinda it” (1.22). Melissa’s goal, in providing this summary, seemed to be to finish the book as quickly as possible. She allowed students to ask questions, and students were interested in what happened to other characters in the book, such as Naledi’s grandmother, Mma Tashadi. Melissa answered these questions directly and quickly, “Mma Tashadi and the other villagers all moved to Bop with Naledi. The grandmother got very, very sick when they were moving” (1.24). This helped students understand, at a surface level, the resolution of important issues from the plot, which was important for students when they completed the writing task. Melissa’s instruction here was declarative – she was simply relaying information to the students. However, her goal did not seem to be for students to think deeply about the end of the book. She felt rushed to finish the text, and knew that she had other things to get through in the class period. In the interview later that day, she told me that even completing the warm-up and reviewing the end of the book took longer than she expected, totaling about 25 minutes; in her lesson plan, Melissa had planned for this instruction to take about 18 minutes. As such, she felt “rushed” for the remaining 23 minutes of class before lunch (Post-instruction Interview 1).

The majority of the task specific writing instruction on the first day took place during a game that Melissa designed for students, which was meant to review important aspects of the

plot and setting in order to prepare students to write their responses to the task. Melissa explained that she had planned for this game because she wanted to do something a “little bit fun ... because they are starting to seriously revolt against me, because they’re so done with [the book]” (Pre-observation Interview). Broadly speaking, Melissa’s goal in playing this game was to provide a fun atmosphere for students to identify important aspects of the setting and the plot. Melissa’s conception of the game aligns with the idea of recruitment as a scaffolding move; she realized that students had little engagement with the text and knew that they might not care to write the assignment – she feared the students might “revolt” and tried to plan something engaging in order to keep them somewhat engaged as a means of helping get the students interested in actually completing the task (Wood et al., 1976).

To begin the game, Melissa asked her students to stand in a circle. Then, she explained the rules of the game – she would toss a ball to a student and ask the student to identify either an important plot event or a feature of the setting. Melissa told the students that she would write the student’s answer on a large sheet of chart paper, to try to keep track of the students’ ideas. Her intention was that only the student who had the ball would be allowed to talk, and other students should listen to the ideas presented. During the game, there were several instances where Melissa was able to help students think about both plot events and settings. While her intention, initially, was to track and collect students’ ideas, she also asked students to explain why they felt these ideas were important. For instance, after one student identified an important event, Melissa asked another student to try to explain *why* the town meeting was important:

Student: The town meeting is important because they were discussing the removal, and the removal is important because that’s a part of the story, and like, you know....

Melissa: That’s a great explanation. We need another moment. Just call someone’s name and throw it. We’re looking for a major thing that happened in the plot. (1.39)

Here, Melissa is trying to elicit some kind of knowledge about why this event mattered in the context of the story; this was important for students to consider for their assignment because the meeting included several of the characters that the students may have chosen to write about. Additionally, this is the first time in the story that the characters come together to discuss the major conflict in the story. The student's explanation is essentially that the event is important because the town is discussing the major problem in the story. Melissa compliments the student on the explanation and moves on. Although Melissa could have pressed the student to say more about the town meeting, her goal was to quickly collect major plot events and move on, both for the sake of time, and also for the sake of trying to keep students' attention during the game.

Occasionally, Melissa tried to push students to think more deeply about why particular events mattered. While marking these features of setting, she tries to elicit why events were important:

Melissa: Brad, why was the march so important? I can't hear Billy. I think you do know. Give it a try, think about it. *(Billy, who has the ball, doesn't answer. It appears that he might not be able to answer the question.)*

Student: (in a joking tone): You've got to believe in yourself!

Melissa: Can someone help him out? Why was the march so important? Thanks, Rebecca.

Rebecca: Because it was a turning point. If it wasn't for the march, then the school wouldn't have been closed. (1.46)

Melissa's prompting students to think about why the march mattered helped students link the march to another significant event in the story – when the government closed the school that the village children attended. Rebecca identified this event as a “turning point,” suggesting that this plot event had consequences for all other characters, especially those who were no longer able to

attend school when it was forced to close. Beyond only marking this as a critical plot moment in the story, Melissa was also trying to help students think about the significance of the event in the overall story. Naming the event seems akin to thinking about emphasizing declarative knowledge, but probing students to think about why the event matters, helped students think about why it mattered and, perhaps by extension, how it might be useful for them in their writing. After her teaching, Melissa shared that she hadn't originally expected to ask students to explain why particular events mattered:

I had in my head the way I thought it should go, which was that students would toss the ball to each other, I would say a question and then they would just sort of fire off some little answer so we could collect answers. And then it felt like, OK, maybe instead of just saying "the march" and letting it hang, there needed to be some explanation. So I felt like I had to get into it more than I had originally planned (Post-instruction Interview 1).

To me, prompting students to consider the significance of events seemed like an important part of this game, but to Melissa, it was an impromptu instructional decision. During the game, Melissa elicited four other major plot events from students, including the town meeting, a major protest march held by the people in the village, the government's notice to the village that they planned to remove people, and one character's throwing of a rock at a police officer, causing him to have to hide from authorities to avoid arrest.

Melissa also prompted students to list three major parts of the setting – the town of Bop (where most of the story took place), South Africa (where the town was located), and the overall "setting" of apartheid, as an important part of the historical context for the physical setting of the town and the country. Melissa explained to me that in the previous unit, students had engaged in a research study of apartheid in South Africa, and understood the racial segregation and oppression brought about by this system (Pre-observation Interview). However, during their discussion of the setting, Melissa grew frustrated with student behavior. Conversations with one

another had increased, fewer students seemed to be engaged or listening to one another, and several students had pulled up chairs, sitting down and staring at the floor.

Teacher: What else about the setting?

Student: It takes place in apartheid in 1990.

Teacher: This one is the '80s, a little bit earlier than that. What do we know about apartheid? Give us some more details about apartheid. (*One student is tossing the ball high in the air; when trying to catch the ball, he misses and the ball rolls into the center of the circle...*) John, with the ball, please. Guys, the talking has got to stop. (*Students do not acknowledge her and continue talking.*) OK, back to your seats. Back to your seats, you had your last chance. That was your last chance, sorry. (1.51-1.53)

Melissa wanted students to be able to explain why apartheid was important to the setting of the story, but student behavior and her own frustration with their behavior kept her from assisting the students to unpack why apartheid mattered in relationship to the setting.

Melissa's task specific writing instruction was different from that of the other case-study participants. She was focused on helping students identify critical parts of the plot and setting that they might need to consider in their writing. In these examples, Melissa did not have any instruction that explicitly guided students to think about how to write about these moments, but that didn't seem to be the goal of her instruction here. Ultimately, she seemed interested in making sure that she could help students begin to think about critical moments in the text. She primarily used the scaffolding move of marking critical features (Wood et al., 1976) in order to support students to answer questions from the task about how the character was influenced by the plot or setting, or how the plot or setting somehow shaped the character. She was supporting student thinking about these ideas as a first step towards allowing them to independently complete the writing assignment.

4.5.4.2 Supporting thinking with tools. Melissa’s talk about task specific writing instruction, such as the ball game activity described above, accounted for 19% of her overall whole-class talk. The majority of Melissa’s talk, however, was around physical tools that she created and provided to help students understand the task; these tools, like ball-toss activity on the first day, seemed to support student thinking about how they would complete the writing task by providing opportunities for students to think about key moments in the story or key aspects of the setting. In this section, I describe the tools that Melissa created to be used with students and analyze the tools Melissa provided for students and her talk about these tools in interviews and with students. This talk was categorized under the code “tool” because the emphasis of Melissa’s *talk* was primarily to help students understand the tools. However, the tools themselves helped build students’ task specific knowledge of content of the text and the relationship of this content to the writing task. As such, these tools certainly helped build students’ task specific knowledge in preparation for this task.

4.5.4.2.1 Development of card sort. The tool that received the most class-time talk was a card-sorting activity that Melissa created for students, which she called “*Chain of Fire Literary Elements Card Mash-Up*.” Melissa provided students with a stack of pink, white and orange “cards”, 3x3 inch cut squares of paper, held together by a paperclip, that she had created. Students received 22 pink “plot cards”; 20 cards included an event from the plot and a page number to reference this event and two cards said “choose your own!” plot event. Students also received 10 white “setting cards”; eight cards included different settings from *Chain of Fire*, including smaller settings (e.g., the village, a farm where women worked in the village) and larger aspects of setting (e.g., “Apartheid – ‘apartness’ for black and white South Africans”). Two cards encouraged students to choose their own setting. Also included in the stack were

cards printed with large, one directional arrows. Finally, students received one orange card; this card was for students to write the name of their character.

When she created these cards, Melissa explained that she was trying to think about how she could find a clear way for the students to brainstorm about the relationships between characters, settings, and plot. She told me, “I keep reading things about kids sorting things. I wonder if there would be a way to do something like that for this kind of thing. Physically moving things around and asking, ‘How do these two things connect?’ ... I guess just because (students) can take (the cards) and move and see and—I don’t know if that somehow is more clear than just talking about it” (Post-instruction Interview 1). Her intention with the card sort was that it might help students think about connections between characters, settings, and plots; she hoped that, by manipulating physical cards, students might be able to more clearly visualize relationship between events and the character they selected. The arrows were used to help students articulate the relationship – if a student said that the character affected the setting, they would point the arrow from the character card towards the setting card. If the setting influenced the character, the arrow would point from the setting to the character.

The development of the card sort had the potential to support students to complete this writing task in multiple ways. Broadly, the sort became a way for Melissa to try to support student thinking for the task she was asking them to complete. It was an opportunity for students to start to think about “how things connected,” and by completing the sort, Melissa’s intention seemed to be that students would understand relationships between characters, setting, and plot – the major topics addressed in the writing prompt. The sort, as developed, also seems to relate to several of Wood et al.’s scaffolding features (1976). The card sort reduced the degrees of freedom for students – instead of asking students to find significant moments in the text on their

own, Melissa provided a large variety of moments to choose from. Melissa included the four plot events that students had identified as important, and added sixteen other plot events. In addition, she provided page numbers for each plot event so that students could easily locate it in the text. She included two of the student-identified important aspects of setting – the town of Bop, and apartheid. The other six setting cards Melissa created included more tangible settings (e.g., “Johannesburg – where Naldei’s mother works for a white woman”) and also more nuanced aspects of setting that are important for the story (e.g., “water must come from the white farmer who made a dam in the river”). It seemed helpful that Melissa picked out moments for students; she had expressed concern about students’ abilities to identify these settings on their own. Because the focus of her writing task was not to identify these settings, but to write about how the setting might have shaped the character, Melissa felt that supplying these settings for students did not take away from the task. Additionally, the sort also seemed to work towards Wood et al.’s (1976) aspect of frustration control – providing these moments for the students had potential to keep students from giving up right away, which Melissa repeatedly referred to as an area of concern, given the students’ lack of engagement with the book. Melissa was concerned that if she asked students to select their own moments, they would not complete the task.

In addition to the cards, Melissa created two handouts to be used along with the cards (Appendix G). The first section of the handout was for students to take notes as they sorted the cards, so that they could record their thinking and take the handout away with them, without having to re-do what they had done in class. There were three sub-sections of the handout; the first was for the students to write down the model example that Melissa would demonstrate for them, while the second was for an example that they created as a whole class; the second two sections were for students to complete independently. The language in this handout is very

positive and encouraging, with phrases such as “lets try it together!”, “now you try!” and “great work!”. What is interesting about this section of the handout is that it does support students to record their thinking, but it seems to be encouraging students only to identify relationships between characters and settings or plots, not to explain why these relationships were important. Melissa seemed to be focused on the connection, but not why the connection mattered. However, the handout, like the task sort, served as a way to support students’ understanding of the prompt and help them think about their response; it was a way for students to record their ideas, and they could return to these ideas later when writing.

The second section of the handout was a “hints and tips” section, which seemed to serve several functions of supporting students. The tone of this section seemed encouraging. Melissa included comments to relate the activity to things that students might already know or be familiar with, like “math equations” (e.g., “plot + character = ???”, how do the events in the story impact the character?), “magnetic poetry” (“keep trying combinations until you find one that works”). It seemed to me that Melissa included these hints and tips as a kind of recruitment strategy, helping students feel like they might use the cards in ways that were already somewhat familiar to them. In this section, Melissa also provided sample sentence starters, again encouraging students by saying “it’s like Mad Libs! Fill in the blanks with information in parentheses.” For example, she gave students the sample sentence, “(A detail in the setting) made (character’s name) feel”. This was an example of task specific instruction where Melissa seemed to support students by reducing degrees of freedom – she gave students one very specific way that they might take an idea and put it into written form. However, it is notable that the sample sentences encourage students to think in third person, rather than in first person. She reminded students that they would need to “translate” their sentences to first person, and provided an example of a sentence

written from third person to first person so that they could have a model of what their final product might look like. Like the sentences on the first section of the handout, these sentences focus on students' abilities to connect a character and an event in the plot or setting, but it is less clear how these sentences lead students to think about why the connections are important or significant in the story. There seems to be potential for students to think about this, but it is also possible that the students might answer the questions in a surface level way (e.g., "Apartheid made Naledi feel angry").

4.5.4.2.2 *Use of card sort in instruction.* Melissa passed the cards out to students with eight minutes left in class before the lunch break in the middle of the period, and introduced how they would use the cards for the "mash up." Her intention was to introduce the cards and to model how she might use these cards to think about aspects of the character, setting, and plot. In her lesson plan, Melissa wrote about this activity as an "I do, we do, you do," meaning that she hoped to model once as the teacher ("I do"), then have the whole class do one together ("we do") and then allow students to work on their own. To begin, Melissa directed students to write the name of the character whose perspective they were taking on the orange card. Then, Melissa put the cards on the document camera, projecting on to a white screen at the front of the room. She wrote "Naledi," the main character, on her orange card, and then tells students, "Because I have Naledi, I'm going to arrange these so that I can make a connection between a plot event and between Naledi." Then, Melissa arranges her cards on the document camera so that it projects this shown in Figure 4.4:

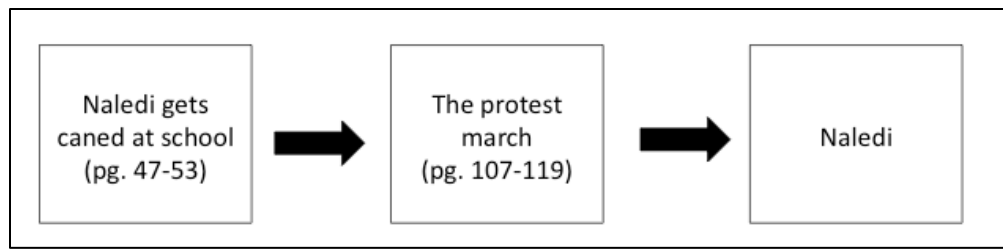


Figure 4.4: Melissa's First Card Sort

Melissa explained to students, “Once Naledi gets caned at school, she gets angry, and so she starts to organize the protest” (2.58). Here, Melissa puts Naledi in the middle of the equation, and is using this sequence of events to explain that when she was caned at school for talking about the removal, this makes her angry and is a factor for her involvement in organizing the protest march with other students at her school later in the text. Although Melissa’s explanation is not thoroughly developed (she only says that Naledi was “angry”), she is trying to provide an example for students of how the “plot affected the character” because when Naledi gets caned, she gets angry. In relationship to the task, Melissa is trying to help students think about what claims they might make about how a character, in this case, Naledi did something to change the outcome of the story, by organizing the protest march. Melissa was modeling for students how they could use these cards to think about how they could connect plot events to a character in order to try to write about these questions when they worked on their writing task. Later, when Melissa had students use the handout, she told students to write a statement to show how the character and plot event were related, she told students to write “Naledi tried to change the outcome of the removal by organizing the protest march” (2.65). Here, Melissa was using the task sort and the handout to a) model for students her expectations of what they were to do with the tools and b) model her own thinking about how she might connect a plot event to a character.

To talk students through the example of how the main character, Naledi, was influenced by the setting, Melissa selected a setting card and arranged the cards as displayed in Figure 4.5.

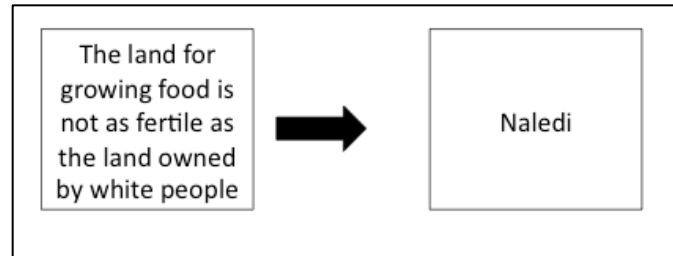


Figure 4.5: Melissa's Second Card Sort

After selecting these cards and using the arrow to indicate that she felt the setting was influencing Naledi, Melissa narrated her thoughts for students:

Melissa: OK, so the setting is the—listen please. “The setting affects Naledi because the land for growing food—” Can you stop talking? “—the land for growing food in Naledi’s village is not as fertile as the land owned by white people.” How does that affect Naledi’s life, the fact that the land that they have isn’t as fertile as the land that’s owned by the white people who live outside of her village?

Liz: It upsets her.

Melissa: She feels upset because some people are taking things just because they think that they’re better. I was also thinking – *(students begin packing things up from their desks)* we’ll be ready to go in just a minute, but I want you to listen here, OK? Look up at me. I want you to look at this while I talk about it, because I want you to see the connection. I’m gonna wait for everyone. *(One student keeps talking; most other students stop packing up their belongings)* I have most people, but I’m waiting. *(The talking student stops talking and looks at Melissa.)* OK, thank you. What I was thinking, and you could have a totally different interpretation, and that’s fine, but I was thinking, the land for growing food in Naledi’s village, the fact that it’s not as fertile as the land owned by white people affects Naledi because they can’t grow their own food any more. And also, her grandmother has to go and work on the farm, do you remember that? And she has to go and talk to her grandma, and she has to talk to her on the farm. And then when her grandma gets sick, she has to go do her grandmother’s work. So just the fact that the land isn’t as fertile kind of affects Naledi’s whole life, because her grandmother has to work for their food instead of them being able to grow it. OK? So when we come back, you’re gonna have a chance to do this on your own, and the packet, this worksheet that you picked up when you came in, we’ll go over how you’re gonna use it. You’re gonna need this and your cards next period, because you’re going to use the cards to make different statements about how the character and how the plot or the setting are connected.

Here, Melissa was modeling for students in two different ways. First, she projected her example using the document camera available in her classroom, physically showing students how they could take two cards and use the arrow card to indicate a connection. More importantly, she talked students through her thinking about how the fact that the land in Naledi's village was less fertile "affects (her) whole life." This connection between the setting and Naledi is one that Melissa was making, and she wanted to help her students understand what she thought was important between the two. Her main claim is that the barren land made Naledi's grandmother, Nono, have to find work elsewhere in order to survive, and when Nono became too sick to work, Naledi had to work for her. In other words, this aspect of the setting influenced other major events in Naledi's life.

Although Melissa is helping students understand her chain of thinking, it is notable Melissa seems to be connecting plot events, all stemming from a problem in the setting ("her grandmother had to go work on the farm", "her grandmother gets sick," "Naledi has to do her grandmother's work), but is not talking about why these events are significant to Naledi's character. For example, Melissa could have connected this detail of the setting to other aspects of Naledi's character, such as her persistence or her bravery. Though Melissa was modeling her thinking for students, her use of this example seemed to encourage students to connect plot events together, and did not clearly help students understand that they were to make claims about the character in relationship to the plot or setting. When Melissa facilitated the "we do" section of the activity, at first, students misunderstood the activity and were linking plot events to plot events, similar to Melissa's model.

Melissa focused most of her in-class attention on how students should use the cards she created to make connections between characters. She encouraged students to write things down

on the first section of the handout, to record their thinking – however, she references this handout only twice – once at the very beginning of the period after lunch, and once at the very end of the period. In her instruction, Melissa never got to the “hints and tips” page; she spent all of the second half of class on the second day of instruction trying to walk students through using the cards and never mentioned this page to the class. Although she had intended to review this tool with students, she ran out of time in class, largely, it seemed, because she had to spend time waiting for students to listen or redirecting students back on task. After reviewing the transcripts from subsequent days of instruction, I also found no mention of the hints and tips page in her whole class or her one-on-one instruction on the third or fourth day of teaching.

4.5.4.2.3 *Other tools.* Although the card sorting activity was the most talked-about tool in class, there were other tools that seemed to support students. For instance, at the end of the first day of instruction, Melissa gave them a four-question homework worksheet. These questions were pre-writing brainstorming questions, which Melissa hoped would “help students get into [the task]” (Final Interview). Overall, she saw this homework as a way to recruit students into the writing assignment (Wood et al., 1976) as it was intended to help them think about important parts of the task. Because she was running out of time at the end of class, she rushed through explaining the homework handout to students, but the handout itself served as an important scaffold for students. The first two questions on the handout prompted students to think carefully about the character that they would choose:

1. Which character are you going to choose to write as? (Naledi, Taolo, Mma Tshadi, Mma Dikobe, or Saul Dikobe.) Write three important details about that character
2. How do you think that character would choose to tell their story? A journal entry? A letter? A speech? Why?

What is important about these two questions is that they help focus students attention in ways that will help them write the task. Melissa narrows the choices of characters for students to choose from and had students identify what form they felt was best for their response (again, providing choices). Both of these moves have the potential to support students by reducing degrees of freedom, providing a limited set of choices so that students could choose more quickly (Wood et al., 1976). The second question asks students to consider the kind of writing most appropriate for their character, supporting students to make a purposeful choice about the way they want to format their responses. Melissa had used a bold font to emphasize the question “why,” suggesting that she cared that the students consider a rationale for their choice.

It is important to note that the questions on this brainstorming sheet did not transfer directly to the actual writing assignment. For instance, Melissa asked students to list three important details about their character, but did not expect the students to include these details in their final paper. However, she hoped these questions would help the students think about important details in the text before they began writing. In our final interview, she explained that she felt like these questions helped students “do good thinking” and helped develop “good reasoning for why a character would choose the particular format... it helped channel their energy towards the kind of thing I was hoping to see.” This brainstorming task functioned as specific writing instruction by supporting student thinking, before they even began writing. This is task specific instruction that differs from what Pamela, Susan, or Andrew used in their instruction. Here, Melissa’s instruction supported student thinking before writing, helping students prepare to think about their characters in order to write their papers.

4.5.4.2.4 Summary of Tools. What is most notable about these tools is that they represent significant moments where Melissa was trying to support students’ thinking and, to a lesser

extent, support their writing. The tools' potential to support student thinking seemed to be high; however to be used to their fullest potential, students needed to rely mostly on the tools as they existed on paper, since student behavior and excessive talking seemed to take attention away from Melissa's attempts to introduce the tools at a whole-class level.

4.5.5 Constraints and Influences

Melissa seemed very frustrated in many of our post-observation interviews; she tended to be very critical about her own teaching. She felt she was not learning much about teaching or about writing instruction, because she so often had to pay attention to student behavior. She told me, "I'm sure that there are a million things I can do better as a teacher, but I feel like I can't even think about those things because everything is such a mess. Like, I can't get a handle on the things I could instructionally do better because the behavior is such a mess. (Post-instruction Interview 2). With tears in her eyes, she told me,

I feel like I've tried a million things. I've tried to be nice, I've tried to be mean. I've tried to wait. I've tried talking over them. And nothing's working. And I am just feeling totally lost as to how I can do my job better. Recently, when they start to get crazy like that, I just say, "OK, it's silent work period now." But they're not prepared to do the writing assignment. So I can't just let them go.

Melissa was torn between pressing on to get through activities and lessons that she designed to support students and having students work silently, to avoid having to manage the excessive talking and behavior. Later, in the same interview, she said, "I want to say, 'fine, do it on your own and I'm not going to stand up here and help you. But then they won't be able to do it! So how do I balance this feeling like, they're totally [burned] out, I'm really mad and frustrated. And I just want to say, fine, you think you can do it, do it. Be my guest. But how can I do that and expect them to do it right?'" (Post-instruction Interview 2). However, later in the interview, she noted that she wasn't "a quitter" and that she felt like giving up on students "doesn't make

me a good teacher.... I need to teach them.” As a researcher, it was really difficult for me to listen to Melissa’s frustration, because it was clear that in her planning and development of tools for students to use, she was being careful to think about how she could support their thinking. But using these tools during instruction was incredibly difficult for Melissa. Ultimately, though, Melissa did not give up on her students – although she was frustrated and often could not finish everything she wanted to finish, she did push on through the writing task.

Melissa felt that some existing conditions in the classroom contributed to her difficulty in classroom management. She explained that her mentor, whom she liked very much as a person, had expectations that differed from Melissa’s about student behavior. Her mentor allowed students to choose their own seats; Melissa felt that students were more likely to talk and be off task when working with their friends. However, when she assigned seats, students resisted and refused. On my first day of visiting her classroom, I observed an exchange with a student where Melissa spent five minutes trying to coax a student into his assigned seat, and he refused; ultimately, Melissa let him sit where he wanted because she needed to continue with teaching class. Melissa also felt that students did not see her as a “real teacher,” telling me that “when the principal comes in, they quiet down a lot faster than when (my mentor) comes in, and when she comes in, they quiet down faster than when I come in. So there are these levels of authority that (students) respond to because they know that those are in place” (Post-instruction interview 2).

Melissa explicitly mentioned that she felt like the concept of scaffolding was important to her, and that she thought that the way a teacher “builds up to the final task” was critical in writing instruction. She said that scaffolding, to her, was a way to “build on the skills that the student is going to need, the skills and I guess the understanding of certain concepts that they would need to do the writing” (Final interview). The instruction that I observed seemed to align

with this belief; much of Melissa's instruction seemed to support students' understanding of different concepts from the text, and the tools she used helped students "build up" to thinking about the task questions. The concept of scaffolding, as a conceptual tool, seemed to assist Melissa in developing practical tools, like the card sort, which she used in her teaching.

Melissa's mentor's position seemed to play a noteworthy role for Melissa's teaching. At times, Melissa seemed frustrated that her mentor had given up on the book; her students were not engaging with the text, but Melissa felt like they needed to finish what they had started. However, since her mentor had quit the book, Melissa worried that it made Melissa seem like the "bad guy" who was forcing students to do something that they didn't like. Melissa also felt pressured by her mentor and the other language arts teacher to finish the unit quickly. However, despite these things that seemed, in some ways, constraints, Melissa's mentor also allowed her great flexibility. The mentor never made Melissa feel like she, too, should stop teaching the book, and she was supportive of Melissa's modifications of the task. Recall that Susan indicated she did not want to stray from the curriculum task because she felt that it might negatively affect her mentor teacher. Melissa, teaching in the same school as Susan, was able to completely change the task, and never mentioned the change in a negative way. Melissa's mentor's flexibility allowed her to design a task and plan instruction to engage students with the content of the text in ways that other preservice teachers in this study – and even in the same school – did not.

5.0 CROSS-CASE FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

“I thought I was going to love teaching writing, but it’s so hard! I never think of the ways that students can interpret one sentence that I say or one direction that I give. I feel like it’s so much more apparent in writing, because they’re actually writing... like, the instruction that I gave affects their writing, you know what I mean?” – Pamela

In many ways, although all PSTs in this study had strengths in their instruction, this study also highlights the difficulties that Andrew, Susan, Pamela and Melissa faced when planning and enacting instruction. Pamela’s quote, above, indicates her own realization of the challenge of writing instruction – she felt her students’ writing was a direct reflection of what she had and had not taught. The goal of this chapter is to highlight what the PSTs did well in this study, but also investigate where they struggled, in the hopes of understanding how to prepare future teachers to do the difficult work of preparing students to respond to cognitively challenging writing tasks. In this chapter, I first summarize findings across four cases and discuss similarities and differences across cases. Then, I consider what these findings might mean for writing instruction for cognitively demanding writing tasks. Newell (1996) argues that if we “hope to develop a conceptually sound theory of literature curriculum and instruction, we will need to get beyond descriptions of literature teaching to systematic studies of the components of instruction that foster intelligent and well-reasoned responses to literary texts” (p. 168). I offer a discussion of

these four teachers not as a means of ranking or evaluating their teaching, but as a means of beginning to think about what components might be necessary to assist preservice teachers who are preparing students to respond to a cognitively demanding writing task. Finally, I conclude by considering the implications of these findings for teacher education and future research.

5.1.1 Summary of Cases

Andrew provided a cognitively demanding writing task about fallacies of logic in *Inherit the Wind*. His task required students to make a claim about the fallacy being used, and discuss the purpose for and effect of using this fallacy. Although Andrew spent six days working with students on this task, the majority of this time was spent reviewing the task prompt or allowing students to work on their outlines, conference with peers, or conference with the teacher. Of the six instructional days, only one day included significant focus on writing instruction, discussing “common mistakes” that students had made on past papers. He addressed three “common mistakes”: not beginning sentences with ‘because’ and not using ‘like’ in writing, “trimming the fat” and not writing too much, and explaining quotes. In each case, Andrew presented a brief example of the “mistake” and offered students a chance to “fix” the mistake. Overall, 26% of Andrew’s total instructional episodes focused on task specific writing instruction; Andrew’s main goal with this instruction seemed to be to offer writing tips about formal language, being concise, and explaining quotes. Andrew spent more time than any other participant discussing with his students the fact that writing is a process. Though he seemed to emphasize this process in his classroom talk, his instruction did not provide opportunities for students to understand how parts of this process worked together. For example, although he provided opportunities for students to draft their thinking in the required outline, he did not use this outline in instruction, nor did he provide other whole-class opportunities for students to generate, revise, or refine

ideas. Additionally, none of his whole-class instruction that I observed addressed literary interpretation. Although the task required significant interpretation – considering the effects of and purposes for using particular fallacies – Andrew’s instruction focused only on conventions of students’ writing in response to the task.

Susan began with a task for the novel *Tangerine* from her district’s curriculum. The task required students to consider the author’s use of “literary techniques (e.g., characterization, mood, tone, figurative language, motif, etc.)” to depict “realistic” families. Susan was adamant that she made no changes to the task because she “didn’t want to mess anything up” for her mentor teacher. However, over her four days of instruction, she emphasized students’ perceptions of what constitutes a “realistic” family rather than the author’s use of techniques to create realistic or unrealistic families. As such, the curriculum task, which was cognitively demanding on its own, was reduced to an opinion-based task that provided few opportunities for constructing knowledge, or making and supporting claims from students. Guided by her belief that the “five paragraph essay taught [her] to organize [her] thoughts”, Susan’s instruction focused on writing strategies very specific to the five paragraph form, emphasizing a “broad beginning” and a thesis sentence that included a “list statement” previewing three topics to be discussed in the essay. A high proportion of Susan’s total instructional time provided task specific writing instruction, but all of this instruction was focused on strategies for writing a five-paragraph essay. Susan’s emphasis on students’ personal perspectives about “realistic” families limited her focus on “content” oriented task specific writing instruction; the emphasis on “realistic” prioritized students’ opinions rather than the text, allowing less room for considering how the text might support their opinions. As such, none of her whole-class instruction focused on “content” oriented task specific writing instruction.

Pamela used the greatest amount of time for writing instruction – 10 days total – to prepare students to respond to the district-required prompt of writing about three poems with a common “theme.” However, the district prompt’s definition of “theme” emphasized the subject of the poems rather than the message, meaning, or moral of the poems. As a result, this prompt required students to write multi-paragraph essays with discrete individual paragraphs about each poem, allowing little space for students to make intertextual connections between themes represented across all the poems. Ultimately, neither the curriculum task nor Pamela’s version of the task qualified as cognitively demanding using the criteria set forth in this study. A unique factor for Pamela’s instruction was the school-wide model of writer’s workshop; because her school required the use of a workshop model, Pamela had 43 minutes per block designated for writing instruction, in addition to the regular 86-minute language arts block. Pamela spent 36% of her instructional episodes focused on task specific writing instruction. In the first four days of teaching, the majority of Pamela’s task specific instruction centered on helping students identify the “theme” of the poems. Although Pamela indicated that she wanted students to unpack the “deeper meanings” of the poems, she ultimately accepted – and even encouraged students to provide – surface level, topic statements in lieu of interpreting possible meanings, messages, or morals from the poem. Pamela’s other task specific writing instruction focused on helping students understand how to use quotes in their papers and how to write introductions, providing models for students. However, Pamela’s models were unrelated to the task. In her model paragraph about using quotes, Pamela focused on how language in the poem relates to imagery, a literary device; this was quite different from the way she was asking her students to use quotes, which was to identify a topic of the poem. Similarly, Pamela’s model of an introduction for this prompt reinforced the subject-level “theme” and did not support students to write any kind of

complex, engaging introduction. She was guided by an upside-down triangle model that she learned about in her Teaching Writing course. Even though the model was “frowned upon”, she felt that it provided much-needed structure for student writing. Pamela’s instruction was limited by her task. Because her curriculum task and the task she presented to students required no real interpretation or analysis, her task specific writing instruction, both of content and form, seemed to stay at a low, topic-only level.

Melissa began her instruction by significantly modifying the writing task available in the curriculum. The curriculum task required students to make connections between literary elements in the story, such as characters, plot, setting, or tone. Melissa worried that the initial prompt was “really abstract and kind of complex”; she feared that this complexity, coupled with her students’ clear lack of engagement with the text, would cause them to resist completing the task. So, she modified the task, and asked students to write from the first-person perspective of a character and address that particular character’s needs, as well as connections between events in the plot, details of the setting, and the character that the student selected. In terms of her classroom talk, 19% of whole-class instructional episodes were coded as task specific writing instruction. Most of these episodes came on the first day of instruction, when Melissa played a game with students to help them recall important details from the plot and setting in preparation to write their essay. However, due to general student behavior and rowdiness, Melissa ended up cutting the game short. The majority of Melissa’s whole-class talk focused on helping students understand how to use various tools that she created to support them during the writing process; both of these tools also provided task specific instruction focused on content. One tool included questions to help students “get into the task”, and a second tool was a card sort activity to support students in making connections between the characters, plot, and setting. Melissa’s

development of these tools was thoughtful – she wanted to be sure that students felt like the task was accessible and wanted to support their abilities to interpret the text. However, classroom management was a struggle for Melissa. She had students write silently and on their own for the entire third day of instruction; on the fourth day, she provided feedback on drafts with a handout to guide revisions. Melissa’s tools supported students to develop better knowledge about their tasks and text, but her opportunities to provide whole-class instruction were limited by student behavior.

5.2 CROSS-CASE DISCUSSION

Findings from this study suggest that preparing students to write in response to a cognitively challenging writing task is no simple thing. Teacher preparation for instruction for cognitively demanding writing tasks requires several components: a) a high quality task presented to students; b) supporting students to think about the text in relationship to the task; c) supporting students’ writing development to produce written text for the task, and d) the ability to build and communicate this knowledge clearly with students. While all of the participants in this study had a combination of these components in isolation, no participant had all of these elements.

Two PSTs, Andrew and Melissa, presented tasks to students that met most, if not all, criteria for cognitive demand as used in this study. Andrew’s task was one that he created on his own; Melissa modified a complex but low-cognitive level task to something more suitable and more challenging for her students. Two PSTs in this study did not present cognitively demanding tasks. Susan’s curriculum task qualified as cognitively demanding, but her instruction simplified the demands of the task. Pamela’s task, while seemingly difficult,

presented an oversimplified definition of theme and required little more than a short summary of three poems.

Across all four cases, teachers spent time engaged in task specific writing instruction. Given research that suggests that teachers typically observe students writing rather than providing whole-class writing instruction, this finding suggests that these teachers were engaged in higher quality writing instruction than many of their peers (e.g., Applebee & Langer, 2009). It was encouraging that all participants seem to be engaged in some task specific writing instruction. Smagorinsky and Smith (1992) suggest that at the middle and secondary levels, teachers should be teaching skills and strategies for tackling specific types of writing. However, the cases discussed in this paper suggest that task specific writing instruction takes many forms. Both Pamela and Melissa taught lessons that focused on the text in some way. Pamela's emphasis on the text was to help students identify surface-level themes, which was necessary to write an essay about themes. Pamela also provided guiding questions to help her students think about the texts in relationship to the task – however, these questions varied in their levels of difficulty. Melissa led her students through the card sorting activity as a means of helping them think about the relationships between various characters, settings, and plot events, which was a requirement of her task. Neither Andrew nor Susan had any whole-class instruction where they returned to the text as a group. However, both Susan and Andrew had specific instruction to focus on important aspects of students' writing, such as instruction to help students understand how many quotes to use or how to use a particular strategy for describing the importance of a quote. Pamela, too, used mini-lessons in her writer's workshop to focus on important parts of students' writing, such as introductions or the use of quotes. While it seemed that Melissa had hoped to provide instruction to support students to “translate” their card sort activity into first-

person writing, like that required of her task, such instruction was not present in my observations. Table 5.1 summarizes each participant with respect to his or her task, both for the curriculum and when presented to students, and task specific writing instruction.

Table 5.1: Summary of Cognitive Demand and Task Specific Writing Instruction for All Participants

| | Cognitive Demand | | Task Specific Writing Instruction | |
|---------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| | <i>Task as written in curriculum</i> | <i>Task as presented by teacher</i> | <i>Focused on Content</i> | <i>Focused on Form/Writing</i> |
| Andrew | N/A | Yes | No instruction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on “common mistakes” in writing |
| Susan | Yes | No | No instruction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on features of five paragraph essay (“broad beginning,”) • Focus on frequency of quotes in paper |
| Pamela | No | No | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus identifying “themes” for each poem • Presents “guiding questions” for students to answer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on features required essay (how to write introduction, how to introduce quotes) |
| Melissa | No | Yes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deciding on a) major events in characters’ lives, b) needs of various characters and c) what “form” a character might choose to write (e.g., letter, speech) • Focus on making connections between characters, plot events, and settings from novel | No instruction |

These findings suggest that teaching students to write in response to cognitively demanding tasks requires more than the presence of a quality task. A task must stay at the same

high level when it is presented to students, and teachers must provide both writing instruction and instruction to support thinking about the task in relationship to the text – and be able to communicate all of this clearly to the students. In the following sections, I discuss the findings of this study in relationship to the three research questions in this study: the cognitive demand of the tasks, the instruction for these tasks, and the influences and constraints for preservice teacher’s instruction.

5.2.1 Preservice Teachers and Cognitively Demanding Tasks

Durst (1987) writes, “If, as educators, we truly wish to foster in students the use of higher level thinking processes, then we need to encourage writing tasks in which students do their own analyzing, rather than finding a ready interpretation to summarize” (p. 375). This study set out to understand how instruction for such tasks might have supported higher order thinking in students.

5.2.1.1 Selecting tasks. When designing this study, I took great care to select four participants who demonstrated a strong understanding of cognitive demand. In the first phase of the study, the task sort in which the PSTs participated helped me select Andrew, Susan, Pamela and Melissa because they were able to identify at least 17 of 18 tasks as “cognitively demanding”. Additionally, these four students brought examples of tasks from their student teaching placements that met specific criteria for cognitively demanding tasks, confirming their understanding of such tasks and showing that they had access to curricula with such tasks in their student teaching placements. It is important to acknowledge that this study did not aim to understand how their teacher preparation supported them to recognize such tasks; beyond my own introduction of cognitive demand, it is unclear how much time PSTs spent studying such tasks. However, it is important to recognize that the ability to select, modify, or create a high

quality task is an important first step for teachers – and a step that, in this case, was not easy for all teachers in the study.

5.2.1.2 Understanding the “work” of a task. In the observational phase of this study, only two PSTs – Andrew and Melissa – presented tasks to students that met most of the criteria for “cognitive demand” as defined in Chapter three. Although understanding and being able to identify a high quality task are important, it is equally important to recognize that the teacher can significantly change the demands of the task in the way they present the task to students. One possible explanation for why Susan and Pamela did not present cognitively demanding tasks to their students is their underdeveloped understanding of the actual tasks from their curricula. In the case of Susan, she identified a task that *did* meet criteria for cognitive demand, and emphasized to me that she felt the task was an opportunity for students to “construct new knowledge” and “look closely at a text.” The emphasis on author’s craft and techniques to depict realistic or unrealistic families seemed to present an opportunity for close textual study and knowledge construction. However, the task that Susan presented to students looked very different from the task that was in her curriculum. True, her students were writing extended essays, and there was great concern amongst students about the length of the essays, but the *work* – the thinking that students had to do in order to respond – moved away from evaluating literary techniques of an author and towards forming an opinion of the families in the texts.

Most important, though, is that this difference was not apparent to Susan. Susan strongly felt that she had not modified the curriculum task at all, and was truly concerned about the ramifications of modifying the task for her mentor teacher – she did not want her mentor to “get in trouble,” and so she did not change the task. When thinking about modifying the task, Susan thought about modifying the entire prompt. She did not consider, though, how her emphasis on

students' opinions about what was "realistic" might be slightly and importantly different from the emphasis on "author's craft." It seems like Susan did not realize that she could change the task by emphasizing one part of the task more than another. Susan presented a task that, itself, met the criteria for a cognitively demanding task, but, through her instruction, transformed the task into one that was considerably easier. As a result of Susan's instruction, the task became much more of an opinion-based, loosely structured reader response, despite Susan's belief that students were doing challenging work. Susan's case highlights the importance of helping PSTs understand exactly what a task requires. Identifying the kind of thinking a student should engage in to complete such a task, and considering how their instruction can support that thinking are important first steps for planning lessons to support students' writing.

5.2.1.3 Role of curriculum and tasks. Similarly, Pamela presented a task that she believed to be cognitively demanding, even though her task and the curriculum task both seemed to lead students more toward summary writing. One reason that Pamela may have seen the task as challenging is because the prompt was asking students to work with multiple texts. However, Pamela did not pay close attention to what the task actually asked students to do with the texts; this is what defines the cognitive demand of any assignment. In some ways, this task was deceiving for Pamela. It led her to believe that, because it worked with multiple texts, it would be challenging for her students. However, the task did not require students to make meaning across poems or to put the texts in conversation with each other. For Pamela, understanding the *work* of her task was a missed critical first step.

Given the cases of Susan and Pamela, one might conclude that PSTs need to be able to analyze tasks in order to understand the actual work required of the tasks, especially if the task comes from a curriculum or is one that the PSTs have not designed. Andrew and Melissa each

designed or modified their own task; they also seemed to have the strongest understanding of what they wanted students to be able to do when completing their task. The ability to look closely at a curriculum and understand the work being asked of students is important both in making decisions about how to use the curriculum in instruction. Wilhelm (2008) writes,

Even the best ideas, when they become programmatic, become reified and lose their vitality. Teachers always need to put their own stamp on any prepared materials, by framing and adapting these to meet the needs of their specific students in their unique situation. This is why any materials, including well-conceived and intelligently designed curricula and programs, cannot work without the expert adaptations of a reflective teacher. (p. 58)

This study calls to attention the “expert adaptations of a reflective teacher.” One certainly cannot expect new teachers to be “experts”; however, teacher educators must find ways to help preservice teachers study curriculum – especially in districts with a somewhat pre-set curriculum – in order to understand what the curriculum is actually asking students to do. An understanding of the intellectual work of classroom tasks is necessary first, before novice teachers consider making adaptations. In the case of Susan, had she better understood the work of the task, she may have realized that she was, in fact, changing the demands of the task with her emphasis on “realistic.” In the case of Pamela, had she realized that her task was not, in fact, the cognitively demanding task she thought that it was, she could have considered adaptations to up the intellectual ante.

In the cases of Melissa, Susan, and Pamela, tasks were inspired by the City District’s curriculum. In all three cases, the district curriculum included a literature-based task that seemed to be removed from actual issues in the text, emphasizing authors’ crafts and authorial choices over events or characters in the text. In a position statement about teaching writing, the National Council for Teachers of English (2006) argues that teachers need to consider the relationship

between reading and writing and understand “how writers read in a special way, with an eye toward not just what the text says but how it is put together” (“Writing Beliefs”). Susan and Melissa’s modification of the curriculum task moved away from “reading like a writer” and towards a consideration of different characters and events in the task. If a task’s emphasis is intended to be on reading like a writer, perhaps it is necessary for this emphasis to be made clear to the teachers (and, in turn, to students), especially if the task originates from a district-wide curriculum. Textbook and curricula writers must carefully consider how they present tasks not only to students, but also to teachers, being sure that critical components of the task are clearly marked for them. Given the literature that suggests that curricula can serve as a source of learning for PSTs (Johnson, Thompson, Smagorinsky, & Fry, 2002; Smagorinsky, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002), it seems that responsible curricula writers should embrace the opportunity to make clear the intellectual intentions of the tasks they create so that teachers can present these tasks to students in ways closer to that intention. Especially in the case of Susan, it seems that it would have been beneficial for these teachers to better understand the work that the task intended students to do, so that they could designed their instruction to support this work.

5.2.2 Claims about Instruction

Across the cases of Andrew, Pamela, Susan, and Melissa, findings from this study point to several important areas of instruction: a) the extent to which PSTs instruction supported – or did not support – students’ understanding and development of the content of the of the task as well as the writing demands in the task; b) the kinds of knowledge and understandings necessary for PSTs to design high quality instruction; c) the use of models in instruction; d) the roles of practical and conceptual tools in preparing for teaching; and e) factors associated with the decline of a cognitively demanding task.

5.2.2.1 Instruction that supports both content and writing. Hillocks argued, “Teaching writing has a venerable history of assuming that the demands of content will be taken care of elsewhere” (cited in National Writing Project & Nagin, 2003, p. 54). Findings from this study corroborate and build upon Hillocks’ argument. In this study, all four teachers presented text-based tasks to students – tasks that required attention to literature. However, very few observations included instruction to help students think about the texts in relationship to the tasks, or to think about the text-based ideas that students could write about. Pamela tried to support students to think about the topics of poems that they had read, but she identified surface level subjects only, and did not help students think about intertextual links across the poems. Only Melissa provided instruction to support students’ thinking about the content of the literature in a beyond-surface-level way with her card sorting activity.

Although the participants likely discussed the content of their respective texts during the course of the unit prior to the writing task, it is notable that none of the teachers incorporated any instruction that engaged students’ thinking about the content that they were being asked to write about during their instruction on the writing task. Andrew’s requirement for the outline provided opportunities for students to brainstorm their ideas about content, but these outlines were never used in whole-class instruction, nor did Andrew seem to help students understand the relationship between the outlines and the task itself. The majority of Susan’s instruction was geared towards helping students master particular skills needed to write in response to the tasks, rather than think about the content they were asked to write about. The National Council for Teachers of English (2006) suggests that, although quality of content and correctness of form are both important, “a correct text empty of ideas or unsuited to its audience or purpose is not a good piece of writing” (Writing Beliefs). However, across these cases, little instructional time was

dedicated to helping students formulate ideas about the text in relationship to the task, or developing students' initial ideas. In most cases, the text seemed to be in the background – it provided a framework for the writing tasks, but was not often referred to in whole class instruction. This was, perhaps, a critical missed opportunity in these cases. If students are asked to write about a text, they must have ample opportunities to study the text in relationship to the writing task.

5.2.2.2 Knowledge necessary for instruction. Findings from this study also suggest that it is important for PSTs to have a robust understanding of what criteria for cognitively demanding writing tasks mean in practice. One criteria of cognitively demanding writing tasks is that students use evidence, examples, details, or reasons to support the claims that they make in their essays (Newmann et al., 1998). In this study, Andrew, Susan and Pamela all provided tasks to students that required the use of textual evidence, but PSTs seemed to have different expectations about what they wanted students to do with the evidence. Andrew provided students with text excerpts and asked students to analyze these excerpts, expecting students to make claims to identify a fallacy and analyze the rhetorical effect of the fallacy. However, although Andrew provided instruction on how students could analyze quotes by focusing on a few words within the quote, he provided no guidance for students to understand how the quotes could be used to advance a claim. In the cases of Susan and Pamela, both tasks required students to use textual evidence, but their instruction neither supported students to analyze quotes *nor* to use quotes to advance a claim or argument – perhaps, in part, because their tasks as enacted did not require students to *make* a claim. The emphasis of Susan and Pamela's instruction on using evidence focused primarily on the presence of quotes – inserting quotes more for the sake of using quotes, or on how to properly introduce a quote or punctuate a quote – rather than using

quotes to support an original claim not already made in the text. This finding is similar to Hillocks' (2006) findings that many teachers encourage students to include "elaboration and support" in their writing, as this is a common criteria for state-issued standardized tests. However, state rubrics and teacher expectations seldom provide criteria for what constitutes "elaboration and support".

This study highlights not only that types of task specific knowledge of form and content are important in writing instruction, but also that there is a necessary depth of knowledge required about both of these things. Pamela's confusion about "theme" is an example of how her uncertainty about theme, coupled with a poor definition from the curriculum, resulted in inarticulate expectations about the task and instruction that, at times, seemed unrelated to the task. Similarly, Andrew encouraged his students to avoid beginning a sentence with "because" or "since" as he felt it contributed to a less-than-academic tone. However, as he reviewed other alternative ways to begin sentences with students, he accepted student revisions that included beginning with a dependent clause (e.g., "Due to Mary being engaged to Cates...") without hesitation. In order to help students understand possible reasons why they should not start a sentence with "because," it might have been useful for Andrew to help students understand the difference between independent and dependent clauses. However, it is questionable as to whether or not Andrew either understood these differences himself or felt it necessary to help students understand them. It seemed like Andrew was relying on a set of individual rules that he picked up from his mentor, such as the rule to "trim the fat", or by his own experiences as a student, rather than on knowledge about conventions necessary for composing an essay such as the one that he expected students to produce.

Additionally, PSTs in this study seemed to have an unclear vision about what kind of written responses they could have expected their students to produce. After having a chance to review student work, Susan told me, “it’s been a while since I’ve been in seventh grade, and I’ve never worked with seventh graders, so I don’t know what they should be doing” (Post-instruction Interview 4). Similarly, Andrew remarked, “I also think just because I’m a new teacher, I grade on the side of higher grades, because I don’t want to be extra-mean to them. I don’t know them that well.” Both comments indicate Susan and Andrew’s lack of understanding about what their students should be able to do. Andrew connects this difficulty to what he perceives to be not knowing students well as writers; he told me this was especially difficult because his mentor had been teaching the same students for six, seventh and eighth grade and he felt his mentor had a much greater sense of these students’ strengths and weaknesses as writers. Susan attributed her lack of knowledge to the fact that she had trouble remembering what it was like to be a seventh grade writer. In both cases, neither PST described ever having an opportunity to study developmentally appropriate samples of student work, and both seemed unclear as to what to expect of students or what students might be capable of achieving.

PSTs in this study also reflected on what they knew about grading student work. When discussing what she considered the “best” student example of work, Melissa struggled to decide if she had fairly assessed the student, telling me, “I’m hoping her grade is fair. So far, she’s the best and she was a low A” (Final Interview). Although Melissa had used a rubric that she developed for the task, she seemed unsure as to whether or not the rubric was fairly capturing what students had done in their writing. Susan was critical of the district rubric that she was required to use. Susan felt that the district rubric was unclear and “wonky,” emphasizing global organization of the essay (e.g., introduction, body, conclusion) but not emphasizing inter-

paragraph organization. Ultimately, she felt that she ended up giving higher grades than she felt students may have actually deserved because of the rubric. However, she also questioned her own understanding of the rubric, saying “I don’t want to give them points lower because I don’t really know what this rubric is saying” (Post-instruction Interview 4). Andrew’s take on assessment was completely different. He described scoring student work:

I didn’t give them a rubric because I think rubrics are—for the most part kids don’t look at them. I think they’re wordy, in language that is meant for the teacher and not for the student... I don’t think kids are gonna look at it and say, “I need to be clear enough blah-blah-blah.” It’s just language for adults. (Final Interview)

Recall that Doyle (1988) argues that a task exists on three levels – the third level is how tasks are taken up by students and accepted by their teachers. While this study did not collect and analyze student work, these PSTs reflections on their rubric call to question the way that the teachers accepted student work. It seems that these teachers did not have a clear vision of what to expect from students and also were unsure of how their assessment criteria did – or perhaps did not – support the work of the tasks.

5.2.2.3 Use of models in instruction. Three teachers in this study, Pamela, Susan, and Melissa, provided students with models of what exemplary work might look like, as recommended by research (e.g., Graham & Perin, 2007, Graham, MacArthur, & Fitzgerald, 2007) and content area specialty groups (e.g., National Writing Project & Nagin, 2003). The benefit to models is that they can provide a clear understanding of what a final response to a writing task might look like. In addition to the research in writing instruction, research in math also suggests that teachers or students modeling high-level performance is one way to maintain the cognitive demand of a mathematical task (Stein et al., 2009).

The models used by Melissa, Susan, and Pamela in this study seemed to both support and confuse students' thinking. Melissa created a model of a written response from Chief Seiteke, a character from the text that she felt students would likely not choose; he was a minor character and there was little information available about him within the text. Her model was grounded in a text that students understood, with a character that the students knew, thus providing potential for students to understand how the model related to the prompt. Her model could qualify as a "high-level" model; however, Melissa presented the model to students very quickly, only asking one student what she noticed about the model in relationship to the task. Students were given a good model, but little classroom time was dedicated to understanding the model.

On the other hand, Susan used two different models in her instruction (one teacher-created and one student created) and provided ample time for student study of both models. However, her first model might not be considered a "high quality" model; she provided a model of a paper that was similar in "type" to a "response to literature", but because students were unfamiliar with the text, it was difficult for Susan to use this model as an exemplar. As such, when Susan tried to use this model to highlight important features of the paper, students grew confused and frustrated because they did not understand the content of the essay.

It is also notable that while Pamela and Susan did use models with students, both provided models that did not relate to the actual prompt to which students responded. Both teachers made this choice in order to avoid students' "copying" the models. When teaching students to integrate quotes in their essays, Pamela made up a new prompt and wrote a sample paragraph, including quotes, in response to that prompt in the hopes that she could make it "similar enough so [students] could get it but not so similar that they would just copy it" (Post-instruction Interview 4). Pamela's and Susan's selection of models to use was quite purposeful –

they wanted to help the students understand the concept they were trying to teach without allowing the students to just copy the model. However, the models that they presented were disconnected from the actual task, and it is questionable whether students were able to understand the models in relationship to the task. The use of models is a recommended “best practice” in writing instruction; however, findings from this study remind us that it is not simply the use of models that is important. Teachers must carefully select models that are accessible for students and clearly relate to the work of the students’ task, and teachers must also provide adequate time for students to study and understand the model so that they are able to see how the model can serve as an exemplar to guide their own writing.

5.2.2.4 Other tools in instruction. Grossman et al. (2000) argues that both conceptual and practical tools are necessary for preservice teachers learning to teach writing and that preservice teachers were hungry for practical tools to assist them in writing instruction. PSTs in this study felt that they did not get enough practical tools in their methods courses and often sought tools and resources from each other. In the present study, Pamela used the upside down triangle as a means of teaching students to write an introduction to their essays – a tool first introduced to her by another student in her Teaching Writing class. Even though Pamela recognized that this method was “frowned upon”, she found the practical nature of teaching introductions in this way to be appealing. She struggled, though, with how much structure to give students. In our final interview, she said:

I don’t want to box in their creativity, but I can’t just let them run free, because they don’t do it well. I don’t know. I don’t know how to balance it out between giving them a lot of scaffolding and modeling and examples but then also letting them kind of run free with what they want to do.

Here, Pamela is representing her own conflicted feelings about providing specific tools, like models or step-by-step scaffolding for students. She seems to feel like these tools provide students with structure that they need, but that they also “box in their creativity.” In the same conversation, she told me that she felt like some students needed to use more graphic organizers to help them write, but she also felt that the same graphic organizers limited other writers. Although she seemed to clearly understand that not all tools like graphic organizers were appropriate for every student, she struggled with how to decide when to use certain tools with particular students. Pamela’s conflict suggests that, in her case, she would benefit not only from having a “tool kit” of practical and conceptual tools, but also from understanding how to use these tools in ways to support students’ individual writing processes and creativity rather than limiting this creativity.

Susan’s use of tools, especially, provided a highly structured form for students’ responses, which relates to Doyle and Carter’s (1984) discussion of the concepts of risk and ambiguity for academic tasks. Doyle and Carter argue that most challenging tasks take place in settings that have high levels of risk (the potential to satisfy pre-specified assessment criteria) and ambiguity (multiple possible acceptable answers), and that often, teachers might reduce one or both of these areas, simplifying the demands of the task for students. Susan’s highly structured format for student responses reduced the ambiguity of the task – students were all directed to open their papers in a similar way, with a broad statement, and have a similar type of thesis sentence. While Susan’s intentions were good – she truly believed that she was helping her students learn a form of writing that was necessary for their success with later standardized tests and high school writing – the formulaic nature of the essay seemed to limit students’ opportunities for responding in a more creative way and also seemed to focus students’ attention

more on following correct procedures rather than on the content of their writing. Susan might have benefitted from understanding how her use of tools, like the highly structured five-paragraph form, might actually limit students more than it would support students.

5.2.2.5 Impromptu instruction. In the lessons I observed, all four teachers in this study had at least one moment of “impromptu instruction” – moments when they modified their instructional plan during the lesson. Melissa, for example, hadn’t planned to ask her students why certain plot events were important when she played the review game with her students. Initially, she planned it to be a rapid-fire review game, with students calling out plots quickly. However, when students were playing the actual game, Melissa felt like she needed to push students to explain why they thought certain events were important. Although Melissa hadn’t planned to require this explanation, it was a modification that had potential to be helpful to students, and certainly stayed in line with the demands of her task. However, Andrew, Susan and Pamela all had impromptu instruction that seemed more troubling. Andrew seemed to have not developed a clear vision of his expectations for the final student product. As such, he didn’t realize that he expected students to write an academic essay with an introduction. His instruction to students about introductions happened on the day before the essays were due. Susan did not think through how she wanted students to use quotes in their essays, and as such gave them self-described “bad” models of how to do so, limiting students’ opportunity to learn how to use quotes. Pamela developed guiding questions to accompany what she felt was a too-open-ended prompt; however, she did not fully plan how she intended students to use these questions, and encouraged students to use them in a way that did not support students to write a coherent essay. Andrew, Susan, and Pamela’s cases highlight the complex work of teaching and the careful, deliberate planning that must come into play when planning instruction. Andrew and Pamela

might have benefitted from a clearer articulation of what they expected students to produce as their paper; with this clearer vision, Andrew could have provided more instruction at an earlier point about introductions. Understanding her own expectations for students' final product, Pamela could have designed questions that may have led students in that direction in a more coherent way, and could have planned better for use of these questions in her instruction. Susan seemed to have a clearer version of what she expected as a final product. However, she had not anticipated what types of things students might struggle with, like using quotes in their essays, and as such was unprepared to provide a helpful example for students when they encountered this difficulty.

5.2.2.6 Instruction and decline of cognitive demand. Stein et al. (2009) described features, in mathematics, that were associated with the decline of cognitive demand of a task in a classroom, such as a) routinizing or proceduralizing a task or when the teacher “takes over” the thinking to tell students what to do; b) shifting the emphasis away from meaning or concepts and towards correctness; c) allowing an inappropriate amount of time – too much or too little – to solve a problem; d) having difficulty controlling the classroom; e) misjudging the appropriateness of the task and giving students a task that is not engaging or for which they do not have appropriate prior knowledge, or f) not holding students accountable for high-level products or processes, such as by accepting work where students do not meet the demands of the tasks set forth. Some of these features make sense in light of the cases described here. For instance, Melissa struggled with the issue of time – she was under pressure from her mentor teacher and her students to finish the task. Additionally, she struggled with classroom management and controlling the classroom; this struggle seemed to influence the amount of instructional time she spent on activities. Often, activities took longer than she expected they might, and so she spent more time

than was necessary on tasks because students were off task or difficult to manage. In the case of Susan, much of her instruction could be considered “taking over” the thinking for students by structuring their responses in the five paragraph essay. While I imagine it was not her intention, her instruction seemed to proceduralize students’ written responses and thus take a great deal of the thinking work out of writing. In some ways, Pamela seemed to suffer from giving students a task for which they did not have appropriate prior knowledge. In her poetry unit, she mentioned that they had not discussed themes of any of the poems prior to the writing assignment, nor did her instruction help students develop an understanding of theme or how theme was developed in a poem. Andrew’s instruction seems to be least connected to these factors, which is promising. However, Andrew also provided very little whole-class instruction – the majority of his time was spent reviewing the prompt with students, or allowing the students to work in small groups or individually.

5.2.3 Claims about Influences and Constraints

This study highlights the importance of preservice teachers’ beliefs about and prior experiences with writing instruction for informing their own classroom choices (Lortie, 1975; Zeichener & Tabachik, 1981). In this study, Susan drew not only on her belief that the five-paragraph essay was essential for students to learn, but also on her memories of her own teacher to inform how she organized her instruction. When I asked her where she saw influences in her own teacher learning, she first acknowledged the curriculum and then said she also was influenced from her own experiences:

I was looking at the curriculum and trying to think, “What helped me when I was learning the five-paragraph essay?” I tried to do my best at that. I know my English teacher would always bring in models of things he wrote, and that made us feel good because we were like, he was trusting us to read his stuff, but also, we were able to see what he was talking about in his own writing (Post-instruction Interview 1).

Similarly, Andrew acknowledged that some of his instructional decisions were influenced by professors he had in college; he had experienced professors who gave him lists of things to avoid in writing, similar to Andrew's "common mistakes" sheet that he gave to students. Wilhelm (2007) reminds us that teachers can often be "prisoners of the traditional... teachers tend to do what was done to them, and what they most often see being done.... Revert(ing) to what is most transparent and common place" (p. 55).

While only truly a factor in the case of Melissa, findings from this study corroborate findings from other researchers about the importance of the classroom environment for carrying out high level tasks (Stein, Grover, & Henningsten, 1996). Ultimately, student behavior and struggles with classroom management kept Melissa from providing the whole-class writing instruction that she wanted to provide, such as helping students understand how to take some of the connections they made between characters, setting and plot, and turn those connections into a first-person letter. Melissa's case serves as a reminder that the classroom environment can shape the way that a teacher carries out a task. This is especially important for consideration in preservice teacher education, where PSTs are often coupled with a mentor teacher in an environment that is not necessarily "their own" classroom, where, like Melissa, they have to negotiate their own position of authority in the classroom.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Although this study was not designed to evaluate the effectiveness of these preservice teachers' teacher education courses, the findings of the study are useful for those who prepare teachers to teach writing. This research study suggests that teacher education programs might better

prepare preservice teachers to select, modify, or create high quality writing tasks, and help provide appropriate conceptual and practical tools to assist new teachers in providing instruction for such tasks. Based on the findings from these four cases, I make the following recommendations as to how teacher education programs might better address the role of and instruction for challenging tasks in middle and high school classrooms.

First, teacher education programs can place more emphasis on tasks and curriculum as part of teacher preparation. New teachers must be able to select, modify, or create writing tasks that challenge students. In university-based methods courses, PSTs should have the opportunity to examine multiple tasks, both those created by PSTs and also those in textbooks and sample curricula, in order to understand what the tasks are asking students to do. Knowledge of tasks – what makes a task high quality and how that high quality can be maintained through instruction – seems to be an important part of teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). Teacher educators might organize such a study around Doyle’s (1988) levels of tasks, studying tasks as they exist in the curriculum, tasks as they are presented to students, and tasks as students complete them and teachers accept them. It makes sense for preservice teachers to have the opportunity to look at a variety of examples here, including the tasks themselves, examples of teaching practice (e.g., video of instruction), student work, and teacher feedback on student work via rubric or written comments. Seeing a variety of representations of the tasks across the three levels can help new teachers understand how a teacher’s instructional choices can either support or degrade the intellectual work originally present in a task.

Second, university methods courses need to support novice teachers in learning to truly understand the intellectual work that a task requires of students. Understanding the work of a task is critical for providing instruction for the task; if a teacher misidentifies the actual point of a

task, it is understandable how his or her instruction might oversimplify the demands of the task. One important feature of understanding the work of a task is to be sure that the teacher understands what the task is asking students to do. This is especially important if a new teacher is working under conditions where she has not designed the task herself. Many teacher education programs have students design their own lessons or units (Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1995) but often preservice teachers are asked to design these units from the bottom up, relying on self-created tasks and lessons. However, many teachers may be asked to teach in schools where assessments – or even entire curricula – are more standardized. In these cases, it behooves novice teachers to be able to closely understand the tasks in their curriculum in order to either a) improve the task if necessary, as Melissa did, or b) plan instruction to support students in completing the task. The ability to either design one's own task, like Andrew, or significantly and purposefully modify a provided task, like Melissa, seemed to support their understandings of the demands of the task. In this study, the two teachers who did the least amount of modification to a pre-written task in their curriculum also seemed to have the least clear understanding of their actual task. Susan did not understand how her emphasis on realistic families steered the focus away from author's craft, and Pamela did not understand how to take up the curriculum's oversimplified version of "theme" during her instruction.

A second important feature of understanding the work of a task is being able to truly understand the specific knowledge and skills necessary to complete a task. For instance, teachers should have a clear sense of what it means to "use evidence" in a written response, and understand the difference between simply locating evidence in the text, citing evidence correctly in a particular style, or using evidence to support an original claim. To design a task that requires the use of evidence is not difficult, but Andrew, Pamela and Susan's cases highlight that

enacting instruction that supports students in learning to *use* evidence in their writing can be difficult. A new teacher must first understand what it means to effectively use evidence before she can provide instruction to students to do so. Novice teachers might also benefit from a very clear understanding of the type of work required in different genres of writing. For instance, if preservice teachers provide an argument-based task, they should understand how argumentative writing differs from opinion writing. The Common Core State Standards, for instance, stress this difference, noting that arguments are based in reason, fact, and logic, whereas opinion or persuasive pieces are often ethos-based, relying on emotion or rhetorical strategies to make a convincing case. Hillocks (2011) has written a book on this very topic; such texts that deeply explore certain kinds of writing might help to provide important pedagogical content knowledge to novice teachers. Having a clear definition of specific terms in a task or even of specific genres of tasks might support preservice teachers to develop clearer instructional goals and activities, perhaps reducing the impromptu changes in instruction that many teachers in this study demonstrated.

Teacher educators must be careful to help preservice teachers understand the relationship between tasks and the instruction provided to students, to help novice teachers understand how they can support pupils to attend to the content demands of a text and the writing demands of the task. Findings from this study demonstrate that while Andrew, Susan, Pamela and Melissa focused on one of these areas, none provided instruction to support students' thinking about the task in terms of content as well as to support students' writing development. This finding is important for teacher educators. In preservice teacher education courses where PSTs take methods courses in both teaching literature and teaching writing, teacher educators need to take care not to reinforce the artificial dichotomy that reading and writing are entirely separate. If

students are to write about literature, it is reasonable to expect students are provided opportunities to think about, talk about, and write about concepts in the text that are addressed in the writing prompt. Teacher educators can help preservice teachers think about best practices in writing instruction in relationship to particular tasks, perhaps drawing also from best practices in literature instruction, such as designing perspective-taking activities to help students begin to think about a character's point of view in a text (Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007). These kinds of activities can help students think about the content of texts they are to write about in respect to the prompt, rather than immediately – or only – focusing on writing skills.

More broadly, teacher educators should organize methods courses as a place for PSTs to develop both conceptual and practical tools to be used for teaching. A balanced understanding of theoretical concepts important to writing, especially tasks (Doyle, 1988), instructional scaffolding (Langer & Applebee, 1986), and a process-based approach to writing instruction (Hayes & Flower, 1980) seem like critical conceptual tools for novice teachers who hope to design and provide instruction for cognitively demanding writing tasks. At the onset of this study, I hypothesized that new teachers would need more practical tools to support their instruction. Knowing their teacher education program quite well, I assumed that they would have strong conceptual understandings of important theories in writing instruction. However, I was surprised to see that it seemed, in my view, the PSTs in this study had a rather underdeveloped understanding of important theories like a process-based approach to writing instruction; while they went through several “steps” with their students, I did not see the critical recursiveness of the writing process, and saw very limited opportunities for important early stages of the writing process, like idea-generation and development. It seemed like students were charging ahead after completing each task along the way, not truly revising or rethinking ideas in their papers,

relying on surface level edits, etc. One way teacher educators can be sure to integrate theory and practice is to have preservice teachers reading from theorists themselves, rather than getting information as summarized in a textbook. Smagorinsky and Whiting (1995) argue that preservice teachers do need practical tools, or nuts and bolts, in their teacher education, but “in order to grow professionally, teachers need more than nuts and bolts. If one of our goals is to be theoretically informed about the decisions we make as teachers, then an understanding of the origins of the theories we consider is essential” (p. 110). However, Grossman (2000) reminds readers that PSTs often feel that they do not receive enough practical tools in their methods courses. Teacher educators should strive to strike a balance of providing examples and practical tools for PSTs, while ensuring that preservice teachers have the opportunity to understand various theories that inform these tools.

Finally, like many studies that have come before it, this study also reminds teacher educators of the role of preservice teachers’ beliefs and the relationship of these beliefs to their instruction. Hammerness et al. (2005) remind us that “learning to teach requires that new teachers come to think about (and understand) teaching in ways that is quite different from what they have learned from their own experience as students” (p. 359). It might be useful for preservice teachers to understand their own biases and beliefs about writing in order to be aware of those biases as they are planning instruction. Perhaps even making the concept of the “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975) clear to new teachers might be useful. Methods courses might provide spaces for PSTs to reflect on their own education as elementary, secondary, and post-secondary students, reflecting on experience and teachers, activities or lessons that they remember. Then, teacher educators can help remind PSTs that they experienced these activities or lessons as *students*, and remind them that thinking like a teacher is

a very different kind of thinking. Teacher educators can press PSTs to think more carefully about the purpose behind particular lessons or activities, essentially attempting to draw out the goals, rationales, or purposes for activities. Perhaps by having to tie particular activities and lessons, based in PSTs beliefs and experiences, to particular learning goals might be a first step towards helping PSTs think more carefully about why they choose to do things.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study begins to highlight what kinds of difficulties new teachers face when preparing students to respond to challenging writing tasks. In this study, I relied primarily on observations of and audio-recordings of instruction and interviews with preservice teachers. Future research on this same topic would benefit greatly from broadening the scope and including student work in data collection and analysis. With student work, one could attempt to draw more clear connections between teacher practice and student outcomes. This could help researchers have a better understanding of the kinds of instruction that seem to support students' high level responses to challenging tasks and perhaps also shed light on what instruction seems to not resonate as well with students.

This study is limited somewhat in focus, emphasizing whole-class instruction and other instructional opportunities that were available to all students (e.g., handouts); I did not analyze teacher talk in small group or individual settings. Such talk could provide additional important information about instruction provided by teachers to students. Such data might be difficult for researchers to collect, especially since the researcher cannot sit in on each group and listen to the talk. In this study, PSTs were asked to wear a small microphone during instruction so that I could capture their talk as they moved about the room. A limitation of this microphone, though,

is that it made it difficult to capture student talk, especially if the student was not near the teacher. If a researcher is interested in understanding a teacher's instruction relative to student writing and hopes to collect teacher-student talk as one kind of data, it might be useful to organize students in small groups (e.g. tables of 3-4) and have a table microphone at each table in addition to having the PST wear a microphone. With these multiple audio-recordings, it is easier to imagine that one could put together a more complete version of the conversation. Alternatively, if the researcher narrowed her focus to only one small group of students and was able to sit near those students during instruction, it would be much easier for her to record the student and teacher talk.

Future research in teacher education might look to longitudinal designs perhaps to better understand how PST learning in methods courses transfers to their actual teaching after they have left their program of study. Smagorinsky, Lakly, and Johnson (2002) provide one such example of a study; their research suggests that Andrea, the teacher in their study, had to modify her beliefs about teaching to fit within her district's curriculum or resist the curriculum in order to teach the way she had learned in her methods courses. Previous research suggests that cognitively demanding writing tasks are rare in many classrooms (American Institutes for Research, 2005, 2007; Newman, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Matsumura, Garnier, Pascal, & Valdes, 2002; Matsumura, Garnier, Slater, & Boston, 2008). Knowing this, it is worth understanding how preservice teachers try, or perhaps do not try, to include such tasks in their own teaching and the challenges they encounter in doing so, after they leave their teacher education programs.

Finally, while it was my goal in this study to examine instruction for cognitively demanding literature based writing tasks, I acknowledge that the PSTs in this study had little

opportunity in their methods courses to engage in a deep study of tasks. Prior to the final task-sort, which they completed in their methods course, I talked with students for 15 minutes about cognitively demanding writing tasks and provided a few examples; however, future research might consider examining a more detailed intervention centered around task selection or creation for novice, mid-career and experienced teachers. Models of such studies in mathematics (e.g., Arbaugh, 2000) provide insight into how teachers learn about these tasks and also to how such learning might influence teacher knowledge, thinking, and instruction.

5.5 SUMMARY

This study examined the tasks and teaching for four novice teachers who had been asked select and design instruction for tasks that were cognitively demanding. Attending to the type of intellectual work that a task requires of students is especially important with the recent adoption of the Common Core State Standards. After I had observed in all four teachers' classrooms, I returned to the CCSS, to understand how the tasks I observed might relate to the standards. I was surprised to see some close correlations for three of the tasks in this study to some of the new CCSS. I offer these comparisons at the conclusion of my dissertation to help contextualize cognitively demanding writing tasks within the CCSS and to show how such tasks closely relate to these standards. It is important to note that the three standards which seemed to align most closely with the tasks in this study were actually standards in the "reading literature" strand of the CCSS; this serves as a reminder that that, although the CCSS divides the standards by reading, writing, listening and speaking, it is reasonable to expect teachers may use writing as a way of assessing students' reading (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010a).

Pamela’s presented task seems quite similar to standard RL.7.2 – both the task and the standard emphasize students’ abilities to determine a theme of a reading. However, the standard emphasizes students’ ability to “analyze the development” of the theme over the course of the text. This seems much more explicit and detailed than Pamela’s presented task, which asked students to write about how the poems “deal with” the theme. The third part of Andrew’s task, where he asks students to “analyze the effect of the fallacy on the play, character speaking or other characters in the play” is quite similar to standard RL.8.3; both the task and the standard require a close reading of a short section of a text, and connecting that small section of text to other events in the story. The task presented in Melissa’s curriculum is nearly identical to standard RL.7.3. Neither Susan’s curriculum task nor her presented task clearly related to any of the Common Core State Standards; the nearest match might have been in the College and Career Readiness Standards that argue that students should attend to the craft and structure of works of literature. However, the grade-specific standards do not emphasize the author’s craft in relationship to developing realistic characters; these standards focus more on author’s development of point of view (standard six), development of overall structure of the text (standard five) or specific meaning of words or phrases within a text (standard four). Table 5.2 presents the standard and the PST task side-by-side for comparison.

Table 5.2: Relationships Between PST Tasks and Common Core State Standards

| Strand | Grade | Standard | Common Core State Standard | PST Task |
|--------------------|-------|----------|---|--|
| Reading Literature | 7 | 2 | Determine a theme or central idea of a text and <i>analyze its development</i> over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text. | Select a common theme from the selection of poems and write about how the <i>poems deal with this theme</i> . (Pamela, 7 th grade task presented) |
| Reading Literature | 8 | 3 | Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision | Select two quotes and a) identify the type of fallacy being used in the quote, b) identify why the character might choose to use this fallacy or argument tactic and c) analyze the effect of this fallacy on the play, the character speaking or other characters in the play. (Andrew, 8 th grade task presented) |
| Reading Literature | 7 | 3 | Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes character or plot). | Select three literary elements (e.g., character, setting, plot, theme, point of view) and describe how the author used these elements, analyzing the relationship among the three elements. (Melissa, 8 th grade task in curriculum) |

The relationship between the tasks in this study and the Common Core Standards is important. Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012) argued, “As challenging as it must have been to write and finesse the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, that accomplishment is nothing compared to the work of teaching in ways that bring all students to these ambitious expectations. The goal is clear. The pathway is not” (p. 13). This study highlights some of the difficulties that new teachers may face when trying to implement these

types of writing tasks – however, these difficulties are not necessarily only ones that novice teachers will face. The CCSS will require a shift in instruction for all teachers – preservice, novice, and experienced teachers – and the difficulties that Andrew, Susan, Pamela and Melissa faced in their instruction may not be limited to new teachers only. Teacher educators, curriculum writers, professional development groups and researchers have the responsibility to support all teachers to be able to design tasks and instruction that meet these ambitious standards. I hope that this work contributes to our understandings of the types of support that teachers might need. Teachers need to be able to select, modify, or design tasks in a way that meet criteria for cognitive demand – but they also need support in understanding the specific features of the tasks that make them challenging and that must be emphasized in instruction. Curricular materials might support teachers by providing examples of tasks that include examples of student work, so that teachers can have a sense of what the task is really asking students to do. Similarly, curricular materials could support teachers by providing pedagogical content knowledge – knowledge of how to teach particular concepts, such as determining a theme – and also knowledge of content and students – knowledge about what might confuse students or about what they might struggle with. Teacher educators and professional development groups can help all teachers study the standards in order to identify how these standards differ from standards currently in place, and can support teachers’ transition to these higher standards by helping them redesign writing tasks and plan instruction to support students to complete the tasks.

As I close, I am keenly aware of the impact that the CCSS will have on research about teachers and teacher practice. I see myself as a teacher educator and researcher who is interested in the ways that research can support teachers to do their very best teaching. Throughout this study, I viewed my observations of and interviews with Andrew, Susan, Pamela, and Melissa

with the assumption that they were truly giving their best efforts to select cognitively demanding writing tasks and to design instruction to support students. It is my firm belief that a primary purpose for research should be to help teachers understand not only what they are doing well and what they can improve, but also to help convey this understanding in a supportive and positive way. In many ways, I've often felt that my job as a researcher is easier than the day-in, day-out work "in the trenches" of teaching. In writing this dissertation, I've tried to be sure that my deep, deep respect for the work of Andrew, Susan, Pamela and Melissa – and for all teachers – is clear in my representations of their teaching.

As the CCSS roll out and are taken up by teachers across the country, I truly hope that other researchers are equally considerate in their investigations of instruction. We know these new standards are going to raise the bar in terms of expectations for students. We know that teachers will have to change the way they teach. Beach (2011) argued that research is needed to understand how teachers are translating the CCSS in their classroom practice. I agree that this work is necessary for understanding how the standards will impact practice, but I also worry that such research has potential to paint a deficit-model of teachers or teaching. Given the current reductive rhetoric about teachers' abilities, knowledge, and teaching, I worry that such research might continue to discuss what teachers "can't do" instead of focusing on what they are doing and trying to support teachers to understand what they might do differently. This project, for me, was an opportunity to understand what new teachers struggled with – the findings of this project will influence the ways I design my future methods courses and future professional development opportunities that I will have with teachers. I hope that other research projects which investigate the implementation of cognitively demanding writing tasks or of the CCSS use their findings in a

way to make positive and lasting changes in teacher education and teacher professional development.

APPENDIX A

OVERVIEW OF DATA ALIGNED WITH RESEARCH QUESTIONS

| RQ 1: What is the nature of the task that PSTs identify when asked to identify a cognitively demanding writing task? | | |
|---|--|---|
| <i>Data Sources</i> | <i>Specific Questions (if applicable)</i> | <i>Analyses</i> |
| Curriculum Analysis Task (Phase 1) | N/A | IQA |
| Written reflection on Curriculum Analysis Task (Phase 1) | <p>Why do you perceive this task to be cognitively demanding for your students?</p> <p>What background knowledge do students need to have in order to successfully begin this task?</p> <p>What knowledge and/or scaffolding do you, as the teacher, need to provide for students to complete this task?</p> | Open/Focused Coding |
| Identified task for observation | N/A | Features of Cognitive Demand defined in Table 3.3 |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Interview (prior to instruction) | <p>IQ1</p> <p>a) Describe how you decided upon this writing assignment for your students?</p> <p>b)What is it about this task that you perceive to be cognitively demanding for your students?</p> <p>c) What background knowledge do they need to have in order to complete this task?</p> <p>d) What knowledge and/or scaffolding do you (as the teacher) need to provide for students?</p> | Open/Focused Coding |
| Interview (Final interview) | <p>IQ6</p> <p>What do you think are the most important things to know (or that you need to know) about writing instruction? Where did you (or where will you) learn these things?</p> | Open/Focused Coding |

| RQ 2: What is the nature of enactment for cognitively demanding writing tasks? | | |
|---|--|------------------------|
| <i>Data Sources</i> | <i>Specific Questions/Notes</i> | <i>Analyses</i> |
| Lesson Plans | What are the learning goals for students in this lesson? | Open/Focused Coding |
| Planning Materials (handouts) | Where did you find this handout/activity? (Curriculum, outside source, etc.) What made you decide to use it? | Open/Focused Coding |
| Classroom Observations (field notes and transcriptions) | N/A | Open/Focused Coding |
| Interview questions (post-instruction) | IQ 11 What learning goals were you addressing with this lesson? To what degree do you feel you were successful in meeting those goals? What did you see from the students to help you know that you did or did not meet them? | Open/Focused Coding |
| Interview question (post-instruction) | IQ 12 How did you feel like this lesson went? What was successful? Why was it successful? What didn't go well? Why do you think it didn't go well? | Open/focused coding |

| RQ 3: What influences or constrains PSTs enactments of Cognitively Demanding Writing Tasks? | | |
|--|--|------------------------|
| <i>Data Sources</i> | <i>Specific Questions</i> | <i>Analyses</i> |
| Prior to instruction | IQ2 Tell me a story about your own experience as a writer (as a student in middle/high school, college, extra curricular, etc). | Open/Focused Coding |
| Post-observation | IQ3 During your lesson, you structured student work by _____ (e.g., small groups/individual work). Why did you choose to do this? | Open/Focused Coding |
| Post-observation | IQ4 (Focusing on a particular point of instruction): At this point in your teaching, to what or to whom would you attribute the instructional choices you made? | Open/Focused Coding |
| Prior to instruction | IQ5 If you were observing in a classroom, what would you look for to determine whether or not the writing instruction was high quality? | Open/Focused Coding |
| Final interview | IQ6 What do you think are the most important things to know (or that you need to know) about writing instruction? Where did you (or where will you) learn these things? | Open/Focused Coding |
| Final interview | IQ7 If you were to do this task/unit over again in your own classroom, what might you do differently? What might you keep the same? | Open/Focused Coding |
| Final interview | IQ8 Is there anything you might not have thought about that occurred to you during this interview or during this research process that you'd like to share? | Open/Focused Coding |
| Final interview | IQ9 Looking back over the unit, and after looking at student work, did you do to support students? What do you think worked best? What would you do differently? | Open/Focused Coding |
| Final interview | IQ10 Did students respond to this task as you anticipated? If not, how did they change? | Open/Focused Coding |

APPENDIX B

TASKS USED IN TASK SORT

TASK A

Text: *Wintergirls*

Intended grade: high school

The title of our novel, *Wintergirls*, appears several times throughout the text. Your task is to consider the significance of this title. Consider the following questions:

- How would you define the term “wintergirl” given the way it is used in the story?
- In what ways are Lia and Cassie frozen?
- Do any other characters appear to be frozen in other ways?
- How do you interpret the symbolism of winter and cold found throughout the story and the role it plays in building the main themes of the novel?

You should respond in 2-3 pages. You should also be sure to return to significant passages that support your definition and provide examples from the text in your writing.

TASK B

Text: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*

Intended grade: high school

Mr. P advises Junior to leave the reservation to pursue hope for the future. Write a letter to Mr. P from Junior at the end of the novel where he tells him whether or not his search for hope has been successful (4 - 5 paragraphs).

TASK C

Text: *The Giver*

Intended grade: high school

Euphemism (noun): the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant (from www.m-w.com).

Example of a euphemism: To say someone “lost his lunch” instead of saying someone vomited.

One feature of the community in *The Giver* is the importance the community places on “precision of language.” Examples of this can be found when Jonas says he is “starving” instead of “hungry”, or when Asher asks for a “smack” instead of a “snack.” However, although the community stresses “precision of language,” the community is built upon words that are actually *not* precise and attempt to cloud meaning.

One example of a word that clouds meaning in *The Giver* is the community’s word “released” which is used in place of the word “killed.” We could say that this is example of a *euphemism*.

Your task is to write an essay (500+ words) about language use in *The Giver* and in our own society.

First, find examples of other words or sayings in *The Giver* that do not actually mean what the community uses them to mean. Then write about what these words mean in the community, and what we, as readers, know they actually mean.

Next, consider the effect of the euphemism “release” within the community. Revisit passages throughout the book where different characters use the term “release”. How do the members of Jonas’s community use *euphemism* to distance themselves from the reality of the act they call “release”? Refer to particular passages as evidence for your claims.

Then, think of an example of a euphemism that we use in our own society. Explain the euphemism (What is the term? What do we use it as a substitute for?). Why do you think our society uses this?

Finally, use all of this work – your reflections on the use of language in *The Giver* and in our own society – to come up with some kind of conclusion about words and the way that people use words. Is precision of language important in the community in *The Giver*? Is it important in our own society?

TASK D

Text: *Wintergirls*

Intended grade: high school

Throughout the text *Wintergirls*, we see Lia interact with many different people and have different relationships. Compare and contrast Lia's relationships between three different characters of your choosing (considering her stepmother Jennifer, her father, her mother, her step sister, her therapist, Elijah). Your paper should be five paragraphs in length – an introductory paragraph, three body paragraphs, and a final paragraph to conclude your thoughts.

Before you begin, identify three people with whom Lia interacts that you find interesting. Then, skim over the novel and find the sections in which that character appears. Reread these sections, taking notes on how you might describe the relationship between Lia and that character. Use your notes to form an outline, and from your outline write your rough draft.

Remember, to compare and contrast doesn't mean you simply describe each relationship. You are looking for similarities across relationships and differences between relationships. So, don't imagine that each body paragraph will be for a different character – instead, think about what is the same and what is different between these relationships.

We will write a rough draft, edit with our peers, and then turn in a final copy. You will be expected to turn in all of your notes with your final copy.

TASK E

Text: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*

Intended grade: high school

Just before the second basketball game Junior tells the reporter, "I'm never going to quit living life this hard, you know? I'm never going to surrender to anybody. Never, never, never." (p. 186). What are your dreams in life? What are you prepared to sacrifice to ensure your goals are achieved? Write an extended reflective piece. (4-5 paragraphs)

Begin this task by brainstorming dreams that you have. You can make a list, a web, or use another kind of brainstorming organization that you like. Next, think about what kinds of things you might have to give up if you want to pursue these dreams. For example, if you want to go to the NBA, you might have to give up late night sleep-overs so that you can go to the gym early on weekend mornings. Then pick three or four dreams that you want to write about, and use your notes to prepare an essay.

TASK F

Texts: *Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*, *Wintergirls*, *The Giver*, *The Book Thief*

Intended grade: high school

In our readings we have met many characters (Junior, Liesel, Lia, Jonas) that experience journeys, some physical, some emotional. These journeys influence the development of their personal identities.

Compose a 3-4 page paper where you analyze two characters' journeys (of your choice from the four books we have read) and explain how these journeys influenced each character's identity. When applicable, describe similarities or differences in your characters' journeys. You should support all claims about a character's identity with evidence (quotes) from the text.

TASK G

Text: *The Book Thief*

Intended grade: high school

We have been talking about identity and the difference between the ways a person is perceived by others vs. a person's "real self" and who they truly are.

Your task: Write an essay about the identity of one of the characters we have discussed in class: Rudy, Hans, Max, Leisel.

In your essay, respond to these questions:

- Who does the world (especially the Nazi party) say your character is?
- Through his/her traits, decisions and actions, how does your character counter the world's view by becoming his or her real self?

Justify your argument by identifying and using ONE passage that shows how your character's traits, actions and/or decisions establish his/her real identity.

TASK H

Text: *The Giver*

Intended grade: high school

In our study of *The Giver*, we have been talking about different character traits. The Chief Elder lists five qualities, or traits, that the Receiver of Memories must possess: Intelligence, integrity, courage, wisdom, and the Capacity to See Beyond.

Write one reason why you think that Jonas exhibits each of these qualities.

TASK I

Text: *Wintergirls*

Intended grade: high school

Some people feel that a subject such as eating disorders is too taboo or too touchy for high school students. However, others might say that these kinds of issues are ones that adolescents deal with in real life and, as such, belong in the classroom.

Write a letter to next year's 9th grade students to explain that *Wintergirls* is on the reading list for 9th grade. Explain to them why you think it is or isn't a good idea to use books to talk about issues like eating disorders. Be sure to provide evidence to support your reasoning.

TASK J

Text: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*

Intended grade: high school

There is the saying that "a picture is worth 1,000 words." *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* shows us how sometimes using pictures can be more effective than a narrative.

Pick a part of the story that is written in narrative form. Retell that same version of the story in pictures (or a combination of pictures and words). We will post these pictures around the classroom to show our understanding of the novel.

TASK K

Text: *Wintergirls*

Intended grade: high school

In *Wintergirls*, Lia is obsessed with her physical appearance. Many models on the cover of magazines (e.g., *Glamour* or *Seventeen*) seem to suggest that one key to beauty is being skinny. Do you think Lia is pretty because she is thin? Or is there more to beauty than what is on the outside?

TASK L

Text: *The Book Thief*

Intended grade: high school

Max's stories for Liesel ("The Stand-Over Man" and "The Word Shaker") represent great change – or, rather, there is a great deal of difference between these two stories.

Your task is first to return to both of these stories and reread them. Then, write a response to the following question:

How are these stories ("The Stand-Over Man" and "The Word Shaker") alike and different from one another?

In your response, address each of the following questions in individual paragraphs:

- What seems to be Max's message in each story, or his purpose for writing the stories?
- Why might there be such differences between stories?
- Why are these stories important to the overall story? What do we learn from them, as readers, about Max and other characters?

You should also include an introduction and conclusion.

TASK M

Text: *The Giver*

Intended grade: high school

One key concept in Jonas' community is that of *sameness* – the community expects people to be, for the most part, the same. You will write a 1.5-2 page paper exploring this concept. First, summarize the community's views on sameness. Then, summarize Jonas' view about sameness. What differences are there between the communities' views and Jonas'?

TASK N

Text: *The Book Thief*

Intended grade: high school

The back of *The Book Thief* summarizes the book as follows:

"...These are dangerous times. When Liesel's foster family hides a Jew in their basement, Liesel's world is both opened up and closed down."

Write a response to this question: How did hiding Max in the basement limit Liesel? How did it give her new opportunities?

TASK O

Text: *The Giver*

Intended grade: high school

We have been talking about characterization in our study of *The Giver*. Select one of the following tasks about characterization:

1. Name the qualities that the Chief Elder saw in Jonas that qualified him to become the Receiver. Choose one of these qualities and identify an instance in which Jonas showed he possessed the quality.
2. Write a bio poem about a character of your choice from the book.
3. Create a puppet or doll of a character from the book. Use materials you find around the house, or recycle old materials.

TASK P

Text: *Wintergirls*

Intended grade: high school

One way that teens can decide what book they do or don't want to read is from reading reviews that others write. Have you noticed that Amazon.com has lots of book reviews?

Your assignment is to write a book review for the novel *Wintergirls* that you could post on Amazon.com. Include in your review important aspects of the book, such as a summary of main events, a description of the main characters, and an evaluation of whether or not you liked this book.

Since you will be potentially sending this review to Amazon, you should work carefully. Begin with a rough draft. We will peer-edit our drafts and then revise for the final draft.

TASK Q

Text: *The Book Thief*

Intended grade: high school

The last line of Liesel's journal reads:

*I have hated the words and
I have loved them,
And I hope I have made them right.
(p. 528)*

Given what we know about Liesel and the way that books, language, and words have played a role in her life, what do you think she meant when she wrote this?

The following steps might be helpful to you in considering your response:

- First, revisit places in your notes and in the text where you see books, language, words, or writing as important parts to the story (in good and/or bad ways). Make a list of these times, and include page numbers for your reference.
- Next, consider what is happening in these instances. Why are books, language, words, or writing important here? What is happening with them? Write your answers next to your list.
- Then, select the most important examples that you have produced. Use these examples within your paper.
- Your paper should include an introduction, a body (with your examples) and a conclusion. There's no *required* length for your essay, but I'd imagine that you'd need about 3-6 pages to answer this question well.

TASK R

Text: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*

Intended grade: high school

In this book, how has Junior's journey illustrated the tension(s) between being an individual and being a member of one (or more than one) communities? Write an essay that explains how Junior struggled between these two ideals. Use evidence from the text to support your response.

Here are some questions to spark your thinking – you may want to jot down answers to these before you begin:

- In what ways does Junior get mixed messages?
- In what ways does Junior feel pressured?
- What are Junior's dreams? Who or what encourages those dreams?
- Who is Junior on the outside? On the inside?
- How did community expectations influence Junior?

APPENDIX C:

TASK SORT ALIGNED WITH FEATURES OF GOOD WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

| | | IQA 1 | | | | | | IQA 2 | | | | | | IQA 3 | | | | | | IQA 4 | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|---|---|---|--|--|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|--|
| | | Surface level Isolated facts Disconnected from/ unrelated to text | | | | | | Constructing basic-level summary | | | | | | Interpretation or analysis w/little evidence Some emphasis on extended thinking but structured responses | | | | | | Interpretation or analysis with extensive evidence Fully supporting extended thinking/ cognitively challenging questions/extended responses | | | | |
| | Task ID → | E | I | K | O | H | | J | P | M | N | | B | D | L | G | | F | A | C | Q | R | | |
| CATEGORY | CODES | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| FEATURE of OVERALL ASSIGNMENT <i>Per NWP & Nagin (2003); NCTE & Gardner (2008)</i> | Focus on Audience other than teacher | X | | | | | | X | X | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Suggests framework for organization | X | | | | | | | X | X | | | | X | X | | | | | X | X | | | |
| | Identify purpose (left Audience under NWP) | X | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Position Student as expert in their communication to that audience | X | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | |
| | Ask students to interact with (rather than restate) text | | | | | | | X | | X | X | | | | X | X | X | | | | X | X | | |
| | Give students choices in their work that supports ownership of that work | | X | X | X | X | | | X | X | | | | X | X | | X | | X | | X | X | | |
| | Unpacks the meaning of the assignment (includes defining terms AND/OR assignment) | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | X | | | | | | X | | | |
| | Provides organizational structure and material that scaffolds the writing process | X | | | | | | | X | X | | | | | X | X | | | | | X | X | | |

APPENDIX D

CODING FOR CONTENT OF INSTRUCTION

| Category | Code | Definition | Example |
|----------|--|--|---|
| Task | Understanding the requirements of task | Teacher talk helps students understand specific requirements of the task such as due dates of drafts | Teacher: The rough drafts you're going to hand to me the 6th, and the final drafts you're going to hand in to me before you go for Christmas break on the 16th. I mean, you have a few days after that, but I want to give you—not the 16th, I'm just saying—like, the 21st or something, don't worry about it. These dates are going to be up here. Do not tell me you don't know these dates. They're not getting moved from this part of the board. Everybody see these dates? They're yours. (A 3.29) |
| | Understanding the prompt | Teacher talk helps students understand the question that is being asked in the writing prompt | Teacher: So who can tell me, what is the <i>main</i> thing you are going to have to talk about in this essay? Student: The theme. Teacher: That's right. We're dealing |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Understanding the assessment criteria | Teacher talk specifically highlights things on which the students will be graded. | with the theme of three poems.(P 2.2) <i>(Teacher asks a student to read the first bullet point on the rubric aloud, student reads.)</i> |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|

Teacher: Good. So for this first one, it's asking—I have to grade you on whether or not you've connected the book to the world and to yourself. In this first paragraph, I'm connecting the book to the world today. OK? That's why I did that. That's why they want you to start broad, so that you can connect the book to the world. Is that clear? (S 1.23)

| | | | | |
|-------------|---------------------------|---------|--|--|
| Instruction | General instruction | writing | Teacher talk is about writing instruction that is not specific to the particular task –it could happen in any given English classroom on any given day (e.g., grammar instruction) | “... well, you can start a sentence with “because,” grammatically it can work, but it's not something I would have you do right now. (A 3.2) |
| | Task specific instruction | writing | Teacher talk is related to supporting students' a) writing or b) thinking in relationship to the particular task with which students are engaged | Teacher: Now I want to write my thesis sentence. I need both of these things in my thesis sentence. Alice, could you turn around and face the board? Thank you. I need to make this into one sentence. How should I start off my |

sentence? Eldon?

Student: “I think the Fisher family is realistic because—”

Teacher: And then what comes next?

Student: “Because they eat dinner together.”

Teacher: Good. And then I’m going to move (my list statement) here. So then my new sentence is going to be, “I think the Fisher family is realistic because they eat dinner together, the brothers fight, and the parents bicker.” (S 2.37)

Writing Process

Teacher talk is emphasizing a process approach to writing instruction (focusing on drafting, revising, sharing, etc)

Teacher: The first rough draft—writing is a procedure, a process. We’re going to have an outline, a first rough draft, and a final draft. The outline we’re going to work on tomorrow in groups. (A 3.26)

Other

Use of tools

The teacher is referencing a particular tool to assist students in completing the task

Teacher: So here’s what we’re gonna do. Open up your source books. Today’s date is February 2nd, and please put in “Conclusions” as your title. Now, we’re going to go over this

Other

Use of tools

The teacher is referencing a particular tool to assist students in completing the task

Teacher: So here's what we're gonna do. Open up your source books. Today's date is February 2nd, and please put in "Conclusions" as your title. Now, we're going to go over this fairly quickly, I don't want to give you guys too much information and confuse you. Today's date, February 2nd. "Conclusions" in your table of contents. I'll give you a minute to get that down. (P 7.6)

Talk to support issues of motivation and engagement

Teacher tells students that they are going to have to be very focused "because this is an essay that you haven't tried writing yet, and so I think

APPENDIX E

CODING SCAFFOLDING MOVES

| Move | Definition | Discriminating Nature of Scaffolding |
|---|---|---|
| Engaging student participation (recruitment, ownership, Langer & Applebee, 1986) | Enlisting students in the task either by providing opportunities for students to <i>own</i> their learning (e.g., providing choice of topic, mode of response, audience) or by engaging students' genuine interests and thereby recruiting them to the task | <p>Appropriate: You can pick two of these excerpts and do all three of those questions for both two of these excerpts. There's four choices on the back. (Allowing choice. <i>A1.8</i>)</p> <p>Not appropriate: All right, listen. This is a new writing assignment. This is due in three weeks. (Announcing assignment, setting due date. <i>A1.1</i>)</p> |
| Reducing frustration (Wood et. al 1976) | Working with the student to keep him motivated and feeling like he can be successful in the task. | <p><i>A student appears worried that he doesn't have an outline – the outline is not due yet (it is due tomorrow), but yet he is anxious as Andrew begins to review instructions for tomorrow's assignment.</i></p> <p>Student: Should we have already started this?</p> <p>Teacher (<i>softly to student</i>): It's OK. I'll talk and you guys ask all your questions.</p> |
| Marking critical features (Wood et. al 1976) | Highlighting specific parts of the task where a student is struggling or may struggle | <p>Declarative</p> <p>Teacher: So this is another incredibly difficult thing to do: explaining quotes... A lot of you ended paragraphs in quotes. You gave me a whole paragraph, and then you said, "For example," gave me a quote, ended the paragraph. It cannot be like that. You need to give me the quote and then explain why you're giving me the quote. And explanation beforehand is sort of—it's not complete. If you just say, "Here's a quote and I'm using it for a little bit of reason," it's not complete. Introduce the quote, give me the quote, tell me why you're using it.<i>A3.13</i></p> <p>Procedural</p> <p>Notice how I quoted this. I put everything in quotes, after it came the page number, outside of the quote,</p> |

and after the page number I put the period. Everything is within the same sentence. I want you to look at this. This is your example of how you use quotes.

A3.14

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Direction maintenance (Wood et. al 1976) | Helping students focus on the next step or steps in the task to keep progress moving forward and avoid regression or stalling. | <p>Declarative Student: Do we type up the excerpt before we answer? Teacher: No. Don't type up this entire excerpt when you write your paper. Refer to it. You can use a few words, but do not type out the entire excerpt in your paper. <i>A1.17</i></p> <p>Procedural "So, look at what we've written so far in this sentence. 'I think the fallacy being used is ad hominem.' What do we need to do next? (Student replies that they need to include why they think it's that fallacy). "OK, how can we justify this?")</p> |
| Reducing degrees of freedom (Wood et. al 1976) | Simplifying the demands of a task so that students can focus their attention on a smaller sub-set of the task. | <p>Declarative "Look at this example. Because Mary was engaged to Cates, like, she was really manipulated." ... When you use the word "like" like this, it's as though you're having a conversation. If I was talking to you about this play, I can imagine using the word "like." Maybe I would use that word in this way. But when you're writing a paper, it should not be in there in that way. <i>A3.4</i></p> <p>Procedural Teacher: So I want you to all write down how you would explain this quote after. How would you explain why you're using this quote? ... Explain what words are important in this quote and why you're using it. <i>A3.16</i></p> |
| Demonstrating (Wood et. al 1976) | Modeling possible responses to a task or possible approaches to a writing prompt. | <p>Declarative (In an exchange with students, the teacher asks students how they have gone about revising a sentence. Students share their examples. Rather than taking up any of the students' possible revisions, the teacher's emphasis seems to be on collecting the responses, focusing on what they did, rather than why or how they made changes. He does not press students for reasoning on this, nor does he elicit this thinking for other students' sakes.)</p> <p>Procedural So if I was doing this, and I wanted to know what words were most important in this sentence, I would look at the stage directions. Let's say I was answering the question, "How do stage directions develop characters?" I would say something like, "When Brady uses the words 'instructing a child,' it shows that blank is how he's acting towards Drummond," or "He sees himself as blank" in terms of Drummond. <i>3.15</i></p> |
| Goal setting (Hillocks, 1995) | Specifying the desired qualities of a piece of writing or of a lesson and setting the direction for learning. | Let's start. This is the agenda for today. We're going to talk about questions 2 and 3. Today we're going to talk about questions 2 and 3 on this. I want to clarify and make sure everybody knows what I'm asking is the distinction between the two. Then we're going to do group work. I have the groups already picked out. And then we're going to do a closing question. That's what today's agenda is. (A4.1) |

APPENDIX F:
PST TASKS
ANDREW'S TASK

Inherit the Wind Essay

Throughout this entire unit we have been talking about common fallacies of argument and their affect on the world and the play. Both Drummond and Brady use fallacies at different points in the play and each time there is a specific result.

Your task for this **2-3 page** essay is to choose two of the following excerpts and answer the following questions:

- 1) What type of fallacy is the character using (do not get too hung up on this, some of them are more obvious than others)?
- 2) Why is the character using this fallacy? (The character could have used other argument tactics but decided to go down this particular path. Try to understand and explain why the character thought this particular fallacy/tactic was the best option.)
- 3) What affect does the use of this common fallacy have on the play, the character, and/or the other characters in the play? (Think about how this particular excerpt helps or hurts the person using it or their opposition. Think about how the town's people are influenced by it. Also, think about how this fallacy may or may not have affected the result of the case.)

Make sure you answer these three points. However, DO NOT worry about answering every question in the parentheses. The content in the parentheses are suggestions as to how to think about the three big questions.

Choose TWO (2) of these three excerpts to work with.

- 1) **Brady:** ...And the legislature of this sovereign state had had the wisdom to demand that the peddlers of poison—in bottles or in books—clearly label the products they attempt to sell! (*There is applause. Howard gulps. Brady points at the boy*) I tell you, if this law is not upheld, this boy will become one of a generation, shorn of its faith by the teachings of Godless science! (70)
- 2) **Drummond:** The Gospel According to Brady! God speaks to Brady, and Brady tells the world! Brady, Brady, Brady, Almighty! (*Drummond bows grandly. The crowd laughs.*) (100)
- 3) **Brady:** Were you shocked when he told you these things? (*Rachel looks down*) Describe to the court your innermost feelings when Bertram Cates said to you: "God did not create Man! Man created God!" (*There is a flurry of reaction*) (79)
- 4) **Brady:** If the enemy sends its Goliath into battle, it magnifies our cause. Henry Drummond has stalked the courtrooms of this land for forty years. When he fights,

headlines follow. (With growing fervor) The whole world will be watching our victory over Drummond. (Dramatically) If St. George has slain a dragonfly, who would remember him. (29)

When you choose one of these excerpts it is important to look at the quote in its context. That means you need to go back and read what was said before and after this particular segment in order to understand its full meaning.

Criteria (what you will be graded on)

- Format: Heading (name, date, class period), 12-point font, 1-inch margins, double-spaced
- Answers the three questions fully
- Uses relevant textual evidence to support claims
- Essay is 2-3 pages in length
- Edited for grammatical and mechanical errors

Common Fallacies:

- 1) **Hasty Generalization:** Drawing conclusions based on insufficient evidence.
- 2) **Faulty use of Authority:** The attempt to bolster claims by citing the opinions of experts without evaluation and comparison of credentials and claims.
- 3) **Doubtful Cause (Post Hoc):** Mistakenly inferring that because one event follows another they have a causal relationship.
- 4) **False Analogy:** Assuming without sufficient proof that if objects are similar in some ways, they are similar in other ways as well.
- 5) **Ad Hominem (Against the Man):** Attacking the arguer instead of the issue.
- 6) **False Dilemma:** Simplifying a complex issue by making it an either/or argument (You are either for us or against us).
- 7) **Slippery Slope:** Predicting without justification that one step in a process will lead unavoidably to a second, more undesirable step.
- 8) **Begging the Question:** Making a statement that assumes that the issue being debated has already been decided.
- 9) **Straw Man:** Disputing a view similar to, but not the same as that of the arguer's opponent.
- 10) **Two Wrongs Make a Right:** Two Wrongs Make a Right is a fallacy in which a person "justifies" an action against a person by asserting that the person would do the same thing to him/her (I stole her pen but that is okay because she would have done the same to me).
- 11) **Non Sequitur (It does not follow):** Using irrelevant proof to strengthen a claim.
- 12) **Ad Populum (To the People):** Playing on the prejudices of the audience.
- 13) **Appeal to Tradition:** Making a claim based upon a past that may be irrelevant in the future.
- 14) **Faulty Emotional Appeals:** Making emotional appeals that divert from the real argument or conceal another purpose.
- 15) **Red Herring:** An irrelevant topic is presented in order to divert attention from the original issue. The basic idea is to "win" an argument by leading attention away from the argument and to another topic.

SUSAN'S CURRICULUM TASK

Part 3: A Response to Literature - 40 points

Write a Response to Literature of no less than 500 words which addresses the following prompt: *Are the families Bloor creates in the novel Tangerine effectively “realistic”? Justify your response with textual support and reference Bloor’s use of literary techniques (e.g., characterization, mood, tone, figurative language, motif, etc.).* Include textual support for your claims in the piece.

To begin your essay, the first thing you’ll want to do is to decide what “position” you’ll want to take in your paper. Be sure to state your position very clearly in your topic/thesis statement. Use your *Elements of Literature* text pp. 630-635 to help you structure your essay.

Once you’ve decided on a position, think through the order of your essay and what details to you will include. Then, think through how you will close, or wrap-up, your argument. After you create an outline, we will share with partners and get feedback.

Next, you’ll write a draft and have it reviewed by a peer before you revise it. Then you’ll have your draft edited by a peer and revise the draft again before handing it in.

Please use your notes from our conversations, the charts we have created, and your Reader’s/Writer’s Notebook to help you with your writing. This will be a portfolio piece and your teacher will use modeling to assist you in following the writing process.

1. **Read the prompt very carefully.** Then reread it! Lightly circle or highlight the key words or phrases in the prompt.
2. **Go back to your Reader’s/Writer’s Notebook and look for QuickWrites and significant passages that might help you answer this prompt.**
3. **Make a plan for your writing** using the Write Tools graphic organizer. Remember to use color-coding to help you organize.
4. **Reread your rough draft.** Does it answer the prompt?
5. **Use the rubric.** Use the City District rubric. Be sure to ask questions if there is something you don’t understand.

SUSAN'S PRESENTED TASK



Name _____

Date _____

Communications, 7

Culminating Project Assignment Sheet: Response to Literature--Critical Analysis of *Tangerine*

Prompt:

Are the families Bloor created in the novel *Tangerine* effectively "realistic"? Discuss how Bloor uses characterization (with all you've learned about it), the plot and the setting to develop the families in the story. Explain your response with text support.

How?

1. Decide what position you will take:
 - a. The families Bloor created ARE realistic or the families Bloor created are NOT realistic.
 - b. Write a thesis statement clearly telling your position.
2. Think about WHY you chose your opinion.
 - a. Brainstorm down your initial thoughts and impressions.
 - b. Write down information from the story telling what makes you think as you do.
3. Use a Graphic Organizer to jot down details.
 - a. Analyze characterization, plot and setting.
 - b. Connect these topics to how Bloor developed the families in the story.
4. Draft your paper.
5. Get peer feedback.
6. Revise & publish your paper.

Your response will be scored using the Response to Literature-- Critical Analysis Rubric & this criteria chart.

Criteria:

Introduction Paragraph

- ___ Compelling lead (direct quotes from the text are great!)
- ___ Clear thesis statement previewing your analysis
- ___ Brief description of the story

At least three body paragraphs

- ___ Describe each story element (characterization, plot and setting, one paragraph each)
- ___ Explain how each element contributes to how Bloor developed the families in the story
- ___ Use text evidence (direct quotes &/or paraphrase) to explain your thoughts

Conclusion Paragraph

- ___ Briefly restate your impressions (tie back to thesis)
- ___ Conclude with a reflection on the story, the author or some other thought-provoking impression

Peer Response/Self Reflection

| Grows | Grows |
|-------|-------|
| | |

Next Steps:

PAMELA’S CURRICULUM TASK

Part 2 Response to Literature: Interpretive Essay

Reread the poems we read during this unit. Identify some of the themes that span a number of the poems. Choose one theme (e.g., love, nature, animals, urban life, and/or family) that you think crosses a few of the poems and write about how these poems deal with this theme. Use quotes from the poems to support your interpretation. Please use your notes from our class discussions, the charts we have created together, the unit vocabulary, and your Reader's/Writer's Notebook to help you with your writing.

Be sure to ask questions if there is something you don't understand.

PAMELA'S PRESENTED TASK

Response to Literature Prompt:

In a formal essay, write about how a common theme is represented in 3 poems. You will choose these 3 poems from the poems we have read this semester. In this essay you will make a broader claim that connects the theme to a life lesson in each of the poems.

Pre Write Check List:

1. Skim all of the poems we read this semester. (A list of all the poems we have read is on the back of this paper)
2. Identify some of the themes common to several poems. Possible themes might be love, nature, animals, urban life, family, identity, and/or school.
3. Choose 1 theme that you believe is present in at least 3 poems we read and that you can connect to a bigger life lesson, moral, or ideal.
4. Look back through your notes from this unit about those 3 poems.
5. Brainstorm ways that each poem represents the theme you chose. Find quotes from the poems that support your interpretation and fill out the 3 column organizer with your details and quotes. Be sure to think about how this theme connects to a life lesson. This is where you take a simpler theme like nature or family and take a step further and write about what that theme represents. For example, if the theme is family, what is the poet saying about family? Are families necessary in peoples' lives? How should we treat or families? Etc.
6. Outline your thoughts with a 5 paragraph essay graphic organizer, to be handed out. (This outline will be submitted along with a rough draft and final copy of your essay)

Guiding Questions (Not necessary to answer all in your paper, just to help you through the writing process:

- What is the theme present in 3 poems?
- What are the similarities in the 3 poems? What are the differences?
- Which poem is most effective in relation to the theme?
- How does each poem develop the theme? (Does it use figurative language to develop the theme? Does it use sound devices to develop the theme?)
- Is the theme discussed in the same tone in all 3 poems? How is it different?
- How does the theme connect to a life lesson, moral, or ideal?

Drafting Checklist:

1. Introduction with:
 - A clear thesis/topic statement
 - Titles and authors of the 3 poems you chose
 - Brief discussion of the common theme you will discuss
2. 3 Body Paragraphs with:
 - Provide a brief summary of the poem, 1-2 sentences, in each paragraph.
 - Transition words to smoothly transition from one paragraph to the next.
 - Discussion of how theme is dealt with in this poem.
 - SPECIFIC QUOTES from each poem that demonstrates your claim about the theme.
3. Concluding paragraph with:
 - An ending statement about how the theme is discussed in all 3 poems.
 - Tie this back to the prompt and your introduction.
 - This should be longer than 1 sentence.

MELISSA'S CURRICULUM TASK

PROMPT: Choose three literary elements of this novel to discuss: characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone, or style. Define the three elements you have chosen and describe how Beverley Naidoo used them. Analyze the relationships among and between the three literary elements you have chosen. For instance, if you chose characterization, plot, and setting, you would explain how the setting affects the plot and characters, how the plot affects the setting and characters, and how the characters affect the plot and setting.

MELISSA'S PRESENTED TASK

Chain of Fire Summative Assessment

For this final writing assignment, you will write from the first-person point of view of one of the characters in Chain of Fire. Writing as the character, you should tell us at least three of the following:

- What your character needs. (Think about our unit question: What do all people need?)
- How has the setting (a village in South Africa during Apartheid) shaped your character?
- How has your character changed (or tried to change) the setting?
- How have the events in the story impacted your character?
- How has your character influenced the events that happened in the story?

You may choose to write as Naledi, Taolo, Mma Tshadi, Mma Dikobe or Saul Dikobe. (If you have another character in mind, please check with me.)

You may use a **variety of formats** to tell your character's story (speech, letter, journal entry). If you have another idea for a format, please speak with me first. Think about why your character would choose one form over another. **BE CREATIVE!**

Your final written product should be 3-5 paragraphs. Please be sure that your response is written neatly and your hand-writing is legible.

Be sure to use proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation. You will be graded according to the attached rubric. **Please hand in all drafts and graphic organizers with your final product.**

Please note the **schedule** for important deadlines:

Monday, Feb. 6: Introduce task. **Homework** – Complete graphic organizer for character.

Tuesday, Feb. 7: Review graphic organizers. Begin drafting in class. **Homework** – Continue working on draft.

Wednesday, Feb. 8: (Possibly) Continue drafting in class. **Homework** – Continue working on draft.

Friday, Feb. 10: **ROUGH DRAFTS ARE DUE.**

Tuesday, Feb. 14: Drafts returned. In-class workshop day. Time to peer edit and revise.

Thursday, Feb. 16: **FINAL DRAFTS ARE DUE.**

APPENDIX G:

MELISSA'S LITERARY MASH-UP

Name:

Date:

Section:

***Chain of Fire* Literary Elements Card Mash-Up**

Use your character, setting, and plot cards to create different combinations that show relationships between them. Use the assessment questions to guide you.

First, follow along with me...

Teacher model:

_____ (Character's name) tried to change the outcome of the removal by _____ (event).

Let's try one together...! What can we come up with as a class?

Character:

Event or detail about the setting:

What statement can we make about how they are connected?

Now you try! See if you can come up with a statement for each of the following...

1. Character:

Detail about the setting:

What sentence can you write about how the character and setting are related?

2. Character:

Event in the plot:

Write a sentence about how they are connected.

Great work!! Now try to make one additional statement about plot and setting...

3. Character:

Detail about the setting:

Write a sentence about how they are connected.

4. Character:

Event from the plot:

Write a sentence about how they are connected.

Hints and tips:

- ❖ Think about filling in these sentences like a math equation. If you add an event from the plot and a character, what is the outcome?

Plot + Character = ??? (How do the events in the story impact the character?)

How does it work if you make the order important?

Character → Plot = ??? (How does your character change what happens in the plot?)

- ❖ Your plot, setting, and character cards are a bit like magnetic poetry. Try different combinations until you find one that works.
- ❖ Remember that when you write your final product, you will have to “translate” your sentences to the first-person. So, “When Chief Sekete left the village, his people had to choose a new leader,” becomes “When I left the village, you looked to Saul Dikobe to lead you.”

Sample sentence starters... (It's like Mad Libs! Fill in the blanks with the information in parentheses)

- When (event in the plot) happened, (character's name) felt...
- After (event in the plot), (character's name) decided to...
- (A detail about the setting) made (character's name) feel...
- Because (a detail about the setting), (character's name) decided to...
- (Character's name) made a choice that caused (event from the plot).

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