

**THE ROLE OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEXTS AND COMPREHENSION
STRATEGY INSTRUCTION IN THE LITERACY ENGAGEMENT OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENT MALES**

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Within the African American community, African American males, arguably, experience a great deal of difficulty in the current educational system (Biggs, 1992; Kleinfeld, 1998a, 1998b; Kunjufu, 2005; Tatum, 2003; Wynn, 1992; Wynn, 2005). This study seeks to examine the role of culturally relevant texts and comprehension strategy instruction in the literacy engagement of African American adolescent males. Following Garth-McCullough's (2002) findings that highlight the positive correlation between African American students' background knowledge and the comprehension of culturally relevant texts, this study modified Garth-McCullough's (2002) design and explored nine, 9th grade private, boarding school African American male students' reading comprehension and engagement with culturally relevant texts. The participants were divided into three groups. The control group received no comprehension strategy instruction. Group two received instruction on answering extended response questions and group three received instruction on how to complete a double-entry journal. All three groups read six texts, three texts were narrative and the other three were expository. Two of the texts were about European Americans, two about Mexican Americans, and the other two were about African Americans. For the purposes of this study, the texts that focused on African Americans were considered culturally relevant texts. Literacy engagement, with text, was defined, following Guthrie (1996) as the level of cognitive involvement invested to the reading process.

Due to the complexity of literacy engagement, the data was collected five ways; The Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2007; 2009), a modified version of the Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading (Guthrie, et al, 1996), a reading comprehension instrument, a post survey, and an interview. The findings suggest that the participants were the most engaged with a culturally relevant text. The findings also suggest that the participants that received comprehension strategy instruction were more engaged than those participants that did not. The participants that were the most engaged were those that received instruction on completing a double entry journal.

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PREFACE

I would like to personally thank all of my committee members for offering their expertise to this process. I would also like to thank them for sticking by my side even when the times were extremely tough. This process would have been impossible for me if it were not for the support of my family. My wife supported me during this process both financially and emotionally. I also want to thank all of my mentors that continuously supported my dreams of completing this arduous journey.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The intense demands of the 21st century are upon us. Not only are Americans competing nationally for jobs, we are now competing internationally. American jobs are being outsourced to many countries around the world and it is imperative that educators equip our students to be competitive in a global job market. A large part of our role as educators is to equip our students for survival. After they matriculate through the educational system, they need to have an income that will allow them to adequately support themselves as well as their families. In order to be competitive, they must be workforce ready. There are currently some populations in our society that are struggling to be workforce ready.

The 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports that there is a clear gap between African American students and their European American counterparts. NAEP reported the average scale score for reading, of eighth grade African American students was 243 and the average scale score of their European American counterparts was 271 (Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005). In addition, with respect to reading performance, NAEP (2010) indicates that in 2009 there was still a 27 point score gap, on the overall average reading scores, between 12th grade European American and African American students. Within this gap, African American males, arguably, experience a great deal of difficulty in the current educational system (Biggs, 1992; Kleinfeld, 1998a, 1998b; Kunjufu, 2005; Tatum, 2003; Wynn, 1992; Wynn, 2005). These,

and other trends suggest that, literacy educators may need to revamp current perspectives on how to educate African American students, in particular African American males.

It is no secret that the current educational school system is failing African American males. Several trends support this claim including low college enrollment, high dropout rates, low scores on standardized assessments, and high rates of African American males in special education (Anderson, 2007; Artiles & Trent, 1994; Biggs, 1992; Ebersole & Kapp, 2007; Grant, 1992; Greene & Winters, 2005; Hall, 2006; Hefner, 2004; Hilliard, 2003; Holzman, 2006; Kleinfeld, 1998a, 1998b; Kunjufu, 2005; McMillen & Kaufman, 1996; Pitre, Lewis, & Hilton-Pitre, 2007; Serwatka, Deering, & Grant, 1995; Tatum, 2003; Washington, 2001; Watkins & Kurtz, 2001; Wynn, 1992; Wynn, 2005). African American males have a very high, high school dropout rate, which is correlated with their low college enrollment (Greene & Winters, 2005; Hefner, 2004; Kunjufu, 2005; McMillen & Kaufman, 1996; Orfield, 2004; Wynn, 2007). Their scores on standardized assessments are significantly lagging behind their peers (NAEP, 2002). They also are disproportionately represented in special education (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Ebersole & Kapp, 2007; Grant, 1992; Harry & Klinger, 2006; Kunjufu, 2005; Pitre, Lewis, & Hilton-Pitre, 2007; Serwatka, Deering, & Grant, 1995; Wynn, 2007). The African American community is the only community that has more of its men in prison than in college (Tatum, 2003; Watkins & Kurtz, 2001; Wynn, 2007).

While it may be argued that there are many African American males (AAMs) who are persevering and achieving despite the aforementioned trends, the evidence is suggestive of the need to create a norm of success. For example, though we are currently living in a time where we are witnessing the first African American president of the United States of America, President Barack Obama, his adopted hometown, the city of Chicago, has a high dropout rate

(over 60%) and African American male students routinely perform lower than their female counterparts and their white peers (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009). While we are living in a time where Urban Prep, a charter school in Chicago, boasts of having 100% of their African American male high school students being accepted into four-year colleges and universities (People Magazine, June, 2010), few charter schools and almost no public schools can offer graduation rates that are comparable. These examples do provide some hope. However, there is arguably still a significant crisis and the fragile stage of adolescence is an ideal time to actively intervene. In this dissertation, I argue that an important component for successful matriculation beyond high school, is the development and ongoing support for strong literacy skills.

1.1 STUDY AIMS

The goal of this study was to determine the impact of culturally relevant texts and comprehension strategies on the literacy engagement of African American adolescent males (AAAM). To provide a foundation for this article, I will define literacy engagement, provide a synopsis of the research on the reading preferences of AAAM in the review of literature. I will also discuss the difficulties many children face when reading expository texts and how comprehension strategies may be able to support that. I will then offer my research questions and describe my methodological approach. However, in the remainder of this section, I will briefly describe the challenges teachers face in teaching adolescents in general, and with respect to literacy development, in particular.

Adolescence in western societies is arguably the most confusing and vulnerable stage of human development. It is during this stage of human development where the question is asked “Who am I?” (Erikson, 1993; Landt, 2006; Phinney, 1989; Randolph, Koblinsky, & Roberts, 1996; Stover, 2000; Tatum, 1997). For some African Americans, it is during this time that the question is asked “what does it mean to be an African American?” (Helms, 2003; Tatum, 1997).

Reading performance, in the U.S. drops in the adolescent years. Biancarosa and Snow (2004) noted in their report that there are approximately 8 million adolescents that are struggling with reading. For African Americans students, in general, and males, in particular, the relationship between identity struggles and reading might be reflected in reading about people and events who seem to reflect their collective identity (Tatum, 2003; 2005; 2008).

2.0 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A prominent line of reading research on African American students explores reading preferences (McGinley & Kamberelis, 1996; Redd, 1993; Smith, 1995). Many scholars suggest that a critical component to the success of African American males is that they be exposed to texts that reflect their collective identity (Tatum 2003, 2005, 2008; Kirkland & Jackson, 2009). However, a particular conundrum exists. If AAAM are to be exposed to a variety of instructional materials that focuses on African Americans and the African American experience, in many cases they will have to read beyond narrative texts and read expository texts. Much research currently suggests that expository texts may pose challenges to many readers (Beck, McKeown, & Gromoll, 1989; Hayes, 2009; Snow and Sweet, 2003; Unsworth, 1999), including struggling African American readers. These students should be equipped with strategies that will support them as they navigate reading both narrative and expository texts. Providing texts that may resonate with African American males racial/ethnic selves and equipping students with literacy strategies to support text reading may aide in reading engagement and support reading comprehension outcomes of AAAM.

In what follows I will describe five related lines of inquiry: literacy engagement, African American students and their in-class literacy preferences, African American males and literacy, the challenges of reading expository texts/content area texts, and content area strategic

approaches to reading. My working theory with respect to these lines of inquiry is that adolescent African American males will be more engaged with texts that they prefer reading and strategies that will support them while reading.

In the first section, I will briefly describe the research on both in school and out of school literacy engagement. This body of literature suggests that providing students with several metacognitive strategies and texts chosen along several dimensions to be engaging and interesting will increase their engagement within school literacy tasks. This research also recognizes that adolescents are actively engaged in out of school literacy practices, and that, while engaging in these practices they are gravitating towards texts that reflect their perceived identities (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007). What is missing from the literature on engagement is the understanding of which comprehension strategies increase engagement and how these strategies may increase African American students' understanding of materials, while supporting engagement with reading materials to which they connect. In the current study, engagement is a component of measurement of students' reading performance.

Secondly, I will describe the literature exploring the literacy preferences of African American students, which is an area that many scholars have explored (McGinley & Kamberelis, 1996; Perney, 1976; Redd, 1993; Ramirez & Price-Williams, 1972; Smith, 1995). This body of literature suggests that AA students want to read texts about AA people. That is not to suggest that they want to read these texts, exclusively, but that when AA students are queried about their reading preferences, opportunities to read texts about AA people would be welcomed. What is missing from the literature is empirical data that highlights the outcomes, on both engagement and reading comprehension, when African Americans are given the opportunity to read texts

about AA people. In the current study, students are provided with texts about African Americans, European American, and Mexican Americans.

In the third section I will describe what is currently understood about AAAM and their literacy challenges as well as their literacy preferences. I will also discuss what is needed in order to fully understand how African American males can best be supported and best benefit from opportunities to read and discuss what they have read. For example, in the current research on AA males, some scholars have discussed what kinds of texts AA males should read. These scholars have provided little insights with respect to whether, and if so, how these texts are engaging for AA males. Turning to the literature on reading strategies and content area texts, in the fourth section I will summarize the concerns that many scholars have highlighted with content area texts/expository texts. Finally, in the fifth section I will recapitulate the current landscape in strategic approaches to reading comprehension for adolescent students. Missing from the strategic approaches to reading comprehension literature is a discussion of the relationship between which strategies are most effective in increasing engagement.

2.1 LITERACY ENGAGEMENT

Literacy engagement is defined as the level of cognitive involvement invested to the reading process (Guthrie, et al., 1996; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Many scholars have found that

students are the most engaged with texts that are relevant to their lives (Gambrell, 2011; Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, Humenick & Littles, 2007; Hulleman, Godes, Hendricks, & Harackiewicz, 2010; Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007). Guthrie, et al (1996) set out to monitor the change in literacy engagement during the implementation of the Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI). CORI was a strategy designed to support students in content area reading. There are four phases of CORI. The first phase is to observe and personalize. During this stage, students are to “observe concrete objects and events in their natural world.” The observation should spark an interest in the students, thus leading to the generation of questions. The second phase is search and retrieve. During the search and retrieve stage the students learn how to select materials that are aligned with their particular interest. The third phase is comprehension and integration. As a result of the search and retrieve phase, the students should have a variety of reading materials. During this phase the student must apply specific reading strategies. They must determine the topic, followed by identifying important details. They also must summarize the text and make comparisons to other texts they have read that have similar content. Guthrie, et al. (1996) employed CORI in two third and two fifth grade classrooms in two schools in the eastern region of the United States. Both schools served a culturally diverse community and a low-income community. There was a performance assessment given to both grades 3 and 5. Their answers were coded according to a rubric. Guthrie, et al. found a correlation between the use of strategies and intrinsic motivation. This research suggests that if students are equipped with strategies, it may increase their motivation to read various texts. Guthrie and Davis (2003) designed a framework of engagement for classroom teachers of middle school students. These scholars have identified six characteristics that, they argue, foster engagement. The first mentioned is knowledge goals. Guthrie and Davis (2003) posit that

students should be learning content and that the reading strategies should be embedded within the content instruction. The second is real world interactions that include hands on activities and selecting personally relevant texts. The third component of the framework is providing an abundance of interesting texts that include a wide array of books and a diverse selection of authors on the same topic. The fourth characteristic is support for student choice and self-determination, this encourages the students input in instructional decisions and it pushes them to take ownership of their learning. The fifth component of this framework is direct strategy instruction, which includes modeling strategies such as questioning, summarizing, and utilizing graphic organizers to support the reading comprehension process. The final component is the collaborative support, where the students learn from each other in pairs and/or small groups. The limitation to both the study and the framework is that the participants were equipped with so many strategies that it was difficult to determine if there were specific strategies that helped to increase their engagement. While Guthrie's work helps us to consider various components that improve engagement, he does not go in depth in detailing each component of his theory. This study extends the work of Guthrie by taking a closer look at two critical elements within his work - interesting texts and comprehension strategies, and implementing these elements in a middle school classroom. This study also employed components of the Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading, which was implemented in the Guthrie (1996) study. This assessment was used to determine the extent to which the participants were engaged with the text. As a result of utilizing the components of the Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading, this study also utilized applicable components of the rubric that accompanies the assessment. The aim, here, is to validate the Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading, for use with a population of AAAM.

In the current study, I utilized some of the reading materials used by Garth-McCullough's (2002) study. Garth-McCullough (2002) investigated the role of prior knowledge in culturally relevant texts and she utilized several texts in the study. Following the Garth-McCullough, the researcher utilized three of the text from the Garth-McCullough (2002) study, as well as some of the questions Garth-McCullough created to assess comprehension. The aim, here, is to validate the texts with respect to their cultural relevance for a population of AAAM.

2.2 LITERACY PREFERENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

The research literature suggests that, given the option, AA students prefer reading texts about AA people (McGinley & Kamberelis, 1996; Smith, 1995). For example, in the McGinley and Kamberelis (1996) study they conducted interviews with 3rd and 4th grade students and teachers. McGinley and Kamberelis (1996) wanted to understand student engagement with reading and writing. The researchers interviewed the children about their reading and writing and they also interviewed the teachers about the participants' progress. They kept copies of the participants' written texts as well as their reading response journals. The researchers visited the classrooms once a week, over a seven-month period, and they maintained field notes on classroom visits and activities. They found that the students self selected texts by African American authors and about African American people. The researchers conducted interpretive analyses of the data collected and found that the participants were seemingly making connections to their personal

histories and relating the texts to certain aspects of their lives. In a similar vein, Smith (1995) found that 5th grade students were self-selecting texts about African Americans. Smith found that students patterned their writings after the texts about African Americans and were very interactive with those texts. She did not see the same patterns with the teacher-selected texts. She found that the students were not as enthusiastic about the texts that were not about African Americans. Some scholars have found that after reading texts about African American people, African American students were inspired to read more texts about African American people and encouraged to learn more about the African American experience (Perney, 1976; Ramirez & Price-Williams, 1972; Redd, 1993). Utilizing a different age population, Redd (1993) discusses the impact of texts about African American people on African American college students. Redd conducted a study with African American college students reading an “Afrocentric” textbook in a freshman English course at a historically Black university. The freshmen students that enrolled in the course completed surveys regarding the textbook. He found that by the end of the semester, and upon the completion of reading the text, the students indicated that they enjoyed reading the textbook. They were also encouraged to think critically about the African American experience, and enjoyed writing more. A limitation to Redd’s (1993) study is that he did not include in this study the students who did not read an “afrocentric” textbook in a freshman English course.

Research conducted by the aforementioned scholars strongly suggests that African American students prefer reading texts about African American people. These scholars conducted studies within a variety of populations in the African American community including elementary and middle school aged (3rd, 4th, and 5th) students as well as college students, but few scholars specifically target AAAM. The study seeks to determine AAAM engagement, and

understanding of content, when they read text relevant to American culture broadly defined versus when they read texts that are specifically about African Americans and particularly about African American males while supported by, or unsupported by comprehension strategies.

Literacy educators should take into consideration the kinds of texts that AAAM are reading. The aforementioned researchers posit that African American children are interested in texts that reflect their collective identity. Ogbu (2003) defines collective identity;

“For members of a minority group, collective identity is a sense of who they are, the ‘we’ feeling or feeling of belonging. Collective identity is a product of the group’s history and experiences. It gives individual members a sense of self-worth.” (pp. 173-174)

Being exposed to texts that reflect the students’ collective identity may have an impact that extends beyond the lesson’s objectives. Successful students are those that are able to handle more responsibilities and are intrinsically motivated to push themselves to work harder and longer on academic tasks (Al-Hazza, T.C. & Bucher, 2008; Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, & Seay, 1999; Taylor, Harris, Pearson, & Garcia, 1995). Many scholars have found that the most successful students are those that are aware of their collective identity (Al-Hazza, T.C. & Bucher, 2008; Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006; Asante, 1992; Chavous et al., 2003; Hilliard, 1992; Nobles, 1990; Sizemore, 1988; Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, & Seay, 1999; Taylor, Harris, Pearson, & Garcia, 1995; Thomas, Townsend, & Belgrave, 2003; Zirkel, 2006). Brooks (2006) posits that reading texts that connect to African Americans collective identity have long lasting effects on their literacy development. Brooks conducted a study with African American middle school students reading African American children’s literature. Her research highlights that knowledge of collective identity has an impact on comprehension and some research suggests (Perney, 1976; Redd, 1993; Ramirez & Price-Williams, 1972) that it is evident when African American students are reading texts about African American people. The students

responded the most to themes such as relationships with family/friends, confronting and overcoming racism, and surviving city life. Brooks (2006) argues that the more African Americans are exposed to these type of texts, it will help them grapple with other literacy concepts such as author's purpose, plot patterns, metaphor, and characterization.

2.2.1 Literacy preferences of males

The focal group of this study is males, and specifically, African American males. With respect to the reading preferences of males, in a recent study, Farris, Werderich, Nelson, and Fuhler (2009) set out to gain a better understanding of the reading preferences of fifth-grade boys. There were a total of 16 participants in this study the majority of whom received free or reduced lunch. Seventeen percent of the boys were African American, 19% Hispanic and 54% Caucasian. Through interviews, e-mail correspondences, and notes on classroom observations, Farris and colleagues, highlighted six major categories of books that appealed to these young men. They found that books that were visually appealing garnered the attention of the boys. They also found that the boys were drawn to both non-fiction and fiction books that were apart of a series or by a favorite author. Books with a character that experiences a series of situations also attracted the boys. In addition, informational books with short passages and photographs/illustrations were attractive to the boys. Finally, graphic novels and graphic nonfiction books were prime choices for the boys. Interestingly, their findings suggest that reading books that reflect cultural identity was not a priority to this group of boys. This research

counters previously mentioned studies that emphasized the importance of collective identity. A possible reason for this outcome is that Farris and colleagues (2009) considered preferences collectively and did not disaggregate any data on race. Informed by Farris and colleagues (2009) as well as prior reading research on African American males' reading preferences, this study further examines the relationship between culturally relevant texts and reading preferences of males and also seeks to understand whether reading culturally relevant texts, in particular, increases engagement.

Though growing, the body of research devoted to literature preferences remains small by comparison to research focused on phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. Perhaps, we should pay equal attention to the content we are requiring our students to read. The National Middle School Association (2002) found that students will not retain information taught if there is no personal connection made to it. We should want our students to not only learn how to read but also enjoy reading and to learn from a variety of sources. Another goal should be to use literature as a tool to potentially change outcomes for the better.

2.2.2 Literacy preferences of adolescent African American males

A large portion of the discussion above, addresses the literacy preferences of African American children. This study investigates the literacy engagement and content understanding of African American males. This section will describe the relevant literature on the educational concerns, in general, and literacy concerns of African American male students and the relationship of these concerns to the availability of resources in instruction.

Some scholars posit that resources have very little to do with learning. There is the belief that instruction is the key to academic success and the way in which the resources are utilized within instruction should be the focus of research (Cohen & Loewengerg Ball, 2001; Cohen, Raudenbush, & Lowenberg Ball, 2003). Cohen, Raudenbush, and Lowenberg Ball (2003) suggest that the most effective teachers were those that planned thoroughly and used the instructional materials that were aligned with learning objectives. The scholars write, “the best materials are of little use if teachers cannot turn them to their advantage in framing tasks, or if students cannot use them to engage the tasks” (p.124). This research suggests that resources are not the sole indicator of learning for students. However, it may be that literacy resources do play a significant role in the learning process, thus, deserving some scholarly attention, specifically trying to understand what works best for specific populations. There have been several studies that suggest when students are interested in a text they spend more time reading and projected positive attitudes about reading (McLoyd, 1979; Morrow, 1992; Schraw, Bruning, & Svoboda, 1995). Other scholars have alluded to the texts that African American males read, having nothing to do with their performance. They argue that the performance of African American males is correlated with inadequate teachers and lackluster teaching. Some scholars posit that the performance of African American males may be related to perceived teachers’ expectations (Atwater, 2000; Ferguson, 2003; Grant, 1985; Jackson, 1999; McLoyd, 1985; Murray & Jackson, 1999; Noguera, 2003; Wong et al, 2003). The literature suggests that some teachers base their expectations of student performance on socio-economic status and race, rather than individual ability (Anderson, 1990; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Murray & Jackson, 1999; Phillips & Ebrahimi, 1993). Some educators may also believe that African Americans possess some sort of biological and/or cultural deficit that inhibits the cognitive ability needed to acquire the reading

process (Jackson, 1999; Monteiro, 1999). Another claim is that as a result of the constant exposure of African American children to negative perspectives, a self-fulfilling prophecy begins to take place where the student internalizes the constant negative feedback (Aronson & Inzlicht, 2004; Jackson, 1999; Murray & Jackson, 1999; Spencer, 1986; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Consequently, it has been suggested that African American males have the worse student-teacher relationship than any other race-sex group (Aaron & Powell, 1983; Bynum, Best, Barnes, & Burton, 2008; Dweck, 1978; Grant, 1985; Irvine, 1990; Jackson, 1999). Incompetent teaching and incompetent teachers do play a role in the academic achievement of African American males. It is imperative for there to be research that informs the practices of these teachers with the hope that one day, they will become informed through reading various scholarly articles that will challenge their current practice. A large part of their practice includes the text and instructional materials that they are requiring their students to read.

Alfred Tatum has dedicated much of his life's research to the acquisition of literacy skills of AAAM. Tatum (2003, 2005, 2008) highlights in his research the role that collective identity plays in the literacy acquisition of AAAM. Tatum (2008) interviewed a sixteen-year-old African American male, deemed a struggling reader, over a period of ten months. Quincy (a pseudonym) had to read books, articles, newspaper clippings and speeches that Tatum recommended. There were twenty 90-minute audio taped discussions about the reading materials between Tatum and the student. There were also four thirty-minute interviews that reflected on the discussions. Tatum highlights some of the conversations that he had with Quincy on certain texts he found that Quincy was meaningfully engaged with. He was engaged because he connected the ideas within the texts to personal experiences. This study contributes to the ongoing dialogue about the literacy acquisition of AAAM. A limitation of Tatum's (2008) study is that he only discusses

one young man's experience. Tatum further posits that the text read by African American males should include a social, cultural, political, spiritual, and/or economic focus, essentially. Tatum's (2008) study does address an increase in literacy engagement with the participant reading culturally relevant texts. This study extends the work of Tatum by looking further into the role of comprehension strategies and culturally relevant texts as it relates to literacy engagement. Thus, shedding some light on other components of literacy instruction that may contribute to literacy engagement. In a similar vein, Guthrie and Davis (2003) discussed six practices that would positively influence the engagement of struggling middle school readers. One of the practices mentioned is having an abundance of interesting texts for the students to read.

Looking at the aforementioned trends of the achievement of African American males, literacy teachers of AAAM should explore other avenues of reading materials in order to reach them. Simply sticking to what is required for them to read for that particular subject or that particular school district may not be all that they need. If we are to be concerned about changing outcomes and changing lives then teachers may need some insight into their reading preferences and go above and beyond the call of duty to reach this population. Orange and Horowitz (1999) conducted a study to determine the preferred literacy tasks of AAAM and adolescent Mexican American males. They interviewed a total of 83 adolescent males, 63 African American males and 20 Mexican American males. The researchers used the Literacy Task Preference Scale (LTPS). The students showed a preference for reading alone. The students felt that reading any book less than 25 pages was a demeaning task. They also expressed an interest in texts that challenged their perspectives and pushed them to think critically. There was a very recent study that sought out to understand the literacy preferences of AAAM and the findings were very different from the findings of the abovementioned studies.

There is considerable research that suggests that AAAM should be reading texts that connect to their lives outside of school. I have found very little research that discusses whether reading these texts increases engagement for AAAM. Furthermore, very little exists that compares the engagement, of AAAM, with the culturally relevant texts to the non-culturally relevant texts to determine if there is a difference.

2.3 EXPOSITORY TEXTS

For the purpose of this study, drawing on definitions by Britton and Black (1985), Vacca and Vacca (2002), and Weaver and Kintsch (1991), expository texts are defined as texts that are used to convey information and/or content. Expository texts do not have one particular structure. Many expository texts contain graphs, charts, table of contents, glossaries, and indexes (Moss, 2005). These texts are an important element in the study of content area literacy because content area texts, often though not always, fall under the umbrella of expository texts. Some examples are social studies textbooks, instructional manuals, and autobiographies. It has been argued that expository text pushes the reader to utilize working memory and challenges them to use analytical reasoning skills, therefore causing the reading and comprehension of expository text to be very laborious (Graesser & Bertus, 1998). Children regularly encounter expository texts.

However, teachers may encounter problems utilizing these resources in the classroom. There is still much to be learned about how to make expository texts more accessible for content learning in classrooms.

On the contrary, narrative texts are very different from expository texts. One explanation for the relative ease of students' use of narrative texts has been offered by Graesser, Goldling, and Long (1991) who describe narratives as being very organized in knowledge structures. The event sequences in narratives are very similar to real life experiences. Therefore, the structure of narrative text may be predictable and easily anticipated by the reading audience. The structure consists of characters, setting, and a plot. The plot consists of a problem and a solution to that problem. The characters are those that are involved in the problem and the solution of the plot. Because of the predictable structure of narratives, many scholars believe that the comprehension of narratives is much easier than other genres (Freedle & Hale, 1979; Graesser, 1981; Graesser, Goldling, & Long, 1991; Graesser & Riha, 1984; Spiro & Taylor, 1987).

Increasing AAAM exposure to historical texts about African American people, means that their exposure to expository texts may increase as well. Expository texts have the potential to be challenging because of the way they are structured and written (Beck, McKeown, & Gromoll, 1989; Hayes, 2009; Snow and Sweet, 2003; Unsworth, 1999; Vacca & Vacca, 2002). Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) found in their research that fourth grade students really began to struggle as they attempted to read content area textbooks. It is in the fourth grade that there is an increased exposure to expository texts. In the proposed study, the focal students will be AAAM in the 9th grade. While, presumably, these students have had some exposure to expository texts in previous years, the extent to which they have been taught, and/or have developed strategic approaches to reading and understanding expository texts is clear.

Beck, McKeown, and Gromoll (1989), conducted an analysis of Social Studies texts for 4th and 5th grade students. The researchers found several issues that would impede comprehension including irrelevant comparisons, unstated connections of text to the main idea(s) thus requiring inferences, and multiple concepts introduced using too few words for an inexperienced reader to walk away with strong knowledge on any one particular concept. These concerns are only a few of the many issues that the researchers found in their analysis of the text. Several years after the Beck, McKeown, and Gromoll (1989) study, Snow and Sweet (2003) highlighted similar issues. They found that many expository texts are ill structured and poorly written, omit pertinent information, and require the reader to access unavailable background knowledge required for the comprehension process.

In a study conducted by Rosa (1994) with African American males and expository texts, findings suggest that African American males should be able to build from external connections when reading expository texts so that they are constructing an understanding of the main idea of the passage. Rosa assessed 43 African American males using two types of assessments, Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT) which is a perceptual test used to measure cognitive styles and the Essential Skills Reading Test (ESRT). The reading objectives of the ESRT were designed to describe and identify the qualities of a good reader as outlined by research. The outcome of the assessment was used to identify the students' level of field independence. Field independent students are able to make sense out of various tasks, are independent readers and thinkers, and are able to handle abstract concepts. Using the data from the assessments, Rosa divided the students into low field independent students and high field independent students. 25 of the African American male students were low field independent and 18 were high field independent. The raw scores of the high field independent students were higher on the reading comprehension

of expository text subtest. As a result of his study, Rosa suggests that African American males would benefit from expository texts that are well organized, well structured, contain instructional aids, and when students are able to underline and interact with the text. Through significant research we have found that the majority of expository texts are not structured in that manner. These findings suggest that if literacy educators are going to incorporate expository texts, they should embed comprehension strategies into their instruction to support their students. The proposed study will seek to understand the best practices around strategic support, for reading comprehension to support AAAM during content area reading.

2.4 COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES RESEARCH

As I have noted above, the text utilized in instruction has a tremendous impact on the reading comprehension process. Snow and Sweet (2003) discuss the role of the text with regards to reading comprehension;

“The features of a text have a large effect on comprehension. Texts that are badly written or poorly structured are harder to understand. Texts that omit crucial information, or links between bits of information, are also hard to understand. And of course, texts that draw upon background knowledge unavailable to the reader are hard to understand. Unfortunately many of the texts that students are expected to learn from have these features. Thus, one goal of comprehension instruction must be to help readers learn from even poorly written texts or texts that are challenging for other readers.” (p.5)

There has been significant research that suggest that instruction in reading comprehension strategies has improved reading comprehension (Block & Duffy, 2008; Duke &

Pearson, 2002; Gajra, Jitendra, Sood, & Sacks, 2007; Graesser, 2007; NICHD, 2000). The research on content area strategic approaches to reading comprehension is very broad. This discussion will be limited to content area strategic approaches and adolescent support and will not focus on young readers and content area strategic approaches.

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) conducted a report on the teaching of reading. The report reviews several years of research on comprehension strategies used in reading. The report emphasizes seven strategies that have proven, through research, to improve reading comprehension. Those strategies are summarization, question answering, question generation, story structure, comprehension monitoring, graphic and semantic organizers, and cooperative learning.

Research has been conducted that has explored content area strategies and its relationship to both the successful reader and the struggling reader. Some scholars, for example, have explored specific strategies to support content area reading such as Annotation (Zywica & Gomez, 2008), journaling, and graphic organizers, and suggest that while these strategies are helpful in supporting reading comprehension for most students, they are particularly useful for struggling readers.

Some may believe that comprehension strategies are skills that should only be taught to struggling readers. There has been research conducted that highlights the need for teaching comprehension strategies to all readers. For example, Jiminez, Garcia, and Pearson (1996) sought to understand strategies that were employed by bilingual Latino/a students that were considered successful English readers. The students that were classified as successful English readers were those that had the ability to think aloud while reading, they had oral language proficiency in both Spanish and English, the ability to read in Spanish, and their ranking as

readers of English. The researchers used several methods to collect data. They used think alouds, interviews, prior knowledge, and recalls. They found a consistent thread of three strategies that were unique to successful Latino/a readers. They found that they transferred information across languages, they translated from Spanish to English and “they openly accessed cognate vocabulary when they read.” The findings to this study suggest that successful readers employ specific strategies when reading. Another example is the Dole, Brown, and Trathen (1996) study that was divided into two phases. In the first phase, there were 67 participants from both fifth and sixth grades. The participants were from a school that was deemed at-risk. The students were randomly assigned to one of the following three treatments, strategy instruction, story content instruction, and basal control instruction. After receiving each treatment the students read. After reading, the students performed about the same for each treatment. When the students were asked to read selections independently, the researchers found that the strategy outperformed the other two groups. In the second phase of the study, two students were selected to provide a more in depth look into the group that received the strategy instruction. One of the two students was a lower achieving student and the other was a higher achieving student. The researchers used oral interviews, written assessments, and classroom observations to gain a better understanding of why the lower achieving student used the strategy more than the higher achieving student. The higher achieving student felt that she already had enough strategies in her repertoire and did not need any additional strategies. The lower achieving student felt that this strategy was very helpful. As she became better at using the strategy, her comprehension began to increase as well. This research strongly suggests that there is a positive impact in the use of strategy instruction on struggling readers. Both the Jiminez, Garcia, and Pearson (1996) study and the Dole, Brown, and Trathen (1996) study have very different findings. The former,

highlights the positive impact of strategy instruction on struggling readers. The latter, indicates that successful readers utilize specific strategies when reading. Both studies emphasize the need for comprehension strategies to be taught to both successful and struggling readers.

The previously mentioned studies highlight the need for comprehension strategies for a wide range of readers. The proposed study will attempt to deepen the understanding of comprehension strategies by taking a look at specific strategies and linking those strategies to literacy engagement.

2.4.1 Comprehension Strategy Instruction

Even with the research that suggests the need for comprehension strategies to be taught and the impact that comprehension strategies has on readers on all levels, there is research that suggests that many secondary content teachers are not infusing strategy instruction into their practice. For example, Pitcher, et al (2010) conducted a study to determine the types of reading instruction that adolescents are receiving and if they are receiving the type of instruction that they need. There were seven adolescents, all from different backgrounds, that were assessed one on one. Utilizing the data, the researchers found recurring themes. They found that all seven of the students struggled in their content area classes, reading expository texts. In addition, they also found that the students were provided with no comprehension strategies for support with the expository texts. In that same vein, Ness (2007) conducted a study over the 2005-06 academic

school year. She wanted to find out to what extent do secondary content area teachers include explicit comprehension strategy instruction into their daily practice. She also sought to understand which comprehension strategies were incorporated into science and social studies classrooms. Ness conducted observations in eight middle and high school science and social studies classrooms. She collected approximately 2,400 minutes of classroom observation. She found that out of 40 hours of classroom observation that there was 82 minutes of explicit teaching of comprehension strategies. During the 82 minutes, she found that the most frequently used strategy was asking literal questions.

Questioning is a very popular strategy employed by content area teachers. For example, Rosenshine, Meister, and Chapman (1996) conducted a review of intervention studies where the students were taught to generate questions as a vehicle to improving comprehension. There were a total of 26 studies used in this review. The studies that were selected for this review had to provide evidence of teaching the students how to generate questions either before or after reading a paragraph or passage. The researchers found that the types of questions generated played a significant role in comprehension. Two of the most successful prompts were generic questions and signal word prompts. The signal word prompts include who, why, how, and what questions. These questions address the literal concepts within the text. Examples of the generic questions are “How does....affect....?,” “What does.....mean?,” and “What did you learn from this?” These concepts require the students to integrate the information read within the text. The researchers closely examine the studies that included a comparison of generic questions and signal word prompts. They found that the students that answered the generic questions were more successful in the comprehension of the text. This review of research provides evidence that the types of questions that the students interact with, play a role in the comprehension of text.

Some scholars are not proponents of questioning and they prefer graphic organizers. Romance and Vitale (1999) discuss using concept mapping as a tool to support the comprehension of expository texts. They describe concept mapping as an instructional support tool that aides in organizing and representing knowledge presented in texts. The maps are used to represent key concepts, highlight their interconnectedness, and to provide visual support during instruction. Teachers may find concept maps relatively easy to use because there are many variations, therefore teachers have the flexibility to be creative. In a similar vein, Gajra, Jitendra, Sood, and Sacks (2007) summarize the results of research studies that were intended to improve the comprehension of expository texts for students with learning disabilities. In order to be included in the summary each study had to include a content area intervention and the participants had to be given the opportunity to practice and apply the intervention. The participants in the study had to be either school age or adolescents. There were a total of 29 studies used for the synthesis. The researchers found 11 studies that focused on graphic organizers and they found that the graphic organizers had a positive impact on the reading comprehension of students with learning disabilities. A few of the graphic organizers used in the studies were semantic mapping, visual spatial displays, and teacher created graphic organizers. In all of the studies the participants that learned and applied the graphic organizers outperformed the other participants.

There are other comprehension strategies that encourage adolescents to interact with the texts. Zywica and Gomez (2008) describe a comprehension strategy that is used with adolescent readers. Annotation is used to encourage students to become interactive readers as they navigate through content area reading. This method is also used to aide students in identifying the structure of the text, analyze key concepts, and gain meaning from the text. The approach encourages students to mark up or annotate text using a standard set of annotations. For

example, students circle heading and subheadings, draw rectangles on content vocabulary words, and place triangles on other words that the students deem as difficult. Zywicki and Gomez (2008) suggest that after utilizing this method the student should have a grasp on the big ideas of the text. A follow-up study (Herman, Perkins, Hansen, Gomez, & Gomez, 2010) conducted with over 1000 students in a small Midwestern city found that 9th grade science students who used annotation along with summarization and/or double entry journaling increased their reading comprehension levels as well as their science understanding as measured by a multiple choice exam.

2.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this section, I have attempted to describe the literature in literacy engagement, literacy preferences of African American students, and the difficulty students have with expository texts. I have discussed the current literacy research that sheds some light on AAAM. I have explained the current thinking around comprehension strategies and adolescents. I have drawn on specific strategies that suggest that the use of strategies may increase literacy engagement. Several strategies seem to hold promise for students, especially those in urban contexts. These include questioning, annotation, utilizing graphic organizers, and CORI. I have pointed out several gaps

in the literature that bear on our understanding of the relationship between comprehension strategy use and literacy engagement for AAAM. Emerging from these gaps are four overarching research questions, that explore issues of engagement with culturally relevant text and explore the relationship between strategy support for reading, engagement, and culturally relevant texts. These include:

Engagement and culturally relevant texts

- 1) To what extent is a selected “culturally relevant” text about African Americans engaging for African American adolescent males?
- 2) To what extent are “non-culturally relevant texts” engaging for African American adolescent males?

Comprehension strategy support

- 3) Do students who use selected comprehension strategies have better understanding of text content than students who do not use the comprehension strategies to support text reading?
- 4) Which selected comprehension strategies support increased understanding of selected text content?
- 5) Which selected comprehension strategies support increased literacy engagement?

In this study I have attempted to address the questions above and highlight the relationship between literacy engagement, culturally relevant texts, and comprehension strategy support.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to measure the effects of both culturally relevant texts and comprehension strategies on the literacy engagement of adolescent African American males.

The goal of the design is to gather both qualitative and quantitative data to compare

- students' engagement with African American texts and non African American texts.
- students' engagement with the comprehension strategies, both extended response questions and the double entry journal.

Engagement is defined as the level of cognitive involvement dedicated to a process (Guthrie, et al., 1996; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

3.1 PARTICIPANTS

The participants were chosen from a single parochial boarding school in the eastern region of the United States. All of the 9th grade males were invited to participate. The participants that were selected were those that submitted the informed consent documents with the signature of the participants and the signature of their parents/legal guardians (see Appendix A for a copy of the informed consent forms). The participants were from all over the United States. They were from places such as the District of Columbia, Boston, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania.

3.2 SETTING

Evergreen Academy (a pseudonym) is a parochial boarding school located in the eastern region of the United States. The school sits on 575 acres of land. There are two dormitories on campus, one that houses the females and the other houses the males. The student body consists of 98% African American students and it serves grades 9-12. The students come from 23 states including Bermuda and Suriname.

3.3 MATERIALS

There were six texts selected for the study, three expository texts and three narrative texts (see Appendix B for a copy of the texts). Both narrative and expository texts were chosen to measure the effects of the comprehension strategy across genres. The three expository passages were selected from the social studies curriculum materials that the students in this school are required to read. When selecting texts from a social studies curriculum, where the goal is to teach United States history from the beginning to 1877, often times, there is not a wide selection of materials on African Americans and Mexican Americans. Therefore, it was a challenge to find materials that fit the abovementioned criteria. Nevertheless, I wanted to use texts that students are often required to read. The narrative texts are short stories extracted from young adult literature anthologies. For both the narrative and expository texts there is one text where the subject matter centers on African Americans, one where the subject matters centers on European Americans, and one where the subject matters centers on Mexican Americans. Each culture was chosen to determine if the African American texts had a significant effect on the participants. A text about Mexican American was included to explore whether a text about non-whites would have an effect on the African American males.

3.3.1 Text Descriptions

3.3.1.1 European American

The passage entitled *American Culture* discusses the role of scientists such as Galileo Galilei and their evolving beliefs about the earth and its relationship to the rest of the planets. The text briefly describes the life of Benjamin Franklin and discusses his accomplishments (Stuckey & Salvucci, 2003).

The short story entitled *Y2K.CHATRM43* describes a European American teenage male that has started a chat room for other teenagers. He starts the chat room with the hopes of addressing global issues (Carter, 1999).

3.3.1.2 African American

The passage entitled *The movement to end slavery* describes the role of abolitionists in the ending of slavery. It also provides a description of the life of Frederick Douglass, a brief synopsis of the Underground Railroad, and the life of Harriet Tubman (Stuckey & Salvucci, 2003).

The short story entitled *Into the Game* describes three African American boys on the train discussing their first paycheck and the frustration with taxes being taken out. There are also girls on the train and they are trying to garner enough courage to speak to them (Williams-Garcia, 1993).

3.3.1.3 Mexican American

The passage entitled *The Conquistadores* is about Spanish soldiers that led military expeditions to the Americas. The passage highlights their various conquests (Stuckey & Salvucci, 2003).

The short story entitled *The Alley* is about a teenage Mexican American male that witnesses a purse being stolen and begins a dangerous pursuit of the thief. This story chronicles teenager's pursuit of the thief (Romero, 1993).

3.3.2 Culturally Relevant Texts

There is a significant amount of research that suggests that African Americans prefer reading texts about African American people (McGinley & Kamberelis, 1996; Smith, 1995). These texts are culturally relevant texts for African Americans (Hollie, 2012; Ladson Billings, 1994). The texts that were considered culturally relevant for this study were *Into the Game* and *The Movement to End Slavery*. Hefflin and Barksdale-Ladd (2001) established guidelines for the characteristics of high quality literature to be used with African American children. These scholars create a rubric that includes character portrayal, language use, illustration authenticity, and information accuracy. Figure 3.1 is the rubric that was used to rate both *Into the Game* and *The Movement to End Slavery*.

Character portrayal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the author identify the characters as African Americans? • Does the author include current accurate information about African American beliefs, traditions, shared values, and other cultural referents? • Does the author present realistic and positive images of African Americans? 	1 Low	2	3 Medium	4	5 High	NA
Language Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the dialogue correctly portray African American dialect? • Is the language authentic and realistic? • Will students understand, identify with, and accurately reflect upon characters language? 	1 Low	2	3 Medium	4	5 High	NA
Illustration authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the illustrations reflect reality? • Do they reveal variety in settings and African American physical features and coloring, or are the characters merely colored brown? • Do the illustrations present positive images of African Americans in aesthetically pleasing ways? 	1 Low	2	3 Medium	4	5 High	NA
Information accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the story contain a motif or an authentic aspect of African American history? • Is the information accurate? • Does the story add a distinctive voice or worldview? 	1 Low	2	3 Medium	4	5 High	NA

Figure 3-1 Scoring for rating the quality of African American children's literature

3.3.3 Readability Formulas

Readability formulas are usually in the form of a multiple regression equation that is designed to quantitatively analyze a text (Harris & Hodges, 1995). These formulas take into consideration factors such as, the number of syllables in each word, the number of words in each sentence, the number of paragraphs, and vocabulary difficulty. Anderson and Davis (1988) define the goal of readability formulas as a “gauge to whether particular texts can be read and understood by a particular reader or groups of readers, on some particular use or occasion of reading” (p.23). There are over 100 readability formulas for text that are written in the English language (Harris & Hodges, 1995). Table 1 highlights each text’s score for six readability formulas; Flesch Reading Ease Score, Gunning Fog Scale, Flesch –Kincaid Grade Level, The Coleman-Liau Index, Automated Readability Index, and the Linear Write Formula. The texts are arranged in order from the most difficult to read to the least difficult to read, as determined by the readability formulas

Table 1 Readability formulas

Text	Flesch Reading Ease Score (text scale)	Gunning Fog (text scale)	Flesch – Kincaid Grade Level (grade level)	The Coleman-Liau Index (grade level)	The SMOG Index (grade level)	Automated Readability Index (grade level)	Linear Write Formula (grade level)
Movement to end slavery	42.2 (difficult to read)	10.1 (fairly easy to read)	10.3	13 (college)	9.6	9.1	7.6
American Culture	53 (fairly difficult to read)	9.9 (fairly easy to read)	9	13 (college)	8.3	9.1	7.3
Conquistadores	62.3 (average/standard)	8.2 (fairly easy to read)	7.9	10	7.2	7.4	7.1
The Alley	76.1 (fairly easy to read)	8.2 (fairly easy to read)	6.5	8	6.1	6.6	7.7
Into the Game	84 (easy to read)	6.2 (fairly easy to read)	4.2	7	4.6	3.7	5
Y2KCHATRM43	83.5 (easy to read)	6.4 (fairly easy to read)	4.1	6	5.1	2.8	4.6

3.4 TEACHING THE COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

Many scholars have outlined guidelines on how to effectively teach comprehension strategies (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989; Duke, & Pearson, 2002; Harris & Pressley, 1991; Sinatra, Brown, & Reynolds, 2002; Winograd and Hare, 1988) These scholars have outlined four components of effective instruction. (1) A clear explanation of the strategy and when and how it is to be used (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Harris & Pressley, 1991; Winograd & Hare, 1988). (2) Modeling of the strategy by the teacher (Collins, et al., 1991; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Winograd & Hare, 1988) (3) The students employ the strategy but with the support of the teacher (Duke & Pearson, 2002). (4) Finally the students independently using the strategy, without the direct support of the teacher (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Harris & Pressley, 1991; Winograd & Hare, 1988). The participants were organized into three groups and they were taught the strategies using a scripted lesson (see Appendix C for the scripted lessons). The lessons were designed utilizing these four components of effectively teaching comprehension strategies. Specifically, the four components are introducing the strategy, modeling the strategy, the teacher and the students collaboratively implementing the strategy, and the students independently working on the strategy. These components are reflected in the lessons in the following ways, the concept is introduced, the concept is then modeled, following the modeling the teacher and the participants collaborate in implementing the strategy and finally the participants employ the strategy independently. For both comprehension strategy groups, the work that is modeled and the work

that is done independently is displayed so that the participants are able to refer to them for the remaining sessions.

3.5 INSTRUMENTS

3.5.1 Reading Comprehension Instrument

Following the Garth-McCullough (2002) study, the Reading Comprehension Instrument (RCI) used in the current study, was designed to consist of both literal and inferential questions (see Appendix D). The rationale for including both literal and inferential questions was to include questions that addressed specific content and also to include questions that addressed inferred themes, therefore providing the participant an opportunity to display an array of knowledge. The literal questions addressed the main idea, supporting details, sequencing, characters, setting, and plot. The inferential questions addressed the recognition of cause and effect, understanding character's actions, and the inferred themes of the plot. There were a total of six RCI, one for each text. Four of the RCI were designed by the researcher and the other two, *Y2K.CHATRM43* and *Into the Game*, were a modified version of the RCI designed by Garth-McCullough (2002).

3.5.2 Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading

Following Guthrie, et al (1996), the participants completed a modified version of the Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading (PAER). Guthrie and his colleagues (1996) conducted a study similar to this one. Guthrie, et al (1996) set out to measure the literacy engagement of 3rd and 5th grade students that were learning Concept Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI). The difference between Guthrie's (1996) approach and the current study is that this study specifically targets AAAM and this study is not monitoring the implementation of a specific reading program. The modified Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading assessed, (a) prior knowledge (writing what they know about the topic prior to reading); (b) drawing (creating a visual representation of what they have learned); (c) writing (expressing what they have learned from the texts through composition).

3.5.3 Post survey

Following Garth-McCullough (2002), the participants completed a post survey following the completion of reading each text. The post-survey gathered information about their opinion and included additional probes about text preference such as, "I would like to read this text in my

spare time”. The post-survey also included questions about text complexity and interest in the text (e.g. whether the text was easy to read or if it was boring). The information gathered from the post survey provided qualitative data that allowed the researcher to compare the responses amongst the texts.

3.6 PROCEDURES

Following the approach taken by other, related, intervention studies, the participants were divided into three strategic literacy groups (Cesalis & Cole, 2009; Lyster, 2002). Group one received comprehension strategy instruction on how to answer extended response questions (ERQ). Group two received comprehension strategy instruction on how to complete a double entry journal (DEJ). Group three, the control group, did not receive any comprehension strategy instruction. The participants in the ERQ and the DEJ groups met with the researcher for seven sessions. The goal of the first session was to receive the comprehension strategy instruction. The goal of the subsequent sessions were to read a passage at each session. Each session was conducted after school and in small groups. The participants completed the pre-assessment to determine the knowledge they had prior to reading each text. The researcher observed the participants while reading and used the Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist to quantify any seemingly disengaged behaviors. Figure 3.2 provides an example of the Silent Reading

Behaviors Checklist. After reading the passage the participants completed the RCI that corresponded with the passage read. Upon the completion of the RCI, the participants then completed a modified version of the Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading (Guthrie, 1996), which included both drawing and writing. Finally, they participated in a brief interview that determined which texts they preferred reading and if they found the comprehension strategies beneficial. Figure 3.3 is a graphic organizer that highlights a description of the instrument to be used and its purpose.

Text	Out of seat	Continually looks up/around room	Flips pages/not reading	Talks	Total # of off-task behaviors	Notes

Figure 3-2 Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist

Method	Description	Purpose
Pre-Assessment	An open-ended question, with one or two parts, given to the participant prior to reading the each text.	To determine the knowledge the participant already has about the topic and to determine the participant’s collective identity affiliation.
Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist	It is a checklist of behaviors. When a particular behavior is displayed the participant is given a tally.	To gather quantifiable data of displayed disengaged behaviors of the participant while reading the text
Comprehension Questions	Multiple choice Comprehension questions: both literal and inferential	To gather quantifiable data to compare the results of the comprehension strategies and the various texts.
Drawing	The participant was given paper and asked to draw and label a picture representing the text.	This provides the participant with the opportunity to visually represent the key concepts of the text. The drawing must be labeled. Engagement is translated through the attention to detail.
Writing	The participants were given one half page of lined paper and asked to write a summary.	To determine if the students were able to synthesize the key elements of the text.
Post survey	The participants were asked to provide their opinion about the texts.	To gather quantitative data to compare amongst the texts

Interview	The participants were asked to provide their opinions about the texts.	To gather qualitative data to compare amongst the texts.
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Figure 3-3 Description of data collection methods

The pre-assessment, drawing and writing are all components of the Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading (Guthrie, 1996) and were scored with the rubric designed for the Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading (Guthrie, 1996).

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The responses to the pre-assessment, drawing, and writing, were scored using the rubric for the PAER. The scale of the rubric is one to five, with five being the highest score. The highest score that the participants are able to earn on the PAER is a 15. Figure 3.3 describes the rubric in detail. There are 10 to 15 questions for each RCI. The RCI was scored and then converted to a percentage. The RCI multiple-choice comprehension questions were scored based on the response being correct or incorrect. The information that the participant already knew about the topic, determined by the pre-assessment, was not scored in any of the post-assessments.

Pre-Assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>No conception</i>—Student writes nothing at all or the answer does not contain information relevant to the question. 2. <i>Preconception</i>—Student may list objects or parts and their functions may be vaguely described; the answer is scientifically incorrect but demonstrates an understanding that there are relationships among objects or events relevant to the concept. 3. <i>Partial conception</i>—Student answer is correct and shows a limited understanding of some relationships among a few of the relevant objects or events, but the statements are vague. 4. <i>Incomplete conception</i>—Student answer is correct, shows an understanding of relationships among many but not all of the relevant objects or events, and the relationships are clear but incomplete. 5. <i>Full conception</i>—Student answer is correct, shows an understanding of relationships among all important objects or events, and the relationships are depicted in clear and complete form.
Drawing	
Writing	

Figure 3-4 Scoring rubric for the Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading

4.0 ASSESSMENT RESULTS

As a result of the complexity of engagement, this study assessed engagement in three ways. The first is a modified version of the Silent Reading Behavior Checklist (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2007; 2009) which is a checklist of disengaged behaviors, implemented while reading, to determine if the participant is having difficulty engaging with the text. Second, a multiple choice reading comprehension assessment. Third, is a modified version of the PAER, in which there is a pre-assessment and participants drew and wrote a summary representing the key concepts in the text.

The Silent Reading Behaviors Observation Checklist was designed by Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2007; 2009) to be used by teachers to determine which students are disengaged and their behavior patterns while disengaging. The checklist was implemented while the participants read the texts. The checklist highlights disengaged behaviors such as being out of seat, looking around the room, flipping pages/not reading, and talking.

As I described earlier in this document, following Guthrie (1996), I used a modified version of the PAER. The original version of this assessment has seven components; (a) stating prior knowledge; (b) searching; (c) drawing; (d) writing; (e) conceptual transfer; (f)

informational text comprehension; and (g) narrative interpretation. Guthrie found that the participants increased their literacy engagement during the implementation of CORI.

The modified version of the PAER, used in the current study, had three components of the original version. Those components are stating prior knowledge, drawing, and writing. The participants will answer questions prior to reading each text to determine their prior knowledge in relation to the text they will be reading.

The Reading Comprehension Instrument (RCI) was used in the McCullough (2002) study where she investigated the relationship between prior knowledge and the comprehension of culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant narrative texts. McCullough found that there was some correlation between prior knowledge and the comprehension of culturally relevant texts. The RCI consists of multiple-choice questions. The RCI for the expository texts consists of 10 multiple-choice questions and for the narrative texts consists of 15-16 multiple-choice questions.

In what follows, I will first offer summary data for all nine participants for each assessment. Within the summary data, each assessment will be displayed two ways, by comprehension strategy instruction group and by the texts read by the participants. I will then present results about each child. I will then close this chapter with a summary analysis of what, I believe, these findings mean and what can be learned from the data, for the fields of strategy instruction and culturally relevant texts.

4.1 INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS

4.1.1 Anthony's Results

Anthony was a participant in the double entry journal group. Based on the silent reading behaviors checklist, displayed in table 2, it is evident that he was engaged in reading the texts. The silent reading behaviors checklist indicates that he was only disengaged once and that was while reading the passage entitled *American Culture*. The text that had the lowest RCI score was *Y2KCHATRM43* with a score of 80%, as indicated in table 3. Anthony scored higher than the mean reading comprehension instrument scores for five of the six texts. The only text that he scored slightly lower than the mean score was *Y2KCHATRM43*, where his score was 80% and the mean score was 81.2%. The text that he scored the lowest on for the PAER, as indicated in table 4, was *Into the Game* with a total score of nine. His highest PAER score was for both *American Culture* and *The Movement to End Slavery* with a total score of 13. Anthony indicated

in the post survey that he enjoyed reading all of the texts. The post-surveys are displayed in tables 5 and 6.

Table 2 Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist for Anthony

Text	Out of seat	Continually looks up/around room	Flips pages/not reading	alks	Total # of off-task behaviors	Not
The Alley					0	
Into the Game					0	
Y2KCHATRM43					0	
Conquistadores					0	
American Culture					1	
End Slavery					0	

Table 3 Anthony's individual RCI score and the mean score

Text	Individual Score (RCI)	Mean Score (RCI)
The Alley	100%	87%
Into the Game	86%	78.20%
Y2KCHATRM43	80%	81.20%
The Conquistadores	90%	73.30%
American Culture	90%	77.70%
Movement to End Slavery	90%	91.10%

Table 4 PAER results for Anthony

Text	Pre Assessment	Drawing	Summary	Total
The Alley	1	5	5	11
Into the Game	1	4	4	9
Y2KCHATRM43	1	5	5	11
The Conquistadores	2	4	4	10
American Culture	3	5	5	13
Movement to End Slavery	3	5	5	13

Table 5 Post Survey (narrative) results for Anthony

	The Alley	Into the Game	Y2KCHATRM43
I enjoyed reading	5 (very much)	5 (very much)	5 (Very much)
I like the main characters	4 (A lot)	5 (very much)	5 (very much)
I would read in my spare time	4 (A lot)	4 (A lot)	4 (A Lot)
This story was...	Very easy to read	Very easy to read	Very easy to read
This story was....	Very interesting	Very interesting	Very interesting
I have experienced what the characters.....	Never	Seldom	Never
I use the same language	Sometimes	often	Always

Table 6 Post Survey (expository) results for Anthony

	Conquistadores	American Culture	End Slavery
I enjoyed reading	5 (Very much)	5 (Very Much)	5 (very much)
I would read in my spare time	4 (A Lot)	5 (Very much)	5 (Very much)
This passage was....	Very easy to read	Very easy to read	Very easy to read
This passage was....	Very interesting	Very interesting	Very interesting

4.1.2 Frank's Results

Frank was a participant in the double entry journal group. He was disengaged a total of eight times, as indicated by the Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist in table 7. He was disengaged the most while reading *Y2KCHATRM43*. He was the most engaged with the texts *The Alley*, *The Conquistadores*, and *The Movement to End Slavery*. His highest PAER scores were 11 for both *The Alley* and *The Movement to End Slavery*. Frank's PAER scores are displayed in table 9. His

lowest PAER score was eight and that was for the text *The Conquistadores*. Frank’s highest score on the RCI was 90% and that was for both *The Movement to End Slavery* and *The Conquistadores*. Frank’s lowest score on the RCI was *The Alley*. Frank scored below the mean score for *The Alley*, with an individual score of 75% and a mean score of 87%, as denoted in table 8, which displays Frank’s RCI scores. He also scored slightly below the mean score for *Y2KCHATRM43* with a mean score of 81.2% and an individual score of 80%. The post survey data, as shown in tables 10 and 11, indicates that he enjoyed reading the texts *The Conquistadores*, *The Movement to End Slavery*, and *The Alley*. He could not relate to the characters in *Into the Game*. From the post survey it appears that he enjoyed reading the expository texts more than the narrative texts.

Table 7 The Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist for Frank

Text	Out of seat	Continually looks up/around room	Flips pages/not reading	Talks	Total # of off-task behaviors	Notes
The Alley					0	
Into the Game					3	Appears to be tired
Y2KCHATRM43					4	
Conquistadores					0	Appears to be tired.
American Culture					1	Yawning and stretching. Laying head on table.
End Slavery					0	

Table 8 Frank's individual RCI score and the mean score

Text	Individual Score (RCI)	Mean Score (RCI)
The Alley	75%	87%
Into the Game	80%	78.20%
Y2KCHATRM43	80%	81.20%
The Conquistadores	90%	73.30%
American Culture	80%	77.70%
Movement to End Slavery	90%	91.10%

Table 9 PAER results for Frank

Text	Pre Assessment	Drawing	Summary	Total
The Alley	1	5	5	11
Into the Game	1	4	4	9
Y2KCHATRM43	1	4	4	9
The Conquistadores	1	3	4	8
American Culture	2	5	3	10
Movement to End Slavery	2	5	4	11

Table 10 Post Survey (narrative) results for Frank

	The Alley	Into the Game	Y2KCHATRM43
I enjoyed reading	4 (A Lot)	3 (Some)	3 (Some)
I like the main characters	3 (some)	3 (Some)	3 (some)
I would read in my spare time	4 (A Lot)	3 (some)	2 (A Little)
This story was...	Very easy to read	Very easy to read	Very easy to read
This story was....	Interesting	Interesting	Interesting
I have experienced what the characters.....	Sometimes	Seldom	Sometimes
I use the same language	Sometimes	Seldom	Sometimes

Table 11 Post Survey Results (expository) Frank

	Conquistadores	American Culture	End Slavery
I enjoyed reading	4 (A Lot)	3 (some)	4 (A Lot)
I would read in my spare time	4 (A Lot)	3 (some)	4 (A Lot)
This passage was....	Very easy to read	Very easy to read	Very easy to read
This passage was....	Interesting	Interesting	Interesting

4.1.3 Jacob's Results

Jacob was a participant in the double entry journal group. He displayed the most disengaged behaviors while reading the text *Y2KCHATRM43* where he looked around the room twice and he was slumped down in his seat. He also appeared to be slightly disengaged with the texts *The Conquistadores*, *American Culture*, and *The Movement to End Slavery*. The notes indicate that he looked disinterested and he was counting pages. He did not display disengaged behaviors for the texts *The Alley* and *Into the Game*. Jacob's highest PAER score was for the texts *The Alley*, with a score of 11, and *American Culture*, with a score of 12, as highlighted in table 12. The text with the lowest PAER score was *The Conquistadores*, with a score of 7. The texts that he scored the highest RCI score was *Y2KCHATRM43* and *American Culture*, with a score of 100%, as indicated in table 13. The mean score for *Y2KCHATRM43* was 81.2% and the mean score for *American Culture* was 77.7%. Jacob's lowest RCI score was for *Into the Game* with a score of

73% and the mean score was 78.2%. On the post survey, Jacob gave *Y2KCHATRM43* the highest score for the text that he enjoyed reading the most. He indicates that *American Culture* and *The Alley* were texts that he enjoyed reading “some”, as denoted in tables 15 and 16.

Table 12 PAER results for Jacob

Text	Pre			Total
	Assessment	Drawing	Summary	
The Alley	1	5	5	11
Into the Game	1	4	4	9
Y2KCHATRM43	1	3	4	8
The Conquistadores	2	3	2	7
American Culture	2	5	5	12
Movement to End Slavery	3	3	4	10

Table 13 Jacob's individual RCI score and the mean score

Text	Individual Score (RCI)	Mean Score (RCI)
The Alley	94%	87%
Into the Game	73%	78.20%
Y2KCHATRM43	100%	81.20%
The Conquistadores	80%	73.30%
American Culture	100%	77.70%
Movement to End Slavery	90%	91.10%

Table 14 Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist for Jacob

Text	Out of seat	Continually looks up/around room	Flips pages/not reading	Talks	Total # of off-task behaviors	Notes
The Alley					0	
Into the Game					0	
Y2KCHATRM43					2	Slumped down
Conquistadores					1	Looks very disinterested
American Culture					1	Counting pages
End Slavery					1	

Table 15 Post Survey (narrative) results for Jacob

	The Alley	Into the Game	Y2KCHATRM43
I enjoyed reading	3 (some)	4 (A Lot)	5 (Very much)
I like the main characters	2 (a little)	5 (very much)	4 (A lot)
I would read in my spare time	2 (a little)	5 (very much)	5 (Very much)
This story was...	Very easy to read	Very easy to read	Very easy to read
This story was....	Interesting	Very interesting	Interesting
I have experienced what the characters.....	Sometimes	Seldom	Seldom
I use the same language	Sometimes	Often	Never

Table 16 Post Survey (expository) results for Jacob

	Conquistadores	American Culture	End Slavery
I enjoyed reading	4 (A Lot)	3 (some)	4 (A Lot)
I would read in my spare time	1 (Not at all)	2 (A Little)	4 (A Lot)
This passage was....	Very easy to read	Very easy to read	Very easy to read
This passage was....	Interesting	Interesting	Interesting

4.1.4 George's Results

George was in the control group. The control group received no comprehension strategy instruction. George appeared to be disengaged a total of nine times, as indicated in table 19. He was disengaged the most with *Y2KCHATRM43*, displaying disengaged behaviors a total of three times, he looked around the room once and talked twice. He was also disengaged with both

American Culture and *The Conquistadores* twice. He was also disengaged with the texts *The Movement to End Slavery* and *Into the Game* once. His highest PAER score was for the text *Y2KCHATRM43*, with a score of nine and he scored an eight for the text *The Alley*. The text that had the lowest PAER score was *American Culture* with a score of five, as denoted in table 17. His highest RCI score was for the text *The Movement to End Slavery* with a score of 100% and his score was higher than the mean score of 91.1%, as indicated in table 18. George scored his lowest RCI score for the text *The Conquistadores* with a score of 50%, which was lower than the mean score of 73.3%. The text that George indicated that he really enjoyed reading was *Into the Game* where he scored it a 5, something that he enjoyed reading “very much.” George also indicated that he liked the main characters “very much,” and he would very much like to read it in his spare time. The text the he indicated that he enjoyed reading the least was *American Culture*, as highlighted in table 20. He enjoyed reading that text very little and he indicated that he would not read the text at all in his spare time and felt that it was “boring.”

Table 17 PAER results for George

Text	Pre Assessment	Drawing	Summary	Total
The Alley	1	3	4	8
Into the Game	1	2	4	7
Y2KCHATRM43	1	3	5	9
The Conquistadores	1	2	3	6
American Culture	1	2	2	5
Movement to End Slavery	2	2	2	6

Table 18 George's individual RCI score and the mean RCI score

Text	Individual Score (RCI)	Mean Score (RCI)
The Alley	75%	87%
Into the Game	80%	78.20%
Y2KCHATRM43	80%	81.20%
The Conquistadores	50%	73.30%
American Culture	80%	77.70%
Movement to End Slavery	100%	91.10%

Table 19 Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist for George

Text	Out of seat	Continually looks up/around room	Flips pages/not reading	Talks	Total # of off-task behaviors	Notes
The Alley					0	Slumped in his seat
Into the Game					1	Slumped in his seat
Y2KCHATRM43					3	
Conquistadores					2	Car skidded outside and grabbed his attention
American Culture					2	
End Slavery					1	Laid back in chair

Table 20 Post Survey (narrative) results for George

	The Alley	Into the Game	Y2KCHATRM43
I enjoyed reading	3 (Some)	5 (very much)	4 (A Lot)
I like the main characters	4 (A Lot)	5 (very much)	5 (very much)
I would read in my spare time	3 (Some)	5 (very much)	3 (Some)
This story was...	Very easy to read	Very easy to read	Very easy to read
This story was....	Interesting	Very interesting	Interesting
I have experienced what the characters.....	Never	Sometimes	Seldom
I use the same language	Seldom	Always	Seldom

Table 21 Post Survey (expository) results for George

	Conquistadores	American Culture	End Slavery
I enjoyed reading	3 (Some)	2 (A Little)	3 (some)
I would read in my spare time	1 (not at all)	1 (not at all)	3 (Some)
This passage was....	Very easy to read	Very easy to read	Very easy to read
This passage was....	Interesting	Boring	Very interesting

4.1.5 Matteo’s Results

Matteo was a participant in the control group. Matteo appeared to be disengaged twice, as indicated in table 24. He talked once while reading the text *Into the Game* and was flipping/counting the pages for the text, *The Movement to End Slavery*. Matteo had the highest PAER score on *The Movement to End Slavery* with a score of nine. He scored the lowest PAER score on *The Conquistadores*, with a score of five, as indicated in table 22. He also scored the lowest RCI score on *The Conquistadores*, with a score of 50%, which is lower than the mean score of 73.3%. The text that he scored the highest RCI score was *The Alley* with a score of 94% which is higher than the mean score of 87%, as noted in table 23. Matteo indicated in the post survey that he enjoyed reading *The Alley* “a lot”. He also indicated that he like the main characters “very much” and he would read the text in his spare time “a lot”. All five of the other texts he indicated that he enjoyed reading “some”, as highlighted in tables 25 and 26.

Table 22 PAER results for Matteo

Text	Pre Assessment	Drawing	Summary	Total
The Alley	1	4	1	6
Into the Game	1	4	1	6
Y2KCHATRM43	1	4	1	6
The Conquistadores	1	3	1	5
American Culture	2	3	1	6
Movement to End Slavery	2	4	3	9

Table 23 Matteo's individual RCI score and the mean RCI score

Text	Individual Score (RCI)	Mean Score (RCI)
The Alley	94%	87%
Into the Game	73%	78.20%
Y2KCHATRM43	66%	81.20%
The Conquistadores	50%	73.30%
American Culture	60%	77.70%
Movement to End Slavery	70%	91.10%

Table 24 Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist for Matteo

Text	Out of seat	Continually looks up/around room	Flips pages/not reading	Talks	Total # of off-task behaviors	Notes
The Alley					0	
Into the Game					1	
Y2KCHATRM43					0	
Conquistadores					0	A loud car skidded and grabbed his attention
American Culture					0	He had to hurry because he had homework.... He looks disinterested
End Slavery					1	Counts pages

Table 25 Post Survey (narrative) results for Matteo

	The Alley	Into the Game	Y2KCHATRM43
I enjoyed reading	4 (A Lot)	3 (Some)	3 (some)
I like the main characters	5 (very much)	3 (Some)	4 (A Lot)
I would read in my spare time	4 (A Lot)	3 (Some)	3 (Some)
This story was...	Easy to read	Easy to read	Easy to read
This story was....	Interesting	Interesting	Interesting
I have experienced what the characters.....	Never	Never	Seldom
I use the same language	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes

Table 26 Post Survey (expository) results for Matteo

	Conquistadores	American Culture	End Slavery
I enjoyed reading	3 (some)	3 (some)	3 (some)
I would read in my spare time	2 (A Little)	2 (A Little)	3 (Some)
This passage was....	On my level	Easy to read	Easy to read
This passage was....	Interesting	Interesting	Interesting

4.1.6 Mario's Results

Mario was a participant in the control group. Mario had a total of seven off-task behaviors, as noted in table 29. There were two texts where he displayed a total of four off task behaviors. While reading the text *The Alley* he looked around the room twice and while reading the text *Y2KCHATRM43* he looked around the room once and talked once. Mario scored the highest PAER score on the three narrative texts *The Alley*, *Into the Game*, and *Y2KCHATRM43* with a score of nine, as noted in table 27. Mario scored the lowest PAER score on the text *American*

Culture with a score of seven. He also scored his lowest RCI score on *American Culture* with a score of 40%, which is lower than the median score of 77.7%, as noted in table 28. Mario indicated on the post survey that both *Into the Game* and *Y2KCHATRM43* were texts that he enjoyed reading “very much.” He indicated that he always shares similar experiences to the characters in *Into the Game*. The text that he indicated that he liked the least was *American Culture*, as highlighted in tables 30 and 31.

Table 27 PAER results for Mario

Text	Pre Assessment	Drawing	Summary	Total
The Alley	1	3	5	9
Into the Game	1	4	4	9
Y2KCHATRM43	1	3	5	9
The Conquistadores	1	4	3	8
American Culture	2	3	2	7
Movement to End Slavery	2	3	3	8

Table 28 Mario's individual RCI score and the mean RCI score

Text	Individual Score (RCI)	Mean Score (RCI)
The Alley	88%	87%
Into the Game	86%	78.20%
Y2KCHATRM43	73%	81.20%
The Conquistadores	70%	73.30%
American Culture	40%	77.70%
Movement to End Slavery	100%	91.10%

Table 29 Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist for Mario

Text	Out of seat	Continually looks up/around room	Flips pages/not reading	Talks	Total # of off-task behaviors	Notes
The Alley					2	
Into the Game					1	
Y2KCHATRM43					2	
Conquistadores					1	A car skidded and grabbed his attention
American Culture					0	
End Slavery					1	

Table 30 Post Survey (narrative) results for Mario

	The Alley	Into the Game	Y2KCHATRM43
I enjoyed reading	4 (A Lot)	5 (very much)	5 (Very Much)
I like the main characters	4 (A lot)	5 (very much)	5 (Very Much)
I would read in my spare time	4 (A Lot)	5 (very much)	5 (Very much)
This story was...	Very easy to read	Easy to read	Very easy to read
This story was....	Interesting	Very interesting	Very interesting
I have experienced what the characters.....	Never	Always	Sometimes
I use the same language	Never	Always	Always

Table 31 Post Survey (expository) results for Mario

	Conquistadores	American Culture	End Slavery
I enjoyed reading	3 (some)	2 (A Little)	3 (some)
I would read in my spare time	1 (Not at all)	1 (Not at all)	2 (A Little)
This passage was....	Very easy to read	Easy to read	Very easy to read
This passage was....	Interesting	Boring	Interesting

4.1.7 Karl's Results

Karl was a participant in the extended response questions group. Karl displayed a total of 14 off-tasks behaviors, as indicated in table 34. He displayed the most disengaged behaviors for the text *The Conquistadores*, where he talked four times and he looked around the room once. He also displayed a total of four disengaged behaviors while reading the text *Into the Game* and four disengaged behaviors while reading the text *Y2KCHATRM43*. He displayed no disengaged behaviors for the texts *The Alley* and *American Culture*. His highest PAER score was an eight, for the texts *The Alley* and *American Culture*, as noted in table 32. He scored a seven for the other texts. Karl's highest RCI score was 90% for the text *The Movement to End Slavery* and the mean score for that text was 91.1%, as shown in table 33. His lowest RCI score was 46% for the text *Into the Game* and the mean score was 78.2%. Karl indicated in the post survey that he enjoyed reading the text *Y2KCHATRM43* "a lot". He also indicated that he liked the main characters "a lot" and he would read this type of text in his spare time, "a lot". He liked reading *The Movement to End Slavery* "a lot." The text that he liked the least was *Into the Game*, he indicated that he did not enjoy reading the text at all, as indicated in tables 35 and 36.

Table 32 PAER results for Karl

Text	Pre Assessment	Drawing	Summary	Total
The Alley	1	3	4	8
Into the Game	1	3	3	7
Y2KCHATRM43	1	3	3	7
The Conquistadores	1	3	3	7
American Culture	2	3	3	8
Movement to End Slavery	2	2	3	7

Table 33 Karl's individual RCI score and the mean RCI score

Text	Individual Score (RCI)	Mean Score (RCI)
The Alley	63%	87%
Into the Game	46%	78.20%
Y2KCHATRM43	66%	81.20%
The Conquistadores	60%	73.30%
American Culture	70%	77.70%
Movement to End Slavery	90%	91.10%

Table 34 Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist for Karl

Text	Out of seat	Continually looks up/around room	Flips pages/not reading	Talks	Total # of off-task behaviors	Notes
The Alley					0	
Into the Game					4	
Y2KCHATRM43					4	
Conquistadores					5	
American Culture					0	
End Slavery					1	Picking nails/ distracted

Table 35 Post Survey (narrative) results for Karl

	The Alley	Into the Game	Y2KCHATRM43
I enjoyed reading	3 (some)	1 (not at all)	4 (a lot)
I like the main characters	4 (a lot)	2 (a little)	4 (a lot)
I would read in my spare time	4 (a lot)	4 (a lot)	4 (a lot)
This story was...	Easy to read	Easy to read	Very easy to read
This story was....	Interesting	Boring	Very interesting
I have experienced what the characters.....	Never	Often	Seldom
I use the same language	Seldom	Often	Sometimes

Table 36 Post Survey (expository) results for Karl

	Conquistadores	American Culture	End Slavery
I enjoyed reading	2 (a little)	3 (some)	4 (a lot)
I would read in my spare time	2 (a little)	4 (a lot)	4 (a lot)
This passage was....	Easy to read	Easy to read	Easy to read
This passage was....	Boring	Interesting	Interesting

4.1.8 Braxton’s Results

Braxton was a participant in the extended response questions group. Braxton displayed a total of four off task behaviors, as shown in table 39. He displayed two of those behaviors while reading *Y2KCHATRM43* and displayed no disengaged behaviors while reading the texts *Into the Game*, *The Conquistadores*, and *The Movement to End Slavery*. Braxton highest PAER scores, highlighted in table 37, were for *American Culture* and *The Movement to End Slavery* with a score of 11. His lowest PAER score was for the text *Into the Game* with a score of 7. His highest RCI score, as indicated in table 38, was 94% for the text *The Alley* and that was more than the mean score, which was 87%. Braxton’s lowest RCI score was for *The Conquistadores*, with a score of 70%, which was lower than the mean score of 73.3%. On the post survey, he indicated that he enjoyed reading both *Into the Game* and *Y2KCHATRM43* “very much”. He also indicated that he enjoyed reading *The Movement to End Slavery* “a lot.” The text that he enjoyed reading the least was *American Culture*, as indicated in tables 40 and 41.

Table 37 PAER results for Braxton

Text	Pre Assessment	Drawing	Summary	Total
The Alley	1	4	5	10
Into the Game	1	3	3	7
Y2KCHATRM43	1	3	4	8
The Conquistadores	2	4	2	8
American Culture	2	5	4	11
Movement to End Slavery	3	4	4	11

Table 38 Braxton's individual RCI score and the mean RCI score

Text	Individual Score (RCI)	Mean Score (RCI)
The Alley	94%	87%
Into the Game	80%	78.20%
Y2KCHATRM43	93%	81.20%
The Conquistadores	70%	73.30%
American Culture	90%	77.70%
Movement to End Slavery	100%	91.10%

Table 39 Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist for Braxton

Text	Out of seat	Continually looks up/around room	Flips pages/not reading	Talks	Total # of off-task behaviors	Notes
The Alley					1	
Into the Game					0	
Y2KCHATRM43					2	
Conquistadores					0	
American Culture					1	Body Language: hand on lip, looks disinterested
End Slavery					0	

Table 40 Post Survey (narrative) results for Braxton

	The Alley	Into the Game	Y2KCHATRM43
I enjoyed reading	4 (A lot)	5 (very much)	5 (Very much)
I like the main characters	5 (very much)	5 (Very much)	4 (A lot)
I would read in my spare time	3 (some)	5 (very much)	5 (very much)
This story was...	Easy to read	Very easy to read	Easy to read
This story was....	Interesting	Very interesting	Very interesting
I have experienced what the characters.....	Never	Often	Always
I use the same language	Sometimes	Always	Always

Table 41 Post Survey (expository) results for Braxton

	Conquistadores	American Culture	End Slavery
I enjoyed reading	3 (some)	2 (A Little)	4 (A Lot)
I would read in my spare time	4 (a lot)	3 (some)	4 (A Lot)
This passage was....	Easy to read	Very easy to read	Very easy to read
This passage was....	Interesting	Boring	Very interesting

4.1.9 Lawrence’s Results

Lawrence was a participant in the Extended Response Questions group. He displayed off tasks behaviors twice, as highlighted in table 44, once for *The Alley* and once for *The Conquistadores*. Lawrence scored the highest PAER score for the text *The Conquistadores*, with a score of 11, as shown in table 42. His lowest PAER score was for the texts *The Alley* and *Into the Game* with a score of seven. Lawrence had an RCI score of 100% for the texts *The Alley*, *Y2KCHATRM43*, and *The Conquistadores*, as shown in table 43. Lawrence’s lowest scores were for the texts

American Culture and *The Movement to End Slavery*. He enjoyed reading the texts *Into the Game* and *Y2KCHATRM43* “very much”. He liked the main characters for the texts *The Alley* and *Into the Game*. Lawrence least enjoyed reading the text, *The Movement to End Slavery*, indicating that he enjoyed it “some”, as shown in tables 45 and 46.

Table 42 PAER results for Lawrence

Text	Pre Assessment	Drawing	Summary	Total
The Alley	1	3	5	9
Into the Game	1	3	5	9
Y2KCHATRM43	1	4	5	10
The Conquistadores	3	3	5	11
American Culture	1	4	5	10
Movement to End Slavery	4	3	4	11

Table 43 Lawrence's individual RCI score and the median RCI scores

Text	Individual Score (RCI)	Mean Score (RCI)
The Alley	100%	87%
Into the Game	100%	78.20%
Y2KCHATRM43	93%	81.20%
The Conquistadores	100%	73.30%
American Culture	90%	77.70%
Movement to End Slavery	90%	91.10%

Table 44 Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist for Lawrence

Text	Out of seat	Continually looks up/around room	Flips pages/not reading	Talks	Total # of off-task behaviors	Notes
The Alley					1	
Into the Game					0	
Y2KCHATRM43					0	
Conquistadores					1	
American Culture					0	
End Slavery					0	

Table 45 Post Survey (narrative) results for Lawrence

	The Alley	Into the Game	Y2KCHATRM43
I enjoyed reading	4 (a lot)	5 (very much)	5 (very much)
I like the main characters	5 (very much)	5 (Very much)	4 (a lot)
I would read in my spare time	3 (some)	5 (Very much)	4 (a lot)
This story was...	Very easy to read	Very easy to read	Very easy to read
This story was....	Interesting	Very interesting	Interesting
I have experienced what the characters.....	Sometimes	Seldom	Often
I use the same language	Seldom	Always	Always

Table 46 Post Survey (expository) results for Lawrence

	Conquistadores	American Culture	End Slavery
I enjoyed reading	4 (A lot)	4 (a lot)	3 (some)
I would read in my spare time	3 (some)	4 (a lot)	2 (a little)
This passage was....	Very easy to read	Very easy to read	Very easy to read
This passage was....	Interesting	Interesting	Boring

4.2 SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENTS

4.2.1 Literacy Engagement Results

The researcher observed the participants while reading and while utilizing the comprehension strategies. During the observation, the researcher used The Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist (Kelley and Clausen-Grace 2007; 2009) and put a tally on the checklist when the participant seemingly displayed a particular disengaged behavior. The Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist includes behaviors such as being out of seat, looking around the room, talking, and flipping pages. Figure 4.1 displays the total Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist by text. The participants that read *Y2KCHATRM43* displayed the most disengaged behaviors with a total of 17. The participants displayed the least amount of disengaged behaviors, a total of 4, while reading *The Alley*. Figure 4.2 displays the Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist by comprehension strategy instruction group. The group that received instruction on how to answer extended response questions exhibited the most disengaged behaviors with a total of 20. The control group had a total of 18 disengaged behaviors and the double entry group had the least, with a total of 14.

The researcher utilized a modified version of the Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading (Guthrie, 1996). The modified version of the PAER includes three components, the pre-assessment, drawing, and writing. Figure 4.1 describes the combined total of all the components of the PAER by text. The text that had the highest PAER score was *The Movement to End Slavery* with a total score of 86. Many scholars have found that students are the most

engaged with texts that are relevant to their lives (Gambrell, 2011; Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, Humenick & Littles, 2007; Hulleman, Godes, Hendricks, & Harackiewicz, 2010; Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007). *The Movement to End Slavery* describes the struggles that many African Americans and European American abolitionist endured to end the enslavement of Africans in America. *The Alley* and *American Culture* were close, with scores of 83 and 82 respectively. The text that had the lowest PAER score was *The Conquistadores* with a total score of 70 points. Figure 4.2 describes the combined total of all the components of the PAER by comprehension strategy instruction groups. The group that had the highest PAER score was the double-entry journal group with a total score of 182. The extended response group scored 159 and the lowest score was the control group with a total score of 129.

The aforementioned findings indicate that the least amount of disengaged behaviors were from the participants that were in the double-entry journal group. The highest PAER scores were from the members of the double-entry journal group and from the reading of *The Movement to End Slavery*. These findings are very similar to those of Guthrie, et al (1996). During his study of the Concept Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI), where he studied elementary aged learners, he found that there was a correlation between the use of comprehension strategies and engagement with a text. When designing a framework for fostering engagement for middle school students Guthrie and Davis (2003) mentioned that strategy instruction and texts that the students considered to be interesting were both critical components to fostering engagement within the middle school classroom. The findings from this study suggest that the young men that participated in this study were the most engaged with culturally relevant texts and using comprehension strategies.

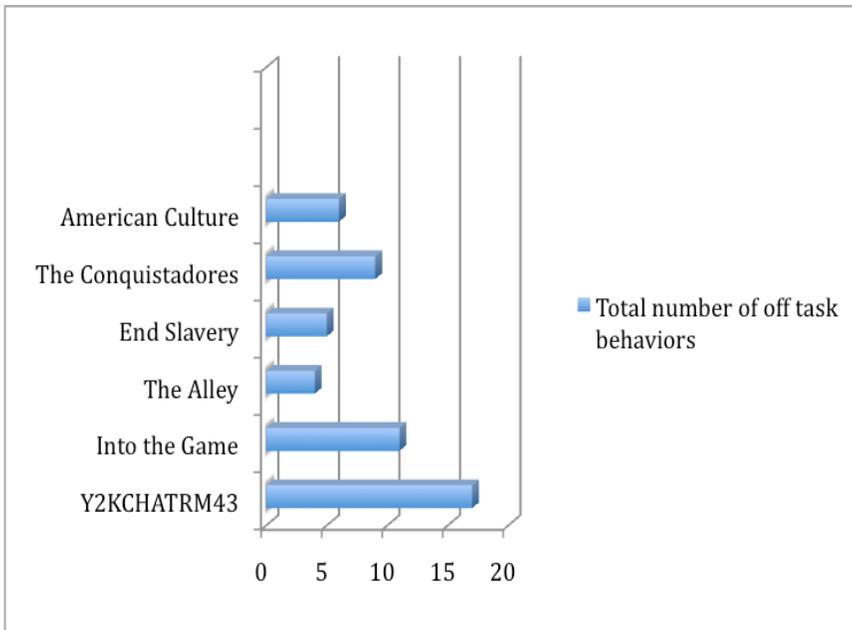


Figure 4-1 Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist by text

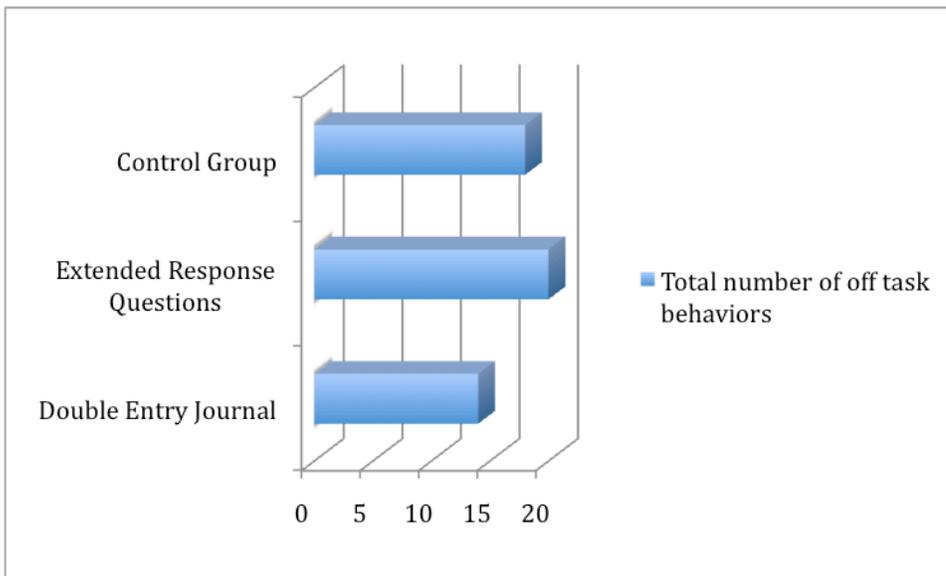


Figure 4-2 Summary of Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist by group

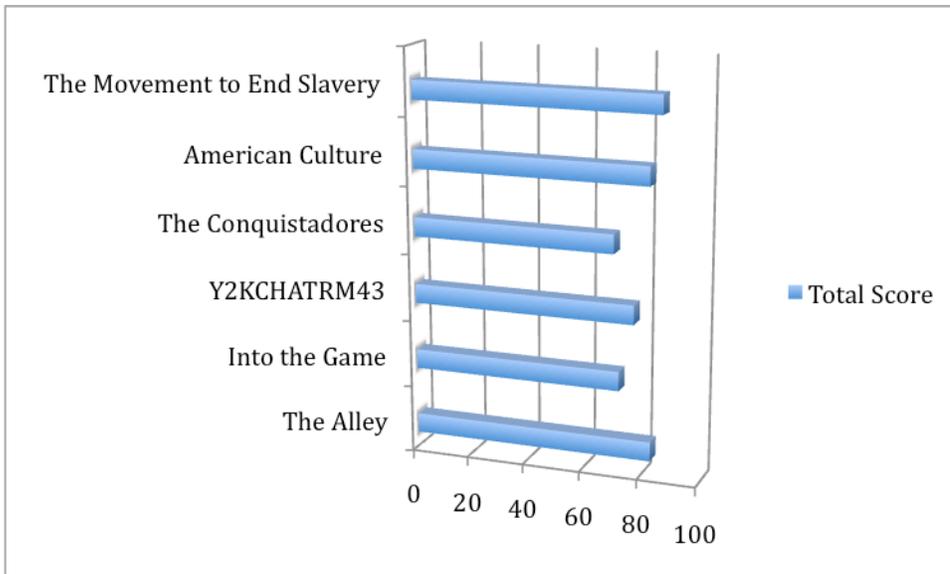


Figure 4-3 The amalgamated PAER scores separated by text

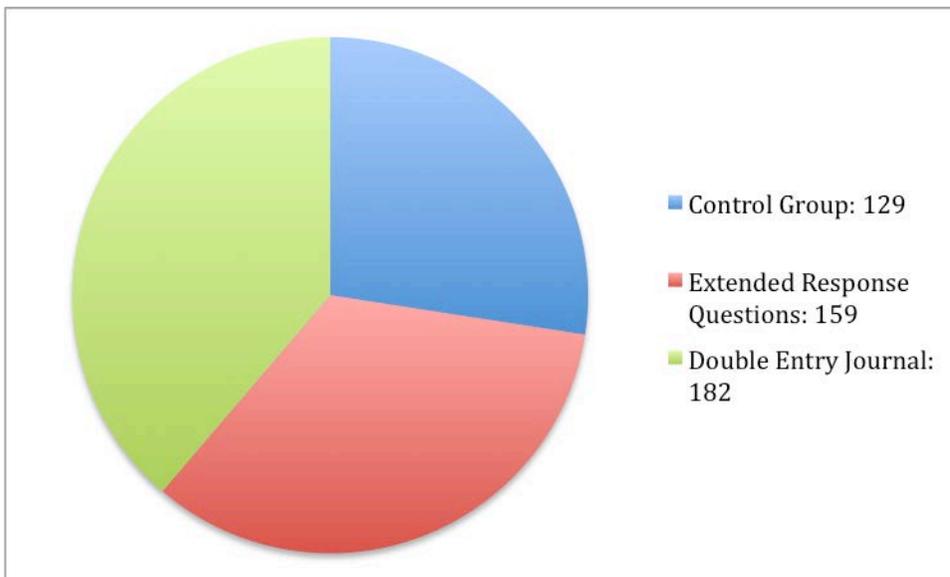


Figure 4-4 The amalgamated PAER scores separated by group

4.2.2 Reading Comprehension Instrument Results

The Reading Comprehension Instrument consisted of 10-15 multiple-choice questions for each text. Following the reading of each text, and the implementing of their respective comprehension strategies, the participants answered a set of comprehension questions. Table 4 describes the Reading Comprehension Instrument scores by text. The mean RCI score for *The Movement to End Slavery* was 91.1%, which is the highest score. The participants scoring the highest RCI score on a text about African Americans aligns with the work that many scholars have conducted that suggests that when African Americans read texts about African American people, it has an impact on their comprehension of that text (Brooks, 2006; McGinley & Kamberelis, 1996; Perney, 1976; Ramirez & Price-Williams, 1972; Redd, 1993; Smith, 1995). Brooks (2006) conducted a study with African American middle school students reading African American children's literature. Brooks posits that reading texts that connect to African Americans collective identity have an impact on the comprehension of that text.

The Alley, a narrative text, was the second highest, with a mean score of 87%. Many scholars describe narrative texts as having a consistent structure and because of that predictable structure, they believe that the comprehension of narratives is much easier than other genres (Freedle & Hale, 1979; Graesser, 1981; Graesser, Goldling, & Long, 1991; Graesser & Riha, 1984; Spiro & Taylor, 1987). Therefore, *The Alley* having the second highest RCI score supports the findings that narratives, in general, may be relatively easier to read than other genres of texts. Conversely, the text with the lowest mean score was *The Conquistadores*, an expository text, which was 73.3%. This supports what many scholars suggest, that expository texts are

more challenging than other types of texts, (Freedle & Hale, 1979; Graesser, 1981; Graesser, Goldling, & Long, 1991; Graesser & Riha, 1984; Spiro & Taylor, 1987).

Table 5 describes the Reading Comprehension scores by comprehension strategy instruction group. The group that received instruction on how to complete a double entry journal had the highest mean score of 87.1%. The mean score for the extended response group was 83.05%. The control group received the lowest mean score of 74.22%. The groups that received comprehension strategy instruction scored higher than the control group that did not receive any strategy instruction. These findings are very similar to that of Dole, Brown, and Trathen (1996). The researchers conducted a study where the participants were randomly assigned to one of the following three treatments, strategy instruction, story content instruction, and basal control instruction and they found that the strategy instruction group outperformed the other groups. Many scholars have highlighted the positive impact of comprehension strategies on the comprehension process (Block & Duffy, 2008; Dole, Brown, and Trathe, 1996; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Jiminez, Garcia, and Pearson, 1996; Graesser, 2007; NICHD, 2000).

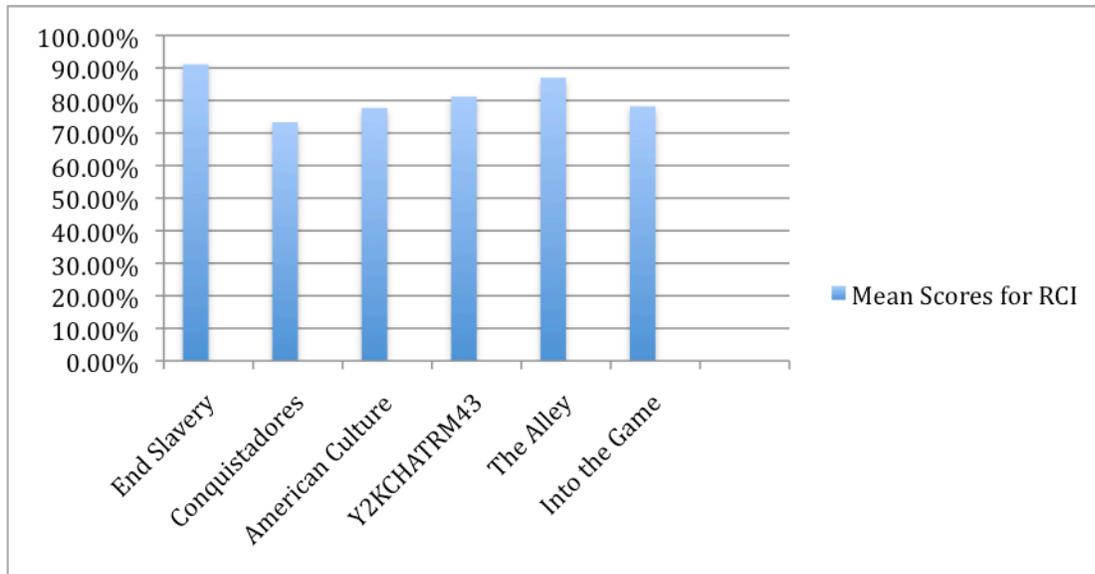


Figure 4-5 The mean scores for the Reading Comprehension Instrument by text

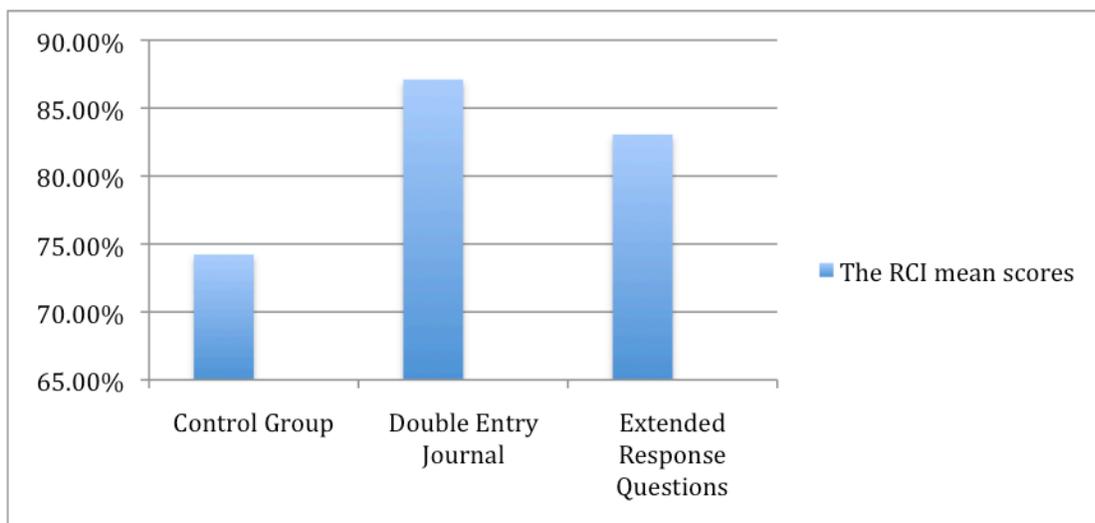


Figure 4-6 The mean scores for the Reading Comprehension Instrument by group

4.2.3 Post Survey Results

The post survey was given following the reading of each text and the completion of the PAER. The post survey required the participants to provide their opinions regarding each text. For many of the components of the survey they had to rank the items on a scale of one to five, with five being the best. There were statement such as I like the main characters, I would read in my spare time, and I enjoyed reading. Figure 4.7 shows the total score for the statements and the texts. The text that received the highest score for the statements, I like the main characters and I would read in my spare time was the narrative text, *Into the Game*. The expository texts that had the highest post survey scores were *The Movement to End Slavery*. The text with the lowest post survey score was *American Culture*. In the Smith (1995) study, the researcher found that African American students were self-selecting texts and preferred reading texts about African Americans.

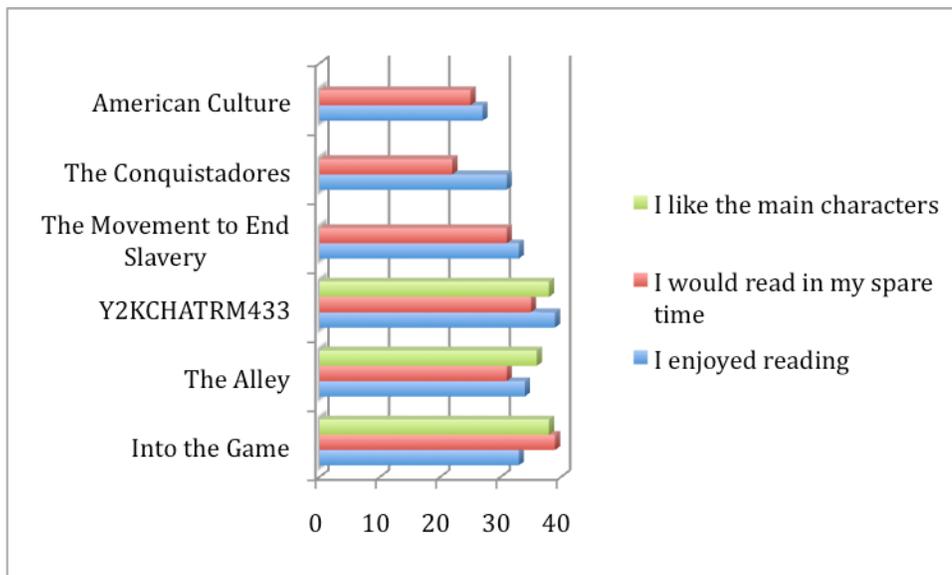


Figure 4-7 Summary of the post survey results

4.3 FINDINGS FROM ASSESSMENTS

Literacy engagement is defined as the level of cognitive involvement invested to the reading process (Guthrie, et al., 1996; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). The goal of this study was to determine the level of engagement of adolescent African American males when reading culturally relevant texts, and non-culturally relevant texts, and having received comprehension strategy instruction. Because of the complexity of engagement, the researcher used several assessments to determine the level of engagement. The assessments used to determine the level of engagement was the Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist, a modified version of the Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading, and the Reading Comprehension Instrument.

The DEJ group received instruction on how to utilize a double-entry journal, while reading. The participants in the DEJ group were expected to utilize the double entry journal, during each session. The participants in the DEJ group had the least amount of disengaged behaviors, the highest PAER score, and the highest RCI score. The control group had the lowest PAER score and the lowest RCI score. The participants in the ERQ group displayed the most disengaged behaviors. Therefore, these findings indicate that the participants in the DEJ group were the most engaged, out of the members of the control group and the extended response questions group. These findings also indicate that the control group, which did not receive any strategy instruction, seemed to be the group that the participants were the least engaged. The

participants that had the most disengaged behaviors were those that were in the ERQ group. The participants in the ERQ group received strategy instruction on how to answer comprehension questions. Questioning is the most taught comprehension strategy (Ness, 2007; Rosenshine, Meister, and Chapman,1996).

There were six texts to be read; *American Culture*, *The Movement to End Slavery*, *The Conquistadores*, *The Alley*, *Y2KCHATRM43*, *Into the Game*. Three of the texts were expository texts and the other three were narrative texts. Two of the texts were about African Americans, two were about Mexican Americans, and the other two were about European Americans. *The Movement to End Slavery*, an expository text about people that fought to end slavery in the U.S., had the highest PAER scores and the highest RCI scores. These findings indicate that the participants were the most engaged with an expository text about African American people. *The Conquistadores*, a text about Spanish soldiers and their conquests, received the lowest PAER score and RCI score. These finding suggest that the participants were the least engaged with an expository text about the conquests of Spanish soldiers.

The aforementioned findings suggest that adolescent African American males are the most engaged when reading culturally relevant texts and utilizing comprehension strategy instruction. Both comprehension strategy instruction groups were more engaged than the control group. The comprehension strategy that engaged the participants the most was the DEJ. This finding suggest that teachers/researchers should look into other areas of comprehension strategy instruction outside of questioning, which is the strategy that is the most frequently utilized in classrooms (Ness, 2007; Rosenshine, Meister, and Chapman,1996), when working with AAAM.

5.0 INTERVIEWS

All of the participants were African American males, in the 9th grade, that attended Evergreen Academy. The researcher collaborated with the dean of the boys to recruit participants for the study. Once interested parties were identified, the researcher met with the potential participants in an assembly. Following the assembly, the researcher and the dean, met with the potential parents during a parent weekend (a weekend where the parents visit the campus). During the parent weekend, the researcher explained the study and answered concerns and/or questions.

The researcher interviewed all nine of the young men in the office where the other sessions were conducted. The majority of the interviews were conducted in the evenings because the young men had a plethora of extracurricular activities. The interviews were conducted following the completion of all sessions. Each interview ranged from 15 to 25 minutes. The goal of the interview was threefold; to determine which texts they liked and disliked, to determine if the participants found the comprehension strategies helpful, and to identify what the participants read outside of school. The researcher started the interview with an icebreaker question, asking the participants where they were from. The interview questions were as follows; Which text was your favorite and why? Which text was your least favorite and why? Did you feel that the comprehension strategies were helpful? What do you read in your

spare time? In what follows, I will describe each interview and then briefly summarize the findings and connect them to the current landscape of literature.

5.1 INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

5.1.1 Anthony's Interview

Anthony is a medium height, dark complexioned young man from Rochester, New York. Out of all of the participants he was the one that was the most respectful towards me. He always responded with a yes sir or a no sir. During our informal conversations he told me that he wanted to be a pastor when he grows up. Just from being on campus, I also noticed that Anthony was a pretty good basketball player. Anthony was a member of the group that received instruction on answering the double entry journal. Anthony's favorite text was *The Movement to End Slavery* because he enjoys reading about history and where he comes from. His second favorite text was *Into the Game*. He like that text because he says when he was younger that his friends used to try to get him to talk to certain girls for them, it was something that he could relate to. His least favorite text was *Y2KCHATRM43*. He said, "it's a 7 page story just talking about this boring chat room that nobody likes." In his spare time he likes to read the Bible and other religious texts, he also likes to read sports magazines such as ESPN.

5.1.2 Braxton's Interview

Braxton is a light brown skin, average height young man with a boxy haircut, from Connecticut. He seemed to be very soft spoken and he only spoke when spoken to. When the other participant were in uniforms (navy blue blazer, white shirt, and gray slacks) Braxton was in a t-shirt and sweat pants. He always made sure that he changed his clothes as soon as he returned to the dormitory, unlike the other participants that lounged around before changing.

Braxton identified *Into the Game* as his favorite text. When speaking with him, it seemed as though he could relate to the main characters and the plot. When asked about his thoughts on the main character, he says, "he seems like someone....that I would actually hang out with." When asked about his second favorite text he indicated that it was Y2KCHATRM43 because he felt it was relatable and on a topic that he really liked, computers. Braxton responded that *The Conquistadores* was his least favorite text because it was not on a topic that was of interest to him. He indicates that his favorite author is Mike Lupica because he writes about a variety of topics such as sports and superheroes. Braxton was in the group that received instruction on answering extended response questions.

5.1.3 Karl's Interview

Karl is a medium height, dark complexioned young man with braces from Connecticut. He is very opinionated and may seem sarcastic at times. During the sessions he says things like

“some short story”, “how many more sessions”, and “this is a long story”. In many sessions, he takes several loud, deep sighs, seemingly displaying behavior as if he is very bored. Karl was in the group that received instruction on answering extended response questions. His favorite text was *Y2KCHATRM43* because he felt like it was more modern and he made a comparison to the use of the chat rooms in the story with the use of Facebook. He was able to make a connection from that passage to his world. His second favorite text was *The Movement to End Slavery*. He says that he likes learning about history, especially black history. The text that he liked the least was *American Culture*. Even though he says that he likes history, he did not like the content of *American Culture*, especially the parts about science. Karl did not feel that the extended response questions were helpful to him because he says that he implements that strategy frequently. He indicated that he does not like to do any reading in his spare time.

5.1.4 Frank’s Interview

Frank is a tall, thin, young man with braces from Boston, Massachusetts. He has a seemingly quiet nature. The only session where he appeared to be talkative was when he came with a new bracelet from his girlfriend, it was at that time that he talked excessively. Frank was in the group that received instruction on utilizing a double entry journal.

Frank’s favorite text was *The Movement to End Slavery* because it was “worth reading.” His second favorite text was *The Conquistadores*. He says, “I was able to go into the lives of the Aztecs and learn how they migrated to America....so I learned something.” His least favorite text was *Into the Game*. He felt like the text was “stupid.” He felt that the plot, guys thinking

about getting girls, was uninteresting. During our interview Frank made a strong stance against fictional texts, he found them “pointless.” He felt that he received more pertinent information from the non-fiction texts because he was learning about “real things” and “real events”. In his free time, he enjoys reading non-fiction texts and magazines about sports and music.

5.1.5 George’s Interview

George is from Brooklyn, New York, he was shorter than the other participants and I would describe him as being very opinionated. Before I began to further describe the study and clear up any misconceptions, he started the first session by asking how long the texts were and how long this (the study) was going to take. During one of the sessions we heard a car skidding loudly, George looks directly at me and says “someone should go check on it.” During another session, George comes in and is seemingly upset about something. I asked was there anything bothering him and he responded that he did not want to talk about it. During the session that we read *Into the Game*, after he finishes reading, George says, “is that it, why does it end so randomly. That was dumb....I was actually getting interested.” George was in the control group and did not receive any comprehension strategy instruction.

George identified *Into the Game* as his favorite text. He likes the text because the setting of the story takes place in New York City, his hometown. Gregory also felt that he could identify with the main characters. He says, “I see myself in those characters. But I see myself actually talking to the girl on the train. So it was kinda funny....” His second favorite text was *The Movement to End Slavery*. George enjoyed reading this text because it was a historical text

that was about African Americans. George says, “if it weren’t for these people I wouldn’t be here. I would still be a slave....” *American Culture* was his least favorite text because it was not interesting to him and he could not relate to the topic. In his free time, George enjoys reading a plethora of genres. He says he likes mysteries, urban books, biographies about famous musicians and famous athletes, and books where a teenager is the main character. He also likes to read urban magazines such as XXL, The Source, and Jet.

5.1.6 Jacob’s Interview

Jacob is a dark complexioned young man from Washington, DC. Initially, I would have described Jacob as a very quiet young man, but apparently there was another side to him. Midway through the project he was involved in an altercation in the cafeteria, where there was food involved and colorful language used. Consequently, he was confined to his dorm room and was only allowed to leave for class and to participate in this study.

Jacob’s favorite text was *The Movement to End Slavery* because he likes reading about both U.S. history and African American history and that text was a blend of both. His second favorite text was *The Alley* because it was action packed with the chasing of a thief by the main character. His least favorite text was *Y2KCHATRM43* because he felt it was boring. When asked if he likes to read in his spare time, he said that typically he does not, but when he does, he reads biographies and history books. He particularly likes *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

5.1.7 Lawrence's Interview

Lawrence is a light complexioned young man that wears glasses from Coatesville, Pennsylvania. Lawrence was probably the most articulate and verbose out of all of the participants. Right before one of the sessions, I spoke to Lawrence and he told me that he couldn't talk to me because he was having a genius moment and had to hurry up and write a poem. Lawrence was the only participant whose parents I met. Lawrence's mom is a literacy professor for a historically black university, she provided me with some insight on Lawrence and his interests. She informed me that most of his life he has attended majority white schools and they always thought that he was not capable of meeting the basic requirements of that grade level. She feels that his current school celebrates his academic ability.

When asked about his favorite text, he answered *Into the Game*. He liked it because of the language they used within the text. He said, "they had a certain vernacular, they use in everyday speak of a certain area....I really like the way they use everyday language with it in an intelligent way." Lawrence's second favorite text was Y2KCHATRM43 because he could relate to the characters and their frequent use of the computer. When asked about his least favorite text he indicated that he liked all of them, if he had to identify a text that he liked the least it was *The Movement to End Slavery*. He felt that he had a significant amount of background knowledge on that topic, therefore it was not of interest to him. In his spare time he likes to read a lot of fiction. He enjoys reading both fantasy novels and historical fiction and he likes to go onto websites and read information about video games and various aspects of the gaming culture.

5.1.8 Mario's Interview

Mario is a heavy set young man with a light brown complexion from Washington, DC. Mario was very easy to talk to and I think he may have felt a connection to me because I told him that I was from Washington, DC as well. We had a conversation about being from the DC area and we discovered that we knew some of the same people. Mario was in the control group, therefore he did not receive any comprehension strategy instruction. Out of everyone in his group, I found Mario to be one of the slower workers. He was very meticulous about his drawings and he seemed to want to get it just right. Figure 4.1 is his drawing response for the text *The Conquistadores*, it is a drawing of Cortez. As a result being so meticulous, he was the last participant in his group still working. In sessions four and five, it seemed as though he was rushing to be done. Once he realized that he was the last one working, he began writing very fast and watching the clock.



Figure 5-1 Mario's PAER drawing for the text *The Conquistadores*

When asked about which text was his favorite, he indicated that he was torn between three texts. They were the fiction texts, *The Alley*, *Into the Game*, and *Y2KCHATRM43*. He ultimately decided that his favorite text was *Into the Game*. He enjoyed reading that text because he felt as though he was in the story. Mario says,

“.....Because the way the person spoke about them, the way the author wrote the story, like it made me feel like I was actually in the story. I like the time setting it was in, it was in an older time. The author wrote some slang.”

He also indicated that he could relate to the characters because he has had times where he and his friends noticed a group of girls and the girls noticed them as well. His second favorite text was *Y2KCHATRM43* because he could relate to the teenager and his love for computers as well as the main character getting the girl at the end of the story. Mario says that his least favorite text was *The Conquistadores*. He disliked *The Conquistadores* because he is not into Spanish history and did not care about the topic. When asked about the books that he reads in his spare time he said that his favorite book is the *Invisible Man*. He likes books about mysteries and drama and described his experiences with books as a movie in his head. He says, “I kinda imagine what

happening in the book in my head. I kinda turn the book into a movie in my head.” He also likes to read books about filmmaking and screenwriting because that is what he wants to do when he grows up.

5.1.9 Matteo’s Interview

Matteo is a medium height, dark skinned young man from Queens, New York. Matteo seemed to be very quiet and always maintained a stoic expression on his face. I could never tell if he was enjoying the text or if he hated the text while reading. During one session, he arrived later than the other participants and when he entered he began talking excitedly about ordering (food) out and that took everyone’s attention away. Ordering out is a very big deal for students that live in the residence hall at this school because they regularly eat cafeteria food. It was at that time that he showed some expression and I found out what excited him.

Matteo was in the control group, therefore he did not receive comprehension strategy instruction. When asked about which text he preferred reading he said that he liked *The Alley*. Matteo thought that the text was interesting. He said, “I liked it because it was catchy and interesting. From the start it had my attention and it had a good ending.” He also felt that the main character was smart because instead of hanging with the “street kids” he hangs in the library. He said that his second favorite was *Y2KCHATRM43* because it took place in modern times. His least favorite text was *The Conquistadores* because it was very boring. When asked about the what he reads in his spare time, he said that he likes reading books in general as long as

they are interesting. He could not remember the last book that he read but he described it in detail and it was very action packed.

5.2 COMPARISON OF THE INTERVIEWS

While the participants were reading the texts, utilizing the comprehension strategies, answering the RCI questions, and completing the PAER, the researcher took anecdotal notes. The researcher also observed their behaviors while completing the aforementioned tasks.

The participants in the DEJ group (Anthony, Frank, and Jacob) all used highlighters and marked up the texts. There were times during the sessions where they referred to the reference charts on the wall. The reference charts included the use of the strategy that the researcher modeled, the example that the researcher and the participants worked on collaboratively, and the example that the participants did independently. All of the participants in the DEJ group had their methods for using the strategy. Anthony and Jacob would stop, while reading, and complete the DEJ. Frank would read the entire text and then go back and complete the DEJ. Conversely, the participants in the ERQ group also had their methods for utilizing the strategy. All of the ERQ participants (Braxton, Karl, and Lawrence) read the questions first and then read the texts.

During the DEJ instructional session, the researcher indicated that the DEJ could be used to write questions about the text and/or it could be used to make comments about the text. Andre

used the DEJ to ask questions. He would identify a quote and then ask question, regarding the quote. For example, while reading the text *The Alley* he includes the quote “He runs still carrying a book in his hand,” he then writes the question, “Why was the book so special?” Frank and Jacob used the DEJ to make comments about the texts. When reading the text, *American Culture*, Frank highlights the quote, “Early to bed, and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” He then comments, “I have heard this before but I didn’t know it was said by Benjamin Franklin.” One of Jacob’s entries in the DEJ from the text *The Alley* was “the boys were guilty in the sheriff’s eyes until proven innocent, and sometimes not even.” Jacob’s response to that quote was “That legal system is wrong for not correcting the police officers thoughts.”

Similar to the responses to the DEJ there were various responses to the ERQ. Braxton responded to the text *The Alley*. The question was; What was Cesar’s connection to the skinny boy that he was chasing? His response was; “The skinny boy was his cousin, although their fathers had disowned each other. They never officially met, but Cesar remembers him.” Karl responded to the text Y2KCHATRM43. The question was; Is Joe’s chat room helping to solve some of the world’s problems? Why or why not? Karl’s response was; “Yes. In chat room they can ask to people in the whole world question to make a better place.” Lawrence responded to the text *Into the Game*. The question was; What does the phrase ‘get into the game’ mean in this story?” He writes “The phrase get into the game means in the story to put away his fears and inhibitions and to just go for it.”

5.2.1 Text preferences

Many scholars have conducted studies within a variety of populations in the AA community, including elementary, middle school, and college students to determine their text preferences. These scholars have found that African American students prefer reading texts about African American people (McGinley & Kamberelis, 1996; Perney, 1976; Ramirez & Price-Williams, 1972; Redd, 1993; Smith, 1995).

In congruence with previous findings, the majority of the participants, seven out of nine, preferred reading the culturally relevant texts. When the participants were asked why they liked reading those texts, many of them commented on how relatable the characters were or they commented that they like learning about Black history because it is their history. This is very similar to Redd's (1993) study where he discusses the impact of texts about African American people on African American college students. He found that upon the completion of reading a textbook about the African American experience, the students indicated that they enjoyed reading the textbook and they enjoyed learning about the African American experience because they could relate to it. The bulk of the participants, seven out of nine, also indicated that the non-culturally relevant texts were their least favorite to read. That is very similar to Smith's (1995) study where she found that African American students were self-selecting texts about African American people and they were enthusiastic about reading them and that same enthusiasm was not displayed when the students were reading non-culturally relevant texts.

Most of the participants, six out of nine, identified a narrative text as their favorite. When the participants were asked about their least favorite text to read, the majority, six out of nine, mentioned that expository texts were their least favorite to read. These findings coincide

with the findings of many scholars that suggest that narrative texts are seemingly easier to read than expository texts, therefore many readers may be drawn to narrative texts rather than other genres (Beck, McKeown, & Gromoll, 1989; Freedle & Hale, 1979; Graesser, 1981; Graesser & Bertus, 1998; Graesser, Goldling, and Long, 1991; Graesser & Riha, 1984; Hayes, 2009; Pitcher, 2010; Snow and Sweet, 2003; Spiro & Taylor, 1987; Unsworth, 1999; Vacca & Vacca, 2002). Beck, McKeown, and Gromoll (1989), conducted an analysis of Social Studies texts and found several issues that would impede comprehension, including irrelevant comparisons, unstated connections of text to the main idea(s) thus requiring inferences, and multiple concepts introduced using too few words. Snow and Sweet (2003) also found that expository texts were ill structured and poorly written. They found that the texts omit pertinent information and require the reader to access unavailable background knowledge required for the comprehension process.

5.2.2 Comprehension Strategies

There has been significant research that suggest that instruction in reading comprehension strategies has improved reading comprehension (Block & Duffy, 2008; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Gajra, Jitendra, Sood, & Sacks, 2007; Graesser, 2007; NICHD, 2000). The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) conducted a report on the teaching of reading. The report reviews several years of research on comprehension strategies used in the instruction of reading. The report emphasizes seven strategies that have proven, through research, to improve reading comprehension. Those strategies are summarization, question answering,

question generation, story structure, comprehension monitoring, graphic and semantic organizers, and cooperative learning.

The bulk of the participants, four out of six, felt that the comprehension strategies were beneficial. These findings support that of many scholars that have highlighted the positive impact of comprehension strategies on comprehension (Block & Duffy, 2008; Dole, Brown, and Trathe, 1996; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Jiminez, Garcia, and Pearson, 1996; Graesser, 2007; NICHD, 2000). Jiminez, Garcia, and Pearson (1996) conducted a study that sought to understand strategies that were employed by bilingual Latino/a students that were considered successful English readers. The researchers found that the participants felt that comprehension strategies were beneficial and they independently utilized them without any prompting from their teachers.

All of the participants that were in the Double Entry Journal group indicated that the comprehension strategy was helpful, because it helped them to think about the material further. Tatum (2008) had a similar finding when he interviewed a sixteen-year-old African American male, deemed a struggling reader, over a period of ten months. The participant read books, articles, newspaper clippings and speeches that Tatum recommended. The researcher found that the participant was meaningfully engaged with several of the texts. He was engaged because the content encouraged him to think about the material further and eventually he began to connect the material to his personal experiences. Tatum's study illustrates how critical it is for African American males to be encouraged to think critically about the content of the texts they are reading.

One of the participants in the Extended Response Questions group felt that answering questions after reading was helpful because it helps to remember items that he may forget had he

not answered the questions. The other two that were in the ERQ group did not feel that it was beneficial because as one indicated, he has been answering questions after he reads in school for a long time and he does not find it helpful. That participant mentions what many scholars have discussed, that questioning is the most used comprehension strategy within the classroom (Ness, 2007; Rosenshine, Meister, and Chapman, 1996).

5.2.3 Out of school reading

Most of the participants enjoy reading action packed, fictional series with teenagers as the main characters. They like following the adventures of the main characters for a long period time. These findings are very similar to that of Farris, Werderich, Nelson, and Fuhler (2009). They found in their study of males, that they enjoy reading a series of books where the character goes through various scenarios. There was a wide variety of other books that they enjoyed reading such as mysteries, science fiction, biographies/autobiographies and the bible. The participants also noted that they read magazines about sports, such as ESPN, and magazines about music, such as XXL and The Source. Some of the other forms of literacy that were mentioned were websites, on video games.

5.3 FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS

The researchers interviewed nine adolescent African American males in the ninth grade. All of the young men were seemingly candid in their responses. The findings of these interviews support what the scholars in the field of literacy have to say about the text preferences of African American readers, the type of genres that many prefer reading, and the use of comprehension strategy instruction. The majority of the young men mentioned that they preferred reading the texts about African Americans over the texts that were not about African Americans. Several scholars have found that African Americans prefer reading texts about people that look like them and that share similar experiences to themselves (McGinley & Kamberelis, 1996; Perney, 1976; Ramirez & Price-Williams, 1972; Redd, 1993; Smith, 1995).

The majority of the participants preferred reading the narrative texts over the expository texts. Some even described the narrative texts as interesting and the expository texts as boring. Many scholars have suggested that narrative texts are written in a predictable structure and expository texts have various structures, therefore some may prefer reading narrative texts rather than expository texts (Beck, McKeown, & Gromoll, 1989; Freedle & Hale, 1979; Graesser, 1981; Graesser & Bertus, 1998; Graesser, Goldling, and Long, 1991; Graesser & Riha, 1984; Hayes, 2009; Pitcher, 2010; Snow and Sweet, 2003; Spiro & Taylor, 1987; Unsworth, 1999; Vacca & Vacca, 2002).

When the participants in this study were asked about the text they read outside of school they discussed a wide variety of texts that ranged from expository to narrative, from texts about African Americans to texts that were not about African Americans. They liked narrative texts

such as mysteries and urban novels and they liked expository texts such as biographies and autobiographies. They even mentioned websites and magazines that they enjoyed reading. Even though these findings are aligned with what many scholars have found, this study is unique because the researcher seeks to gain a better understanding of AAAM.

6.0 DISCUSSION

As an adolescent in the DC Public School system I struggled with staying interested with the content being taught in my Language Arts/English classes. There was very little literature that I was exposed to, in a classroom setting, that reflected me. The content that we were reading did not reflect me physically or culturally. Therefore, I became disengaged. I was not motivated to read the texts assigned to us for homework and I was not motivated to participate in class discussions. As a result, my grades began to suffer. On one hand, the teachers communicated to my parents that I did not like to read and I refused to participate in the in-class activities. On the other hand, I was a voracious reader at home. I read many books and magazines about various black experiences. I was very interested in reading about slavery and the civil rights movement. I was also interested in reading biographies and autobiographies about African Americans that persevered despite the odds against them. With that said, I still struggled as an adolescent to motivate myself to be interested in texts that were of no relevance to me. At that time, I felt that the teachers did not care enough about me to even attempt to make our time in their classroom more engaging.

As an adult, I occasionally reflect on those times of my adolescence and being disengaged in my Language Arts/English classes, despite my love for reading and learning.

Interestingly, there was a time in my career, as a teacher, where I was faced with this issue head on. The school where I taught, and served on the leadership team, was a K-5 elementary school for many years. The district faced many changes and they realigned our school, in one year, from a K-5 to a K-8 school. We were now faced with a group of disgruntled middle school students that were confused and outraged because they were returning to their elementary school. The group within the middle school that confounded us the most were the young men, and all of them were African American. Our primary issue was that they were disengaged. The standard curriculum materials were not engaging, therefore it forced the educators to think outside of the box. The abovementioned phenomena had a tremendous impact on me as a researcher. In what follows I will address the individual research questions, the implications of these findings for both culturally relevant texts and comprehension strategy instruction for AAAM, the implications for teachers and administrators, and the limitations to this study.

6.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

6.1.1 Engagement and culturally relevant texts

- To what extent is a selected “culturally relevant” text about African Americans engaging for African American adolescent males?
- To what extent are “non-culturally relevant texts” engaging for African American adolescent males?

Literacy engagement is defined as the level of cognitive involvement invested to the reading process (Guthrie, et al., 1996; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). One of the goals of this study was to determine the type of texts that would increase the literacy engagement of adolescent African American males. Particularly focusing on “culturally relevant texts”. Gloria Ladson Billings (1994) coined the term “culturally relevant teaching”. She defines it as “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural and historical referents to convey knowledge....” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 13). The texts that are utilized with culturally relevant teaching are culturally relevant texts. Sharroky Hollie (2012) describes them;

“culturally specific texts that authentically illuminate the experience of the group culturally and not racially. The text realistically taps in the norms, mores, traditions, customs, and beliefs of the culture in focus. There may be a stress on the history of racial discrimination and strife, the struggle for freedom, and an emphasis on racial or cultural pride” (p. 86).

The participants in this study read two culturally relevant texts. They read *Into the Game*, a narrative text about young men navigating the world of girls and their first employment opportunity. They also read *The Movement to End Slavery*, an expository text about enslaved Africans and abolitionist that fought to end slavery.

The findings indicate that *The Movement to End Slavery*, had the highest PAER and the highest RCI score. In the post survey categories, I like the main characters and I would read in my spare time, the text *Into the Game*, a culturally relevant text, had the highest score out of the other texts that the participants read.

The Silent Reading Behaviors Checklist was used while the participants were reading and implementing the comprehension strategies. The goal of the checklist was to determine the disengaged behaviors while reading. *Y2KCHATRM43* had the most disengaged behaviors, which means that while reading, the students displayed behaviors such as talking and looking around the room. *The Alley*, a text about a young adolescent Mexican American male that witnesses a purse being snatched and decides to do something about it, had the least amount of disengaged behaviors out of the three narrative texts.

6.1.2 Comprehension strategy support

- Do students who use selected comprehension strategies have better understanding of text content than students who do not use the comprehension strategies to support text reading?

- Which selected comprehension strategy support increased literacy engagement?

There has been significant research that suggest that instruction in reading comprehension strategies has improved reading comprehension (Block & Duffy, 2008; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Gajra, Jitendra, Sood, & Sacks, 2007; Graesser, 2007; NICHD, 2000). The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) conducted a report on the teaching of reading. The report reviews several years of research on comprehension strategies used in reading. The report emphasizes seven strategies that have proven, through research, to improve reading comprehension. Those strategies are summarization, question answering, question generation, story structure, comprehension monitoring, graphic and semantic organizers, and cooperative learning.

This study takes a further look into two comprehension strategies, extended response questions and double entry journals. Extended response questions are comprehension questions that are designed to be answered following the reading of the passage. Questioning has been found to be one of the most popular strategies employed by content area teachers (Ness, 2007; Rosenshine, Meister, and Chapman,1996). Double entry journals are designed to be utilized while the reader is reading. The expectation is that when the reader identifies a quote from the passage that stands out or sparks interest, the reader writes that down one side of the DEJ and on the other side the reader is expected to either write a comment or a question about the quote.

The results indicate that the DEJ group displayed the least amount of off task behaviors. Therefore, they displayed very few behaviors such as talking, flipping pages and not reading, and being out of seat. The highest PAER score was from the members of the DEJ group and the lowest PAER score was from the control group. Thus indicating that the participants in the DEJ group were the most engaged out of the other two groups. The results also indicate that the

participants in the DEJ group had the highest RCI score. The group that had the lowest RCI was the participants in the control group. These findings suggest that those participants that utilized the comprehension strategies had a better understanding of text content than those that did not receive comprehension strategy instruction.

6.2 CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEXTS

Many scholars have suggested that the most successful students are those that are aware of their collective identity (Al-Hazza, T.C. & Bucher, 2008; Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006; Asante, 1992; Chavous et al., 2003; Hilliard, 1992; Nobles, 1990; Sizemore, 1988; Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, & Seay, 1999; Taylor, Harris, Pearson, & Garcia, 1995; Thomas, Townsend, & Belgrave, 2003; Zirkel, 2006). A very interesting find in this study was that the text *The Movement to End Slavery* elicited the highest PAER score and the highest RCI score. Many scholars have indicated that expository texts are much more challenging to read than narrative texts (Beck, McKeown, & Gromoll, 1989; Hayes, 2009; Snow and Sweet, 2003; Unsworth, 1999; Vacca & Vacca, 2002). They have found that many expository texts are ill structured and poorly written, omit pertinent information, and require the reader to access unavailable background knowledge required for the comprehension process (Beck, McKeown, & Gromoll, 1989; Snow and Sweet, 2003). Even with these finding, the participants in this study

scored their highest score on an expository text about people fighting for the freedom of enslaved Africans.

6.2.1 Implications for teachers

The implications of these findings suggest that teachers should infuse culturally relevant texts into their practice. When selecting culturally relevant texts, the educators should use some guidelines. Figure 3.1 is a rubric designed by Heflin and Barksdale-Ladd (2001) for selecting culturally relevant text. This rubric consists of guidelines that encourage the educator to look beyond the text simply having African American characters and the implication that the text is about the African American experience. The rubric contains components such as, character portrayal, language use, illustration authenticity and information accuracy.

Often times, due to the mandates of the school district, teachers have to follow the curriculum materials and maintain the pacing guidelines established by district administrators. With that said, there are still several strategies that can be incorporated to include culturally relevant texts into daily instruction. Teachers should have an array of culturally relevant texts accessible to students within the classroom, thus allowing the students to read them during their down time. In addition, daily instruction often falls under the umbrella of a larger themed unit. Consequently, teachers can align culturally relevant texts with the theme that is being taught, therefore maintaining the pace while incorporating culturally relevant texts into their practice. Another strategy is to use culturally relevant texts to introduce concepts, hence allowing them to see people that look like themselves to aide in building on concepts that they are familiar with.

In addition, culturally relevant texts can be use to clarify concepts that may appear to be confusing, thus building a bridge between the knowledge that they know and connecting it to the knowledge that they need to know in order to be successful in school.

6.3 COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

There have been several scholars that have designed models of the reading process on the premise that reading is an interactive process (Goodman, 1967; Just & Carpenter, 1980; Van den Broek, Young, Tzeng, and Linderholm, 1998). Van den Broek, Young, Tzeng, and Linderholm (1998) in their Landscape Model of Reading view reading as an ongoing interaction between the reader and the text. They posit that there are a series of activations that occur during reading. One source of activation is the text currently being read and the reader grappling with the immediacy of that text. A second source of activation occurs when the reader is grappling with the information in the current cycle and attempting to integrate that knowledge with the information from the preceding cycle. The third source consists of reactivating concepts in the very first cycle attempting to carry over so that the connections are constantly being made. The fourth cycle is the reader activating his/her own prior knowledge. This model of reading is based on the theory that the reader is interacting with the texts and attempting to constantly make connections while reading.

Out of the two comprehension strategies, the DEJ is seemingly the one that is the most interactive. One of the objectives of the DEJ is to have the reader jots down ideas and concepts that the reader finds interesting or that they want to know more about while reading, thus encouraging the reader interact with the text. The participants in the DEJ group were more engaged and they had the highest comprehension scores. Conversely, the ERQ is designed to have the reader implement the strategy after the text is read. There was a very interesting find in this study, even though the ERQ was designed to be utilize after reading the text in its entirety, at one point in the study all of the participants in the ERQ group read the questions first and answered the questions while reading the passage. Therefore, transforming the strategy to an interactive strategy by answering the questions as they read. Perhaps literacy educators should consider making literacy instruction more interactive, which may increase the engagement of the learner.

6.3.1 Implications for teachers

The findings suggest that out of the three groups of students, those who received strategy instruction were more engaged and they had the highest comprehension scores. The comprehension strategy instruction group that was the most engaged and had the highest comprehension scores was the group that received instruction on the Double Entry Journal. These students were seemingly more engaged and understood more text content than the other groups. All of the participants in the DEJ group indicated that they liked using the DEJ because it pushed them to think about concepts further. In addition, this strategy can be used as a

comprehension tool and as an informal assessment, determining the knowledge gained and any misconceptions that the students may have regarding the text read (Gomez & Gomez, 2007). As a result, teachers should consider embedding comprehension strategy instruction routinely. In particular, including a double-entry journal, which encourages the reader to interact with the text while reading.

6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR ADMINISTRATORS

The results of this study suggest that students are more engaged with texts that reflect their culture and they are more engaged when utilizing comprehension strategies. Therefore, when administrators are choosing curriculum materials for their district, they should ensure that the materials reflect the population they are serving. The curriculum materials should contain pictures that reflect the population and it should contain content that reflects their cultural beliefs and norms. There should also be professional development that demonstrates, to the teachers, how to select appropriate culturally relevant texts that aligns with the curriculum. In addition, there should be professional development that demonstrates to teachers how to infuse comprehension strategies into their daily practice.

As a result of the complexity of engagement there were several ways that the participants were assessed. They took a traditional comprehension assessment that included questions and a

selection of multiple-choice answers. They also wrote a summary about the text and drew a picture. The participants being able to represent their knowledge through comprehension questions, summary, and a drawing, provided them with several opportunities to display their experience with the text. Some of the participants performed better with the traditional questions and answers, while others performed better with the drawing, and there were some that performed better writing a summary. With that said, perhaps taking a look at a variety of assessments will allow the teachers to glean a better understanding as to what knowledge the student walked away with after reading that text.

6.5 LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

There were a few limitations to this study. The sample size (9 participants) is a very small size to draw any significant conclusions. In addition, the institution that allowed me to work with their students would not provide me with any background data such as grades or scores on formative and/or summative assessments. As a result, I could not gauge the reading ability levels of each participant. This information would have been taken into consideration and compared to the results of the RCI and the PAER.

For future research I want to take this study and replicate it with a larger sample size. Another study that I would like to conduct is a study that interviews “successful” African American men and discuss with them their literacy practices today and when they were an adolescent. Sharroky Hollie (2012) describes four components of culturally responsive teaching;

validation, affirmation, build, and bridge. During the “validation” and “affirmation” stage the teacher is acknowledging the student for who they are and praising them for their uniqueness. During the “build” stage, the teacher is building on the knowledge that the student already has. During the “bridge” stage, the teacher is connecting the student’s knowledge to what they need to know in order to be successful in school and in mainstream society. I would like my research agenda to be focused on the “bridgework.” Ideally, I would like to conduct studies that provide teachers with a cadre of strategies that have proven to be successful with underserved students, particularly African American males.

6.6 SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

Statistics suggests that AAAM’s are struggling in many academic areas (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Ebersole & Kapp, 2007; Grant, 1992; Harry & Klinger, 2006; Kunjufu, 2005; Pitre, Lewis, & Hilton-Pitre, 2007; Serwatka, Deering, & Grant, 1995; Wynn, 2007). Educators could provide more support for these students. In particular, finding ways to engage this population is very critical. If we could find ways to build a bridge from their already existing background knowledge to the knowledge that they need to successfully matriculate beyond high school, it may address some of the areas in which they are struggling. Culturally relevant texts and comprehension strategies are only a fraction of the ways in which we can best support this population.

APPENDIX A

CONSENT TO ACT AS A PARTICIPANT IN A RESEARCH STUDY



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CONSENT TO ACT AS A PARTICIPANT IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE: The role of comprehension strategy instruction and culturally relevant texts on the literacy engagement of adolescent African American males.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

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Why is this research being done?

Your son is being asked to participate in a research study. This study will use different texts to determine if the readers have a better understanding of texts that they are seemingly more familiar with. The study will also test two strategies to determine which strategy helps the reader understand the text better. After reading each text they will take a series of assessments to determine the knowledge gained from reading the text and their interest level in the text.

Who is being asked to take part in this research study?

Your son is being invited to take part in this research study because he is an adolescent African American male.

What procedures will be performed for research purposes?

The participants will be divided into three groups. Group 1, the control group, will read six texts and will not receive any additional instruction. Group 2 will read all six texts but they will receive instruction on utilizing a double-entry journal while reading. A double entry journal is a journal that has two sides. On one side the reader will write down something that they found interesting from the text, and on the other side they will write why that was particularly interesting to them. Group 3 will read all six texts and receive instruction on how to answer extended response questions. Extended response questions are open-ended questions that are answered after reading the passage.

All of the groups will meet with me at different times. The participants in groups two and three will meet with me a total of seven times. The first time will be to teach the strategy that they are to implement while reading. The other six will be to read a text per session and complete all tasks related to the text. The participants in group one will meet for only six sessions because they are not receiving instruction. They will read a text per session, and complete all related tasks. Each session will last approximately 30-45 minutes. The principal investigator, Russell Patterson, will be conducting all of the sessions. The sessions will be held in a classroom at Pine Forge Academy during afterschool hours. If the program extends to the summer months, the sessions will occur following the instruction they receive in the summer enrichment program. There will be 6 participants in each session. The participants will be working individually in their respective groups. Prior to reading each text, all participants will take a pre-assessment to determine the knowledge that they have about that topic.

The participants will be reading 3 fiction texts, from a book of short stories geared towards adolescents, and 3 non-fiction texts, that were taken from a traditional social studies textbook. Two of the texts will be about European Americans, 2 of the texts will be about Mexican Americans, and the other 2 will be about African Americans.

The participants will be reading silently in a group. I will be observing them while they are reading. During the observations I will be looking to see how interested/disinterested they are in the text. After reading the text, they will be answering a series of questions related to the text. The participants will also draw a picture and write a summary about the text.

After completing the readings and all related tasks, the participants will participate in an interview conducted by the principal investigator. The interview will only be conducted once. During the interview, the principal investigator will be asking questions such as which text they preferred reading and if they felt the methods learned were beneficial. The interviews will be conducted individually and will last approximately 15-25 minutes.

What are possible benefits from taking part in this study?

Your son may not receive a direct benefit from this study, however, he may acquire some strategies that will help him better understand what he reads in the future.

Will my son be paid if he participates in this research study?

Your son will not be paid for his participation in this study.

Who will know about my son's participation in this research study?

Any information about your son obtained from this research will be kept as confidential (private) as possible. Dean Jaime Pottinger will be responsible for collecting all consent forms and he will have knowledge of all that are participating in the study. All records related to your son's involvement in this research study will be stored in a locked file cabinet. Your son's identity on these records will be indicated by a pseudonym rather than by his name, and the information linking these pseudonyms with your son's identity will be kept separate from the research records. Your son will not be identified by name in any publication of the research results.

Who will have access to identifiable information related to my participation in this research study?

In addition to the principal investigator listed on the first page of this authorization (consent) form and their research staff, the following individuals will or may have access to identifiable information related to your participation in this research study:

Authorized representatives of the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office may review your son's identifiable research information for the purpose of monitoring the appropriate conduct of this research study.

In unusual cases, the investigators may be required to release identifiable information related to your son's participation in this research study in response to an order from a court of law. If the investigators learn that your son or someone with whom you are involved is in serious danger or potential harm, they will need to inform, as required by Pennsylvania law, the appropriate agencies.

For how long will the investigators be permitted to use and disclose identifiable information related to my son's participation in this research study?

The investigators may continue to use and disclose, for the purposes described above, identifiable information related to your son's participation in this research study for a minimum of seven years after final reporting or publication of a project.

Is my participation in this research study voluntary?

Your son's participation in this research study, to include the use of your identifiable information for the purposes described above, is completely voluntary. Whether or not you provide consent for participation in this research study will have no effect on you or your son's current or future relationship with the University of Pittsburgh. Whether or not your son participates in this study will have no impact on his relationship with his school, teachers, or course grades.

May I withdraw, at a future date, consent for participation in this research study?

You may withdraw at any time, your consent for participation in this research study, to include the use and disclosure of your son's identifiable information for the purposes described above. In addition, your son may decide to discontinue the study at any time. Any identifiable information recorded for, or resulting from, your son's participation in this research study prior to the date that you or your son formally withdrew your consent may continue to be used and disclosed by the investigators for the purposes described above.

To formally withdraw your consent for participation in this research study you should provide a written and dated notice of this decision to the principal investigator of this research study at the address listed on the first page of this form. Your decision to withdraw your consent for participation in this research study will have no effect on your current or future relationship with the University of Pittsburgh.

If I agree to take part in this research study, can I be removed from the study without my consent?

It is possible that your son may be removed from the research study by the researchers if, for example, your son shows disinterest in the study or is being disruptive and making it difficult for others that are participating in the study.

What are the possible risks of participating in this research study?

While reading, the participants may feel some frustration/embarrassment if they are unfamiliar with some of the words in the text. I will be there to support the participants if there are words that they are unfamiliar with. When collecting data, there is the risk of breaching confidentiality. All data collected will be in a locked cabinet and pseudonyms will be on all documents to protect the participant's identity.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT/ PARENTAL CERTIFICATION
(For participants under age 18)**

The above information has been explained to me and all of my current questions have been answered. I understand that I am encouraged to ask questions about any aspect of this research study during the course of this study, and that such future questions will be answered by a qualified individual or by the investigator(s) listed on the first page of this consent document at the telephone number(s) given. I understand that I may always request that my questions, concerns or complaints be addressed by a listed investigator.

I understand that I may contact the Human Subjects Protection Advocate of the IRB Office, University of Pittsburgh (1-866-212-2668) to discuss problems, concerns, and questions; obtain information; offer input; or discuss situations in the event that the research team is unavailable.

By signing this form, I agree for my child to participate in this research study. A copy of this consent form will be given to me/my child.

Printed Name of Child-Subject

I understand that, as a minor (age less than 18 years), the above-named child is not permitted to participate in this research study without my consent. Therefore, by signing this form, I give my consent for his/her participation in this research study.

Legal Guardian's Name (Print)

Relationship to Participant (Child)

Legal Guardian Signature

Date

CHILD ASSENT

This research has been explained to me, and I agree to participate.

Signature of Child-Subject

Date

Printed Name of Child-Subject

CERTIFICATION of INFORMED CONSENT

I certify that I have explained the nature and purpose of this research study to the above-named individual(s), and I have discussed the potential benefits and possible risks of study participation. Any questions the individual(s) have about this study have been answered, and we will always be available to address future questions as they arise. I further certify that no research component of this protocol was begun until after this consent form was signed.

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Role in Research Study

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

APPENDIX B

TEXTS READ BY PARTICIPANTS

AMERICAN CULTURE

Night after night in 1610 Italian scientist Galileo Galilei looked up at the night sky. People had long believed that Earth was the center of the universe. Galileo, however, began to doubt this idea. He used his newly built telescope to view Jupiter and observed small moons around this planet. This discovery told him that not everything in the universe moved around Earth. Other scientists began to share Galileo's views. They thought that many other ideas about the natural world also needed to be considered.

New Ideas in Europe

During the 1600s Western Europeans began to re-examine their world. As scientists performed more experiments, they made exciting discoveries. Scientists began to better understand the basic laws that govern nature. Their new ideas about the universe began what is known as the Scientific Revolution. This revolution began in mathematics and astronomy, but it later changed all areas of natural science.

Galileo Galilei was one of the leading figures in the Scientific Revolution. He demonstrated that the planets revolved around the Sun. In the late 1600s Sir Isaac Newton explained how objects on earth and in the sky behaved. His theories proved that the same laws of physics govern both. He also developed much of the scientific method used today. The scientific method requires that scientists carefully study natural events. Scientists then test their theories as they learn new facts.

The Scientific Revolution also began changing the way people viewed human actions. This change in thought is often called the Age of Reason, or the

Enlightenment. The Enlightenment took place during the 1700s. Enlightenment philosophers used reason and logic, much as scientists were doing. These thinkers, however, studied human nature and suggested ways to improve their world. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (roo-SOH), Voltaire, and Baron de Montesquieu (mohn-tes-kyoo) all formed ideas about how government should work to best serve the people.

Some Enlightenment thinkers believed that there was a social contract between government and citizens. With this contract, rulers needed the consent of the governed. Philosophers such as John Locke believed that people had natural rights such as equality and liberty. Locke stated that people should obey their rulers only if the state protected their life, liberty, and property. Eventually the ideas of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment began to influence some colonial leaders.

Colonial Education

In the colonies few people could afford a formal education. The availability of schooling also varied widely in the colonies. For example, there were more schools in New England than in the southern and middle colonies. New England colonists particularly valued the ability to read the Bible. They also wanted to make sure future generations had educated ministers. Therefore, communities founded and paid for town schools. Schoolchildren often used the *New England Primer*, which had characters and stories from the Bible. They learned to read at the same time that they learned about the community's religious values. In the middle and southern colonies, most children lived far from towns. They had to be taught by their parents or private tutors.

Most colonial children stopped their education after the elementary grades. Many went to work, either on the family farm or away from home. Some boys became apprentices. In New England and in the middle colonies, some girls became servants for other families.

A growing number of young men did attend universities. In 1636 colonists in Massachusetts founded Harvard College. Colonists went on to establish nine colleges, most of which were in the middle colonies and in New England. The classes at many of these colleges focused on religion. Some young men also went to English universities to study the sciences or law. Others studied at a colonial college and then trained with a professional in their field.

Benjamin Franklin

Perhaps the most famous colonial scientist was Benjamin Franklin. A man with many interests, Franklin was one of the most important thinkers of his time. He was born in Boston in 1706 and worked first in his father's candle and soap

shop. Later he became an apprentice in his brother's printing shop. In 1723 Franklin moved to Philadelphia. In his mid-20s he started a newspaper, which quickly became the most successful paper in the colonies. Franklin published *Poor Richards Almanack* between 1732 and 1757. He wrote the almanac under the made up name of Richard Saunders. Franklin came up with sayings that are still used today, including "Early to Bed, and early to rise makes a Man healthy, wealthy, and wise." Poor Richard offered much additional advice.

"If you would be wealthy, think of Saving as well as of Getting: The Indies have not made Spain rich, because her Outgoes [expenses] are greater than her incomes."

--Poor Richard (Benjamin Franklin), quoted in Anthology of American Literature, Volume 1, 2nd edition

Franklin believed that reason could be used to make life better for people. During his life he invented many useful devices. The lightning rod reduced the risk of fire started by electrical storms. The Franklin stove heated homes better than previous stoves had. Franklin also invented bifocals, eyeglasses with lenses that correct for both far- and nearsightedness. Franklin once said he was "glad of an opportunity to serve others" through his inventions. He did not take out patents on his work because he wanted all people to benefit from his good ideas.

Franklin also conducted many scientific experiments. He flew a kite during a thunderstorm in 1752 as an experiment to prove lightning is a form of electricity. He also found the positive and negative charges in electricity. These discoveries made him well known in the colonies and in Europe.

The Conquistadores

During the Reconquista there was constant warfare in Spain, creating a class of Spanish warriors that had little land or money. After the Reconquista these soldiers lacked work. Military leader Hernan Cortes explained the problem. "Since this harsh land will yield us no living, we must rely on our swords and lances. For the same reason, we must move on." In the 1500s many Spanish soldiers chose to "move on" to the Americas to seek their fortunes.

Cortes and the Aztecs

Conquistadores (kahn-kees-tuh-DAWR-eez) were Spanish soldiers who led military expeditions in the Americas. The governor of Cuba sent conquistador Hernan Cortes to present-day Mexico in 1519. Cortes heard stories of a wealthy land to the west ruled by a king named Moctezuma II (mawk-tay-SOO-mah). "I decided to go and see him [Moctezuma] wherever he might be," wrote Cortes. "I would take him alive in chains or make him subject to [the King of Spain]." To prevent his soldiers from turning back, Cortes ordered their ships sunk. He then marched inland in search of Moctezuma and riches.

Moctezuma's kingdom was the Aztec Empire. The Aztec ruled several million people and had a rich civilization. They had thousands of warriors. In contrast, Cortes had only about 600 soldiers, 16 horses, and some guns. Cortes hoped that his superior weapons would bring him victory. In addition, the Aztec had never before seen horses and found them frightening. "These 'horses'....make a loud noise when they run...as if stones were raining on the earth," Aztec messengers told Moctezuma. Cortes received help from an American Indian woman named Malintzin (mah-LINT-suhn), also known as Malinche. She acted as an interpreter and advised him about the Aztec and their many enemies. These enemies allied with Cortes against the Aztec.

Moctezuma sent Cortes gifts of gold and other valuables, hoping to keep him away from the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan. These signs of great wealth only encouraged Cortes. He and his men arrived in the capital in November 1519. Conquistador Bernal Diaz recorded his first impressions of the city, which sat in the middle of a great lake.

"We were astounded [amazed]. These great towns and temples and buildings rising from the water, all made of stone, seemed like an enchanted vision."

--Bernal Diaz, quoted in *Cortes and the Downfall of the Aztec Empire*, by Jon Manchip White

Moctezuma was friendly to the Spanish, but Cortes was suspicious and took him prisoner. While Cortes was away, the Aztec rebelled and took back their city. The outnumbered Spanish who remained in the city fought their way out with heavy losses. Moctezuma was wounded during the battle and died soon after. Refusing to accept defeat, Cortes returned and fought the Aztec for several months. He then gathered thousands of soldiers from other American Indian groups and built a small fleet armed with cannons. This army attacked Tenochtitlan again. After three weeks of fighting, the city lay in ruins.

Other Aztec towns soon fell to Cortes as well. The Aztec also suffered terribly from diseases that the Spanish introduced to Mexico. Illnesses

such as smallpox caused hundreds of thousands of deaths in a very short time, hastening the fall of the Aztec Empire.

Pizarro's Conquest of the Inca

Cortes had conquered a territory larger than Spain. His success brought him fame back home and inspired other conquistadores. Among these was Francisco Pizarro (pee-SAHR-roh), who had traveled with the explorer Nunez de Balboa. Pizarro heard rumors of golden cities in the mountains of South America . In late 1531 Pizarro landed with a small army on the coast of what is now Peru. After marching for several weeks, he reached the Inca Empire.

The Inca ruled a huge region that stretched from present-day Chile to Colombia. The Incan ruler, **Atahualpa** (ah-tauh-WAHL-pauh), heard about the Spanish invaders, but he was not worried. Fewer than 200 strangers did not seem much of a threat. Like the Aztec, however, the Inca had no weapons to match the conquistadores' swords and guns. The Inca had also been weakened by smallpox, which had killed tens of thousands of people. In addition, Atahualpa faced an ongoing civil war with his half-brother.

After reaching the Andes, Pizarro arranged a meeting with Atahualpa. He then kidnapped the Inca ruler. Atahualpa promised to fill a large room with gold and silver in return for his freedom. The Inca delivered 24 tons of gold and silver. Pizarro killed Atahualpa instead of freeing him, however. The Spaniard then joined with several powerful Inca rebel leaders. By 1534 he and his local American Indian allies had conquered the Inca Empire. The second great empire of the Americas had fallen.

Conquistadores in Florida

The hope of finding another rich empire lured many other conquistadores to the Americas. One of these was Juan Ponce de Leon. King Ferdinand of Spain had given Ponce de Leon the right to settle the mainland North America. According to legend, Ponce de Leon heard American Indian stories about a magic spring that "makes old men young again." This mythical spring became known as the Fountain of Youth.

In 1513 Ponce de Leon reached a land that he called Florida after the Spanish name for the Easter season, *Pascua florida*, or the season of flowers. There his forces soon fought with American Indians. Finding neither gold nor the

Fountain of Youth, he gave up and sailed home. In 1521 Ponce de Leon returned to found a settlement in Florida, but was wounded in another battle with American Indians. His crew sailed to Cuba, where Ponce de Leon died.

Despite Ponce de Leon's failure, the Spanish remained interested in Florida. In 1528 Panfilo de Narvaez (PAHM-fee-loh day nahr-BAH-ays) arrived from Spain to explore Florida's western coast. Narvaez split his forces. He sent ships ahead to explore and led about 300 soldiers north through the inland swamps. This move proved to be a mistake. The ships lost contact with Narvaez and had to return home.

Narvaez and his conquistadores faced illness, hostile American Indians, and bad weather. They were starving and desperate. Finally they built simple boats and tried to sail west across the Gulf of Mexico. Most of the boats sank or wrecked, and Narvaez died.

Among the few survivors were Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca (kay-BAY-sah day BAH-kah) and a Moor named Estevanico (e-stay-bah-NEE-koh). In 1528 the survivors reached the coast of what is now Texas. They were captured by local American Indians but managed to escape. The group began a journey across Texas to what is now New Mexico. Cabeza de Vaca recalled this time as "years during which I wandered lost and naked through many and very strange lands." He and his companions survived by their wits and luck.

For eight years Cabeza de Vaca lived with various American Indian tribes while searching for a Spanish settlement. He worked as a servant, trader, and healer. During this time he gained fame and respect from the Pueblo Indians. Finally, in 1536 Cabeza de Vaca met a group of Spanish soldiers "who were thunderstruck to see me so strangely dressed and in the company of Indians." Cabeza de Vaca traveled on with the soldiers to Mexico. In 1542 after returning to Spain, he published the story of his travels as *The Narrative of Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca*.

The Movement to End Slavery

During the mid-1800s John Fairfield help enslaved African Americans escape to freedom in the North. Fairfield traveled throughout the South under different disguises. Sometimes he posed as a slaveholder. Other times he dressed as a trader, or a peddler. Once he led 28 slaves to freedom by disguising them as part of a funeral procession. Most antislavery activist did not take such risks. However, they all helped a movement that grew much stronger in the mid-1800s.

Abolition

During the 1830s Americans who had been against slavery for years began to take organized action. They formed a movement to support abolition, or a complete end to slavery, in the United States. Some of these people wanted immediate emancipation. Through emancipation, all enslaved African Americans would be freed from slavery.

Abolitionists were in the minority in the United States, but they were very vocal. They came from many different backgrounds and wanted to ban slavery for different reasons. The Quakers were among the first groups to challenge slavery on religious grounds. The Quakers had begun working for abolition during colonial times. Some ministers of the Second Great Awakening also believed that slavery was morally wrong. People such as Charles Grandison Finney and Theodore Weld moved many others to take up the cause of abolition. Other abolitionists pointed to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence. They reminded people that the American Revolution supported equality.

Abolitionist disagreed about what ending slavery should mean for African Americans. Some abolitionists thought that African Americans should be treated the same as white Americans. Many others, however, opposed full social and political equality for African Americans.

Some antislavery reformers wanted to send freed African Americans to Africa to start new colonies there. They thought that this would prevent conflicts between different races in the United States. Many Americans supported this view. J.C. Galloway of North Carolina described this idea. "It is impossible for us [whites] to be happy, if...they [freed African Americans] are to remain among us," he wrote.

In 1817 a minister named Robert Finley started the American Colonization Society. Five years later the society founded the colony of Liberia on the west coast of Africa. About 12,000 African Americans eventually settled in Liberia. However, many who were once in favor of colonization later turned against it. Some African Americans also opposed the colonization movement. David Walker was one such person. In an 1829 essay, *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, Walker explained why he was against colonization.

"The greatest riches in all America have arisen from our blood and tears: And they [whites] will drive us from our property and homes, which we have earned with our blood."

--David Walker, quoted in *From Slavery to Freedom*, by John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss Jr.

Spreading the Abolitionist Message

Abolitionists found many ways to further their cause. Some abolitionists went on speaking tours or wrote newspaper articles and pamphlets. Editor Horace Greeley became a strong voice in the movement through the *New York Tribune*. Others, like John Greenleaf Whittier, spread the abolitionist message through their poetry and literature. **William Lloyd Garrison** published an abolitionist newspaper. This newspaper, **The Liberator**, first appeared in 1831. Garrison became one of the most outspoken and controversial leaders of the movement. In 1833 Garrison helped found the **American Anti-Slavery Society**. This group wanted immediate emancipation and racial equality for African Americans. Garrison later became the group's president.

Both *The Liberator* and the Ant-Slavery Society relied on the support of free African Americans. Members of the society spread antislavery literature throughout the North and Midwest. They also sent petitions to Congress. In these petitions, they asked for an end to all federal support of slavery. Then in 1840 the American Anti-Slavery Society split. One group wanted immediate freedom for enslaved African Americans. This group also believed women should take part in the abolition movement on an equal basis with men. The other group wanted slower emancipation and a limited role for women.

Angelina and Sarah Grimke, two white southern women, became well-known antislavery activists of the 1830s. The sisters were members of a slaveholding family in South Carolina. They did not share their parents' support of slavery, however. Instead, they moved to Philadelphia and joined the abolition movement. Angelina Grimke tried to bring other white southern women to the cause. She wrote a pamphlet titled *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* in 1836.

“I know how to make the laws, but...if you really suppose you can do nothing to overthrow slavery, you are greatly mistaken....Try to persuade your husband, father, brothers and sons that slavery is a crime against God and man.”

--Angelina Grimke, quoted in *The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina*, edited by Gerda Lerner

This essay was quite popular in the North. As a result, the Grimke sisters became the first women to speak before male and female audiences of the Anti-Slavery Society. The sisters gave lectures and formed dozens of female antislavery societies. In 1839 they wrote *American Slavery As It Is* with Angelina's husband, abolitionist leader Theodore Weld. This book was one of the most important antislavery writings of the time.

African Americans Fight against Slavery

Many former slaves were very active in the antislavery movement. Frederick Douglass, who escaped from slavery at age 20, became one of the most

important African American leaders of the 1800s. Douglass had secretly learned to read and write as a boy. In addition, his public-speaking skills greatly impressed the members of the Anti-Slavery Society. In 1841 they asked Douglass to give regular lectures. Speaking at a Fourth of July celebration in 1852, he captured the audience's attention with his powerful voice.

“The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common....This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn.”

--Frederick Douglass, quoted in *From Slavery to Freedom*, by John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr.

Douglass went on many speaking tours in the United States and Europe. He also published a pro-abolition newspaper called *North Star* and wrote several autobiographies.

African Americans such as Charles Remond and Sojourner Truth also helped the abolitionist cause. Truth became famous in the antislavery movement for her dramatic and fiery speeches. In 1842 Remons asked the Massachusetts legislature to end racial discrimination in the state. “It is JUSTICE I stand here to claim, and not FAVOR for either complexion [skin color],” he declared.

Other African Americans wrote slave narratives about their experiences. In 1861 abolitionists helped publish *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs, one of the few slave narratives written by a woman. William Wells Brown wrote an antislavery play and an antislavery novel called *Clotel*. These writers and many other African Americans contributed significantly to the abolitionist cause.

The Underground Railroad

By the 1830s a loosely organized group had begun helping slaves escape from the South. Free African Americans, former slaves, and a few white abolitionists worked together to create the Underground Railroad. This network of people arranged transportation and hiding places for fugitives, or escaped slaves. Often wearing disguises, fugitives moved along the “railroad” at night, guided by the *North Star*. They stopped to rest during the day at various “stations.” These stations were homes of abolitionists known as conductors. The conductors hid the fugitives in barns, attics, and other secret locations. They would then send word to the next station farther north that they were on the way.

The most famous and daring conductor on the Underground Railroad was Harriet Tubman. When Tubman escaped herself in 1849, she left behind her husband, parents, sisters, and brothers. She returned to the South 19 times. Tubman successfully led her family and more than 300 other slaves to freedom. She never lost a fugitive. At one time the reward for Tubman's capture climbed to

\$40,000. Historians estimate that 40,000 slaves used the Underground Railroad to reach freedom between 1810 and 1850.

Into the Game

By Rita Williams-Garcia

G—chuk-a—chuk. G-chuk—a-chuk. We made one pathetic sight. Three lonesome guys on payday, getting jerked all the way uptown by the Number Two train. *G—chuk-a—chuk. G-chuk—a-chuk.* That shouldn't have been. Not when we had freshly clipped shape-ups (courtesy of the Nu Bush Cutters) and money in our pockets *G—chuk-a—chuk. G-chuk—a-chuk.* There we sat, staring at subway ads when there were two Brooklyn College girls in smelling range, licking their lip gloss, dying to be talked to.

What we must have looked like. My mouth was hanging open. Manny was staring off, remembering a girl who was never his. Dupree was hunched over so low, his head was under his seat. My man was gone. His head was bobbing and his lips were twitching, though nothing came out, unless you want to count “FFFFFICA!” as conversation.

His spit landed on one of the Brooklyn College girls' arms. She and her girlfriend leaped up and fled into the next car. The bad news was, we could have gotten something going. Asked them for the time. Where they from. How's the college scene. I was building up to it, too. Not that they would have given three high school dudes any play, especially the way we looked. I caught our reflections in the window facing us. Frightening! Our eyes seemed glossy, and our faces long and pointed. I couldn't blame them for bolting.

With the seats now vacant, I stretched my legs out, only to discover I wasn't the only one going for comfort. This Korean woman broke through the straphangers and threw herself into one of the empty seats, her shopping bags into the other. I guess her corns were killing her a lot more than we could intimidate her. She had us figured right: three of the weakest dudes to shoot out of the Bronx.

At that moment Dupree decided to turn up the volume on his “psycho hoodie” act. He vaulted out of his seat raised his arms like a DC Comics action figure, and yelled “Mutha FICA!” then collapsed into his seat.

Most of the riders took it as business as usual on the Number Two, though some were genuinely scared. "Its okay!" I called out. "He just found out he's a taxpayer." I looked down on Dupree, who between nodding, mumbling, and getting jerked Seventh Avenue style, looked like a whacked-out holyman. "Yo," I said. "You gotta give some to get some, so get off of that riff."

DuDu didn't want to hear that. He wanted back everything he claimed the federal government withheld from him, starting with the money from his first paycheck. Me and Manny let him get his stuff off because we knew he'd wind down. Wasn't nothing wrong with him. He was just trying to bug those people out. I figured we'd get off at 125th Street, catch a flick, and have some laughs, and DuDu would be DuDu again.

The day had fallen apart around noon in the mailroom. We had torn open our first pay envelopes knowing that minimum wage checks could only be but so respectable, even with overtime. Me and Manny got exactly what we anticipated. Deductions for latenesses, a pinch here and there for Social Security and taxes. DuDu, however, didn't take it so well. When he saw the difference between the net of what was, and the gross of what could have been, a chunk of it going to FICA, he started bugging. He got into a beef with the lady at the check-cashing place because he thought she was laughing at his digit. "I could be running for Mr. Benz," he told her. "I don't need this." Mr. Benz was a tenth grader and a local kingpin, tagged for his twin Mercedes. Me and Manny laughed at DuDu because he had forgotten one thing: He, like Manny and me, was one of the weakest dudes to shoot out of the Bronx. Instead of working in the neighborhood like everyone else, we had taken mailroom jobs in an office downtown. An office with a dress code. Now that was weak.

The doors opened at Chambers Street, and a herd of pinstripe suits charged in. DuDu shouted like a train conductor. "Step lively and watch your pockets! Watch your pockets! FICA's in your pocket!"

People either turned our way or tried hard not to notice us. A concerned mother gripped her child's shoulders and the Korean woman guarded her shopping bags. My eyes stayed on the tops of my sneakers. Manny was too dejected to care what anyone thought. Dupree put his headphones on and shoved a tape into his Walkman. He started "Ja-fakin" righteously off-key to a reggae beat: "FICA's in my pocket ripping out my heart.....Oh FICA!.....Everybody say FICA."

People were now studying crack posters and glancing at us while the train ripped wildly up Seventh Avenue. Instead of steeling his butt to his seat, DuDu

surrendered to the rocking and jerking, so every lurch forward gave him the power to jump out of his seat.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. The three of us bumping knees on a payday. This was supposed to be the summer for getting girls. Not just dreaming about them. Looking at them. Lying about them. But talking to them. Taking them out. Being put through changes that only girls can put you through.

At least last year, when we were three no-muscles-rippling, no-car-cruising, lint-pocketed tenth graders, we had three solid reasons for leaving girls alone. Now things were different. The tide was turning in our favor. We had jobs and the use of Manny's mother's boyfriend's car, not to mention we had filled out respectably.

What we didn't have was a spectacular rap to get the door open. For girls, good talk rated highly with juicy kissing—so I'd heard. Since Manny had been liking Up The Block Carmen since eighth grade, he was elected to get us into the game. Me and DuDu were counting on Manny because Carmen had nice-looking cousins. Unfortunately, Manny'd always choke around Carmen. The best he could do was "Yo, Carmen. W'sup? Yeah cool.....aw'ight....peace," then tell us, "Me and Carmen got that silent love going on." It must have been deaf, dumb, and stupid love because Carmen so tired of waiting for Manny to kick it and settled for some jerk from Bronx Science. To this day Manny gets sick when he sees them up the block. And that's what's so pathetic: Manny believed silent love was working.

Dupree had the same problem in reverse. Count on DuDu to take everything to the extreme. Like that time we crashed this block party in Washington Heights. The music was thumpin', the people were peaceful, and the card tables were decked with six-foot heroes. We were having a good time, coolin' on a hot July afternoon in our Bermuda shorts, checking out the honeys. Courage was building that night. In our hearts we knew we'd be slow-walking some girls to their front doors. Then Dupree (can't take him nowhere) wanted to stand out. He grabbed about twenty-thirty napkins from a table and rolled them up into this blunt sausage. He went around the side of the brownstone and put the rolled napkins in his shorts so it just hung right. With his confidence in check, he joined the party, grabbed a girl, and started dancing. Everybody's checking him out, and we're yellin' "Go DuDu!" I mean, he was looking good, and me and Manny were going "That's my man," until DuDu went wild, forgot what was what, and started jumping and spinning like he was on MTV. Even the girl he was with stepped back. When he took that final jump, everything, I mean everything,

jumped. We left no dust in the wind when we jetted. And for all that hype and humiliation he didn't get off one word to the girl he was dancing with.

Yet deep down I know, if I had a chance to get close to a girl, tell her things she would and would not want to hear....I'd choke. Say the wrong thing and embarrass myself. I don't understand it. I know I got a smoker deep inside me, but it never surfaces. Get me around some girls, and I end up fronting like I'm the iceman, when I'm really dying because girls are...vicious. The "finies" don't even look at you, let alone hear you talking. The "okeydokeys" got attitude 'cause they know they're number two. And the "uglies" want to hurt you to brag that they did.

Dang. I must be bugging. I can hear the train huffing "jerk—you jerk—you jerk—you jerk—you jerk—you jerk...."

I saw Manny, Dupree, then myself though the door's reflection. Curley, Moe, and Slow Moe. Inhaling the same breath for ten years too many. Sooner or later, one of us had to get into the game. Even if it meant cutting the others loose.

The train stopped at Penn Station. The people pushing to get out battled with those pushing to get in. Three girls managed to slingshot through a hole—the little forced the hole open—as they made their way to the back. These girls had conquered Thirty-fourth Street. Each had huge pink Conway bags and brown Macy's bags. They were comparing and exchanging loot, being as loud as they pleased, attracting attention. Especially ours.

"The one in green," I said to Manny. "Nice hair."

"The one in the granny shoes," Manny said. "A heartbreaker." He grinned. "I like that in a girl."

"Sucker." Manny was destined to get dumped hard by the first girl who listened.

"That leaves DuDu with Troll Baby," Manny said.

She was tearing tags off of clothes. Troll Baby didn't look bad. In fact, she was kinda cute underneath all that wild hair. She was just short. Really short. Muscular and serious. Look at her rip those tags! Now, why couldn't I go for her? Why did I have to make the finest one My Girl?

Dupree was fidgeting with his Walkman. He hadn't noticed the girls.

"It was probably their first payday as well. They're beautiful and employed." I said.

"Working queens." Manny agreed.

"It could happen." I said. "Flick. Pizza. Phone numbers."

“You asking them?”

“The silence lasted too long. Manny bailed me out saying, “They’re probably hooked up. As fine as they is.”

I went back to staring at subway ads, the ones that promise to relieve pain. My eyes were glassy with daydreaming: I had My Girl pinned against her front door.....Her mom’s yelling for her to come in....Her green top presses against my shirt...My hands slide from shoulder to hips....I lean in for that kiss.....

The crashing of coins hitting tin yanked me into consciousness. I caught myself with my mouth open and closed it quick. It was a blind man making his way down the car, shaking his can twice between a drag, step drag. I wanted the train to throw him off balance and send his can flying for pulling My Girl from my lips. No such luck. The blind man had things under control, drag stepping, can shaking and chanting while the train rocked. “I have no one in the world....Please help me please.....Please help me please....I have no one in this world....”

I slapped DuDu on the shoulder, and he looked up at me all evil as if he was the one who just got jerked. I was getting tired of his act. “Toss him a dollar,” I said.

DuDu chirped like a girl who does not curse. “Give who a dollar? FICA’s got my dollar.”

“Mine, too,” Manny said, letting the blind man go past.

I looked over at the girls, wishing they’d put us out of our misery and get off the train so we could stop thinking we had a chance. My Girl, the one with the nice hair and green top, reached into her purse. Even her fingers were long and perfect. Or they looked that way because she was far away. I swear. Girls look so good when they’re out of reach. I watched her peach-colored nails digging around for change. As she reached for the blind man’s can, I could see she wasn’t wearing any bracelet, though she did have a gold chain around her neck. That was when I noticed a splotch on her neck that was either a monster hickey or a birthmark. I must have been doing some heavy X-ray staring because the tables suddenly turned, and she was now staring at me.

Shades and Troll Baby were also staring. I was praying DuDu was FICA free. The last thing we needed was a relapse. Not when we were on the verge of making contact. Me and Manny tried to play it off, faking like movie extras, talking and signaling to look like we belonged in this scene. It was past pathetic.

The girls went back to their pink bags.

“The pain,” I said putting my hand over my heart.

Manny didn't smile like I thought he would. Instead he said loud enough, "One of us should go over there and check them out. See if they're worth it. See if they wanna hang out."

Even Manny was getting tired of bumping knees with the fellas—though we weren't man enough to go over there.

Then as if she'd heard him, Manny's girl, Shades, pulled down her dark granny glasses about an inch, looked us up, never down, then reported something to My Girl. DuDu's girl cut her off, protesting and shaking her Brillo pad head "no way."

Who asked you? me and Manny were thinking.

"Go. Ask them," Manny said.

"Ask who what?" Dupree was now back among the conscious. He spotted the girls at the opposite end. "Now, she's a winner," DuDu said, smiling at Troll Baby. "Want me to do it? I'll do it." When he said it, we recognized the napkin-rolling light bulb clicking on his eyes.

"Hold him back," I told Manny, who was thinking the same thing. We started getting loud, laughing, and trying to restrain DuDu from humiliating us. Me and Manny were laughing so hard, paying the other riders no mind. They probably thought we were fighting for real. In between bopping DuDu upside the head, we kept checking out the girls. My Girl and Shades kept stealing glances our way but not overdoing it. Troll Baby did all she could to keep My Girl and Shades from giggling.

Then the connecting doors slid open, and a young cop stepped into the car. He marched slowly, his footsteps coming down too hard as he scanned the train for something or someone. He stood directly across from us, clearly issuing a warning with his hawk eyes: Chill out. His police hat seemed slightly tilted, ready to fall off his narrow, eggplant-shaped head. Instead of looking ominous he looked stupid. Stupid looking or not, his hand stayed near his nightstick.

Me and Manny eased up, sharing the same premonition, while DuDu kept saying, "I'll do it. I'll do it."

G—chuk-a—chuk. G-chuk—a-chuk. "Jerk—you jerk—you jerk....."

I caught our reflections. Damn, we looked stupid. One of us had to get up. One of us had to stride down to those lovelies and say "Yo....." Cop or no cop. It wouldn't be Manny, and it wouldn't be DuDu.

The train pulled into 116th Street. *Get in the game*, I thought. *Let those girls shoot you down, roll their eyes, and act like you're a fly buzzing round their golden hoops.* They could rip me apart or be as kind as they look. I didn't care. If

a cop was going to stand over me, then I was going to at least stand up. Go over there. Rap my heart out.

I pulled myself up.

The girls had their bags by the handle and stormed out the same way they came in.

I tapped Manny and DuDu. "Let's go."

"This aint our--"

"Go!" I yelled, grabbing one of them by the shirt. The conductor announced the next stop. The doors were preparing to close. We made a dash for the door, bulldozing the cop, who wasn't expecting us to bolt. The cop's hat fell on the platform. Dupree scooped it up and tossed into the car. He yelled to the cop, "Peace, man. I'm a taxpayer!" and we beat it up the stairs howling like animals. Oh, man, we couldn't stop laughing, especially DuDu who hadn't cracked a smile all day.

"Where they at?" I asked boldly—as if I knew what to say when we found them.

They were walking slowly down the street. We stood at the top of the steps unable to move as they walked away. Not because we were punks but because they could walk that walk and control us, even at a distance. My Girl had on sandals. Manny's wore flats. Dupree's had on hikers. Hikers! We could have stood there and watched them until they disappeared. They chatted, and took bite size steps, and tossed their heads like movie extras trying to look like they belonged in this scene.

I looked at Manny and DuDu. The girls weren't too far away. And the way I figured, big feet and long strides being what they are, and bite size steps being what they are, it would take ten-twenty steps to catch them. One to get in the game.

The Alley

By Danny Romero

The setting sun casts a growing shadow over the backs of the wooden houses lining the alley between Seventy-fifth and Seventy-sixth streets. From Bell Avenue it runs east to Crockett Boulevard, across it, then past the grammar school and the Catholic church to Lou Dillon Avenue, then Alameda and the

railroad tracks where it dead-ends. The yards adjacent have either fences or walls surrounding them. Some are topped with strands of barbed wire; on others, shards of glass ward off would-be trespassers and felons.

A skinny young boy dressed in baggy khaki pants and an oversized Pendleton shirt scrambles desperately across the debris-strewn asphalt. In his frenzy he almost loses his dark glasses and the woman's purse he has stolen.

Behind him comes Cesar Rojas. Cesar has been walking home from the public library when he hears Mrs. Ramirez's high pitched voice shrieking, "*Oye Cabron!?* What are you doing!?" At that, Cesar looks over in her direction and sees the young cholo stumble for an instant, then regain his footing and head down the alley.

Cesar takes off in pursuit instinctively, not allowing himself time to doubt his actions. Later he will look back on it and see the real trouble he could have been in if he had been led into the alley where the rest of the gang had waited. He runs still carrying a book in his hand. It is a large, hardbound copy of *1984* by George Orwell.

Cesar uses it much as a relay-race runner uses a baton: legs moving in a rhythmic motion, arms pumping the book up and down, pistonlike. Two years earlier, as a sophomore, he had been on the track team, but his lackluster performance had left him feeling a more urgent need to get into college than running into track meets or relay-races.

That was the reason he had been spending so much time at the library. His English teacher, J. Smith, had given Cesar a list of books he should read, and *1984* was one of them. Now when Cesar read the newspapers and watched the television news closely, the resemblance between his world and that of the main characters in Orwell's novel grew more apparent and frightening. And he wondered what he could do to make this less true.

Cesar halts in his tracks for a moment. The boy in front of him now comes running back toward Cesar, carrying a long wooden stake. It is more than five feet long and had been used as a means of support for a young tree planted by the city. Cesar backs up. The stake, hurled through the air, flies end over end over end over end over end toward Cesar, then tangles in the electrical wires overhead and falls down, crashing loudly onto the hood of a rusted Volkswagen abandoned in the alley.

The pair cross Crockett Boulevard and pass the grammar school. Cesar still follows the khaki-clad figure.

When he was younger, Cesar and his friends walked this way home from school. Up ahead in the alley, he knows, there is a buzzer at the back door of a garage. As kids, they would press the button, then run off before anyone answered it. Now as he remembers it, he wonders if the buzzer really worked. He had never before wanted to see who might answer it.

Plastic bags filled with garbage come flying back at Cesar. The younger boy grabs them as he passes by and flings them backward. Cesar steps over a large watermelon rind and a half-dozen used diapers. The khaki pants stops and picks up a bottle, turns, and throws it. Cesar stops just in time and moves behind a graffiti-covered wall. The glass splinters away from him. The chase continues.

It seems to Cesar like the summer he spent in this alley more than three years ago. It was during that summer before high school when things had changed for him. He was leaving the security of his *barrio* and would have to travel on the bus to another *barrio* for high school. In the beginning of that summer he had felt all alone. None of his old friends was around. And he began to wonder if it was only his family that never went on vacation. Then he met his friends in the alley.

They all walked a thin line between drugs, gangs, and the law. The boys made decisions about right and wrong, for better and for worse. The sheriffs, no matter, always held the boys under suspicion because of the color of their skin and the neighborhood they lived in. And more than once the boys had been lined up with their faces in the asphalt and broken glass. The boys were guilty in the sheriffs' eyes until proven innocent, and sometimes not even then.

Cesar and his friends had still been young enough to build go-carts with washing machine motors, and they raced them over the cracks and bumps in the asphalt of the alley straight away into the night.

After those few summer months Cesar never saw any of those boys again. Except for one whose name was Mando. Cesar had seen him a couple of times on the bus in the morning. They spoke to each other briefly, but they had never been very close among the bunch in the alley that summer. Cesar remembered that Mando once had blamed him for causing him to wreck and flip over the go-cart and break his arm, but they both knew Mando lied.

It had been Frank and his brother Clown who had caused the accident. The brothers, fifteen- and sixteen-year-old gang members, were shot dead at the end of that summer by the sheriffs. Cesar was the passenger in the go-cart that Mando drove, and they both saw clearly the brothers at the far end of the alley, sniffing paint. As Cesar and Mando had sped faster and faster toward Lou Dillon

Avenue, the brothers turned with slingshots in their hands and smiling, fired steel ball bearings. They hit Mando, who lost control of the vehicle, veering closer and closer to a wall on one side, then running into a trash and flipping over.

The pair crossed Lou Dillon Avenue.

Cesar already can smell the dog turd coming from the Lozano family's yard near Alameda. The yard has been filled with a dozen Chevrolet Impalas from the 1950s and 1960s, sitting along the weeds for as long as Cesar can remember. Many people had offered Mr. Lozano money for the vehicles so they could restore them to their original splendor, but all had been refused.

The horrible smell comes from the chow-chow dogs that guard the yard. There are three or four of them, Cesar does not know for sure. He does know they are the meanest, oldest, and ugliest dogs he has ever met, and he has wished never to see them again. They begin a loud, rasping bark from the other side of the sheet-metal siding that surrounds the yard these days. Another bottle comes sailing past Cesar.

The thief has and is hiding in some shrubbery near the Lozano's yard. Cesar proceeds with caution. He notices the heavy traffic on Alameda, thousands of cars speeding north and south. He tries to listen for the thief, the sound of his own heart thumping in his ears.

The thief lunges at Cesar from the bushes, this time with a piece of broken bottle in his hand. Cesar quickly raises his book in front of him and deflects the blow. The glass sticks momentarily in the cover of the book, then is twisted free. Cesar slams the spine of the book into the face of the other boy with all his might. The dark glasses go flying. Blood splatters over both boys as Cesar grabs the hand holding the broken glass and turns the wrist until the weapon is dropped. The younger boy pulls Cesar's hair and head backward. Cesar backpedals, knocking both of them to the curb. Cesar turns the boy over.

It is his cousin.

Though it has been years since they have seen each other, Cesar remembers him. Cesar recalls that he is three years older and that their fathers had disowned each other as brothers years earlier after a drunken brawl at a family gathering.

The two boys had never been introduced. By the time they both had been born, the two men were firmly entrenched in their dispute, though it had overlooked the cousins. They knew each other only from those gatherings where the two families had sat on opposite sides of the room and never spoke to or acknowledged the existence of each other. Except for once, Cesar remembers,

when at a funeral the two boys had seen each other. Quickly they recovered before anyone else noticed and never let their guard down again.

Lalo is his name, Cesar remembers. Cesar looks into the boy's eyes and sees the growing desperation and almost animallike look brought on by the pipe that never stops calling. Cesar has seen the same look on the faces of other boys, girls, men and women in the *barrio* now addicted to rock cocaine. The rockheads, as they are known, always look worried and nervous: tense, as if their jaw were on a spring and wanted to snap right off their face at any moment. Cesar had noticed that at least with PCP zombies they sometimes look as if they are having a good time.

Cesar unhands the boy and stands. He picks up the purse from the ground nearby. No one has been hurt, he thinks, except for his cousin. He turns back toward the boy and sees his small figure dodging across the traffic on Alameda. Jail will not help the boy, thinks Cesar, though perhaps this chance he is given now might. Cesar can think of no other solution.

Y2K.CHATRM43

By Alden R. Carter

At the end of this story I'm supposed to turn off my computer and go outside to enjoy a beautiful autumn evening: the real world as opposed to cyberspace, reality as opposed to the electronic void, blah, blah....Well, I guess we'll have to see what happens. But beginnings first.

The bus let us off at the corner of Marathon and Peach in the late October dusk. As usual, I walked the last couple of blocks to my street with Adrien Koudalakian, who's Lebanese-Armenian and looks it. We've never been boyfriend and girlfriend, just friends and neighbors for just about forever. I guess it's a condition that Adrien feels gives her the right to rip on me every so often—actually, pretty often. Tonight was one of those nights.

"You ought to get involved in some stuff, Joe," she snapped. "It'd give you a better attitude. Today in Mod Prob you were so depressing, I felt like hitting you with a textbook. A big, heavy one.

"Well, school violence is another modern problem we ought to discuss it up tomorrow."

She glared at me. “In your case a whack alongside the head would be therapy. How come you see the dark side of everything? This is going wrong, that’s falling apart, disaster is right around the corner. You’re a gloomy Gus.”

“That’s an old one, “ I said.

“I know. That’s what my grandma calls my grandpa when he starts in on how the world’s going to hell.”

“He’s probably got a point.”

“Oh, pooh. There are lots of reasons to be optimistic about the future.”

“Name a dozen and I’ll name two dozen why you’re wrong.”

She turned on me, stamping a foot she was so mad. “Just take a break, will you? Get away from your computer. Get out of your dumb chat room and spend some time around real people. I remember when you used to be in band and lots of things. Now you’re gone in hyperspace every spare minute you’ve got.”

“Cyberspace, not hyperspace.”

“Whatever. The point is, all you do anymore is play with your computer.”

She’d finally hit a nerve. “I don’t *play* with my computer! I *use* it. And, by the way, how’s that new Power Mac I helped you set up last summer?”

“It’s fine! And I get your point. But there is a difference: I use my computer to get my homework done so I can get on to other things. You? You almost live on the Web.”

“So? It happens to be what I like to do. And don’t tell me my chat room is dumb. We’re trying to solve some problems.”

“Yeah, yeah. You told me all about your chat room. Trying to solve the problems of the twenty-first century while there’s still time. But three hours every night, Joel? Don’t you get depressed worrying about the world’s problems every night?”

I glared at her. “Yeah, I get depressed about the world’s problems, Adrien. But at least I’m doing something about them. Or trying to.”

She returned the glare and then huffed off. I went to help with supper.

My parents argued all the time we were eating. At least the subject wasn’t money or Dad’s drinking or what’s going to happen to Grandpa Mel (Mom’s dad) or Grandma Fran (Dad’s mom) when they can no longer live on their own. Instead, they were back on Dad’s essay.

Mom, who’s got a double master’s in history and linguistics but sells real estate, slapped her napkin down hard enough to make the ice in the glasses rattle. “Franklin!” (She only calls Dad Franklin when she’s really mad.) “You

cannot mix French and German in the same sentence! '*Fin-de-millenaire angst*' may sound just wonderful to you, but other professors are going to jump down your throat! And you should know it."

Dad tried to adopt his amused, professorial look, but the tic below his left eye gave him away. Dad used to be a tenured sociology professor at the university until Auren products hired him away to do demographics and market analysis. Five years of big bucks and good times for the family. But last spring a German conglomerate, Betterheim Limited, swallowed Auren. Then came the big sweat to squeeze costs and maximize profits. And guess what? Demographic and market analysis performed by Dr. Franklin Sandley became a frill. Bye-bye job, hello major panic in the Sandley household.

Dad had enough pull to get back on the faculty part-time, but he's got to impress some people and do it fast to win a full-time appointment. Hence the essay. He cleared his throat, still hoping the professorial approach would work. "No, Kit. I cannot agree. As you know better than anyone, English borrows from every language and mixes the results higgledy-piggledy. Now just imagine if this becomes a major catchphrase. If *Newsweek* or *Time* were to pick it up, my career could be remade in a week."

I was tempted to ask if we'd then become *millenaire* millionaires, but held myself back. This was serious. Dad had already explained to me (with his usual pained expression at my ignorance) that *fin de millenaire* meant "end of the millennium. "I knew what *angst* meant. "Why don't you just call it Y2K anxiety?" I said. "That would do it, and it's catchy."

They ignored me, as usual. "Higgledy-piggledy, piggledy-higgledy, I don't care!" Mom snapped. " '*Fin-de-millenaire angst*' doesn't have a word of English in it."

I sighed and shrugged. So much for the peacemaking biz. And I'd wasted a good idea, too. I finished my lasagna, put the plate in the dishwasher, and went down to open the chat room.

I guess this brings me to the point where I have to explain how I became a Webdict. (Web plus addict Clever, huh?) It's not much of a story. I just dig the Web and have since the first time I got on a computer powerful enough to really cruise. For a long time I was happy jumping from one chat room or newsgroup to the next. (I guess Adrien could call me a hyper cybersurfer if she ever got her terms straight.) But after a few months the stupid talk in the chat room really started to irritate me. I mean, I could go all over the Web, learning stuff that was happening all over the world. But when I went to a chat room to talk about it,

here were these people flaming each other just for the heck of it: “suck my toe jam”; “eat my shorts”; “hey the snot you just squeezed was really your brains man.”

Just junk like that. And stupid me, I decided to try something different: I opened Y2K.CHATRM43. Y2K.CHATRM43 is supposed to discuss the problems of the new millennium. Rules: teenagers only; keep the nightly topic; serious comments only; don’t monopolize; keep your mind open; no flaming.

Amazingly, the chat room caught on. Not that it was any big fad or anything, but a lot of people stopped by. Most only hung around a few minutes, dropped a comment or two, and then cruised off into cyberspace. But a few stayed and kept coming back night after night. Most of the regulars were from around the U.S., but we had quite a few international log-ins despite the problems of language and time zones. In all, I counted some thirty countries over the course of six months. A few of the log-ins might have been fakes. (one kid from North Carolina claimed to be from Tahiti until we caught him in a lie.) Still, I was pretty sure that most of them were for real.

For quite a while the rules actually worked. Cyberpunks would check through, decide we were boring, drop an obscene comment or two, and then boost off for the next chat room. We’d go back to business. Our discussions didn’t find magic solutions to anything big. We didn’t find any way to defuse the population bomb, close the hole in the ozone layer, end terrorism, or cure AIDS. Still, we talked through a lot of things.

But after a few months all the talk about big, big problems without any solutions started getting big-time depressing. I don’t know what I expected. Were we going to wow the United Nations with some radical and painless solution to a problem? Were we going to find a magic bullet to shoot one of the world’s really nasty werewolves? No, I don’t think any of us were that naïve. But when nothing new happened, people started losing interest. A lot of the regulars just dropped out. Those who remained started wanting to talk more and more about smaller and smaller issues: tattooing, dating, clothes, school rules, getting along with parents.

Hard as I tried as the chatmaster, I couldn’t keep them on the nightly subjects for very long. I wasn’t about to admit to Adrien, but she was right: The chat room was taking far too much of my time and leaving me depressed just about every minute of the day. I had to break free, but it was tough. I’d had a lot of hopes and it was hard to let them go.

Logging on to my server, I told myself that maybe tonight would be better that maybe tonight I'd find enough reason to go on believing. But I wasn't really hopeful. No, this was it. Time to shut down Y2K.CHATRM43 while I still had something like a life.

I'd set up the evening's question that night before:

What do you see as the future of international peacekeeping? When should NATO, the UN, or other international organizations deploy armed forces?

The subject was a downer. Fred (Texas) and I kicked it back and forth for a while. Fred's conversation let-them-solve-their-own-problems-even-if-they-blow-themselves-to-hell sort of guy. But I like him. He's tough but he listens.

I hoped Vlad (Bosnia) would log in, since he'd had some real experience with international peacekeepers. But he didn't and that made me uneasy. Vlad had been telling us for months about the problems in his country: the threat of renewed civil war; the poverty; the poor sanitation; the closed hospitals; the unexploded artillery shells lying around. Altogether, some pretty nasty stuff. But he hadn't been around in a few days, and I was beginning to have some doubts. Maybe he was just another American kid masquerading as something he wasn't, an American kid who'd had his fun and wandered off to make trouble somewhere else. Still, I wanted to believe in Vlad. And if he was real, I just hoped that he was okay.

Suddenly, Sonja (Norway) popped into the middle of an exchange between Fred (Texas) and me.

Sonja (Norway): hey kids. i'm here. want here news?

I sighed and dropped my fingers to the keyboard, figuring I'd better get her under control right from the start. But Fred, who has a lot more patience with distractions than I have already begun to type.

Fred (Texas): new pair of skis Sonja?

Sonja (Norway): no that is last week news.

Fred (Texas): new boyfriend?

Sonja (Norway): oh they come go. i don't worry.

Fred (Texas): sven's history huh?

Sonja (Norway): no he still here. and erik and jon.

Jill (Oregon): how many do you keep at once?

Sonja (Norway): i do not count.

Art (Kansas): more than you do jill-babe.

Jill (Oregon): like you know dope.

Art (Kansas): ain't hard to tell these things.

Don (Illinois): come on guys. joel you going to keep these guys in line?

For some reason, my hands felt almost too heavy to lift. Finally, I typed:

Joel (Wisconsin): ya come on guys. Sonja tell us your news so we can get back to the question.

Sonja (Norway): what is the big question?

People waited for me, but I just sat. Finally, Fred answered.

Fred (Texas): international peacekeeping. what's your news?

Sonja (Norway): I got my bellybutton pierced.

Art (Kansas): you got your naval pierced? why?

Sonja (Norway): why not? i thought it be fun.

Jill (Oregon): ya why not arty? it's her body.

Art (Kansas): right! Then why does she want to poke holes in it.

Fred (Texas): naval or ears. what's the difference?

Art (Kansas): and i imagine tongues are ok too. you pierce your body freddy?

Fred (Texas): nope but it wouldn't be your business if i did.

Kathy (New Brunswick): my mom almost had a bird when I got my ears pierced again, that makes four holes in one ear and three in the other but i figure i got all these earrings why shouldn't i wear them?

Cal (London): i tried orange and green hair for a while. bloody marvelous the looks i got.

Pero (Rome): like the american basketball player? name?

Don (Illinois): dennis rodman. hey good ball player. i don't care what color his hair is man.

Pero (Rome): yes very good. not like michael jordan but ok. good tattoos too.

Don (Illinois): wait a second. you're saying mj isn't good?

Pero (Rome): oh no. very good!

Don (Illinois): ya I thought that was what you meant. and the rod-mans tattoos are very cool.

I leaned back, hands behind my head, staring at the ceiling. I was going to shut it down for good. We couldn't keep our concentration anymore. Here we are: an international teen colloquium on body piercing, hair color, basketball, and tattoos. Just make the announcements and then give Sonja a parting shot. One she'd remember for a long time. I tried to imagine how Sonja (Norway) should look. How Adrien might imagine her.

I dropped my hands to the keyboard, fingers ready to fly, and stopped. Vlad (Bosnia) had logged into the chat room.

Vlad (Bosnia): hi everyone, sorry i gone three days. little brother hurt by land mine exploding. right no foot no leg. Other better. he in hospital. Sorry...things not so good hear.

There was a long pause. Finally I typed:

Joel (Wisconsin): hey sorry vlad. hope he comes thru ok.

The others came in, one by one.

Fred (Texas): ya sorry vlad. that's tough.

Jill (Oregon): say we're thinking of him huh?

Art (Kansas): sorry vlad. lousy land mines, we ought to talk about them some night joel.

A few more said sorry and then sonja took her turn.

Sonja (Norway): sorry vlad. really really sorry. give him our love, and joel i'm sorry i got everyone talking about navels and stuff. tell us the big question again.

I've got all sorts of questions for you, I thought. I typed:

Joel (Wisconsin): international peacekeeping. when is it justified? who should do it? how much force is okay? you first sonja.

I could almost feel Sonja hesitate. *This is it, I thought. Are we going to stay open or not? Make or break is in your hands.* She started in:

Sonja (Norway): i think when many innocent people are dying then the world has to do something. if it takes peacekeepers with guns then maybe thats how it has to be.

Fred (Texas): problem is it always seems like the u.s. sends the troops and foots the bill.

Pero (Rome): italians help sometime. in Africa we do much with no help.

Cal (London): and brits too. with iraq lots of countries helped.

Fred (Texas): ya, but that wasn't really peacekeeping. that was kicking saddam's butt so everybody could have oil.

Art (Kansas): lets stick to the question. does peacekeeping work well enough for the cost. And i mean the cost in lives.

Don (Illinois): i say yes. most of the time anyway. i give a rap about those kids caught up in all that crap in yugoslavia and bosnia and those places.

Jill (Oregon): i'm with sonja and don. sometimes we need to do something.

The discussion went on that way to the end, everybody keeping cool and thinking hard. Jill and Art (who I figured are going to look each other up someday and get married) went round and round about the United Nations but didn't lose their tempers. Vlad (Bosnia) typed a long, careful comment on Bosnia and NATO. He apologized about five times about his grammar, but the grammar didn't make

any difference. The guy was for real—had been there and was there, God help him.

It was closing time. I leaned forward and typed:

Joel (Wisconsin): thanks everybody, have courage. remember, no fear. sonja meet you out front in five minutes.

I leaned back and smiled when I got the response.

Sonja (Norway): ???!!!

So I guess the story ends pretty much like it was supposed to. I put my computer to sleep and went out to enjoy the autumn evening. My parents were still arguing in the kitchen, so I left by the front door. Three houses away, Adrien came down from her porch, pulling on a light jacket. She didn't look hugely happy with me.

"Okay, how'd you know?" she snapped.

"Oh it's a small world." I started walking toward the park, and she followed.

"Come on, Joel. How'd you know?"

"You let on things. A couple of weeks ago you didn't know that the Norwegian hockey team had won an exhibition against the Russians. Real big stuff in Norway. Tonight....well, come on. "Belly button? What Norwegian kid is going to call it that? Then every time you got serious, you'd forget to leave out words and mess up your tenses. You sounded just like you.

She looked at me. "How mad are you?"

"Not very. You didn't hurt anything and whenever you got serious you had good stuff to say.

"Well, thanks. I guess.....It was hard not to be serious after Vlad logged on. I just can't get it out of my head about his little brother getting his leg blown off. I just hate to think there's nothing we can do but talk about land mines some night. There ought to be more."

"I think there are some organizations that work on the issue. We could look into it. They're bound to have Web pages."

"Yeah, but guys like Fred and Art aren't going to go along with raising money for any Princess Diana Fund."

"Hard to say. We'll have to talk about it."

"I guess that's the place to start," she said.

We walked on for a few minutes without saying anything. Gosh, it was an incredible evening, what with the stars out, a moon rising, and all the smells of leaves and autumn and frost in the air. "I've got one question," I said. "Why'd you do it? I thought you hated the chat room."

She shrugged. "Oh, I figured somebody should keep an eye on you."

I laughed. "Why? Did you think I'd get seduced by some babe from the chat room? That I'd run away to meet her in Las Vegas or some place?"

She shrugged again. "Something like that....So you guessed all along that I was Sonja Norway, huh?"

"Oh, not all along, but I was pretty sure you were an American after a couple of weeks. The last couple of days I kind of wondered if it was you. Tonight cinched it."

She sighed. "Darn. I really wanted to be Sonja Noorway. Tall, blond, athletic. Some Nordic goddess on skis."

"I'll call you Sonja if you like."

"Na, that's okay. I don't really fit the name."

"I like Adrien better, anyway. And I've always liked small and sultry better than tall and blond."

She gave me a skeptical look. "Is that supposed to mean something?"

"Maybe."

"Something about you and me?"

"We could give it a try?"

She considered. "I'm not going to compete with your computer. At least not all the time."

"Not a problem. I'm thinking of cutting back the chat room to an hour and a half every other night and letting Fred or Vlad or somebody else do the hosting half the time." "Why not just end it? Try something new for a change?"

"Do you think we should?"

"Oh, it's we now, huh?"

"Well, I'd like to hear your opinion."

She thought for a long minute. "No, I guess we should keep talking."

"That's what I figure," I said, and took a breath because I wasn't sure how this next part was going to sound. "The way I see it, everybody's got to remember that we're all connected. That we're all caught in the same web together."

"Not caught. Part of the same web."

“Yeah, you’re right. Part of the same web. And if we remember that and keep talking, then maybe we’ll all come through all right. Maybe we’ll be able to handle what’s coming.”

She slipped her arm through mine. “All of us coming through all right,” she said. “Yeah, I think we’ve got to believe that.”

And after the chill of cyberspace, her hand was a warm, firm reality in mine.

APPENDIX C

LESSONS

Double Entry Journal Lesson

Introduction

- A double entry journal is divided into two sides. It provides you the opportunity to write down items that you feel are important from the text on one side and on the other side you may write a personal response and/or a question that you may have.

Modeling

- Let's read a snippet from chapter 1 of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Alex Haley.

When my mother was pregnant with me, she told me later, a party of hooded Ku Klux Klan riders galloped up to our home in Omaha, Nebraska, one night. Surrounding the house, brandishing their shotguns and rifles, they shouted for my father to come out. My mother went to the front door and opened it. Standing where they could see her pregnant condition, she told them that she was alone with her three small children, and that my father was away, preaching, in Milwaukee. The Klansmen shouted threats and warnings at her that we had better get out of town because “the good Christian White people” were not going to stand for my father’s “spreading trouble” among the “good” Negroes of Omaha with the “back to Africa” preachings of Marcus Garvey.

My father, the Reverend Earl Little, was a Baptist minister, a dedicated organizer for Marcus Aurelius Garvey’s U.N.I.A. (Universal Negro Improvement Association). With the help of such disciples as my father, Garvey, from his headquarters in New York City’s Harlem, was raising the banner of black-race purity and exhorting the Negro masses to return to their ancestral homeland—a cause which had made Garvey the most controversial black man on earth.

Still shouting threats, the Klansmen finally spurred their horses and galloped around the house, shattering every window pane with their gun butts. Then they rode off into the night, their torches flaring, as suddenly as they had come.

My father was enraged when he returned. He decided to wait until I was born—which would be soon—and then the family would move. I am not sure why he made this decision, for he was not a frightened Negro, as most then were, and many still are today.

<p>“I am not sure why he made this decision, for he was not a frightened Negro, as most then were, and many still are today...”</p>	<p>Why did he consider his father a frightened man because he wanted to move? Are there many Black men that are frightened today?</p>
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- This quote really stands out to me, it caused me to ask some questions. Sometimes when you read there are things that you encounter that make you stop and asks questions. This is one way you can utilize a double entry journal. You take what you are thinking about a particular phrase and write it down in the journal.
- Let’s continue reading a few more paragraphs.

My father was a big, six-foot-four, very black man. He had only one eye. How he lost the other one I have never known. He was from Reynolds, Georgia, where he had left school after the third or maybe fourth grade. He believed, as did Marcus Garvey, that freedom, independence and self-respect could never be achieved by the Negro in America, and that therefore the Negro should leave America to the white man and return to his African land of origin. Among the reasons father had decided to risk and dedicate his life to help disseminate this philosophy among his people was that he had seen four of his six brothers die by violence, three of them killed by white men, including one by lynching. What my father could not know then was that of the remaining three, including himself, only one, my Uncle Jim, would die in bed, of natural causes. Northern white police were later to shoot my Uncle Oscar. And my father was finally himself to die by the white man’s hands.

It has always been my belief that I, too, will die by violence. I have done all that I can to be prepared.

<p>“It has always been my belief that I, too, will die by violence. I have done all that I can to be prepared”</p>	<p>Knowing that Malcolm X died by violence, I think it is very interesting that he predicted his own death.</p>
--	---

- This quote stood out to me as well. This is another way you can utilize the double entry journal.
- What is the difference between how I utilized the double entry journal initially and how I am utilizing it now?
 - Instead of asking a question I made a comment that indicated how I felt a bout that particular statement.
 - There is more than one way that this strategy can be utilized.

Guided Practice

- Let’s continue reading a few more paragraphs.

I was my father's seventh child. He had three children by a previous marriage—Ella, Earl, and Mary, who lived in Boston. He had met and married my mother in Philadelphia, where their first child, my oldest full brother, Wilfred, was born. They moved from Philadelphia to Omaha, where Hilda and then Philbert were born.

I was next in line. My mother was twenty-eight when I was born on May 19, 1925, in an Omaha hospital. Then we moved to Milwaukee, where Reginald was born. From infancy, he had some kind of hernia condition which was to handicap him physically for the rest of his life.

Louise Little, my mother, who was born in Grenada, in the British West Indies, looked like a white woman. Her father *was* white. She had straight black hair, and her accent did not sound like a Negro's. Of this white father of hers, I know nothing except her shame about it. I remember hearing her say she was glad she had never seen him. It was of course, because of him that I got my reddish-brown "mariny" color of skin, and my hair of the same color. I was the lightest child in our family. (Out in the world later on, in Boston and New York, I was among the millions of Negroes who were insane enough to feel that it was some kind of status symbol to be light complexioned—that one was actually fortunate to be born thus. But, still later, I learned to hate every drop of that white rapist's blood that is in me.)

Our family stayed only briefly in Milwaukee, for my father wanted to find a place where he could raise our own food and perhaps build a business. The teaching of Marcus Garvey stressed becoming independent of the white man. We went next, for some reason, to Lansing, Michigan. My father bought a house and soon, as had been his pattern, he was doing free-lance Christian preaching in local Negro Baptist churches, and during the week he was roaming about spreading word of Marcus Garvey.

- Let's stop here. Lets take a moment to look back on this passage.
 - What is something that stood out to you from this section?
 - Why did that stand out to you?
 - What did that make you think of?
 - Did it push you to ask any further questions?

Insert example provided by participants	Insert example provided by participants
Insert example 2 here.	Insert example 2 here.

Independent Practice

- The participants will read the remainder of the passage.
- The researcher will go around to monitor the work of the participants. Being free to assist where needed.
- After they have finished reading and completing their journals, the participants (if willing) will then share with the group.

Closing

- What did we discuss today?

Extended Response Question Lesson

Introduction

- Extended Response Questions are those questions that are asked when you are checking for comprehension after you read a text or a portion of a text.
- Feel free to use highlighters and your pens/pencils to identify where you have found the answers to the questions.
- Lets number the paragraphs for the first three pages, I find that numbering may help when you are trying to locate an answer.

Modeling

- Let's read a snippet from chapter 1 of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Alex Haley.

When my mother was pregnant with me, she told me later, a party of hooded Ku Klux Klan riders galloped up to our home in Omaha, Nebraska, one night. Surrounding the house, brandishing their shotguns and rifles, they shouted for my father to come out. My mother went to the front door and opened it. Standing where they could see her pregnant condition, she told them that she was alone with her three small children, and that my father was away, preaching, in Milwaukee. The Klansmen shouted threats and warnings at her that we had better get out of town because “the good Christian White people” were not going to stand for my father’s “spreading trouble” among the “good” Negroes of Omaha with the “back to Africa” preachings of Marcus Garvey.

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Still shouting threats, the Klansmen finally spurred their horses and galloped around the house, shattering every window pane with their gun butts. Then they rode off into the night, their torches flaring, as suddenly as they had come.

My father was enraged when he returned. He decided to wait until I was born—which would be soon—and then the family would move. I am not sure why he made this decision, for he was not a frightened Negro, as most then were, and many still are today.

1. Why were the Ku Klux Klan members looking for Reverend Earl Little? How do you know? (On one of the post-its)
 - The Ku Klux Klan riders were looking for Reverend Earl Little because he was an organizer for Marcus Garvey and he was preaching Black race purity and that blacks should go back to their ancestral homeland. These facts were mentioned in both paragraphs one and two. (On another post-it)
(this is how you respond to an extended response question. They often require you to go back into the text and simply answer the questions)

Guided Practice

- Let's continue reading a few more paragraphs

My father was a big, six-foot-four, very black man. He had only one eye. How he lost the other one I have never known. He was from Reynolds, Georgia, where he had left school after the third or maybe fourth grade. He believed, as did Marcus Garvey, that freedom, independence and self-respect could never be achieved by the Negro in America, and that therefore the Negro should leave America to the white man and return to his African land of origin. Among the reasons father had decided to risk and dedicate his life to help disseminate this philosophy among his people was that he had seen four of his six brothers die by violence, three of them killed by white men, including one by lynching. What my father could not know then was that of the remaining three, including himself, only one, my Uncle Jim, would die in bed, of natural causes. Northern white police were later to shoot my Uncle Oscar. And my father was finally himself to die by the white man's hands.

It has always been my belief that I, too, will die by violence. I have done all that I can to be prepared.

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1. What physical traits did Malcolm X inherit from his grandfather? (this is on a post-it) The other post-it will be blank because the students will answer it and I will write it down.

Independent Practice

- The participants will read the remainder of the passage.
- After they have finished reading, the participants will be given a question that is on a post it on the board. They will then respond to their question independently on separate sheets of paper.
- The question: *Why did Malcolm X's family have to move into another house on the outskirts of East Lansing?*
- After they have finished completing the question, the participants (if willing) will then share with the group.

Closing

- Review the answers

Ask the question—What did we discuss today?

APPENDIX D

READING COMPREHENSION INSTRUMENTS

American Culture

1. The Enlightenment took place in the
 - a. 1600s
 - b. 1700s
 - c. 1800s
 - d. 1900s

2. Isaac Newton
 - a. demonstrated that planets revolved around the sun
 - b. explained where humans evolved from
 - c. tested theories on animals
 - d. explained how objects on earth and in the sky behaved

3. Galileo Galilei
 - a. explained how objects on earth and in the sky behaved
 - b. demonstrated that planets revolved around the sun
 - c. tested the laws of physics
 - d. developed the scientific method

4. Why did the colonial children stop their education after the elementary grades?
 - a. They were tired of school
 - b. They went to work
 - c. Their teachers quit

- d. The school was too far away from their house
-
- 5. Benjamin Franklin was born in
 - a. New York in 1716
 - b. Washington, DC 1806
 - c. Boston in 1706
 - d. Philadelphia 1916

 - 6. Where was Benjamin Franklin's first job?
 - a. His father's candle and soap shop.
 - b. His brother's printing shop.
 - c. In a science laboratory.
 - d. In a grocery store.

 - 7. What was the name of Benjamin Franklin's publication?
 - a. The Rich Man's Book
 - b. The Poor Almanack
 - c. Rich Benjamin's Almanack
 - d. Poor Richard's Almanack

 - 8. Benjamin Franklin invented the lightning rod which
 - a. decreased the cost of electricity bills.
 - b. reduced the risk of fire started by electrical storms.
 - c. decreased the average rainfall per year
 - d. reduced the number of people struck by lightning.

 - 9. Benjamin Franklin flew a kite during a thunderstorm to prove that
 - a. rain is wet
 - b. thunder is loud
 - c. lightning can injure people and animals
 - d. lightning is a form of electricity.

 - 10. Benjamin Franklin invented bifocals
 - a. to correct both far and nearsightedness
 - b. to protect eyes from the sun
 - c. for fashion
 - d. so that the rich could see better

Reading Comprehension Instrument for

The Conquistadores

1. Conquistadores were
 - a. Spanish soldiers who led military expeditions in the Americas
 - b. A Spanish singing group
 - c. French soldiers who led military expeditions in Europe
 - d. Spanish soldiers who led military expeditions in Brazil

2. Who did the governor of Cuba send to present-day Mexico in 1519?
 - a. Moctezuma
 - b. Malinche
 - c. Hernan Cortes
 - d. Bernal Diaz

3. The Aztec Empire ruled
 - a. 600 people
 - b. 16 people
 - c. thousands
 - d. millions

4. The conquistadores Hernan Cortes had _____ soldiers.
 - a. thousands
 - b. 600
 - c. millions
 - d. 16

5. Malintzin helped Cortes by
 - a. fighting in his army against the Aztecs.
 - b. interpreting and advising about the Aztecs.
 - c. making weapons for Cortes's soldiers
 - d. taking care of the horses

6. Why did Moctezum send Cortes gits?
 - a. Moctezuma wanted to thank Cortes for being a good friend.
 - b. Moctezuma wanted to send him early holiday gifts.
 - c. Moctezuma hoped to keep Cortes away.
 - d. Moctezuma wanted Cortes to be the first to try out his new fashion line.

7. Which disease had a significant impact on both the Incas and the Aztecs?
 - a. smallpox
 - b. H1N1
 - c. The West Nile virus
 - d. HIV/AIDS

8. Atahualpa was the ruler of
 - a. the Aztecs
 - b. the Americans
 - c. the Incans
 - d. the British

9. Who did Francisco Pizarro kidnap?
 - a. Atahualpa
 - b. Ponce de Leon
 - c. Cortes

10. What year did Ponce de Leon reach Florida?
 - a. 1913
 - b. 2013
 - c. 1313
 - d. 1513

Reading Comprehension Instrument for

The Movement to End Slavery

1. What is one way that John Fairfield helped enslaved African Americans escape to freedom?
 - a. Disguising them as a part of a funeral procession.
 - b. Hiding them in the back of a truck.
 - c. Sneaking them through the woods.
 - d. Disguising them as a group of college students

2. William Lloyd Garrison published an abolitionists newspaper called
 - a. The Slave
 - b. The Abolitionist
 - c. The Liberator
 - d. The Northern Star

3. In 1833 William Lloyd Garrison helped found the
 - a. NAACP
 - b. American Pro-Slavery Society
 - c. Ku Klux Klan
 - d. American Anti-Slavery Society

4. Members of the Anti-Slavery Society sent petitions to congress asking to
 - a. continue slavery
 - b. end all federal support of slavery
 - c. discontinue the Jim Crow Laws
 - d. receive discounts at the grocery store

5. Frederick Douglas was born
 - a. a free man
 - b. into slavery
 - c. a white man
 - d. a member of the Anti-Slavery Society

6. Frederick Douglass secretly learned how to
 - a. read and write
 - b. how to run fast
 - c. cook
 - d. swim in the lake

7. Many people were impressed by Frederick Douglass's
 - a. singing voice
 - b. strength
 - c. public speaking skills
 - d. swimming skills

8. What kind of newspaper was the North Star?
 - a. A pro-abolition newspaper
 - b. A fashion newspaper.
 - c. An entertainment newspaper
 - d. A sports newspaper

9. The Underground Railroad was
 - a. a network of people that aided in the escape of enslaved African Americans.
 - b. an underground location where abolitionist met
 - c. a train station that took passengers from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia.
 - d. a meeting place for slaves

10. Harriet Tubman
 - a. was a famous speaker
 - b. only led her family to freedom
 - c. led her family and 300 other slaves to freedom
 - d. was a famous singer

Reading Comprehension Instrument for

Into the Game

1. Where were the characters in the story?
 - a) on a plane
 - b) on a subway train
 - c) on a bus
 - d) In a New York city taxi

2. How would you describe the boys in the story?
 - a) Bored
 - b) Very social
 - c) Lonesome
 - d) Popular

3. This was the _____ time Dupree had received a paycheck.
 - a) First
 - b) Second
 - c) Third
 - d) Last

4. The boys received the money they earned minus
 - a) their lunch money
 - b) social security and federal taxes
 - c) dues
 - d) the cost of stamps

5. How does Dupree react to being a taxpayer?
 - a) he is excited
 - b) he is afraid
 - c) he is upset
 - d) he is flattered

6. The boys in the story were in
- a) college
 - b) graduate school
 - c) high school
 - d) elementary school
7. The boys have summer jobs
- a) in a mailroom
 - b) at a school
 - c) in the neighborhood
 - d) in a park downtown
8. In the Bronx the boys were
- a) respected by many
 - b) feared by their peers
 - c) considered to be weak
 - d) considered to be nice
9. The people riding with them on the bus
- a) liked them
 - b) feared them
 - c) felt sorry for them
 - d) wanted to talk to them
10. The government _____ money for taxes.
- a) contributed
 - b) donated
 - c) withheld
 - d) dispersed
11. When it came to talking to girls that they liked, the boys
- a) had been successful
 - b) were not nervous
 - c) were very skilled
 - d) were unsuccessful
12. Compared to last year the boys were
- a) muscular
 - b) funnier
 - c) more honest

d) shorter

13. When the girls were staring at the boys, the storyteller was afraid DuDu would

- a) stare back at them
- b) speak to the girls
- c) start getting upset about his tax deductions again
- d) begin to dance

14. At first, Dupree was more focused on _____ than on the girls in the car

- a) his friends
- b) his car
- c) his paycheck
- d) his sunglasses

15. When the storyteller thought to himself “Get into the game” he meant

- a) he wished he played basketball instead of work
- b) he wanted to play a game with his friends
- c) he should try to talk to the girls
- d) he should not play games with the money from his paycheck

Reading Comprehension Instrument for

The Alley

1. What time of day does this story take place?
 - a. very early morning
 - b. late at night
 - c. early in the evening as the sun is setting
 - d. In the middle of the afternoon

2. The skinny boy is dressed in a
 - a. shirt and tie
 - b. baggy khaki pants and an oversized shirt
 - c. a sweat suit
 - d. a soldier's uniform

3. The skinny boy has stolen a
 - a. purse
 - b. car
 - c. library books
 - d. a Pendleton shirt

4. Why is Mrs. Ramirez screaming?
 - a. She is looking for her children.
 - b. She fell down in a puddle of water
 - c. She saw a mouse
 - d. Someone has just stolen her purse.

5. Where was Cesar Rojas coming from?
 - a. the public library
 - b. the public restroom
 - c. home
 - d. Spanish class

6. What is the first thing that the skinny boy throws at Cesar?
 - a. a stack of books
 - b. a long wooden stake
 - c. a banana
 - d. a large rock

7. Where is this story taking place?
 - a. on a farm
 - b. in a library
 - c. in a busy city neighborhood
 - d. in a school building

8. Why are there plastic bags filled with garbage flying back at Cesar?
 - a. The skinny boy is throwing them at Cesar.
 - b. Cesar is running behind a garbage truck.
 - c. The neighbors are throwing them at Cesar because it is trash day.
 - d. Trash bags are falling from the sky

9. Why did Cesar leave his friends and travel to another neighborhood?
 - a. To do all of his grocery shopping.
 - b. To go to the public library
 - c. To go to high school
 - d. To go to work

10. Cesar and his friends were always under suspicion by the sheriffs because of the
 - a. color of their skin
 - b. schools that they went to
 - c. food that they ate
 - d. the neighborhood that they lived in
 - e. both a and d
 - f. both b and c

11. Cesar and his friends
 - a. played soccer in the neighborhood fields.
 - b. built go carts and raced them in the alleys.
 - c. all made straight A's in school.
 - d. were a singing group.

12. The thief lunges at Cesar from the bushes with a _____ in his hands.
 - a. broken bottle

- b. large book
- c. baseball bat
- d. golf club

13. When the thief lunges at Cesar, he protects himself against the weapon with

- a. his hands
- b. a book
- c. dark glasses
- d. a trash can

14. Cesar finds out that the thief is his

- a. best friend
- b. teacher
- c. uncle
- d. cousin

15. The thief's name is

- a. Lalo
- b. Cesar
- c. Justin
- d. Barrio

16. How does the story end?

- a. Cesar and the thief both end up in the hospital.
- b. The thief offers Cesar drugs.
- c. The thief ends up in jail
- d. Cesar lets the thief go grabs the purse and walks away.

Reading Comprehension Instrument

For **Y2K.CHATRM43**

1. Adrien and Joel were
 - a) friends and neighbors
 - b) enemies and competitors
 - c) masters and writers
 - d) politicians and web addicts

2. Adrien was concerned about Joel's
 - a) optimistic outlook
 - b) therapeutic point of view
 - c) negative outlook
 - d) cheery point of view

3. Joel spent a lot of time worrying about the
 - a) world's problems
 - b) world's beauty
 - c) world's religions
 - d) world's economic issue

4. The catchphrase "*fin de millenaire angst*" means
 - a) the anger about the millennium
 - b) the fear of the end of the millennium
 - c) the end angle of the millennium
 - d) the fear of the last millionaire

5. The main idea for Y2KCHATRM43 was to
 - a) discuss the world's problems
 - b) solve the world's problems
 - c) make fun of the world's problems

- d) count the number of log-in's
6. The regular people that were logged in wanted to
- a) plan to meet
 - b) get tattoos
 - c) talk about smaller issues
 - d) make their own rules
7. The evening's question was about the future of
- a) international travel immigrants
 - b) other countries helping each other out
 - c) other countries being nice together
 - d) other countries armed forces sharing tactics
8. Sonja often brought up
- a) serious medical issues
 - b) important academic issues
 - c) distracting personal issues
 - d) depressing issues
9. When Vlad logged in he told them about
- a) a bomb blowing his brother's leg off
 - b) Dennis Rodman's hair color
 - c) his body piercings
 - d) closing down the site
10. How did Sonja feel about international peacekeeping?
- a) Guns should never be used in any place in the world.
 - b) People should have to deal with their own problems all over the world.
 - c) There is no such thing as peacekeepers with weapons in any place in the world.
 - d) In order to protect innocent people from dying the world has to do something.
11. What problem did Fred see about international peacekeeping?
- a) The U.S. never gets involved
 - b) The U.S. only helps sometimes
 - c) The U.S. always pays for it
 - d) Fighting for good is always worth the effort

12. Who was logging on as Sonja?

- a) Jill
- b) Joel's mom
- c) Adrien
- d) Cal

13. How did Joel know who Sonja really was?

- a) She didn't know about events in Norway and her spelling was good too often
- b) She was too serious about misspelling words and knew too much about European events
- c) She didn't know about events in the U.S. or the correct term for navel
- d) She knew too much about hockey and body piercing.

14. Why did someone pretend to be from Norway?

- a) To make sure everyone followed the rules
- b) To make sure Joel didn't get bad grades
- c) To make sure Joel did not get depressed
- d) To make sure someone watched out for Joel

15. Why was Joel thinking about limiting his computer time?

- a) To spend more time with Vlad
- b) To spend more time reading
- c) To spend more time with his parents
- d) To spend more time in the real world

APPENDIX E

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS OF ENGAGED READING

Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading for
American Culture

Pre-assessment

1. Who was Galileo Galilei?

2. What is the Scientific Revolution?

3. Who was Benjamin Franklin?

Drawing

Utilize the space below to draw a picture that represents the text. Clearly label all parts of the picture.

Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading for
The Conquistadores

Pre-assessment

1. Who were the Conquistadores?

2. What were the Aztecs?

3. Who discovered Florida?

Drawing

Utilize the space below to draw a picture that represents the text. Clearly label all parts of the picture.

Performance Assessment of Engaged Reading for
The Movement to End Slavery

Pre-assessment

1. What do you know about the movement to end slavery?

2. What is an abolitionist? Who were some of the well-known abolitionist?

3. Who were some of the African Americans that fought to end slavery?

Drawing

Utilize the space below to draw a picture that represents the text. Clearly label all parts of the picture.

Drawing

Utilize the space below to draw a picture that represents the text. Clearly label all parts of the picture.

Drawing

Utilize the space below to draw a picture that represents the text. Clearly label all parts of the picture.

Drawing

Utilize the space below to draw a picture that represents the text. Clearly label all parts of the picture.

APPENDIX F

EXTENDED RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Extended Response Questions to
American Culture

1. Who was Galileo Galilei?

2. What is the scientific revolution?

3. Who was Benjamin Franklin?

4. How did Benjamin Franklin make life better for people?

Extended Response Questions to

The Alley

1. Why is Cesar chasing the skinny boy?

2. Why was Cesar so familiar with the alley that he was running in?

3. What was Cesar's connection to the skinny boy that he was chasing?

Extended Response to Questions to

The Conquistadores

1. What is a Conquistadores?

2. Who was Hernan Cortes?

3. Who was Moctezuma?

4. What happened when Ponce de Leon reached Florida?

Extended Response Questions to

The Movement End to Slavery

1. What is an abolitionist? Explain in detail.

2. Did white people help in the movement to end slavery? If so, how?

3. Who were some of the African Americans that led the movement to end slavery?

4. What did those African Americans do to help end slavery?

Extended Response Questions to

Into the Game

1. What was Dupree's issue with FICA?

2. Why did the narrator refer to himself and his friends as "three of the weakest dudes"?

3. What does the phrase "get into the game" mean in this story?

Extended Response Questions to

Y2K.CHATRM43

1. Why is Joe on the computer so much?

2. Why are some of the characters concerned about Joe being on the computer?

3. Is Joe's chat room helping to solve some of the world's problems? Why or Why not?

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