CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH WRITING: AN ANALYSIS OF

WRITING TASKS IN ELEVENTH GRADE ELA TEXTBOOKS

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WRITING TASKS IN ELEVENTH GRADE ELA TEXTBOOKS

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This dissertation reports on a study of two widely used eleventh grade ELA textbooks for the opportunities they provide students to construct knowledge through writing. Data included every writing task in both textbooks (158 tasks) as well as the corresponding texts. Data analysis focused on (a) how cognitive demand, textual grist, and elaborated communication contribute to the rigor of a writing task, (b) how authentic the tasks are to the discipline of ELA, and (c) how writing tasks position students as intellectual authorities. This study contributes a new approach to determine the quality of ELA writing tasks and a detailed assessment of the writing tasks in the most widely used ELA textbooks. The findings from this study showed differences in the quality of ELA writing tasks types (text-based, non text-based, and creative writing), with text-based tasks ranking the highest quality for cognitively demanding work. Findings also showed that textual grist and opportunities for elaboration in addition to cognitive demand are essential factors when determining the overall rigor of text-based writing tasks (i.e., analyzing text-based ELA writing tasks for cognitive demand alone may inflate the rigor of the task). Further findings on writing task quality describe the level of disciplinary authenticity and intellectual authority contained in ELA textbook writing tasks and why these features are important in determining the

quality of ELA writing tasks. The findings from this study suggest the importance of using a disciplinary-specific theory of task quality, including a three-part model of rigor, disciplinary authenticity, and intellectual authority, to assess the quality of ELA writing tasks. Additionally, this study provides suggestions for practitioners including how teachers might revise and supplement ELA textbook writing tasks in order to support student writing.

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PREFACE

I would like to acknowledge the teachers, colleagues, friends, and family who supported me throughout this process. Thank you for fostering and reaffirming my passion for education.

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1.0   INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF STUDY

1.1   PROBLEM STATEMENT

Current research has shown that high school students do not graduate with the writing proficiency that they need for college (Achieve, Inc., 2005; ACT, 2005; Chait & Venezia, 2009; Conley, 2003a; Graham & Perin, 2007; National Commission on Writing, 2003; Persky, Daane, & Jin, 2003; Salahu-Din, Persky, & Miller, 2008; Southern Regional Educational Board, 2006). According to research, there are at least two significant reasons why students graduate without the needed level of proficiency. The first reason is that high school students do not engage in writing experiences that will prepare them for the kind of writing necessary upon graduating from high school (Addison & McGee, 2010; Kiuhara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2008); namely, writing that demands high level thinking and reasoning. In fact, the results of a national survey of writing practices at the high school level showed that students were rarely asked to complete analytic or interpretive writing assignments (Kiuhara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009). Instead, according to recent research on writing, students' writing reflects the demands of high stakes writing assessments that often do not emphasize problem solving or inquiry (Applebee & Langer, 2013). More than this, these high stakes writing assessments limit "the genres and purposes for which students are asked to write, narrowing the

audiences and the types of writing students are learning to address" (Applebee & Langer, 2013, p. 31).

A second significant reason why students graduate without the writing proficiency needed for college is because they have limited opportunities to participate in extended writing. Research has suggested that even in English classes, a typical student produces only 1.6 pages per week of extended prose[1] (Applebee & Langer, 2013). Instead, high schools emphasize "bare bones" writing due to demands on teacher time (Mosley, 2011) and influences of high-stakes testing (Applebee & Langer, 2013; Fanetti, Bushrow, & DeWeese, 2010; Scherff & Piazza, 2005). To put the problem concisely, high school students are not writing in a way that requires high level thinking, reasoning, or significant elaboration.

Unlike high school writing tasks, college writing tasks ask students to engage in extended writing that requires high level reasoning, such as analyzing conflicting points of view or multiple perspectives, supporting arguments with reasons and evidence, making inferences, and applying knowledge in original ways (Addison & McGee, 2010; Conley, 2007; National Research Council, 2002; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001). In order for high school students to engage in the rigorous, high quality types of writing needed for college, they need to have opportunities to construct knowledge in meaningful ways. The meaningful construction of knowledge requires learning opportunities that ask students to "interpret, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate information…rather than to merely reproduce it" (Newmann, Lopez, Bryk, 1998, p. 17). Such work also involves building on a prior knowledge base to reach an in-depth understanding (Newmann et al., 1998). Students who do not receive opportunities to engage in rigorous writing

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[1] Applebee and Langer (2013) defined extended prose as a paragraph or more

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opportunities will not be prepared for the types of writing that professors expect at the college level.

In 2010, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) movement began as an attempt to increase educational rigor across the United States. One of many issues the CCSS has sought to improve is college readiness in both English Language Arts (ELA) and writing. Since states' widespread adoption of the CCSS[2], textbook companies that publish ELA materials claim that they have included writing tasks in their new textbooks that align to the CCSS and that, presumably, address the writing skills that students need for college. There may be reason to question textbook publishers' claims of alignment, however, as past research on standards alignment and instructional resources, including curriculum and assessments, has shown these claims to be problematic. For example, a review of nine middle school science programs concluded that none would help students learn standards (Kesidou & Roseman, 2002). These programs were criticized for covering many topics superficially and for overemphasizing technical vocabulary. Research conducted by Rothman, Slattery, Vranek, and Resnick (2002) found that assessments were not aligned to a full range of standards and that "[s]tandards and objectives that call for high-level reasoning are often omitted in favor of much simpler cognitive processes" (Rothman, Slattery, Vranek, & Resnick, 2002, p. 29). In addition, research on ELA textbooks showed that ELA textbook questions and tasks emphasized knowing rather than learning or constructing knowledge in meaningful ways (Applebee, 1991; Appleby, Johnson, & Taylor, 1990a; Mihalakis, 2010; Zaharias, 1989). Specifically, research on questions in ELA textbooks revealed an overwhelming emphasis on low order questions (Applebee, 1991; Mihalakis, 2010; Zaharias, 1989) and that textbook questions have or assume one right answer

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[2] currently 43 states have adopted the CCSS

(Appleby et al., 1990a; Mihalakis, 2010) thus limiting students' opportunities to reason, analyze, interpret, and synthesize.

The writing tasks in such textbooks are worthy of study because textbooks are frequently-used tools in the ELA classroom (ACT & The Education Trust, 2004; Applebee, 1992; Applebee, 1993a; Goodlad, 2004; Sosniak & Perlman, 1990), yet little to no research to date has focused on the quality of writing tasks in ELA textbooks. Although aligning ELA writing tasks to the CCSS may be one step toward solving the problem of college readiness, there is little research to substantiate that the writing tasks in textbooks actually prompt students to construct knowledge in meaningful ways. Without a careful analysis of these tasks, ELA textbooks may perpetuate the problem of low quality writing tasks in high school ELA and give the false impression that their tasks elicit the kinds of writing that will prepare students for college. In this study, I analyzed the writing tasks in two widely used secondary ELA textbooks to examine the opportunities they provided students to construct knowledge through writing.

1.2   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature that framed my investigation of writing tasks in ELA textbooks included three major areas: (1) academic tasks and cognitive demand, (2), features of high quality writing tasks and (3) and the role and use of ELA textbooks. I began by drawing on Doyle's framework for academic tasks (1983, 1988) as he argued that academic tasks are important because they can define the way a student learns about a particular discipline. From there, I focus on research about theories of cognitive demand and the features of high quality ELA writing tasks. I conclude with a discussion of the quality of ELA textbooks and their use in the ELA classroom. I

used this literature to build on and expand existing theories of task quality for ELA writing tasks and created an analytical tool, which I used to analyze writing tasks in secondary ELA textbooks.

1.3   STUDY DESIGN

1.3.1   Purpose of study

The purpose of my study was to analyze writing tasks in two widely used CCSS-aligned eleventh grade ELA textbooks for the potential opportunities they afford students to construct knowledge through writing. Drawing on the review of literature, I created an analytical tool to assess the quality of writing tasks in CCSS-aligned[3] ELA textbooks. This research-based assessment tool contained five features of high quality writing tasks that enable constructing knowledge through writing: cognitive demand, textual grist, elaborated communication, disciplinary authenticity, and intellectual authority. This tool also contained guiding questions to frame the features in ways specific to secondary ELA and supported by ELA research[4]. In effect, my findings allowed me to determine how the writing tasks in these CCSS-aligned textbooks prepared students for constructing knowledge through writing in ways that can prepare them to meet the demands of college writing.

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[3] Textbooks marketed as CCSS-aligned
[4] Preliminary examples of ELA values include text-based interpretative and analytic writing tasks, the use of textual evidence in writing, and extended prose.

1.3.2 Research questions

In this descriptive study, I used two CCSS-aligned eleventh grade ELA textbooks to investigate students' opportunities to construct knowledge through writing. The main research question that guided my study was as follows: How do writing tasks in two CCSS-aligned eleventh grade ELA textbooks give students opportunities to construct knowledge through writing?

To help answer the main research question, I considered the following guiding questions:

a. How do different types of ELA writing tasks (text-based, non text-based, creative) position students to construct knowledge through writing?

b. How cognitively demanding are the writing tasks?

c. How much grist do texts used in text-based ELA writing tasks contain?

d. What types of opportunities do students have to engage in elaborated communications?

e. What is the overall rigor of text-based ELA writing tasks?

f. How authentic to the discipline of ELA are textbook writing tasks?

g. How do the writing tasks position students as sources of intellectual authority?

h. What assumptions are embedded in the writing tasks?

1.3.3 Research methods: Sample

The data that I collected for this study was drawn from teacher editions of CCSS-aligned ELA textbooks of the most recent editions at the beginning of this study. The textbooks were two widely used eleventh-grade ELA textbooks from best-selling educational publishers:

Holt McDougal. (2012). *Literature: American Literature.* USA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Prentice Hall. (2012). *Literature: The American Experience*. USA: Pearson Education, Inc. Publishing Company.

In order to fairly represent the potential writing experiences of students, I coded all of the writing tasks in each textbook. For the Holt McDougal textbook, I coded 64 writing tasks. These tasks included seven writing workshops, 20 writing wrap-ups, and 37 writing prompts. For the Prentice Hall textbook, I coded 94 writing tasks. These tasks included six writing workshops, 52 writing lessons, 30 tasks simply labeled "writing," and six research tasks. These writing tasks included both fiction and literary non-fiction texts and tasks from the beginning, middle, and end of the textbook. In total, I coded 158 writing tasks.

1.3.4   Research methods: Data collection and analysis

In order to answer my research question, I analyzed the potential opportunities for students to construct knowledge in textbook writing tasks in two steps. First, I coded the writing tasks in each textbook using a self-created research-based analytical tool. There are three components to the tool: 1) features of tasks that support the construction of knowledge through writing (cognitive demand, textual grist, elaborated communication, disciplinary authenticity, and intellectual authority); 2) guiding questions to frame each feature in ways specific to the discipline of ELA; and 3) descriptions of the degree (low, mid, high) to which each writing task addressed each of the features.

Second, I used an open coding structure within each of the five features to determine patterns; these patterns allowed me to describe each feature in detail. For example, open coding enabled me to gather data to answer questions such as *how do writing tasks position students as sources of intellectual authority?* Using an open coding structure allowed me to understand *how*

a student is being positioned as a source of intellectual authority. For example, does the task require a student to engage in academic conversations, publish his or her work, or make an original claim? Open coding in this way enabled me to reach a highly detailed level of analysis. Additionally, I used an open coding structure to analyze assumptions embedded within the writing tasks. Open coding for the assumptions allowed me to consider the cultural and genre-based knowledge students need in order to successfully engage in the writing tasks.

Currently, no research has addressed the intersection among secondary ELA textbooks, secondary ELA writing tasks, and task quality. My study not only provides a description of secondary ELA writing tasks, but it also provides an in-depth snapshot of the learning potential and intellectual work of ELA textbook writing tasks in the most commonly used ELA curriculum.

1.4   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.4.1   Foundation for studying academic tasks

Any curriculum is made up of a set of academic tasks that students encounter in classrooms (Doyle & Carter, 1984). Given this, studying academic tasks is essential in research on curriculum, student achievement, and learning. Doyle (1983) was first to study the concept of academic tasks and provide a theoretical framework for thinking about tasks across disciplines. He used the term "task" to designate the structures that organize and direct thought and action. Researchers study tasks in order to know that "the tasks students are working on give access to the kinds of cognitive processes that are likely to be necessary to accomplish the task" (Doyle,

1983, p. 162). For Doyle, *academic tasks* are the curricular events and processes that organize the work students do and the extent to which they engage the content. He used the term *academic tasks* across disciplines to focus attention on the following: the product students are asked to produce (e.g., an argumentative essay, a lab report); the operations used to create that product (e.g., memorizing a list of words) and the givens, or the resources that are available to students when they are learning (e.g., a model of a finished essay). Doyle (1991) considered academic tasks "curriculum in motion" and argued that they are central to teacher efforts to organize student cognition. Thus, academic tasks are embedded in the content students encounter on a daily basis.

Doyle differentiated the levels of cognitive demand placed on students by different types of tasks. He argued (1983) that considering the cognitive demand of academic tasks, rather than thinking about tasks in broad or general ways, is a necessary distinction because considering task type alone (e.g., division, vocabulary) does not provide information about the type of intellectual work a student is being asked to engage in to complete a task. He outlined four kinds of tasks: memory tasks, procedural or routine tasks, comprehension or understanding tasks, and opinion tasks. In differentiating the kinds of tasks, Doyle (1983) argued that rather than thinking about the type of task (e.g., argument, informative essay) scholars should consider the cognitive demands of the task. Considering the cognitive demand of a task rather than the "type" of task allows for more accurate understandings of the types of intellectual work in which students might engage. Therefore, Doyle argued that the intellectual work or cognitive demand of a task should be the focus, rather than the "type" of task. According to Doyle, labeling tasks by their type can lead to confusion about the actual intellectual work required. I used Doyle's theory on academic tasks and the cognitive demand required of tasks because he argued that the work

students do is defined by the tasks assigned, which ultimately impacts how students understand a discipline. Doyle's foundational ideas apply to my study on writing tasks because writing tasks have the potential to shape student learning, both about the process of writing and the content that they are writing about.

1.4.2 Learning through writing

The National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges (2003) sponsored by the College Board, called writing the *"Neglected R"* in American classrooms and emphasized the importance of writing ability as a tool both for learning and for economic growth and social advancement (Applebee & Langer, 2013). Combined with reading, "writing is a literate behavior that underlies disciplinary 'knowing'" (see Langer, 2011a). Constructing knowledge through engaging in academic writing tasks, which often requires writing in response to text, has the potential to shape student learning about both the process of writing and about the content they are writing about. In addition to shaping student learning, academic writing tasks provide the structure for student learning; in other words, as students begin to understand what tasks lead them to do they will "acquire information and operations that are necessary to accomplish the tasks they encounter" (Doyle, 1983, p. 161). To clarify, tasks provide a framework for constructing knowledge within a discipline that determines what students do and learn in the classroom. Engaging in academic writing, therefore, is a worthwhile task for students because of the complexity and richness of the process. In fact, writing is "among the most complex of human mental activities" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 3). Research has shown that writing significantly influences a student's understanding of a topic or text and confirms the importance of incorporating writing tasks into classroom learning activities (Graham & Hebert, 2010;

Langer & Applebee, 1987; Nelson & Calfee, 1998; Newell, 1984; Shanahan, 2006; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991). More importantly for this study, research has suggested that the kind of writing students are asked to complete in school has a direct influence on the ways in which students are asked to think (Applebee, 1981; Applebee, 1984; Fulwiler & Young, 1992; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Newkirk & Atwell, 1982).

1.5   SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of this study is two-fold. First, this study contributes to scholarship on ELA textbooks, which has primarily addressed reading questions, by focusing on the quality of writing tasks in ELA textbooks. Second, it expands on the current research on task quality in three ways. In addition to analyzing tasks for the cognitive demand, this study utilizes a three-part model of rigor that considers elaboration and textual grist in conjunction with thinking skills. Most of the previous work on cognitive demand and writing tasks has focused on students' opportunities to apply high order thinking skills, such as analysis versus recalling surface-level information (see Hess, 2005b for an example). I have built on such work by building a new three-part model to address the overall rigor of ELA writing tasks, with cognitive demand being one part of the model. This combined, three-part model allowed me to create a more accurate depiction of the overall rigor of text-based writing tasks. Second, this study analyzed three distinct ways that students construct knowledge through writing. While most research on task quality has only focused on the cognitive demand of the task, my study considers how students are asked to construct knowledge in ways that are rigorous, authentic to the discipline of ELA, and promote intellectual authority.

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2.0   REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The literature that frames my investigation of writing tasks in ELA textbooks includes research on three major topics: (1) academic tasks and cognitive demand, (2) features of high quality writing tasks and (3) and the role and use of ELA textbooks. Doyle's work on academic tasks (1983, 1988) provides a framework for my study as he justified the study of tasks and argued that they define the way a student thinks about a particular discipline. From there, I present research focusing on cognitive demand and features of high quality writing tasks, specifically cognitive demand, elaborated communication, disciplinary authenticity, intellectual authority, and textual grist. I conclude with a discussion of the quality and use of ELA textbooks, frequently used resources in the classroom. I use this literature to inform my analytical tool, which synthesizes the disciplinary practices and values in ELA.

2.2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1   Foundation for studying academic tasks

According to Doyle and Carter (1984), "curriculum consists of a set of academic tasks that students encounter in classrooms" (p. 130). Given this definition, studying academic tasks is essential in research on curriculum, student achievement, and learning. Doyle (1983) was one of the first to study the concept of academic tasks and provide a theoretical framework for thinking about tasks across disciplines. He used the term "task" to designate the structures that organize and direct thought and action. Researchers study tasks in order to know that "the tasks students are working on gives access to the kinds of cognitive processes that are likely to be necessary to accomplish the task" (Doyle, 1983, p. 162). For Doyle, *academic tasks* are the curriculum events and processes that organize the work students do and the extent to which they engage the content. Doyle (1991) considered academic tasks "curriculum in motion" and argued that they are central to teacher efforts to organize student cognition. He used the term academic tasks across disciplines to focus attention on the following: the product teachers ask students to produce (e.g., an argumentative essay, a lab report); the operations that create that product (e.g., memorizing a list of words) and; the givens, or the resources that are available to students when they are learning (e.g., a model of a finished essay). Thus, academic tasks are entrenched in students' everyday learning through the content they encounter on a day-to-day basis.

Doyle differentiated cognitive demands placed on students by types of tasks. He outlined four kinds of tasks: (1) memory tasks, (2) procedural or routine tasks, (3) comprehension or understanding tasks, and (4) opinion tasks. Essentially, these task types require students to construct knowledge in various ways, which affects how a student learns. Doyle (1983) further

classified these types of tasks according to the dimensions of ambiguity and risk. Doyle (1983) defined ambiguity as "the extent to which a precise answer can be defined in advance or a precise formula for generating an answer is available" and risk as "the stringency of the evaluative criteria a teacher uses and the likelihood that these criteria can be met on a given occasion" (p.183).

Drawing on the work of cognitive psychologists (Anderson, 1972; Brown, 1975), Doyle argued that memory tasks direct students to focus on surface-level features or sentence-level features of a text or writing task. Additionally, memory tasks require students to reproduce information previously encountered. Memory tasks are low in ambiguity and low in risk and require students to construct knowledge by merely reproducing previously encountered information.

Procedural or routine tasks direct students to follow a pre-determined process to solve a problem. These procedural or routine tasks are high in risk but low in ambiguity. An example of a routine task might include memorizing the temperature conversion formula and converting a number of Fahrenheit temperatures to Celsius. Here, the task continues to be a matter of memorizing information where there is a predetermined set of correct responses (low ambiguity), but this task would also carry substantial weight/risk, depending on the amount of information to be memorized, the difficulty of learning a formula, and classroom conditions (i.e., students consider the assignment to be serious/important).

In contrast, comprehension tasks direct students to construct knowledge by attending to conceptual structures and textual meaning contained within sentences. These tasks might ask a student to recognize transformed or paraphrased versions of information previously encountered, apply procedures to new problems or decide from among several procedures those which are

applicable to a particular problem, or draw inferences from information or procedures that they encountered previously. Comprehension-driven tasks might use procedures (especially in mathematics, for example), but direct students to understand why a particular procedure works or when it might be appropriate to use such a procedure.

When students are presented with difficult concepts, they often resort to memorization rather than forming an understanding of the concept (e.g., memorizing a sentence to define the hydrologic-cycle rather than forming a deep understanding of how the cycle works). Doyle defined these understanding tasks as containing high degrees of ambiguity and high degrees of risk. These tasks involve higher order cognitive processes (high ambiguity) where students must make decisions about how to use knowledge and skills (e.g., evaluating, inferring, and creating) and account for a large percentage of a student's grade in a system of strict accountability (high risk). An understanding task might be an investigation where students must construct a model that hums and dings given simple materials. Here, the task is highly ambiguous because a student cannot predict the precise nature of the correct answer or rehearse it in advance. This problem-solving activity is also high in ambiguity because students lack some information they need for solving the problem. As such, Doyle (1983) argued that "comprehension is a *constructive* process" and a higher level process than memorizing or following a set of procedures (p. 166). Thus, Doyle's category of comprehension tasks support active student learning through high order cognitive work such as organizing, inferring, evaluating, and analyzing; these learning activities require students to construct knowledge in complex ways.

During opinion tasks, students are expected to state a preference. Opinion tasks are high in ambiguity and low in risk. Answers do not come from predetermined sets of correct responses (high ambiguity). Instead, broad boundaries for acceptable answers exist (low risk). An opinion

task might take the form of a problem solving activity that presents students with highly ambiguous conditions because it requires students to decide how to use information in particular circumstances, but if this task is coupled with many acceptable ways for students to use the information, the conditions of risk are low.

Doyle's work on academic tasks and cognitive demand provides a rationale for the study of how writing tasks provide students with opportunities to construct knowledge. Doyle's (1983, 1988) theory of academic tasks applies to my study on ELA writing tasks because writing tasks have the potential to shape student learning within a discipline, determining what students do and learn in the classroom.

2.2.2   Learning through writing

The National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges (2003) sponsored by the College Board emphasized the importance of a particular classroom task: writing. This report called writing the *"Neglected R"* in American classrooms and emphasized the importance of writing ability as a tool both for learning and for economic growth and social advancement. Combined with reading, "writing is a literate behavior that underlies disciplinary 'knowing'" (see Langer, 2011a). When one writes, he or she creates meaning by using both experience and knowledge to construct a text and create relationships among words, sentences, and paragraphs (Wittrock, 1990). Thus, writing is a valuable tool for learning (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, & Wilkenson, 2004; Graham & Perin, 2007a), as it allows for one to gather, preserve, and communicate information with detail and precision.

Research has shown that there is a connection between rigorous writing tasks and student achievement. Rigor, cognitive demand, intellectual challenge, and cognitive challenge, terms

used somewhat interchangeably in this line of research, describe the level of intellectual work required of students to complete a task. A rigorous task promotes "ambitious intellectual work" for all students (Bryk, Nagaoka, & Newmann, 2000). Findings from research on cognitively demanding writing tasks have shown an increased quality of student work as well as increased student achievement on standardized test scores. For example, Matsumura, Garnier, Pascal, and Valdes (2002) conducted a study of 23 secondary teachers and 1,963 students in the Los Angeles Unified School District where they collected three assignments from every teacher. They found that "secondary students who received higher quality written assignments produced higher quality written work and scored higher on the reading and language portions of the Stanford Achievement Test" (p.1). Results from Newmann, Bryk, and Nagoaka's (2001) study showed similar results. They rated 2,000 writing assignments from 277 third, sixth, and eighth grade teachers for construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry[5], and value beyond school. They found a consistent and positive relationship between student exposure to high quality, cognitively demanding assignments and students' learning gains on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. In fact, classrooms with high quality, cognitively demanding writing assignments had learning gains 20% greater than the national average, and both lower and higher achieving students benefited from exposure to high quality, cognitively demanding assignments. Other research has pointed to an over-reliance on instructional activities that use straightforward applications of learned or routine steps (The Standards Company LLC, 2008a, 2008b), but that students produced higher quality work and scored higher on standardized achievement tests when they engaged in higher quality assignments (see Clare & Aschbacher, 2001; Matsumura et

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[5] They defined tasks guided by disciplined inquiry as those (1) using a prior knowledge base, (2) striving for in-depth understanding instead of superficial awareness, and (3) allowing for the expression ideas through elaborated communication

al., 2002; Newmann et al., 2001). Thus, research has clearly pointed to the benefits of exposure to high quality, cognitively demanding writing tasks for students.

Writing also allows students to be thoughtful and engaged when reading texts written by others (Graham & Hebert, 2010). Students can learn through writing to make their assumptions and premises explicit; in addition, writing teaches students to observe the rules of logic (Applebee, 1984). Constructing knowledge through writing promotes students' awareness of these issues in the material they read. Writing, then, can actively engage students in discovering and stating relationships between new and old information (Van Nostrand, 1979). In addition to actively engaging students and connecting new and old information, Emig (1977) identified several characteristics that writing shares with learning. Both require selection and connection; both are active and involve immediate self-feedback. Emig further argued that "writing involves the fullest possible functioning of the brain" and is a "multi-representational mode of learning" (p. 125). In other words, there is participation among the brain, hand, and eye thus making writing an active way to construct knowledge.

Academic writing tasks, which often require writing in response to text, have the potential to shape students' learning about both the process of writing and the content about which they are writing. Research has shown that writing assignments requiring students to integrate information from a text (or texts) enhances the recognition of inferences and knowledge transformation compared to assignments for which students are asked to explain, narrate, or summarize (Wiley & Voss, 1999); academic writing tasks also further students' comprehension of the texts under study (Miras, Sole, & Castells, 2008).

In addition to shaping student learning, academic writing tasks provide the structure for student learning; in other words, as students begin to understand what tasks lead them to do they

will "acquire information and operations that are necessary to accomplish the tasks they encounter" (Doyle, 1983, p. 161). Engaging in academic writing, therefore, can be a worthwhile task for students because the process requires them to construct knowledge in complex and rich ways. Fredericksen and Dominic (1981) summarized the elements of composing as follows:

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

This description of writing as a complex cognitive activity supports that writing is "among the most complex of human mental activities" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 3). Given the significance of writing, educational institutions have adopted influential writing programs and reforms such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), and Writing in the Disciplines (WID), all of which have advocated for improving writing in order to improve students' ability to think both across and within disciplines.

A related body of research has studied the ways that specific types of writing shape student learning in the classroom. Newell (1984) conducted one of the first studies on the ways in which writing influenced how students learn or construct knowledge from texts. He researched how eight eleventh grade students completed various writing activities in order to determine how these activities influenced students' learning. In this study, students wrote in the following ways:

note taking, answering study guide questions, and writing an essay. Newell found that students who wrote an essay better understood key concepts and engaged in planning, organizing, and reviewing than the students who participated in the note taking or study guide activities. He explained:

> [A]nswering study questions required planning at a local level rather than at a global level. While answering study questions may require a great deal of planning, the writer can only consider information in isolated segments. Consequently, while a great deal of information is generated, it never gets integrated into a coherent text, and, in turn, into the students' own thinking. Essay writing, on the other hand, requires that the writers, in the course of examining evidence and marshaling ideas, integrate elements of the prose passage into their knowledge of the topic rather than leaving the information in isolated bits. This integration may well explain why students' understanding of concepts from the prose passage was significantly better after writing essays than after answering study questions. (Newell, 1984, p. 282)

Langer and Applebee's (1987) research showed similar results. They also researched the relationship among reading, writing, and learning. In their study, students engaged in summary writing, note taking, analytic writing, and answering study guide questions after reading. Much like Newell, their findings showed that writing tasks such as taking notes, answering comprehension questions, and summarizing "lead to relatively superficial manipulation of the material being reviewed" (Applebee & Langer, 1987, p. 131). In contrast, when students engaged in analytic writing tasks, their attention was "more directly focused on the relationships that give structure and coherence to that information" (Applebee & Langer, 1987, p. 131). Problematically, though, Applebee and Langer (1987) found that "even the 'better' responses

show little evidence of well-developed problem-solving strategies or critical thinking skills" (p.4).

Marshall (1987) also examined the relationship between types of writing tasks and learning. He examined the effects of three types of writing tasks, restricted writing, personal analytic writing, and formal analytic writing, and found that extended writing (personal analytic writing and formal analytic writing) was associated with higher student achievement gains. Furthermore, he found that restricted writing (such as short answer questions) might have actually impeded students' understanding of literary texts because these straightforward tasks did not allow students to explore and elaborate on possible interpretations. Together these studies suggest that essay writing provides great opportunities for students to engage in reasoning as well as think flexibly and develop their ideas.

Additionally, Graham and Hebert's meta-analysis (2010) showed that increasing how much a student writes improves reading comprehension. They drew on research that demonstrated how writing has the theoretical potential for enhancing reading in three ways. First, as functional activities, reading and writing can work together to achieve specific goals, such as learning new ideas presented in a text (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000). To elaborate, writing about information in a science text "should facilitate comprehension and learning, as it provides the reader with a means for recording, connecting, analyzing, personalizing, and manipulating key ideas from the text" (Graham & Hebert, 2010, p. 4). Second, writing can enhance reading because the mental work (or the cognitive processes) needed to engage in reading is similar to the mental work needed to engage in writing (Shanahan, 2006). Third, reading and writing are both communication activities. When students have opportunities to write about new concepts or ideas, they learn them better (Graham & Perin, 2007). As such, when students write they gain

insight about reading by composing their own texts because the process of creating a text promotes students to be more thoughtful and engaged when reading text written by others (Nelson & Calfee, 1998; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991).

This research has demonstrated how extended academic writing positively influences students' understandings of a topic or text and confirms the importance of incorporating writing tasks into classroom learning activities. Perhaps more importantly, this research suggested that the type of writing students complete in school has a direct influence on the ways in which students think and construct knowledge (Applebee, 1981; Applebee, 1984; Fulwiler & Young, 1992; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Newkirk & Atwell, 1982).

2.3   COGNITIVE DEMAND AND TASK QUALITY

Given the relationship between tasks and student learning, a small but important body of research on task quality and cognitive demand emerged. The research on the quality of writing tasks has primarily focused on student opportunity to apply higher order thinking skills. When students engage in higher order thinking, they are required to "manipulate information and ideas in ways that transform their meaning and implications" (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993, p.2); this higher order thinking occurs when students "combine facts and ideas in order to synthesize, generalize, explain, hypothesize, or arrive at some conclusion or interpretation (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993, p.2). In contrast, lower order thinking occurs when students are asked to focus on receiving or reciting factual information or to follow rules (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). When students are treated as information receivers, teachers give students pre-specified knowledge to remember or information to recall (Goodlad, 1983; Newmann, King, &

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Carmichael, 2007); thus, students are not afforded opportunities to construct knowledge in ways that require high order thinking and reasoning, prominent concepts in the research on task quality. Students come to think of schoolwork, then, as a "series of contrived exercises" needed to earn credits and grades required for future success; however, for many students, this type of work is disengaging and leads to dropping out (Newmann et al., 2007, p. 2). Students must figure out how to comply with teachers' and test requirements rather than to use their minds to solve significant problems or answer interesting, challenging questions that require students to construct knowledge in meaningful ways. Research has indicated that students exposed to interesting, cognitively demanding tasks are more engaged in their schoolwork than students exposed to more conventional schoolwork (Avery, 1999; Kane, Khattri, Reeve, Adamson, & Pelvin, 1995; Marks, 1997; Newmann et al., 1996).

There is limited research that focuses specifically on the quality of *writing* tasks. Most research that exists on this topic has been conducted by (1) the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, (2) the National Centers for Research in Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), and (3) the Chicago Consortium for Quality Schools. This body of research not only provides educators and researchers tools for evaluating tasks, but it operationalizes the process of evaluating tasks by considering cognitive demand (Hess, 2005b; Matsumura et al., 2006) and authentic work (Bryk, Nagaoka, & Newmann, 2000; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Newmann, Lopez, & Bryk, 1998).

One of the first tools designed to specifically study the cognitive demand of writing tasks was designed by Karin Hess. Hess (2005b), a senior associate at the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, constructed Applying Depth of Knowledge (DoK) Levels in Writing, a tool that applied Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DoK) (1997) to

writing tasks. Hess's tool ranks four levels of writing, providing descriptors for all four levels. Level one, the lowest level, describes tasks that ask students to write or recite simple facts and focuses on basic ideas. Level two tasks require some "mental processing," but for a limited number of purposes and audiences. At this level, students are expected to use a simple organizational structure to connect ideas for tasks, such as composing a short, accurate summary. Level three tasks require students to engage in some higher level mental processing. At this level, students compose multi-paragraph essays. These essays may include complex syntax or demonstrate some synthesis and analysis. At this level, students make revisions to improve their precision of language and to produce a logical progression of ideas. Tasks at the highest level, level four, require higher level thinking. These tasks necessitate multi-paragraph essays that "demonstrate synthesis, analysis, and evaluation of complex ideas or themes and evidence of a deep awareness of purpose and audience" (p.1) and call for students to identify nuances, complexities, or consider multiple perspectives (Hess, 2005).

A second tool that addresses the cognitive demand of writing tasks is the Instructional Quality Assessment (IQA) tool (Matsumura et al. 2006). Building on task quality research, researchers at the University of Pittsburgh developed the IQA tool to assess the quality of ELA instruction. The IQA addresses four components: the overall quality of texts used in classrooms, the quality of classroom discussions of text, the quality of writing assignments given to students, and the assessment criteria used to score their writing. For my study, I focused on the IQA rubric that concentrates on the quality of writing tasks; other studies have provided evidence in support of the validity of inferences about students' learning opportunities derived from the ratings of the assignments (Clare & Aschbacher, 2001; Matsumura et al., 2002; Matsumura, Garnier, Slater, & Boston, 2008). The IQA rubric that focuses on the quality of writing assignments draws on the

levels of cognition from Bloom (1956). It contains levels that function on a continuum and places an emphasis on the extent to which students have an opportunity to engage in high level cognitive work. This dimension of the IQA tool is comprised of four levels of cognitive demand, and, like Newman et al. (1998) and Hess (2005), the highest levels of cognitive demand on the IQA rubrics require students to apply their knowledge in new ways or engage in analysis, synthesis, or evaluation.

The IQA rubric for the quality of writing tasks ranks the cognitive demand of the task on a scale of 1-4. Low scoring tasks earning a one ask students to respond to text in an isolated way or recall fragmented information about the text. For example, students might have to answer disconnected questions on a worksheet. Level two tasks generally ask students to construct a literal summary of the text or engage in surface-level information; these tasks require students to use little or no evidence to support their ideas or opinions. In order to earn the score of a three, tasks must contain an interpretative or analytical question about the text. With level three tasks, students engage with nuances that might exist within the text. Although these tasks guide students to a more difficult kind of question, level three tasks may provide limited opportunity for students to construct knowledge about the text (i.e., asking a challenging question but requiring a very structured or limited response). A task receiving the highest score of a four asks students to engage with an interpretative or analytical question about the text (like tasks that earn the score of a three), but *also* requires students to support their ideas with detailed evidence from the text. Additionally, tasks earning a four require an extended written response from students.

Like Hess and Matsumera et al., the Chicago Consortium for Quality Schools has also provided a framework to examine task quality. Fred Newmann, Anthony Bryk, and colleagues (Bryk et al., 2000; Newmann et al., 2001; Newmann et al., 1998) defined high quality

assignments as those that promote "authentic intellectual work." They articulated the characteristics of authentic intellectual work using three criteria: construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school. The first criteria, construction of knowledge, concentrates on the degree to which an assignment requires students to engage in cognitively demanding work such as organizing, interpreting, evaluating, or synthesizing prior knowledge to solve a new problem. Disciplined inquiry, the second criteria, focuses on the extent to which the assignment requires students to draw on a prior knowledge base, work towards an in-depth understanding, and share their ideas through elaborated communication. The last criterion, value beyond school, focuses on the applicability of the task to life outside the school setting (Newmann et al., 2001).

All three tools assess the complexity of thinking that students need to engage in to complete a given writing task. These tools all describe low level writing tasks as those asking for recitation or recall and high level writing tasks as those requiring analysis or interpretation. The tools differ in their level of specificity to content area subjects. The IQA is the most specific to ELA. IQA has been used in both ELA and math classrooms. The rubrics for each content area include features specific to ELA and math, respectively. The work of the Chicago Consortium for Quality Schools used three criteria (construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school) to assess the quality of tasks in both writing and mathematics, but the same criteria was used to assess both content areas. Hess's (2005b) tool is not discipline specific and can be applied to writing tasks in various content areas.

Research on cognitive demand and writing tasks is valuable to the field of ELA because cognitively challenging writing tasks have been associated with student gains on standardized tests (Newman et al., 2001; Matsumura et al., 2002; Matsumura et al., 2008). One study showed

that students who engaged in demanding assignments across grades three, six, and eight were more likely to show increased gains on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) than students who did not engage in such assignments (Newman et al., 2001). Findings also showed that students who received intellectually demanding writing assignments surpassed the average score of students taking the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills); students exposed to challenging writing tasks with both high and low prior achievement showed gains on the ITBS (Newman et al., 2001). Another study found that the quality of writing tasks positively and significantly predicted all reading comprehension outcome scores (for reading comprehension, vocabulary, and total reading) for sixth and seventh grade student performance on the Stanford Test of Achievement, 10th edition (SAT-10) (Matsumura et al., 2008). This research demonstrates that cognitively demanding writing assignments benefit students by improving the quality of their work as well as increasing test scores; as such, researchers and educators need to ensure that students are engaging in cognitively demanding writing tasks.

Research examining the effect of cognitively demanding writing tasks on student achievement has provided evidence that rigorous tasks are associated with an increased quality of student work (American Institutes for Research, 2005, 2007; Bryk et al., 2001; Clare & Aschbacher 2001; Matsumura et al., 2002; Newman et al., 1998). Research has shown that the rigor of assignments positively affected the quality of students' writing (i.e., the extent to which students addressed a topic and used appropriate and accurate supporting details from a text to support their assertions) (Matsumura et al., 2002) and the ability of students to demonstrate more complex intellectual performance in their work (e.g., submitting work with a greater number of elaborations and constructions of new knowledge) (Bryk et al., 2001).

This body of work informed my study by providing examples of ways to assess the quality of writing tasks. My study builds on and expands the work on task quality by creating an analytical tool to specifically evaluate secondary ELA writing tasks, including the features of Disciplinary Authenticity and Intellectual Authority. By analyzing and evaluating secondary ELA writing tasks using features of high quality tasks valued within the discipline of ELA, my research contributes to the body of knowledge on task quality, secondary ELA writing tasks, and secondary ELA textbooks.

2.4   HIGH QUALITY SECONDARY ELA WRITING TASKS

Building on the broader research concepts outlined in the above sections, research in the field of ELA has identified features of learning tasks that promote the construction of knowledge through writing. These features are (1) cognitive demand, (2) elaborated communication, (3) disciplinary authenticity, and (4) intellectual authority.

2.4.1   Cognitive demand

The first feature of high quality writings tasks is cognitive demand. This feature builds on the frameworks of cognitive demand outlined earlier in this chapter. Writing tasks that require students to construct knowledge in cognitively demanding ways "move beyond the reproduction of information students have read, heard, or viewed, and demonstrates construction of knowledge, where students take current knowledge and use that to construct new knowledge, creating and exploring new ideas" (American Institutes for Research, 2005, p. 25). Constructing

knowledge in cognitively demanding ways includes the ability of students to analyze, reason, argue, and interpret information (Bryk et al., 2000; Conley, 2007; Newmann et al., 2001; Newmann et al., 1998).

Research on task quality conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research (Bryk et al., 2000; Newmann et al., 2001; Newmann et al., 2007; Newmann et al., 1998) considered the rigor of a task as a key feature of authentic and demanding ELA work. This consortium sought to find ways to promote "more ambitious intellectual work" for all students (Bryk et al., 2000). In order to analyze task quality, they collected "typical" and "challenging" ELA tasks in grades three, six, and eight, and examined the intellectual or cognitive demands placed upon students with these tasks. Researchers assessed the intellectual work of the task and students' responses to the tasks. One important feature that they examined was the extent to which writing tasks asked students to construct knowledge in cognitively demanding ways; that is, how these tasks directed students to "interpret, analyze, synthesize or evaluate information ... rather than to merely reproduce information" (Newmann, et al., 1998, p. 17). Such construction of knowledge involved organizing, interpreting, evaluating, or synthesizing prior knowledge to solve new problems (Newmann, et al., 2001; Newmann et al., 2007). Newmann et al. (1998) found that 43% of the third grade writing tasks fell into the "no challenge" category as they "called for little construction of knowledge, requiring students only to fill in the blank or provide short answers…" (p. 23). Grade six and grade eight writing tasks showed little improvement: at these grades a greater number of tasks fell into the "moderate" or "extensive" challenge categories, but the majority of the writing assignments fell into the two lowest categories, "no challenge" and "minimal challenge."

Behind the principle of constructing knowledge in cognitively demanding ways is the idea that adult, real-world problems require constructing, not reproducing, meaning or knowledge (Newmann, et al., 2001). The results of a national survey of writing practices at the high school level showed that students were rarely asked to complete analytic or interpretive writing assignments (Kiuhara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009). Applebee (1983) found that generally:

> even when students are asked to write an essay, the essays were treated as tests of previous learning. The tasks for the students was one of repeating information that had already been organized by the teacher or textbook, rather than of extending or integrating new learning for themselves. (p. 3)

Applebee and Langer's (2013) more recent research reported similar concerns: middle and high school students were often asked to present expected content rather than to develop and defend their own interpretations. Thus, most writing tasks in middle and high school classrooms did not provide opportunities for students to construct knowledge in meaningful ways. Additionally, current research on writing shows that secondary students' writing reflected the demands of high stakes writing assessments that often did not emphasize constructing knowledge in cognitively demanding ways, such as through problem-solving or inquiry (Applebee & Langer, 2013). The recollection of information rather than constructing knowledge in cognitively demanding ways is problematic as it "constrains the genres and purposes for which students are asked to write, narrowing the audiences and the types of writing students are learning to address" (Applebee & Langer, 2013, p. 38). Furthermore, these constraints also affect the larger goals of the ELA curriculum, which include apprenticing students into the various disciplines of English as well as

preparing students to engage in the public discourse of a democratic society (Applebee & Langer, 2013).

Applebee and Langer's (2013) research on the construction of knowledge and cognitive demand built on previous work that focused on how students learn. For example, research by Resnick and Klopfer (1989) found that "knowledge is acquired not from information communicated and memorized but from information that students elaborate, question, and use" (p. 206-207). Additionally, research on writing by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) argued that when writing, students must go beyond telling what they know about a text and engage in knowledge construction, reasoning, and discourse with text. In short, research on ELA tasks contends that rigorous learning requires students to go beyond recalling surface level information and engage with a text in analytic or interpretive ways.

2.4.2   Elaborated communication

A second feature of high quality writing tasks in ELA is elaborated written communication. There are two characteristics of elaborated communication: length and the features of tasks that allow for students to write in elaborated or extended ways. Elaborated communication requires students to "draw conclusions or make generalizations or arguments and support them through extended writing" and focuses on how students use examples, illustrations, details, or reasons in their written responses (Newmann et al., 1998, p. 17).

However, recent research has found that assignments requiring students to write more than a single paragraph occur less than once a month in 50% of ELA, social studies, and science classrooms (Kiuhara et al., 2009), even though extensively communicating in writing, which typically includes analysis and interpretation rather than short sentences or fragments of thought,

increases student engagement and achievement (Newmann et al., 2001; Ray, 2006). Applebee and Langer (2006) reported similar results, based on data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress. In a more recent national survey, Applebee and Langer (2013) found that that the typical secondary student is expected to produce about 1.6 pages a week of extended prose for their English class and about 2.1 pages from science, math, and history/social studies combined, and Kiuhara et al. (2009) reported that high school students typically have only one or two opportunities a semester to practice evidence-based writing or to write papers of five or more paragraphs.

When students *are* asked to engage in extended writing about a text that involves analysis, interpretation, or personalization, they are likely to construct better understandings of the material (Langer & Applebee, 1987). In fact, Graham and Hebert's (2010) meta-analysis showed that extended writing had a strong and consistently positive impact on reading comprehension. They found that extended writing produced greater comprehension gains than simply reading the text, reading and rereading the text, reading and studying the text, reading and discussing the text, and receiving reading instruction. Tasks that allowed for elaborated communication not only supported comprehension, but also provided opportunities for students to use evidence to make claims, draw conclusions or make generalizations, and support conclusions with textual evidence, details, or reasoning (American Institute for Research, 2005, 2007; Grossman et al., 2009; Newmann et al., 2001). Students need opportunities to practice elaborated communication in school because the verbal, symbolic, and/or visual tools accomplished adults use "provide qualifications, nuances, elaboration, details, and analogies woven into extended narratives, explanations, justifications, and dialogue" (Newmann et al., 1998, p. 15). Thus, current expectations for student writing include that it be well reasoned, well

organized, well developed, and well documented with evidence from credible sources (Addison & McGee, 2010; Conley, 2007; National Research Council, 2002; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2002, 2004, 2006).

The research above demonstrates the necessity for secondary students to have opportunities to construct knowledge in text-based ways because the features of tasks that support elaborated communication tend to require students to use textual evidence in their writing. However, it is important to note that other types of ELA writing tasks, such as creative writing, may also support students to engage in extended and elaborated writing. For example, a creative writing task might require students to weave details and elaborations into an extended narrative or creative dialogue. This study considers the differences in elaboration and writing task type, and in Chapter 4 I will discuss how various types of ELA writing tasks require students to write in extended ways.

2.4.3   Disciplinary authenticity

A third feature of high quality writing tasks is disciplinary authenticity. Disciplinary authenticity means engaging in the types of reading, writing, talking, and reasoning as a junior member of a discipline's community (Petrosky, McConachie, & Mihalakis, 2010). As explained in the book *Content Matters*, this type of learning requires students to create an understanding of what is valued within a discipline; that is, what counts as a good question, evidence, problem, or solution within a given discipline (Petrosky et al., 2010). In order for this deep learning to occur, students need to have opportunities to construct disciplinary knowledge, such as knowledge in the disciplines of ELA (e.g., English literature, composition, linguistics, communication and rhetoric, journalism, and creative writing). Compared to broad, superficial, or generic reading

and writing tasks, tasks that position students to engage in inquiry within a specific discipline are more authentic, meaningful, and significant (Petrosky et al., 2010).

Tasks that are authentic to the discipline of ELA allow students the opportunity to engage in the "real work" in English; that is, its purpose extends beyond the task at hand and is similar to work that a student would do in college or if he or she were to pursue a career in English studies or other related fields, such as journalism or communications (Newmann et al., 1998). The skills required to be college ready in these types of English-related courses include the knowledge and skills that allow students to engage critically with texts and create well written, organized, and supported work in both oral and written format (Conley, 2007). For ELA, this work includes the following:

…crafting arguments in the ways that members of the discipline do: for example, articulating understandings and documenting analyses of texts, writing as an investigative reporter does, forming and warranting interpretations within and across texts and interpreting texts from different perspectives. (Petrosky et al., 2010, p. 132)

Authentic tasks in ELA may also require a student to read and write about literature from "historical, cultural, and theoretical perspectives [as] it is not just reading literature but learning to write about reading in a way that shapes the act of reading, a way of knowing that marks a literature major" (Carter, 2007, p. 400). Tasks such as the ones described (Carter, 2007; Conley, 2007; Petrosky et al., 2010) are examples of tasks that are authentic to the discipline of ELA; however, tasks that are authentic to the discipline of ELA may also ask students to create an original piece of creative writing or study and imitate author's craft. Given the expansive scope of ELA, my study has adopted a broad view of the writing tasks that are authentic to the discipline of secondary ELA.

Students need opportunities to engage in authentic tasks because by high school, students are required to grapple with subject-specific texts and tasks that require specialized, discipline-specific forms of knowledge. For example, in a high school ELA class a student may be expected to interpret the theme(s) of a set of poems or write a newspaper article, while in science class a student may be expected to write a lab report or engage in scientific argumentation. In order for educators to help their students become proficient readers and writers, educators must provide opportunities for students to construct knowledge in discipline-specific ways (Coffin, 2004; Moje, 2008; Monte-Sano, 2010; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Part of learning in a discipline, then, is learning the norms of practice for producing and communicating knowledge in each discipline (Bain, 2000, 2006; Gee, 2001; Hicks, 1995; Lemke, 1990; Moje, et al., 2004; Wilson & Wineburg, 1998; Wineburg & Martin, 2004).

Therefore, to learn deeply in a discipline such as ELA, students need to have opportunities to practice the ways that disciplinary knowledge production and communication can be routinely challenged and reshaped. When students have opportunities to purposefully engage in the various ways disciplines produce knowledge and communicate, students will be become accountable to the standards of knowledge, able to support their ideas with evidence that meets the standards of the discipline under study (Michaels et al., 2010). For instance, in ELA a student might be required to work with a poem to create a "sense of how the words and rhythms create tension or convey emotions" or to use evidence to support a particular interpretation of a character's emotion whereas a science student might be expected to write a lab report using proof drawn from an experiment" (Michaels et al., 2010, p. 5).

Giving students opportunities to engage in this type of disciplinary learning is particularly important because, as Carol Lee (2007) argued, subject area knowledge and skill is essential to

supporting adolescents becoming active participants in a democratic society. Although literacy educators and researchers recognize the power of knowledge, practices, and texts, Lee argued that literacy instruction should also be rich in content so that youth can gain access to the accepted knowledge within the disciplines. This learning, Lee contends, will give students the power to critique and challenge knowledge (2007). Theorists have argued that content areas are spaces where content knowledge about a discipline is actively created rather than passively memorized (Foucault, 1972; Haliday & Martin, 1993; Hicks, 1995; Lemke, 1990; Luke, 2000). As Moje explained (2008):

> …a person who has learned deeply in a discipline can use a variety of representational forms—most notably reading and writing of written texts, but also oral language, visual images, music, or artistic representations—to communicate their learning, to synthesize ideas across texts and groups of people, to express new ideas, and to question and challenge ideas held dear in the discipline and broader spheres. (p. 99)

Thus, tasks that are authentic to a discipline are tasks that allow students to actively construct knowledge in discipline-specific ways and will ultimately promote constructing knowledge within a given discipline such as ELA.

2.4.4   Intellectual authority

A fourth feature of high quality writing tasks is intellectual authority. Intellectual authority works with the other features (i.e., cognitive demand, elaborated communication, and disciplinary authenticity) to promote student learning.

Mayer (2012) defined intellectual authority as the meaningful, powerful, and transparent knowledge construction processes that support intellectual development. According to Mayer,

intellectual authority has to do with what and how a person knows as well as the ways in which a person attends to what others know. Having opportunities to develop intellectual authority allows one to represent his or her knowledge in personally and culturally meaningful ways and also to be willing and able to understand the divergent views of others. The notion of freedom in the development and exercise of intellectual freedom is a longstanding idea (Foucault, 1984; Habermas, 1984) based on the belief that a goal of education is to foster rational, independent thinking in students (Ross, 1994).

Despite the importance of representing one's own knowledge in personally and culturally meaningful ways, the research on this topic is somewhat limited. Existing research on intellectual authority has focused on the enactment of mathematical tasks (Cobb, Gravejeijer, Yackel, McClain, & Whitenack, 1997; Coburn, Russell, Kaufman, & Stein, 2012; Lampert, 1990), ELA textbooks (Sosniak & Perlman, 1990), and high school and college writing (Bartholomae, 1985; Bartholomae, 1988; Smagorinsky, Daigle, O'Donnell-Allen, & Bynum, 2010). Intellectual authority empowers a student's ability to construct his or her own knowledge. According to Mayer (2012) each of us holds intellectual authority to varying degrees, depending upon how much we know about a topic and the extent of our ability to consider alternative points of view on that topic. She explained that in order to hold intellectual authority about an issue or subject, one must know how different people have thought about that issue. To some extent intellectual authority and disciplinary authenticity are connected because in order to establish intellectual authority within a professional or academic field, "one must both become versed in the assumptions, methods, and shared understandings of that field *and* be able to weigh the relevant strengths and weaknesses of competing lines of thought in a principled and fair-minded fashion" (Mayer, 2012, p. 2-3). Mayer explained that these conjoined capacities—developing

and articulating an informed perspective and appreciating the divergent perspectives of others—is at the heart of intellectual authority.

Intellectual authority in education has been studied in limited ways. In mathematics, Coburn, Russell, Kaufman, and Stein (2012) conducted research on teachers' social networks and how these networks related to teachers' ability to sustain reform-related mathematics instructional strategies. They found that teachers and texts acted as the authority in the classroom, rather than providing students opportunities to share their mathematical reasoning. Sosniak and Perlman's (1990) research showed that ELA high school students found that the majority of academic work was organized around their ELA textbook. As such, these students saw the textbook as a self-contained and self-explanatory location of knowledge. Students reported that the teacher assigned readings and the accompanying questions from the textbook, which were mostly recall, rather than interpretive questions (Sosniak & Perlman, 1990). These studies, although few, demonstrate the infrequency of students being positioned as intellectual authorities in the classroom and the missed opportunities for students to explain and share their knowledge.

Other research on intellectual authority has addressed tensions around the ability of student writers to engage in and use disciplinary language. As David Bartholomae (1985) wrote in "Inventing the University," a college student writer has to "learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community" (p. 456). When college students are unable to participate in learning activities, such as writing, using the language of a discipline or are academically positioned in a way that makes it difficult to respond, they often "bullshit their way through their assignments to create the appearance of knowledge according to

scholarly specifications, even in its considerable absence" (Smagorinsky, et al., 2010, p. 369). Thus, students focus their writing on imitating style and word choice as an attempt to hide their lack of knowledge. In this vein, Bartholomae (1988) stated that "students have to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse" and in the course of this process "they must dare to speak [our language], or to carry off the bluff, since speaking and writing will most certainly be required long before the skill is 'learned'" (p. 273). In ELA and other disciplines, students may attempt to produce writing that they believe will impress their teachers by imitating the language and structures of academic writing that teachers have shared with them. It is when students are asked to produce writing that is beyond their ability that "academic bullshit" occurs (i.e., students use generic genre features of academic writing to create the impression that they have adequate content knowledge) (Smagorinsky et al., 2010).

Building on Bartholomae's work, Smagorinsky, Daigle, O'Donnell-Allen, & Bynum (2010) used a think-aloud protocol to research how one high school senior used "academic bullshit" as she composed an essay on irony and the inclusion of Beatrice's song in Shakespeare's play, *Much Ado About Nothing*. Smagorinsky et al. (2010) found that when the writer relied on generic features of academic writing to mask lack of content knowledge, it was not in a deceitful way. The student writer reflected, "I absolutely did not think of my actions as a deliberate deception, but rather a filling of space with the inconsequential" (p. 399). This study demonstrated how "bullshit in academic writing" functioned as a crutch for this writer. Since she did not have the required content knowledge needed to complete the writing task, she relied on her knowledge about the expectations of her writing. Thus, she attempted to gain intellectual authority through her use of language rather than her knowledge of the play's content.

Research on college writing and intellectual authority further highlights how students struggle with professors' expectations to negotiate the differing demands across the disciplines of the university, master content, and juggle multiple forms and types of essays. Sommers and Saltz's (2004) longitudinal study on college writing and intellectual authority examined the paradox of novice writers being positioned as experts in the classroom. They found that even the most proficient freshmen writers had trouble making overarching claims or interpretations and instead apprenticed expert writers by "repeating the ideas they encounter in the sources they read and the teachers they admire, using the material and methods of a course or discipline in demonstrated ways before making them their own" (p. 134). Thus, students first used sources as the location of knowledge before gradually positioning themselves as sources of knowledge.

Further exploring the issue of novice writers being positioned as experts, Lockhart (2008) described how a student writer must choose whether to make visible his or her "achieved authority or the lack of authority" (p. 3) in terms of the ideas presented as well as the preferred genres of presentation. These types of writing decisions may be difficult for college students, especially students who are not already enculturated to attend to the register and develop the skills valued by a particular field (Martin, Wignell, Eggins, & Rothery, 1986). Thus, when researching tasks in the ELA classroom it is worth considering whose knowledge is valued and whose is discounted. Sommers and Saltz (2004) found that freshmen students made the most improvements in writing when they accepted their status as novices and when they saw a greater purpose for writing beyond completing an assignment. Sommers and Saltz (2004) found that when students felt

> free to set their own intellectual agendas, many freshmen, particularly those who grew up
> in relatively homogenous communities, set off to explore their identities by selecting

courses that enable them, however covertly, to study themselves. It is most frequently in

these courses that novices discover they can 'give and get' something through writing. (p.

141)

This research demonstrates the importance of students not simply appropriating the discourse of

a discipline but becoming "critical intellectual thinker[s] who, instead of sitting passively on the

sidelines, can participate in the debates and conversations of [their] world in an active and

empowered way" (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010, p. 13). ELA writing tasks that foster students'

critical thinking build their ability to engage in meaningful learning experiences, and, on a

broader level, the empowerment that comes from engaging in both oral and written

communication as a critical thinker has broad implications including the ability to function as a

literate citizen.

2.5   ELA TEXTBOOKS

2.5.1   Quality of textbooks

My study used the five characteristics of high quality writing tasks discussed above to examine

the quality of ELA writing tasks in the most widely used curriculum materials in secondary ELA

classrooms: ELA textbooks, also commonly called literature anthologies or literature textbooks.

Teachers in the United States use and rely on ELA textbooks in their classrooms. ELA textbooks

are usually commercially produced and are comprised of lessons and units to address both

student and teacher needs. Textbook adoptions, which are usually updated every five to seven

years, are the primary curriculum materials in school systems because they offer some sense of a

common curriculum across diverse settings (Ball & Cohen, 1996). Through a national survey of public, Catholic, and independent high schools, Applebee (1992) found that the literature textbook was the most frequent source of material used in the ELA classroom. In addition to providing literary readings for students, textbooks also provide questions, writing tasks, and options for differentiation (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Grossman & Thompson, 2004; Woodward & Elliot, 1990). Publishers market current ELA textbooks as comprehensive curriculum containing scope and sequence charts for courses of study (Beers et al., 2009) and pacing guides for daily lessons (Prentice Hall, 2010).

There is a body of research in the field of ELA that is devoted to research on ELA textbooks; this research outlines major criticisms of the curricular resources. One main criticism of ELA textbooks is that their questions and tasks emphasize knowing rather than learning. In other words, the questions and tasks in textbooks do not emphasize the type of high order thinking necessary to engage students and prepare them for college. In an analysis of ELA textbooks, Applebee (1991) found that there was an overwhelming emphasis on superficial recitation questions across all grade levels. In a more recent study of four widely used literature anthologies, Mihalakis (2010) found that the majority of post-reading questions in all four ELA textbooks were low level recitation questions that have or assume one correct response. Another critique of the questions and tasks in ELA textbooks is that they "presuppose the rightness of the question, the answers, and the form of the answers" (Appleby et al., 1990a, p. 94). In essence, the research on the low rigor and quality of ELA textbook questions, texts, and tasks demonstrates the narrow view of literature presented by ELA textbooks and consequently limits students' opportunities to broaden their perspectives and construct knowledge in analytic and interpretive ways.

A second criticism of ELA textbooks is the content. In order for rigorous instruction to occur, educators need to expose students to complex texts. An ACT report (2006), *Reading Between the Lines: What the ACT Reveals About College Readiness in Reading,* found that "the ability to read complex texts is the clearest differentiator between those ready for college-level reading and those not" (pp. 16-17). This report presented data indicating that many students, even those who have been accepted to major colleges and universities, were underprepared to read complex texts. One reason for this decline is that reading and ELA textbooks (and thus reading ability) have decreased in difficulty and sophistication over the past century (CCSS, 2010). Past research showed that the difficulty of textbooks decreased from 1963 to 1975 (Chall, Conard, & Harris, 1977) and that average sentence length and vocabulary level in reading textbooks has showed a "pervasive decline in the difficulty" (Hayes, Wolfer, & Wolfe, 1996, p. 489). Furthermore, ELA textbooks excerpt literature selections into fragmented parts, superficially addressing challenging concepts, glossing vocabulary, and posing mostly low level comprehension questions for students (Applebee, 1993; Beck & McKeown, 1991, 1992, 1994).

The use of complex texts is necessary in order to support meaningful writing topics and discussion; furthermore, rigorous texts are needed in order to engage students in activities that require them to construct meaning beyond what is written on the page (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, & Kucan, 1997; Snow, 2002). As Beck and McKeown (2001) explained, "Texts that are effective for developing language and comprehension ability need to be conceptually challenging enough to require grappling with ideas and taking an active stance toward constructing meaning" (p. 1). Texts that are straightforward provide few opportunities for students to develop their own interpretations (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Langer, 2000; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1997). In order to support students' construction of knowledge through writing,

texts need to contain "grist." The grist of a text is composed of complexity of the content (theme, plot, figurative levels, ambiguity) as well as the writer's craft (organizational structures, vocabulary, literary language) (Matsumura et al., 2006). For example, a text that contains grist might have the following characteristics: implicit, unexplained, or complicated relationships among ideas, characters, or themes; complex meaning of quotations; ambiguous causes of events or situations; and/or character motivations that are not explicit or explained (Fulcher, 1997; Langer, 2000; Oteiza, 2003; Sandora, Beck, & McKeown, 1999). Texts that contain grist invite students to construct knowledge by providing students with meaningful substance to write about, such as the content of the text or the style in which it is written. Without grist, students are left with nothing to grapple with, thus leaving students unengaged with less to analyze or interpret.

A third criticism of ELA textbooks is the lack of curricular coherence. One of Applebee's (1993a) findings in his study of post-reading questions indicated that the questions functioned largely in isolation and could be "removed or reordered without affecting students' ability to answer the others" (p. 21). In order to provide coherent, focused inquiry, post-reading questions in textbooks should ideally be sequenced to engage students in a series of related, sequenced questions and tasks that move from low cognitive demand to higher cognitive demand (Mihalakis, 2010). In other words, the questions and tasks need to build on one another so that answering earlier questions provides support for answering later questions (Cumming-Potsvin 2007; Lucking, 1976; Smith, 1985), thus assisting students' ability to construct knowledge about a text. In Mihalakis's (2010) study, she found that ELA textbooks organized units around an overarching topic or text-specific concepts/questions, but that the units were not structured in ways that provided students with coherent learning opportunities that would allow them to build their conceptual understanding of unit or text-specific concepts/questions. Similar to Applebee's

(1991) finding of a lack of intertexuality and connectivity between activities, Mihalakis found that the there was an abundance of questions and tasks that were unrelated to the unit or text-specific concept/question or to each other. These findings show how ELA textbooks treat students as passive beings requiring only a superficial and fragmented understanding of the content, whereas textbook questions and tasks should foster an appreciation of deeper meaning (Zaharias, 1989), which will develop students' intellectual autonomy and promote more analytic learning.

Despite these many criticisms of textbooks, teachers and school districts still rely on these resources. In fact, a survey showed that 91% of sampled public school teachers reported using an ELA textbook, and 63% reported that the ELA textbook was their primary source of material (Applebee, 1991). Teachers use textbooks despite their limitations because school districts often require the use of mandated curriculum and/or textbooks (Agee, 2004; Ball & Feiman-Nemser, 1988; Dutro, 2010; Grossman & Thompson, 2008; Smagorinsky, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002). Another reason textbooks are used despite their flaws is because new and inexperienced teachers desire and need guidance (Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, & Peske, 2002; Grossman & Thompson, 2008; Grossman & Thompson, 2004). In fact, Valencia, Place, Martin, and Grossman's (2006) findings suggested "beginning teachers…were deeply influenced by the curriculum materials provided to them" (p. 114). Although Guth (1989) has argued that the textbook may be the "prime suspect" in students' failure to do better in school, teachers are often required to use them or do not have the knowledge or experience to teach without them. As Grossman and Thompson (2008) explained, teachers have "long been dependent on textbooks to help guide their instruction" (p. 6). There is evidence that when beginning teachers study and engage with a rigorous, purposefully sequenced ELA curriculum, they extend their

understanding of both content and pedagogies (Grossman, 2004, 2008). Thus, despite the problematic aspects of textbooks, they have the power to shape ELA curriculum and instruction, which makes them (and the writing tasks contained in them) worthy of study.

2.6   NEED FOR PRESENT STUDY

Research has shown that writing significantly influences students' understandings of topics or concepts and has demonstrated the importance of incorporating writing tasks into ELA classroom learning activities (Graham & Hebert, 2010; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Nelson & Calfee, 1998; Newell, 1984; Shanahan, 2006; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991). Recent research also demonstrates that cognitively demanding writing tasks have been associated with student achievement gains in literacy (Newman et al., 2001; Matsumura et al., 2002; Matsumura et al., 2008) and increased quality of student work (American Institutes for Research, 2005, 2007; Bryk et al., 2000; Clare & Aschbacher 2001; Matsumura et al., 2002; Newman et al., 1998).

Research has shown that writing tasks, such as the ones contained in widely used ELA textbooks, influences student learning and college and career readiness (Agee, 2004; Applebee, 1992; Ball & Cohen, 1996; Ball & Feiman-Nemser; Dutro, 2010; Grossman & Thompson, 2008; Smagorinsky et al., 2002). Given this influence, my study analyzes and evaluates high school ELA textbook writing tasks to determine the kinds of learning opportunities they provide for students to construct knowledge through writing. Building on existing theories of cognitive demand and research on task quality (Bryk et al., 2000; Hess, 2005; Matsumura et al.; 2006; Newman et al., 1998), my study contributes a more disciplinary-specific theory of rigor and task

quality for secondary ELA writing tasks that includes cognitive demand, textual grist, elaborated

communication, disciplinary authenticity, intellectual authority.

3.0   RESEACH METHODS

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to analyze writing tasks in two widely used eleventh grade ELA textbooks for the potential opportunities they afford students to construct knowledge through writing. Drawing on existing scholarship on cognitive demand and task quality, I created an analytic tool to assess the writing tasks in ELA textbooks. The tool includes the features of cognitive demand, textual grist, elaborated communication, disciplinary authenticity, and intellectual authority. These features enable the construction of knowledge and are not discipline specific; thus, I drew on relevant research and theories of best practices from the field of secondary ELA in order to align these general features to the discipline-specific features of ELA. I then used focused and open coding to analyze the potential opportunities for students to construct knowledge in ways that promote rigor, disciplinary authenticity, and intellectual authority.

3.2   SAMPLE

The chosen literature textbooks were two eleventh grade ELA textbooks from best-selling educational publishers. Both textbooks were marketed as aligned to the CCSS, teacher editions[6], and the most recent editions at the beginning of this study.. These textbooks were as follows:

Holt McDougal. (2012). *Literature: American Literature.* USA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

     Publishing Company.

Prentice Hall. (2012). *Literature: The American Experience.* USA: Pearson Education, Inc.

     In order to fairly represent the opportunities to construct knowledge provided by the textbook writing tasks, I coded all of the writing tasks in each textbook. For the Holt McDougal textbook, I coded 64 writing tasks. These tasks included seven writing workshops, 20 writing wrap-ups, and 37 writing prompts. For the Prentice Hall textbook, I coded 94 writing tasks. These tasks included six writing workshops, 30 tasks simply labeled "writing," 52 writing lessons, and six research tasks. The writing tasks from both textbooks included prompts that addressed both fiction and literary non-fiction texts and spanned the beginning, middle, and end of the textbook. In total, I coded 158 writing tasks. The types of writing tasks included in each textbook can be found in Tables 1 and 2.

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[6] There was a variety in the amount of instructional information for teachers included with the writing tasks, which ranged from no instruction to fairly detailed instruction. The amount of instruction was dependent on the type of writing task as labeled by the publisher. For the Holt McDougal textbook, the Writing Wrap-Up tasks contained two bullets of information (one bullet defining the type of task—defining synthesis or analysis, for example—and one bullet contained a brainstorming tip). Writing Prompts had no instructional information accompanying the writing tasks, and research tasks contained the most instructional information including questions for teachers to ask to guide student thinking, scripted instructions, and an explanation of a scoring rubric (the six writing workshops in the Holt McDougal textbook were the only writing tasks that contained a scoring guide). For the Prentice Hall textbook, Writing Workshops contained the most instructional information including a script on how to teach strategies, Writing and Writing Lessons contained short reminders and writing tips for teachers to help students get started or draft their responses, and research tasks contained scripted instructional information about how to guide student research (e.g., tell students to use only relevant sources, tell students to begin with secondary sources such as encyclopedias to get the big picture).

Table 1: Writing Tasks in Eleventh Grade Holt McDougal Textbook

Holt McDougal Textbook		
Type of Writing Task	**Number**	**Description**
Writing Workshop	7	Described as a "writer's toolbox," Writing Workshops take students through steps of the writing process (from drafting to publishing).
Writing Wrap Up	20	Writing Wrap Ups revisit selections from each section in order for students to synthesize, reflect, evaluate, and analyze across texts.
Writing Prompt	37	Writing prompts aim to "expand understanding" of individual texts. Revising tips are offered alongside each writing prompt.

Table 2: Writing Tasks in Eleventh Grade Prentice Hall Textbook

Prentice Hall Textbook		
Type of Writing Task	**Number**	**Description**
Writing Workshop	6	Writing Workshops focus on a type of writing (e.g., narrative, reflective, research report) and take students through steps of the writing process.
Writing	30	Writing tasks focus on linking writing activities to section content and usually focus on individual texts.
Writing Lessons	52	Similar to Writing tasks, Writing Lessons use writing activities to link to section content and usually focus on individual texts. In addition, Writing Lessons also typically include tips for prewriting, drafting, and revising.
Research Task	6	Research Tasks provide students with a topic related to the textbook section and break down the research process, which typically includes formulating a research plan/question, gathering sources, synthesizing information, and organizing and presenting ideas.

3.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was designed to investigate students' opportunities to construct knowledge through writing by analyzing the writing tasks in two CCSS-aligned eleventh grade ELA textbooks. The main research question that guided my study is as follows: How do writing tasks in CCSS-aligned ELA textbooks give high school students opportunities to construct knowledge through writing?

To help answer the main research question, I considered the following guiding questions:

a. How do different types of ELA writing tasks (text-based, non text-based, creative) position students to construct knowledge through writing?

b. How cognitively demanding are the writing tasks?

c. How much grist do texts used in text-based ELA writing tasks contain?

d. What types of opportunities do students have to engage in elaborated communications?

e. What is the overall rigor of text-based ELA writing tasks?

f.   How authentic to the discipline of ELA are textbook writing tasks?

g. How do the writing tasks position students as sources of intellectual authority?

h. What assumptions are embedded in the writing tasks?

3.4   DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In order to answer my research question, I analyzed the opportunities for students to construct knowledge in ELA textbook writing tasks in four steps: identifying ELA task types, focused coding, open coding, and analysis.

3.4.1   Step 1: Identifying ELA task types

In order to accurately assess the cognitive demand of each task, I designed my analytic tool to account for the differences in the types of cognitive work required from various types of ELA writing tasks. In order for students to be college-ready writers, they must be able to engage in a range of writing including argument, explanation, and narrative; in addition, students must be able to combine these different elements of writing (CCSS, 2010). Various types of writing, however, call for different types of cognitive work. For example, writing a literary analysis calls for different mental work than writing a modernist poem. Differentiating the cognitive demand descriptors for these three types of writing tasks allowed me to create a more accurate analysis of the rigor of the tasks. Therefore, I first categorized the writing tasks into the general categories of: (1) *text-based writing tasks*, (2) *non text-based writing tasks*, and (3) *creative writing tasks*.

Text-based tasks typically asked students to write about a text or text(s) and required mental work ranging from recall to analysis and positioned students to utilize both fiction and non-fiction texts in their writing. Examples of such tasks included writing arguments and explanatory essays, most often in the form of a literary analysis. Text-based tasks also asked students to apply knowledge in new or original ways.

Non text-based tasks asked students to share their experiences and opinions in their writing or to describe a scene. These tasks typically asked students to share their thoughts or opinions around a question, topic, or experience; additionally, non text-based tasks usually called for students to support their thinking through the use of details, evidence, and (occasionally) reasoning. Examples of such tasks included position statements, persuasive essays, and descriptions.

Although all tasks could be coded as text-based or non text-based, I created the third category of *creative writing* in order to emphasize the nuanced differences in tasks that engaged students in the writing of imaginative fiction and creative non-fiction. These tasks typically encouraged students to compose an original and creative piece of work while focusing on specific genre features. Examples of creative writing tasks included composing a poem or memoir or re-writing a short story from a different point-of-view.

3.4.2 Step 2: Focused coding

Drawing upon my review of literature, I created a research-based analytic tool to assess the quality of writing tasks. There are three components to the tool: 1) features of tasks that support the construction of knowledge through writing (cognitive demand, textual grist, elaborated communication, disciplinary authenticity, and intellectual authority); 2) guiding questions to frame features in ways specific to the discipline of ELA; and 3) descriptions to assess the degree (low, mid, high) to which each writing task addresses each feature. The analytic tool can be found in Table 3.

Feature	Guiding Question	High	Mid	Low	N/A or Indeter-minate
Cognitive Demand[7]	*How cognitively demanding is the text-based writing task?*	Task guides students to interpret, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate a text; task asks students to apply knowledge in new or original ways.	Task guides students to build an understanding of the text as a whole.	Task guides students to consider the text in isolated or superficial ways or recall fragmented information about the text.	
	How cognitively demanding is the non text-based writing task?	Task guides students to explain their thinking around a challenging question or complex topic/experience. Task engages student in reflective thinking about the topic or experience.	Task guides students to respond in a way where they may begin to explain their thinking around a moderately challenging question, topic/experience.	Task guides students to provide isolated, straightforward, or surface-level information about a topic or experience; task asks for personal connections loosely related to the task.	
	How cognitively demanding is the creative writing task?	Task guides students to adhere to/include features of a genre to a high degree; explicit language around the inclusion of features is used. Task guides students to construct an original and creative piece of work.	Task guides students to adhere to/include the features of a genre to a moderate degree; general or vague language around the inclusion of features is used. Task may guide students to construct a work in moderately creative ways.	Task guides students to adhere to the features of a genre to a minimal degree; vague, abstract or no language around the inclusion of features may be used. Task does not prompt students to engage in writing, but rather focuses on editing or revising.	

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[7] Research that supports this feature is as follows: American Institute for Research (2005, 2007); Applebee & Langer (2013); Bereiter & Scardamalia (1987); Bryk, Nagaoka, & Newmann (2000); Clare (2000); Clare & Aschbacher (2001); Conley (2007); Grossman (2009); Hess (2005); Matsumura et al. (2006); Newmann et al. (2001); Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka (2001); Newmann, King, & Carmichael (2007); Newmann, Lopez, & Bryk (1998); Resnick & Klopfer (1989)

Table 3 (continued)

Feature	Guiding Question	High	Mid	Low	N/A or Indeterminate
Textual Grist	*How rigorous is the text?[8]*	The text contains a high level of grist. Text contains multiple levels of meaning, nuanced plot and/or complex theme, implicit purpose, or is highly ambiguous. Structure is complex and may include parallel plots, flashbacks, or sophisticated graphics.	The text contains a moderate level of grist. Text contains a moderately complex plot or theme; may contain some degree of ambiguity. Structure is between complex and simple.	The text contains a minimal level of grist. Text contains a single level of meaning; familiar and predictable plot; straightforward or explicitly stated purpose; basic information. Structure is simple, conventional, or explicit.	Task does not require the use of the text. Task requires students to choose their own text.
Elaborated Communication[9]	*How does the task support elaborated communication?*	Task has a dominant expectation for students to engage in elaborated communication; task explicitly encourages students to substantiate response with reasons and evidence (e.g., providing qualifications, nuances, elaborations, and details woven into extended narratives, explanations, and dialogue)	Task has some expectation for students to engage in elaborated communication; task allows for students to use reasons, evidence, elaborations, and details but in implicit, vague, superficial, or cursory ways.	Task has little to no expectation for students to engage in elaborated communication.	
Elaborated Communication: Length	*What is the length of writing as articulated in task?*	Task guides students to engage in extended writing (i.e., multi-page or five or more paragraphs)	Tasks guides students to engage in a moderate amount of writing (i.e., three or multi-paragraph)	Task does not guide students to engage in extended writing (i.e., specifies "brief" or one paragraph)	

[8] Research that supports this features is as follows: Beck & McKeown (2001); Matsumura et al. (2006)

[9] Research that supports this features is as follows: Addison & McGee (2010); American Institute for Research (2005, 2007); Applebee & Langer (2013); Conley, 2007; Greene, 1991; Grossman (2009); Howard, Serviss, & Rodrigue, 2010; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2002, 2004, 2006); Newmann et al. (1998); Newmann et al. (2001); Ray (2006)

Table 3 (continued)

Feature	Guiding Question	High	Mid	Low	N/A or Indeter-minate
Disciplinary Authenticity[10]	*How does the task support disciplinary authenticity?*	Task promotes work authentic to the fields and practices of ELA (e.g., create an original piece of creative writing, write an interpretive essay, use model texts to emulate an author's style, form and warrant interpretations from within and across text/texts, evaluate or critique a text).	Task focuses on basic skills and proficiencies that apply across disciplines (e.g., creating a summary)	Task calls for work that does not have application beyond completion of the task; that is, students will not likely encounter a similar task outside of school (e.g., use these five vocabulary words in a sentence).	
Intellectual Authority[11]	*How does the task position a student as an intellectual authority?*	Task positions students with a high level of intellectual authority; student positioned as an expert or published author, student required to make original claims, or contribute new knowledge; task puts students in extended academic conversations.	Task positions students with a mid level of intellectual authority; student positioned to support a given interpretation or evaluation of a text, to contribute personal knowledge for isolated or superficial reasons, or to revise or edit a text.	Task positions students with a low level of intellectual authority; student positioned as a novice and asked to repeat, memorize, or share information, which is often superficial in nature; task may function in isolation rather than part of a greater conversation.	

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[10] Research that supports this features is as follows American Institute for Research (2005, 2007); Newmann et al. (2001); Petrosky, McConachie, & Mihalakis (2010)

[11] Research that supports this features is as follows: Cobb et al. (1997); Coburn, Russell, Kaufman, & Stein (2012); Collins, Brown, & Newman (1989); Mayer (2012) Lampert (1990)

I used this tool to analyze the writing tasks in each textbook. After coding for each feature, I asked a second reader to analyze approximately 20% of the writing tasks using my research-based analytical tool to ensure intercoder reliability of at least 80%, which is considered to be sufficient in qualitative research (Lombard, Snyder-Dutch, & Bracken, 2004; Neuendorf, 2002). I discussed and compared results with the second coder to look for causes of difference. To further establish validity, I aimed to be transparent about my coding methods. Further descriptions of coding are described in the sections below.

3.4.2.1 Cognitive demand

To analyze the cognitive demand of writing tasks, I coded each writing task individually to determine to what degree the task supported students to engage in high level thinking. In order to accurately assess the cognitive demand in each writing task, I designed my analytic tool to account for the differences in the types of cognitive work required from various types of ELA writing tasks because various types of writing call for different types of cognitive work. For example, writing a literary argument calls for different thinking than does writing a memoir. Using different descriptors to assess the cognitive demand in these various types of ELA writing tasks (text-based, non text-based, and creative writing) allowed me to create a more accurate analysis of the cognitive demand of the tasks.

Text-based tasks coded as high for cognitive demand asked students to interpret, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate a text (Bryk et al., 2000; Clare, 2000; Clare & Aschbacher, 2001; Grossman, 2009; Hess, 2005; Newmann et al., 2001; Newmann et al., 1998; Matsumura et al., 2006). Text-based tasks were also coded as high if they required students to extend or integrate new learning for themselves by applying basic skills and knowledge to complex problems that were novel or unique (Newmann et al., 1998). Text-based tasks that required students to build an

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understanding of the text as a whole were coded as having a mid degree of cognitive demand. Tasks requiring a mid degree of cognitive demand could also be analytic or interpretive in nature or ask students to evaluate or synthesize, but provide limited opportunities for students to think about the text (i.e., asking a question about a very fragmented or isolated piece of the text) (Matsumura et al., 2006). Tasks that asked students to reproduce or simply recall superficial information were coded as containing a low degree of cognitive demand.

Non text-based tasks coded as high for cognitive demand guided students to explain their thinking around a challenging question, complex topic, or experience using extensive details, evidence, and reasoning. These tasks may have also asked students to engage in reflective thinking about the topic or experience. Non text-based tasks requiring a mid level of cognitive demand guided students to respond in a way where they may begin to explain their thinking around a moderately challenging question, topic, or experience using some details or evidence to support ideas. Non text-based tasks coded as low for cognitive demand guided students to provide isolated, straightforward, or surface-level information about a topic or experience or to make personal connections only loosely related to the text under study.

Creative writing tasks requiring a high level of cognitive demand guided students to adhere to or include features of a given genre to a high degree. Highly demanding creative writing tasks might also guide students to construct an original and creative piece of work. Creative tasks requiring a mid level of cognitive demand guided students to adhere to or include the features of the genre to a moderate degree. For instance, the task might ask students to incorporate genre features, but the task used general or vague language requesting the inclusion of these features. Additionally, creative tasks coded as having a mid level of cognitive demand guided students to work with a text in moderately creative ways, such as updating or creating a

modern version of a short story. Creative tasks coded as containing low level of cognitive demand guided students to adhere to the features of a genre to a minimal degree. In such tasks, the language requesting students to include genre-specific features was vague, abstract, or not included. Creative writing tasks with low cognitive demand might not ask students to engage in writing, but rather focuses on editing or revising. Examples of the coding scheme for the three task types (text-based, non text-based, and creative) can be found in Tables 4, 5, and 6.

Table 4: Examples of Coding Scheme for Cognitive Demand of Text-based Tasks

Degree	Example	Explanation
Cognitive Demand of Text-based Tasks		
High	In an **essay**, examine [two poems] through two different critical lenses. First, use a *social perspective*, analyzing how each poem reflects the struggles of African Americans during the mid-twentieth century. Then, use an *archetypal perspective*, demonstrating how each poem expresses universal human longings. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 1069)	This text-based task required a high degree of cognitive demand because it asked students to analyze two poems through two critical lenses thus requiring students to go beyond comprehension to engage in analysis of whole texts in an ELA-specific way.
Mid	Make a chart like the one shown, listing each of the selections you've read in this section….On your chart, note what you've learned about the way the people in each region speak, the way they dress, their customs, and their landscapes. Then use your chart to write a one-paragraph description of each region you've encountered in your reading. Based on all of your descriptions, write a concluding sentence or two in which you sum up what the regions have in common. (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 729)	This text-based task focused on building an understanding of several texts and repeating that information in paragraph form. Although this task required students to briefly (one or two sentences) synthesize information across texts to determine what the regions have in common, the emphasis of the task is recalling details about the texts (e.g., dress and customs) in isolation.
Low	Write an introduction that provides background about the poet. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 783)	This text-based task required a low degree of cognitive demand because it positioned students to recall surface-level information about the background of the poet, e.e. cummings.

Table 5: Example of Coding Scheme for Cognitive Demand of Non Text-based Tasks

	Cognitive Demand of Non Text-based Tasks	
Degree	Example	Explanation
High	…identify a key event in your life, and write an essay communicating its significance. Follow the model Douglass set by combining narration, or storytelling, with other rhetorical strategies, such as description, exposition, or explanation, and —if appropriate— persuasion. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 529)	This non text-based task required a high level of cognitive demand because it not only asked students to write about a life event, but it also asked students to communicate its significance, which makes the task complex due to students engaging in reflective thinking. Additionally it required the use of narration and rhetorical strategies, which also add to the task's complexity.
Mid	Imagine that you have entered a writing contest sponsored by a heritage society. Draft a three-to-five paragraph autobiographical essay, modeled after Hurston's essay, in which you share your feelings about your own heritage. (Holt, 2012, p. 907)	This non text-based task required a mid level of cognitive demand because the topic is moderately challenging, asking students to share feelings about heritage.
Low	Write a three-to-five paragraph eyewitness report on an event of your choosing, such as a sporting event or a community gathering. (Holt, 2012, p. 1249)	This non text-based task required a low level of cognitive demand because it asked students to provide straightforward information about an event. Asking students to convey the significance of the chosen event or reflect on the experience of writing an eyewitness essay could add to the complexity of the task. As written, it only required students to report or recall straightforward information.

Table 6: Example of Coding Scheme for Cognitive Demand of Creative Tasks

Cognitive Demand of Creative Tasks

Degree	Example	Explanation
High	[W]rite your own poem in the modernist style. (Holt, 2012, p. 975)	This creative writing task required a high level of cognitive demand because it asked students to create an original modernist poem and to include features of modernist poetry to a high degree. These features included a nontraditional subject matter and themes, a focus on alienated individuals rather than heroes, use of understatement and irony to reveal emptions and ideas, use of symbols and images to suggest meaning, experimentation with style and language.
Mid	Write a sequel to ["A Worn Path"] that describes what happens when Phoenix Jackson gets home. Use specific details and sensory language to create vivid pictures in your story. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 857)	This creative task required a mid level of cognitive demand because it asked students to include some features of the short story genre (i.e., details and sensory language), but in a narrow way. The task omits many genre features of the short story (e.g., plot structure, dialogue).
Low	After reflecting on each of the short stories you have just read, choose two stories and evaluate them to distill their essence—that which is utterly indispensable—in no more than 300 of the author's own words. You may use portions of sentences and combine them, if appropriate and necessary. In addition, you may create your own paragraphing structure in order to give your distillations a desirable flow. (Holt, 2012, p. 1091)	This creative writing task required a low level of cognitive demand because it asked students to make changes to existing texts, but not to engage in the task of writing themselves. Asking students to articulate the essence of the chosen short stories or to explain the reasoning of their choices would increase the demand of the task. Expectations for students to include genre features were unclear or missing.

3.4.2.2 Texts

I also analyzed the textual grist, or richness, of every text associated with a writing task in both textbooks (text-based and text-based creative writing). Analyzing the textual grist associated with each writing task allowed me to determine the degree to which each text was able to support meaningful writing experiences. Drawing on the work of Beck and McKeown (2001), Matsumura et al. (2006) described the importance of considering the grist of a text: "the richness of the text can place a ceiling on the potential for rigorous comprehension work if it does not contain enough 'grist' for students to work at making sense of the text (Matsumura et al, 2006, p.9). In addition to rigorous comprehension work, rich texts are needed because straightforward texts provide few opportunities for students to develop their own interpretations (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Langer, 2000; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1997) or to elaborate through written communication. Therefore, coding for the level of grist contained in each text allowed for a consideration of how the features of the text enhance or constrain the degree to which the text is useful for a given writing task (Beck & McKeown, 2001).

Frequently used models of text complexity (ACT, 2005; CCSS, 2010) combine several elements including content, structure, and language/vocabulary; the intent of these models is to analyze texts to determine reading level in an effort to improve students' reading proficiency. For the purpose of this study, however, I focused primarily on the content of the text, concentrating on the interpretive and analytic potential the texts could offer in terms of extended writing. In order for students to use a high level of cognitive demand (e.g., interpretation, analysis) and write in elaborated ways, the texts under study must be able to support working to construct meaning beyond what is written on the page (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, & Kucan, 1997; Snow, 2002). Although other characteristics (such as the use of archaic language) will

increase the level of complexity for readability, such features play much less of a factor when considering the potential for students to construct knowledge through writing.

Texts that contained a high level of grist had sophisticated content or structure. Features of texts that had a high level of grist included multiple levels of meaning, nuanced plot and/or complex theme, implicit purpose, or high levels of ambiguity; the structure may have been unconventional or contained parallel plots, flashbacks, or sophisticated graphics. Texts that contained a minimal level of grist had simple content and structure. Features of texts that had a low level of grist included single levels of meaning, familiar and predictable plot, straightforward or explicitly stated purpose or basic information; the structure may have been conventional, simple, explicit. Texts that contained a moderate level of grist given the content and structure fell between a high and minimal level of grist. These texts contained a moderately complex plot, theme, or topic and may have contained some degree of ambiguity. Tasks that asked students to choose their own texts or did not allow students the opportunity to refer to or integrate the text were coded as *not able to be determined* or *not applicable*. In order to code for the grist of the text, I read each text then described and recorded the information about the content and structure of each text.

3.4.2.3 Elaborated communication

Elaborated communication requires students to "draw conclusions or make generalizations or arguments and support them through extended writing" and focuses on how students use examples, illustrations, details, or reasons in their written responses" (Newmann et al., 1998, p. 17). To analyze the potential for elaborated communication in writing tasks, I coded each writing task individually to determine (1) to what degree the task allowed students to elaborate in writing and (2) the required length of student writing.

First, I coded all three task types (text-based, non text-based, and creative writing) to determine to what degree the task required students to elaborate in writing. Text-based tasks that supported elaborated communication to a high degree had a dominant expectation for students to substantiate responses with sufficient and well selected evidence and to explain their chosen evidence. Non text-based and creative writing tasks were coded as containing a high degree of elaborated communication if they allowed for providing qualifications, nuances, or elaborations; for example, a task could ask students to weave rich detail into a memoir. In other words, tasks coded as containing a high degree of elaborated communication afforded students opportunities to provide qualifications, nuances, elaborations, reasons, and details in their writing. Tasks were coded as having a mid degree of elaborated communication if they had some expectation for students to engage in elaborated communication; these tasks may have allowed for students to use reasons, evidence, elaborations, and details but in implicit, vague, superficial, or fragmented ways. Tasks were coded as low if they had little to no expectation for students to engage in elaborated communication. Table 7 shows examples of the coding scheme for elaborated communication.

Table 7: Examples of Coding Scheme for Features of Elaborated Communication

	Elaborated Communication	
Degree	Example	Explanation
High	Write an essay in which you analyze Twain's use of [humor] techniques in his story "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." Include in your analysis an evaluation of Twain's definition…Organize your essay point by point, connecting Twain's definition to passages from the story. For each passage do the following: • Introduce the passage by indicating which aspect of the definition it will illustrate. • Provide the passage in the form of a quotation. • Explain the connection between the passage and Twain's definition. Strengthen your analysis by adding your own insights about how and why a certain technique creates humor. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 584)	This task had a dominant expectation for students to engage in elaborated communication because it asked students to not only provide evidence in the form of quoted passages, but the task also asked students to explain the connection between the passage and Twain's definition in addition to asking students to add their own insights. Thus, this task explicitly requested students to substantiate their analysis with both evidence and reasoning.
Mid	Choose the quotation on this page that you think best represents a theme of "The Open Boat" or "The Law of Life." Write an essay defending your choice, using details from the story as support. (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 770)	This task provided students with a moderate opportunity to engage in elaborated communication. The task requested students use details from the story to support their choice of a quotation, but the task does not explicitly ask students to explain *how* the details support their chosen quotation. Rather, the act of reasoning is implicit and/or vague in this task.
Low	If Dexter were your close friend, what advice would you give him? In a three-paragraph letter (or e-mail) to Dexter, explain what you think he should do to improve the quality of his life. Be sure to recommend something to fill the great void left by the loss of his youthful illusions. (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 1001)	This task provided students with a low opportunity to engage in elaborated communication. This task does not explicitly ask students to use evidence from the text to support the given advice nor does it require students to provide reasoning for the given advice.

Second, I determined the length of writing as articulated in the task. As reported by Applebee and Langer (2013), the typical student is only expected to produce about 1.6 pages a week of extended prose for their English class which is concerning as college-bound students "will be expected to write even longer papers when they begin their college coursework" (Applebee, 2006, p. 12). By coding for the length of writing as articulated by the task, I was able to determine if and to what degree each task requested writing length. Tasks that called for multi-page essays or five or more paragraphs were coded as having a high level of elaborated communication for length. Tasks that called for three or multi-paragraphs were coded as having a mid level of elaborated communication for length. Tasks that explicitly requested a "brief" writing or one paragraph were coded as having a low expectation for elaborated communication. Tasks that did not specify length of writing were coded as indeterminate.

3.4.2.4 Overall rigor of text-based tasks

In addition to analyzing each writing task for its cognitive demand, textual grist, and elaborated communication, I also combined these three features into a single rating of rigor for each text-based writing task. I only analyzed text-based tasks for overall rigor, not non text-based or creative tasks, because neither non text-based or creative writing tasks required students to closely read, understand, and interpret or analyze the pieces of literature associated with text-based writing tasks. As discussed in Chapter 2, although the cognitive demand of a text-based ELA writing task is an essential marker of a task's rigor, the quality of the texts the students are responding to and the required elaboration of the writing also contribute to the overall rigor of the task. For example, if a writing task asked students to engage in extended, interpretive, text-based writing but the text was straightforward with little to interpret or little grist, focusing solely on the cognitive demand of the task would inflate the overall rigor of the task. The three-part

model to assess the overall rigor of text-based writing tasks provided a more accurate description of the rigor than cognitive demand alone.

In order to create the combined rigor rating, I synthesized my ratings of the cognitive demand, textual grist, and elaborated communication (features) into one high, medium, or low rating. Often, 42% percent of the time, the individual ratings for a particular writing task matched each other (e.g., a task that was rated high for cognitive demand was also rated high for textual grist and elaboration too). In cases where not all individual ratings were the same, I based the overall rigor rating on the two consistent ratings as well as my own qualitative analysis and experience doing the task. Likewise, if all three ratings differed, I based the overall rigor rating on my own qualitative analysis and experience doing the task. Examples and explanations of the coding scheme for overall rigor of text-based tasks can be found in Table 8.

Table 8: Examples of Coding Scheme for Overall Task Rigor

	Overall Rigor of Text-based Tasks	
Degree	Example	Explanation
High	Why does John Proctor change his mind and tear up the confession? In **four or five paragraphs,** discuss Proctor's perception of a morally righteous person and how that perception affects his decision[12]. Think about Rebecca Nurse's reaction to his confession and Elizabeth's assertion that "there be no higher judge under heaven than Proctor is!" (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 215, bold in original)	This task prompted students to engage in a high level of **cognitive demand** because it required an analysis of John Proctor's decision in terms of his moral character. Such work emphasized a detailed examination of Proctor's actions throughout the play as well as inferential thinking regarding how his understanding of moral righteousness is reflected in his actions. The text accompanying the task contained a high amount of **grist.** Although the play is about the Salem Witch Trials, it also works on a metaphoric level addressing the events of McCarthyism and the Red Scare, which took place during the time Arthur Miller wrote the play. This task also contained a high expectation for **elaborated communication** because the revising tips asked students to "[e]xplain the choices Proctor must make to arrive at his decision," to "[c]larify how Proctor's idea of morality differs from that of the judges," and to "[u]se quotations and examples from the play to support key points" (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 215). These stems prompt students to provide qualifications, reasoning, and elaborations. Thus, the overall rigor of this task is high.

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[12] Proctor chooses to accept his punishment of being hanged instead of lying.

Table 8 (continued)

Degree	Example	Explanation
Mid	Auden offers a fairly dark vision of modern society. Write an **essay** in which you describe the political nature of the world this poem portrays. Cite specific details from the poem to support your ideas. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 777, bold in original)	This task was coded as requiring a mid level of **cognitive demand.** Upon completion of this task, students will have likely developed a comprehensive understanding of the text but will not likely have engaged in analysis or interpretation. The text contained a mid-level of **grist** as it straightforwardly highlights the bureaucratic nature of society. The poem can be considered a social satire, but the purpose (i.e., a criticism of society) is clear; thus this text falls into the mid-level category. **Elaborated communication** was coded as low for this task. Students were asked to cite details to support their ideas, but not to explain or provide reasons as to why or how the details support their ideas. Without explicitly prompting students to provide reasoning, it is unlikely that students will engage in extended writing beyond description and details. Overall, though, this task contained a mid level of overall rigor due to the cognitive demand of the task and the grist of the text.
Low	Write a letter to Anna Quindlen in which you share your thoughts about her essay. Add to the discussion by answering the following questions: - What is the situation now as Americans look back to 2001 and 2002? - How might we answer the question: 'Is everything back to normal? (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 1397)	The **cognitive demand** of this task was coded as low because students were asked to consider the text in a somewhat superficial way: to share their thoughts about the essay (which does not require interpretive/analytic work nor does it call for students to articulate the main ideas or summarize to build an understanding of the text). The text contained a low level of **grist.** Despite a compelling topic, the content of the text is straightforward: Quindlen's purpose, to reflect on how the events of 9-11 have affected American life, is directly stated throughout the essay. **Elaborated communication** is coded as low for this task. Although the task contained two questions to prompt students, it is unlikely that they will yield fruitful written discussion given students' ages. Students will be unable to reflect on 2001 and 2002 or discuss normalcy post 9-11 as they were toddlers on 9-11. Given the cognitive demand, textual grist, and opportunity for elaborated communication, this task was coded as low for the overall rigor.

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3.4.2.5 Disciplinary authenticity

To analyze the disciplinary authenticity of writing tasks, I coded each writing task individually to determine to what degree the writing task requested work that is specific to the field of ELA, which provides students the opportunity to apprentice writing in discipline-specific ways. Tasks that contained a high degree of disciplinary authenticity provided opportunities for students to engage in work that is authentic to the field of ELA. Tasks of this nature include, but may not be limited to, using model texts to emulate an ELA-specific genre or style, creating an original piece of creative writing, forming and warranting interpretations from within and across text/texts, and understanding and articulating an analysis of text/texts. Tasks that contained a mid degree of disciplinary authenticity focused on literacy skills and proficiencies that apply across disciplines (e.g., write a summary). Tasks that did not have an application beyond the completion of the task was coded as having a low degree of disciplinary authenticity; these tasks, such as being asked to use vocabulary words in a sentence, were contrived for the academic purposes at hand but have no real-world application. Examples of the coding scheme for disciplinary authenticity can be found in the Table 9.

Table 9: Example of Coding Scheme for Disciplinary Authenticity

Disciplinary Authenticity		
Degree	Example(s)	Explanation
High	(1) [r]eview the poems…to get a feel for how they incorporate the features of modernism. Then write a poem in the modernist style. (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 975)	The first example is highly authentic to the discipline of ELA because it asked students to consider poems by canonical authors (i.e., cummings, Eliot, Frost, Sandburg, Pound, Moore, St. Vincent Millay) as models of the modernist style. Students then were asked to create their own modernist poem, a task unlikely to be asked in any other discipline.
	(2) Write a brief essay in which you interpret the speaker's view of love and reward in this poem. First, review the poem for details relating to luxury and abundance. Then, explain how these images of wealth help the speaker express the depth of her love for her husband. Cite details from the text to support your ideas. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 79)	The second example is also highly authentic to the discipline of ELA because it asked students to interpret the view of the speaker in a poem; creating interpretations from within a text is characteristic of the field of ELA.
Mid	[C]hoose [a] purpose and write a business letter to accomplish it. (Prentice Hall, 2012, R38)	Although an example of functional writing, this task focused on a general literacy skill (writing a business letter) that is not authentic to the work of ELA; thus, this task was coded as having a mid level of disciplinary authenticity.
Low	Choose the poem in this grouping that you think would make the most poignant short story. Then, create an outline that would aid you in translating the verse into prose narrative (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 649)	Although this task asked students to work with genres specific to the discipline of ELA, the purpose of the task (i.e., to create an outline of a short story based on a poem) is not a task that students will likely encounter outside of a high school setting; thus, this task was coded as having a low level of disciplinary authenticity.

3.4.2.6 Intellectual authority

To analyze the potential for intellectual authority in writing tasks, I coded each writing task to determine to what degree the task positioned a student as an intellectual authority. A task can position a student as an intellectual authority in myriad ways: for instance, the task could position the student as an expert or published author, allow students to represent or contribute knowledge in personally and/or culturally meaningful ways, evaluate a text, or ask students to make original claims. Tasks that positioned students as intellectual authorities also placed students into academic conversations, often asking students to understand and consider multiple or divergent points of view. Tasks that positioned students with a moderate degree of intellectual authority asked students support a given interpretation or evaluation of a text, contribute personal knowledge for tangential reasons, or apply features or characteristics from a text to their own writing. Tasks that positioned students as intellectual authorities to a low degree treated students as novices by asking them to memorize, repeat, or share superficial information. These tasks may also have asked students to write about the text in isolated or fragmented ways rather than writing to contribute to greater conversations. Examples and explanations of the coding scheme for intellectual authority can be found in Table 10.

Table 10: Examples of Coding Scheme for Intellectual Authority

	Intellectual Authority	
Degree	Example	Explanation
High	With a group of classmates, come up with several criteria for evaluating the poems….Then use your criteria to write a brief evaluation of the work of the Fireside Poets as a whole. (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 365)	This task allowed students to have a high degree of intellectual authority by not only asking them to evaluate individual poems and the work of the Fireside Poets as a whole, but it also provided students with the freedom to create the criteria on which the poems will be evaluated thus giving students much intellectual freedom and authority to make original claims about the work.
Mid	Bierce was among the first writers to use stream of consciousness, a *stylistic device* that imitates the natural flow of thoughts and feelings. In an **essay**, explain how Bierce's use of this technique adds to the story's drama. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 491, italics and bold in original)	In this example, the student was told that the stream of consciousness technique added to the story's drama instead of allowing the student to form his or her own analysis of the author's use of stylistic devices. Students were required to defend the idea that the stream of consciousness technique is effective, when they may think that this device detracted from the story's clarity.
Low	Write the information for a large **museum placard** that visitors might read the beginning of a museum exhibit about Olahdah Equiano and the slave trade during the eighteenth century. Use details from Equiano's narrative, as well as facts and data about the North American slave trade that you gather through research in other sources. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 177, bold in original)	Although a student would have the authority to decide what information to include, this task was coded as positioning students with a low degree of intellectual authority because the task is ultimately asking the student to repeat background information from the text and other secondary sources and, therefore, not allowing for a demonstration of intellectual authority.

3.4.3 Step 3: Open coding

After evaluating the writing tasks using the research-based analytical tool, I used an open coding structure in two ways. I first used an open coding structure to look for patterns within each of the features. Second, I used an open coding structure to collect data about assumptions embedded in writing tasks regarding students' previous knowledge (e.g., assumptions about background knowledge, assumptions about ability to analyze author's craft, etc.). Using an open coding schema with focused coding allowed me to both quantify and qualify the features within each of the categories. For example, when coding for disciplinary authenticity I not only looked for the degree to which the task supported disciplinary authenticity in ELA, but I also coded for patterns in *how* the task was authentic to the discipline of ELA. For instance, were students asked to emulate an author's style? Write a literary criticism? Create an original interpretation? Thus, open coding *within* each feature gave me a more specific lens with which to analyze the ELA-specific features of writing tasks. Additionally, open coding for the assumptions in writing tasks allowed me to consider what students need to know to successfully engage in the writing prompt beyond the features outlined in the analytic tool. Allowing for the open coding of tasks helped shape the implications and recommendations of my study.

3.4.4 Step 4: Analysis

I used the collected data from both focused and open coding to answer my main research question, *How do writing tasks in CCSS-aligned ELA textbooks give students opportunities to construct knowledge through writing?* Once the percentages of each feature were calculated from the focused coding data, I drew on my open coding within the features to identify, describe, and

analyze the patterns and omissions inherent within each of the features of high quality ELA writing tasks. Currently, no research addresses the intersection among secondary ELA textbooks, secondary ELA writing tasks, and task quality.

3.5   SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter described the methodology I used to conduct this study on how writing tasks position students to construct knowledge. This chapter included information about the sample from which I collected my data, the research questions that drove the study, and the analytical tool used to describe the data, which I created by drawing on the literature from Chapter 2. In an effort to be transparent about the way the tasks were coded, I included samples of coded writing tasks and explanations for each of the five features (cognitive demand, textual grist, elaborated communication, disciplinary authenticity, and intellectual authority) as well as the overall rigor for text-based tasks. Additionally, this chapter detailed how open coding was used to analyze patterns within each feature to determine how the task positioned students to engage in high order thinking, elaborated communication, disciplinary authenticity, and intellectual authority; open coding also allowed me to analyze the assumptions embedded in writing tasks. Using these methods to analyze textbook writing tasks allowed me to determine how current ELA textbooks support students' construction of knowledge through writing, a skill needed to be successful for college writing.

4.0   FINDINGS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 introduced an analytic tool to assess the writing tasks in two eleventh grade ELA textbooks. This research-based tool pointed to five features of high quality tasks that enable students to construct knowledge through writing: cognitive demand, textual grist, elaborated communication, disciplinary authenticity, and intellectual authority. The analytic tool included three levels of evaluation, high, medium, and low, which allowed me to determine the quality of each writing task for each feature. In this chapter, I present my findings based on the data yielded by the analytic tool as well as open coding.

The chapter is organized in eight main sections: *Task types*, *cognitive demand*, *textual grist*, *elaborated communication*, *overall rigor of text-based tasks, disciplinary authenticity*, *intellectual authority*, and *assumptions*. All eight sections are informed by the main research question: How do writing tasks in two eleventh grade ELA textbooks provide students opportunities to construct knowledge through writing? The first section describes the three types of tasks present in ELA textbooks: *text-based, non text-based, creative writing tasks*. The next four sections, *cognitive demand, textual grist, elaborated communication,* and *overall rigor of text-based tasks*, explain the rigor of the writing tasks. The next two sections focus on *disciplinary authenticity* and *intellectual authority* and the ways in which they contribute to the

quality of ELA writing tasks. The final section, *assumptions*, emerged from open coding and considers the cultural and genre-based assumptions embedded in writing tasks and how these assumptions affect the construction of knowledge through writing in the textbook tasks.

4.2   TASK TYPES: TEXT-BASED, NON TEXT-BASED, AND CREATIVE WRITING

In order to accurately assess the cognitive demand of each task, I designed my analytic tool to account for the differences in the types of cognitive work required from various types of ELA writing tasks. Across both textbooks, over half (65%) of the writing tasks were text-based. Non text-based tasks made up approximately 20% of all tasks, and creative writing tasks made up nearly 15% of all tasks. The Holt McDougal textbook, however, had a greater percentage of non-text based tasks and a smaller percentage of text-based tasks compared to the Prentice Hall textbook. Tables 11, 12, and 13 provide the data for task types.

Table 11: Text-based, Non Text-based, and Creative Tasks in Holt McDougal
(64 tasks)

Task type	# of Tasks	% of Tasks
Text-based	37	57.8%
Non Text-based	17	26.6%
Creative	10	15.6%

Table 12: Text-based, Non text-based, and Creative Tasks in Prentice Hall (94 tasks)

Task type	# of Tasks	% of Tasks
Text-based	66	70.2%
Non Text-based	15	16.0%
Creative	13	13.8%

Table 13: Text-based, Non Text-based, and Creative Tasks in Both Textbooks Combined (158 total tasks)

Task type	# of Tasks	% of Tasks
Text-based	103	65.1%
Non Text-based	32	20.3%
Creative	23	14.6%

4.2.1 Text-based tasks

Text-based writing tasks require students to refer to or cite the text(s) in their writing. Typically, text-based tasks utilized the reading selections included in the textbooks, but there were a handful of research tasks (4%) that required students to choose their own texts.

4.2.1.1 Explicit language around the use of evidence

Across both textbooks, the vast majority (98%) of text-based tasks explicitly directed students to cite, reference, and engage with the text under study. An example of a task that was explicit with regard to citing evidence asked students, after reading "The Yellow Wallpaper," to write an "**analysis** explaining your own thoughts and feelings about the story. In your analysis, discuss the effect Gilman's present-tense narration had on you" (Holt, 2012, p. 817, bold in original). The task further prompted students to "cite examples and quotations from the story to support

your conclusion," "include your personal thoughts and comments about the examples you used from the story," and "respond to any opposing claims that you expect readers might make" (Holt, 2012, p. 817). This task is representative of the way the vast majority of text-based tasks included expectations for students to reference the text(s) in their writing.

All but two text-based tasks explicitly asked students to refer to the text in their essays or to use the text as a model for their own writing. These two tasks, although outliers, are notable because they represent examples of text-based tasks that do not require a close reading or analysis of text. One such task asked students to write an essay about whether "we have reached total equality…or have arrived somewhere between total equality and total oppression" (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 1259). Although the task prompted students to consider the vision of equality in several texts from the civil rights era, a savvy student might be able to complete the task without referring to the text(s). Another such task asked students if pastoral poetry can be meaningful in the 20th and 21st centuries. Like the civil rights task, students can potentially answer this question without referring to the work of Robert Frost, whose poems preceded the task.

Although all text-based tasks held the potential for students to utilize text(s) in their responses, the explicit language asking students to cite evidence, include personal comments, and think about opposing viewpoints prompted students to use evidence to support their claims. Such explicit language potentially provides ways for students to closely read/reread the text and elaborate about the text, sets expectations for students to include reasoning (Anderson, Chinn, Chang, Waggoner, & Yi, 1997), and supports college and career readiness standards (CCSS, 2010). However, criticism of the CCSS exists with regard to the focus of reading closely and using textual evidence. Hodge and Benko (2013) described how lead writers of both the CCSS

and Publisher's Criteria, David Coleman and Sue Pimentel, conflated the action of "read closely" (language used in the standards) with the instructional strategy of "close reading." As a result, "many English teachers interpreted this message as conflating the importance of drawing on textual evidence with a school of literary criticism called 'New Criticism,' which is generally considered outmoded in English education (see Gewertz, 2012 for a summary of the controversy)" (Hodge & Benko, 2013, p. 184). New Critics promote interpreting texts as independent from their historical contexts, focusing on how authors use literary devices and rhetorical methods to develop an argument or theme. The focus on drawing on textual evidence, then, may promote a neutral view of literature and remove students from considering the "sociopolitical and historical context" (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2012, p. 107).

The focus on using textual evidence in the writing tasks in CCSS-aligned textbooks is evident given that 98% of text-based tasks used explicit language regarding text usage. Given this, two assumptions may be made. First, a major priority of textbook writing tasks is for students to closely read and utilize the text in their writing, at least at a superficial level. Second, textbook writing tasks do not assume that students will automatically cite or refer to the text. Thus, explicit language requesting the inclusion evidence may help assure students do not overlook the text while constructing knowledge through writing.

4.2.2   Non text-based tasks

Non text-based writing tasks were least likely to provide students with opportunities to engage in high level thinking. These tasks did not ask complex questions nor did they require students to use extensive details in their writing. Instead, tasks asked moderately challenging or, more often, straightforward, uncomplicated questions focusing on recalling experiences without reflective

thinking about the topic or experience. Only one of the 32 non text-based tasks[13] could potentially engage students in high level cognitive demand.

The majority of non text-based tasks asked students to describe personal experiences, often about significant events in their lives such as telling about a time when their lives dramatically changed, sharing a time when they were inspired to pursue something they love, or writing an essay of tribute to honor a person who has influenced them. These topics required less sophisticated mental work and, unlike high level non text-based tasks, these tasks did not explicitly ask students to engage in reflective thinking about why the experience was significant or meaningful.

4.2.2.1 Placement of non text-based tasks

One significant finding regarding non text-based tasks is that they were placed after reading selections by minority authors in problematic ways. Across both textbooks, eleven non text-based tasks[14] appeared after students read a nonfiction text by a minority author. Nineteen percent of these non text-based tasks asked students to mirror or identify with the experiences described in the text. In other words, if students read about a person who overcame an obstacle, the task prompted them to write about overcoming an obstacle. For example, an excerpt from the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* described Douglass's experiences as a slave where he detailed receiving a "a very severe whipping, cutting [his] back, causing the blood to run, and raising ridges on [his] flesh as large as [his] little finger" (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 560). The accompanying task claimed to be a "reading-writing connection" that would "[e]xpand your

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[13] This particular task asked students to write a reflective essay about a common or household task that suggests a metaphorical meaning, but most tasks asked students to recall personal experiences.
[14] 34% of non text-based tasks

understanding of Frederick Douglass by responding to this prompt" (p. 571). The task explained to students that "Douglass viewed his fight with the cowardly overseer Covey as a turning point in his life" and asked students to "[t]hink of an episode from your own life that you would describe as a turning point" and to then write a three-paragraph description of the episode. Similar text-task pairings also occurred after reading about Olaudah Equiano's transatlantic journey on a slave ship and Amy Tan's struggles around language varieties, heritage, and success in American society. Tasks such as these may promote the assumption that students can readily understand or relate to experiences that may be particular to an individual person or minority group. As Thein, Beach, and Parks (2007) explained:

> If we encourage students to relate their experiences with a school bully to the experiences of a character who survives slavery, we as teachers may do a disservice to students by leaving them with the impression that they can authentically understand situations that they haven't and may never fully experience. (p. 54)

Thus, tasks such as the one that appeared after Douglass's narrative work against the goals of multicultural education because they can lead to an over-identification of experiences. Reading literature that includes diverse experiences and perspectives can act as a window to explore other cultures as well as a mirror for students to examine their own (Galda, 1998; Glazier & Seo, 2005); however, literature paired with tasks such as the one described may require students to make implicit connections between the struggles and experiences of those they read about and their personal experiences.

In addition to an over-identification of the experiences of minority authors, such framing of non text-based tasks is seemingly dismissive of the literature by not affording students the opportunity to grapple with difficult content or closely read the texts. Instead, these tasks focused

on building empathy in a way that may be removed from the author's experience. In order for students to consider cultural perspectives and to better understand their lives and the lives of those around them, tasks need to promote students' understanding of the reasoning behind character motivation or consider an event or topic from multiple points of view.

When students encounter new perspectives in the literature they read, they must negotiate between the beliefs and perspectives they bring with them and those that they read about in texts (Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007). It is through experiencing these tensions that students can "become more critically aware of their beliefs and perspectives and may then become more willing to temporarily try on alternative perspectives" (Thein, Beach, & Parks, 207, p. 55). Studies have shown engaging students in writing tasks that promote this type of work (e.g., writing journal entries from various points of view) allows students to try on and acknowledge other perspectives even if these other perspectives are in conflict with their beliefs, values, and attitudes (Glazier & Seo, 2005; Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007).

4.2.3   Creative writing tasks

Overall, there were few creative writing tasks in the textbooks. Across both textbooks, only 15% of all tasks provided students opportunities to engage in creative, imaginative work that utilized features of the genre in which they were writing, such as composing an original poem or rewriting a short story from another character's perspective.

4.2.3.1   Types of creative writing tasks
Within the creative writing tasks, two types of creative writing tasks emerged: text-based creative writing tasks and non text-based creative writing tasks. Non text-based creative writing

tasks accounted for 26% of all creative writing tasks. The mental work of these tasks focused on incorporating genre features while constructing an original, creative piece of work such as a poem, short story, or monologue. Text-based creative writing tasks accounted for 74% of the creative writing tasks. In addition to incorporating genre features, the mental work of these tasks focused on considering new perspectives in a given text or rewriting a text in a different genre. Thus, text-based creative writing tasks were connected, at least superficially, to the textbook reading selections. Both types of creative writing tasks asked students to use genre features to form a coherent piece of work and emphasized creativity, yet each type of creative writing task contained affordances and limitations.

Examples of non text-based creative writing tasks included composing an original monologue, creative dialogue, imagist and modernist poems, and short stories. For example, one task asked students to "write a short story that tells about a fictional event in which a central conflict is—or is not—resolved" (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 1448). Another task asked students to "write your own poem in the modernist style" (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 975). Although these tasks are not likely to deepen students' understanding of a text, they provide opportunities for personal expression and to construct new understandings of language and the emotions tied to them (Sinclair, Jeanneret, & O'Toole, 2009).

Examples of text-based creative writing tasks included rewriting a story from a new perspective such as a different character's point-of-view/new context or rewriting a text in a different genre (e.g., myth to play). For example, after reading the short story "The Devil and Tom Walker" students were prompted, "Write a **one-to-three page story** around a situation where a character makes a 'deal with the devil' in a modern setting" (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 335, bold in original). Here, students had the opportunity to change the context of the story while

using an established or archetypal plot structure. Another example of a text-based creative writing task appeared after the short story "Antojos": "Write a new version of the **story** from the point of view of one of the men who changes Yolanda's tire" (Prentice Hall, p. 1309, bold in original). These kinds of tasks limit the content of what students are able to write about and limit self-expression compared to the non text-based creative writing tasks that may allow for more originality. However, these text-based creative tasks encourage perspective-taking, which allows students to develop an understanding of their lives and lives of those around them (Glazier & Seo, 2005; Mabry & Bhavnagri, 2012; Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007; Vinz, 2000). Both types of creative writing tasks, text-based and non text-based, contain affordances and limitations as discussed above; however, in terms of cognitive demand both types of creative writing tasks rated about the same with over 70% of tasks containing a mid or high level of cognitive demand.

4.2.3.2 Genre expectations

Both non text-based and text-based creative writing tasks contained expectations for students to incorporate appropriate genre features[15] into their writing. In fact, across both textbooks, 70% of the creative writing tasks asked students to adhere to or include features of the intended genre to a high degree. Examples of genre-specific expectations in the poetry tasks included sensory language and precise, descriptive language to create emotional intensity, free verse, rhythm, symbolism, and the use of irony; short story writing tasks required consideration of plot structure (e.g., introduction, climax), character and setting description, and the use dialogue.

Although most tasks requested students to incorporate genre-specific features in their writing, the tasks varied to the degree in which those genre-specific features were described.

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[15] Features of writing specific to a certain genre or form of writing (i.e., stanzas are a genre feature of poetry)

Some tasks simply listed the requirements: "Give clear details about the setting for your story" or "show how your character confronts conflicts" (Holt, p. 1063). In fact, 61% of creative writing tasks only listed the genre features for students to include but omitted explanations as to how or why to include them. Without guidance as to why and how to include the requested genre features, tasks may not be conveying clear expectations to students.

In contrast to the tasks that merely listed the genre features for students to include, 39% of creative writing tasks included explanations to support students' incorporation of genre features. One task, for example, asked students to rewrite Sojourner Truth's "An Account of an Experience with Discrimination" as a newspaper article. The task explained that if the newspaper article were written by a "reporter rather than a participant" it should "maintain a formal style and objective, or neutral tone" (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 557). Additionally, the task asked students to include a headline that "summarizes the event and engages readers' interest"; a lead or "gripping first sentence"; "relevant facts that identify *who, what, where, when,* and *why*"*;* and "quotations from participants and eyewitnesses that shed additional light on the events described" (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 557). This particular task not only listed the genre features of newspaper articles for students to include, but it was also informative regarding features of newspaper articles. Tasks that included such information provide clear expectations for not only students, but teachers as well.

4.3   COGNITIVE DEMAND

After coding each task to determine task type, I coded the cognitive demand of every writing task in both the Holt McDougal and Prentice Hall textbooks (158 tasks total). The ways that text-

based, non text-based, and creative writing tasks require students to think, reason, and create varied according to task type, so I created my analytic tool to account for these variations in the descriptors of cognitive demand. As described in Chapter 3, text-based tasks requiring a high level of cognitive demand asked students to interpret, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate a text or to apply knowledge in new or original ways; text-based tasks requiring a mid level of cognitive demand focused on building an understanding of the text as a whole; and text-based tasks requiring a low level of cognitive demand asked students to consider the text in isolated or superficial ways or recall fragmented information about the text. Non text-based tasks requiring a high level of cognitive demand asked students to explain their thinking around a challenging question, complex topic, or experience using extensive details, evidence, and/or reasoning; non text-based tasks requiring a mid level of cognitive demand asked students to begin to explain their thinking around a moderately challenging question, topic, or experience using some details/evidence to support ideas while non text-based tasks requiring a low level of cognitive demand asked students to provide isolated, straightforward, or surface-level information about a topic or experience. Creative writing tasks requiring a high level of cognitive demand guided students to adhere to or include features of a given genre to a high degree and/or to construct an original piece of creative work; creative writing tasks requiring a mid level of cognitive demand asked students to adhere to/include the features of the genre to a moderate degree, and creative writing tasks requiring a low level of cognitive demand asked students to adhere to or include genre features to a minimal degree. These low level creative writing tasks often confined students' creativity and thinking. Tables 14, 15, and 16 present the data on cognitive demand and task type for each textbook.

Table 14: Cognitive Demand of Writing Tasks in Holt McDougal (64 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	19	29.7%	12	18.8%	6	9.4%
Non Text-based	0	0.0%	6	9.4%	11	17.2%
Creative	3	4.6%	5	7.8%	2	3.1%
Total	22	34.3%	23	36.0%	19	29.7%

Table 15: Cognitive Demand of Writing Tasks in Prentice Hall (94 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	39	41.5%	18	19.1%	9	9.6%
Non Text-based	1	1.1%	9	9.6%	5	5.3%
Creative	6	6.4%	5	5.3%	2	2.1%
Total	46	49.0%	32	34.0%	16	17.0%

Table 16: Cognitive Demand of Writing Tasks in Both Textbooks Combined (158 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	58	36.7%	30	19.0%	15	9.5%
Non Text-based	1	.6%	15	9.5%	16	10.1%
Creative	9	5.7%	10	6.3%	4	2.5%
Total	68	43.0%	55	35.0%	35	22.1%

Across both textbooks, text-based tasks were more likely to elicit high level cognitive demand from students than other types of tasks. Over half of all text-based tasks, 56%, asked students to interpret, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate a text or texts. In comparison to text-based writing tasks, only 3.1% of the non text-based tasks and 39.1% of the creative writing tasks required students to engage in high level cognitive demand[16].

4.3.1 High cognitive demand

Highly cognitively demanding text-based tasks accounted for 36.7% of all textbook writing tasks and typically asked students to interpret, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate a text. Some of these tasks also asked students to apply knowledge in new or original ways, such as asking students to "come up with several criteria for evaluating the poems" and then to use the identified criteria to "write a brief evaluation of the work of the Fireside poets as a whole" (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 365). There was only one non text-based task that required a high level of cognitive demand. This task asked students to write a reflective essay to "explore a personal experience or event and reflect on its deeper meaning" that includes "a balanced approach that presents incidents from your life and connects them to more general or abstract ideas" (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 440), requiring students to both explain their thinking about a complex topic *and* to engage in reflective thinking about the topic or experience. High cognitively demanding creative writing tasks accounted for 5.7% of all tasks and asked students to adhere to or include features of a genre to a high degree *and* explicit language around the inclusion of features was used. These

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[16] 103 text-based tasks, 32 non text-based tasks, and 23 creative writing tasks

tasks also guided students to construct an original and creative piece of work (e.g., imagist poem, modernist poem, short story).

4.3.2   Mid level cognitive demand

Text-based tasks requiring a mid level of cognitive demand, 19% of all tasks, focused on building an understanding of the text as a whole. These tasks typically asked students to restate, describe, identify, or explain the big ideas of the text. For example, after students read several texts from the Revolutionary War era (e.g., "The Crisis," "The Declaration of Independence"), the textbook prompted students to choose two texts that they found persuasive and to write a letter to the local paper from the point of view of a colonist. In the letter, students were asked to explain and support the main ideas from the chosen texts. In this task, students were prompted to demonstrate comprehension by describing and supporting the ideas they found persuasive in the text. This task has the potential to build students' overall understanding of the chosen texts, which may promote a comprehensive understanding of the texts under study.

Some tasks coded as containing a mid level of cognitive demand asked students to briefly engage in higher level cognitive demand such as synthesis or evaluation, but in brief or arbitrary ways. In other words, the main work of the task emphasized literal comprehension with a higher level thinking skill added at the end of the task. For example, after reading texts in a section entitled "Regionalism and Local Color Writing," the task prompted students to "write a one-paragraph description of each region you've encountered in your reading. Based on your descriptions, write a concluding sentence or two in which you sum up what the regions have in common" (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 729). Here, the main focus of the task was to describe various regions, a recall activity, but the end of the task asked for one or two sentences that

synthesized commonalities of the regions. Thus, the main work of the task focuses on the overall comprehension of the text(s) under study.

Non text-based tasks requiring a mid level of cognitive demand, 9.5% of all tasks, asked students to engage with moderately challenging topics. For instance, students were asked to write about their heritage, compose a journal entry about an interesting moment, or write a description of an everyday location and make it seem terrifying. Creative writing tasks requiring a mid level of cognitive demand, 6.3%, asked students to use genre features to a moderate degree. For instance, one task asked students to write an 8-10 line imagist poem and, upon revision, to "use sensory language to create vivid imagery" and to "write in free verse" (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 959). This task created some expectation for students to follow stylistic features of imagist writers, but only to a moderate degree; the task asked student to include only a few qualities of imagist poems and does so using very general language.

4.3.3 Low cognitive demand

Low cognitively demanding text-based tasks accounted for 9.5% of all tasks and asked students to consider the text in isolated or superficial ways or recall fragmented information about the text. It is unlikely that this type of mental work will prepare students for the types of writing emphasized in college and career settings because it does not promote analytical thinking or reasoning (Addison & McGee, 2010; Applebee & Langer, 2014; Kiuhara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009; NSSE, 2008). Low cognitively demanding non text-based tasks accounted for 10.1% of all tasks and focused on surface level recalling, such as describing a hobby, scene, event, or writing a resume. Low cognitively demanding creative writing tasks accounted for 2.5% of all tasks and provided limited opportunities for students to construct knowledge through writing. Often, these

tasks required students to delete or rearrange the texts instead of allowing students to create original pieces of writing. One example of such a task appeared after the "Iroquois Constitution." The task asked students to

> [c]hoose a passage from the Iroquois Constitution that you think is especially strong or beautiful. Turn it into a poem by rewriting it with line breaks like those of poetry. Organize the stanzas and place the line breaks where you feel they create the most impact. Read your poem aloud to verify your choices; revise them if necessary. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 45)

In order for this task to increase in the cognitive demand it requires of students, the task could have asked students to write a paragraph explaining the chosen organization. In other words, the task could ask students to write a reflection on how and why the stanzas and line breaks create impact, since studies have shown that engaging in metacognitive work allows students to become aware of the choices they make as they analyze how and why they constructed their work resulting in effective learning and higher academic achievement (Kramarski & Mevarech, 2003; Schraw, 1994; Sperling, Howard, & Staley, & DuBois, 2004; Young & Fry, 2008).

4.4   TEXTUAL GRIST

I also analyzed the textual grist, or richness, of every text associated with a writing task in both textbooks. Any writing task that was not associated with a reading selection was excluded from this analysis (30%). Analyzing the textual grist associated with each writing task allowed me to determine the degree to which each text is able to support meaningful writing experiences. Texts

containing a high level of grist had content with multiple levels of meaning, nuanced plot, complex themes and/or character relationships, implicit purpose, or a highly ambiguous plot. Texts containing a mid level of textual grist contained a moderately complex plot, theme, or topic, and tasks containing a low level of grist had a single level of meaning, familiar and predictable plot, basic information, or a straightforward or explicitly stated purpose. Tables 17, 18, and 19 show the level of textual grist associated with each task type.

Table 17: Textual Grist in Holt McDougal (39 Tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	17	43.6%	14	36.0%	2	5.1%
Text-based Creative	0	0.0%	6	15.4%	0	0.0%
Total	17	43.6%	20	51.3%	2	5.1%

Note. 25 tasks did not require students to use the text or asked students to self-select texts and therefore are not included.

Table 18: Textual Grist in Prentice Hall (72 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	16	22.2%	26	36.1%	19	26.4%
Text-based Creative	2	2.7%	8	11.1%	1	1.3%
Total	18	25.0%	34	47.2%	20	27.7%

Note. 22 tasks did not require students to use the text or asked students to self-select texts and therefore are not included.

Table 19: Textual Grist in Both Textbooks Combined (111 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	33	29.7%	40	36.0%	21	18.9%
Creative	2	1.8%	14	12.6%	1	.9%
Total	35	31.5%	54	48.6%	22	19.8%

Note. 47 tasks did not require students to use the text or asked students to self-select texts and therefore are not included.

Across both textbooks, nearly 35% of the texts used in text-based tasks and nearly 12% of the texts used in text-based creative writing tasks contained a high level of textual grist. That is, they contained complex content and richness for interpretation and analysis. One example of a text that contained a high level of textual grist was "The Minister's Black Veil," a short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne. The story, which appeared in both textbooks, contains a high level of ambiguity concerning why the minister always wore a black veil on his face:

> All through life that piece of crape had hung between him and the world: it had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman's love, and kept him in that saddest of all prisons, his own heart; and still it lay upon his face, as if to deepen the gloom of his darksome chamber, and shade him from the sunshine of eternity. (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 283)

In addition to the high level of ambiguity in the text, the plot builds suspense over the course of the story. These features potentially allow for rich discussions, both oral and in writing, about this text. Some other frequently anthologized texts that contain a high level of grist include *The Crucible*, "Speech in the Virginia Convention," and "The Yellow Wallpaper."

Approximately 48% of tasks that used texts (text-based tasks and text-based creative writing tasks) contained a mid level of textual grist. An example of a text that contained a mid

level of grist is "Everyday Use," a short story by Alice Walker about a mother and her two daughters (one who is shy and traditional and one who is educated and modern). The story contains a moderately complex plot and moderately rich themes: Both daughters wish to inherit their mother's quilts, which function as a symbol of the generational bonds and the vulnerability of those bonds. Although the plot is fairly straightforward, the theme and central conflict are ambiguous, placing it in the mid category. Other frequently anthologized texts that contained a mid level of textual grist are "Of Plymouth Plantation," "Mirror," "Death of a Hired Man," and "The Devil and Tom Walker."

Nearly 20% of tasks that used texts (text-based tasks and text-based creative writing tasks) contained a low level of textual grist. The texts coded as low level had a straightforward plot or purpose and provided only limited opportunities for students to develop interpretations or analysis. One example of a text that contained a low level of grist is Anne Bradstreet's poem "To My Dear and Loving Husband." This frequently anthologized poem contains little ambiguity, richness, or interpretive potential. Instead, the poem offers a straightforward message: Bradstreet loves her husband very much (e.g., "If ever two were one, then surely we./If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee") (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 76). Other frequently anthologized texts that contain a low level of textual grist included "Richard Cory," "I Will Fight No More Forever," "Poor Richard's Almanac," and "I Hear America Singing."

Nearly 20% of the texts used in text-based and text-based creative writing tasks contained a low level of grist, and therefore would not likely support the high level thinking and reasoning or elaborated writing necessary to prepare students for college writing. However, a majority of the texts, 80%, used with text-based and text-based creative writing tasks contained at least a mid level of textual grist. These texts not only have the ability to support analytical and interpretive

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work, but they also contain rich content that can support students to write in extended ways (through both length and using evidence and explanations). Overall, the grist of texts used in these eleventh grade textbooks has the potential to support student writing in ways that will prepare them for college writing.

4.5   ELABORATED COMMUNICATION

4.5.1   Length

Elaboration of length refers to the extent to which the task explicitly stated a length requirement for writing. Tasks coded as high called for students to engage in extended writing: five or more paragraphs or a multi-page essay. Tasks asking students to engage in a mid level of elaborated communication for length required a moderate amount to writing (i.e., three or multi-paragraph). Tasks coded as low for length did not promote extended writing; these tasks often emphasized brevity or only required students to write one paragraph. Tables 19 and 20 present the data on the length of writing tasks explicitly called for in the task.

Table 20: Elaborated Communication Length in Holt McDougal (64 tasks)

Task type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% Low	# of n/a	% n/a	# of n/s	% n/s
Text-based	2	3.1%	10	15.6%	8	12.5%	0	0.0%	17	26.6%
Non Text-based	0	0.0%	12	18.8%	1	1.6%	0	0.0%	4	6.3%
Creative	3	4.7%	3	4.7%	2	3.1%	2	3.1%	0	0.0%
Total	5	7.8%	25	39.1%	11	17.2%	2	3.1%	21	32.8%

Note. Tasks were coded as not applicable (n/a) if the task did not allow for extended writing (e.g., modernist poem). Tasks were coded as not stated (n/s) if there was no specification regarding length.

Table 21: Elaborated Communication in Prentice Hall (94 tasks)

Task type	# of High	% High	# of Mid	% Mid	# of Low	% Low	# of n/a	% n/a	# of n/s	% n/s
Text-based	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	66	70.0%
Non Text-based	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	15	16.0%
Creative	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	3.2%	10	14.0%
Total	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	3.2%	91	96.8%

Note. Tasks were coded as not applicable (n/a) if the task did not allow for extended writing (e.g., modernist poem). Tasks were coded as not stated (n/s) if there was no specification regarding length.

No specifications regarding length appeared in the Prentice Hall textbook. In the Holt McDougal textbook, only 7.8 % of tasks called for writing that is multi-page or five or more paragraphs. The tasks that called for extended writing included writing one-to-three page short stories and writing a five or more paragraph literary analysis related to *The Crucible*. Most tasks, however, called for one-to-three paragraphs, three paragraphs, or "brief" essays.

4.5.2   Expectations for elaborated communication

In addition to coding for length, I also analyzed each task to determine the expectation for students to engage in elaborated communication. Tasks coded as having a high level of expectation for elaboration required or encouraged students to substantiate their responses with evidence and reasons (e.g., expectation to provide reasoning, warrants, and/or qualifications; elaborations and details woven into extended narratives, explanations, and dialogue). Tasks requiring students to elaborate to a mid degree contained some expectation for students to engage in elaborated communication; for example, the task requested for students to use evidence, but in vague ways without requiring student explanation or reasoning. Tasks coded as low had little to no expectation for students to engage in elaborated communication. Tables 22, 23, and 24 present the data on elaborated communication expectations of writing tasks.

Table 22: Expectations for Elaborated Communication in Holt McDougal (64 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	9	14.0%	22	34.4%	6	9.4%%
Non text-based	1	1.6%	9	14.0%	7	10.9%
Creative	2	3.1%	4	6.3%	4	6.3%
Total	12	18.7%	35	54.7%	17	26.6%

Table 23: Expectations for Elaborated Communication in Prentice Hall (94 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	27	28.7%	26	27.6%	12	12.7
Non text-based	3	2.1%	9	9.6%	3	2.1%
Creative	4	4.2%	6	6.4%	3	2.1%
Total	34	36.2%	41	43.6%	18	19.1%

Table 24: Expectations for Elaborated Communication in Both Textbooks Combined (158 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	36	22.8%	48	30.4%	18	11.4%
Non text-based	4	2.5%	18	11.4%	10	6.3%
Creative	6	3.8%	10	6.3%	7	4.4%
Total	46	29.1%	76	48.1%	35	22.1%

Overall, the tasks promoted written elaboration. In fact, almost every writing task in both textbooks prompted students to use "details" in their writing. Text-based tasks ranged from more general language such as "cite evidence" and "use details to support your interpretation" to more specific language like "elaborate upon your reasoning in each body paragraph, citing details that are substantial, specific, and relevant to your position" (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 320). However, only 21% of tasks asking students to state a claim[17] included explicit language asking students to reason, or explain why their examples, evidence, or details supported their overall claim or position. Non text-based tasks overwhelmingly requested students to be "precise" through their use of details, examples, and images. Some of these tasks also encouraged students to elaborate through the use of personal examples, explanations, or anecdotes. Creative writing tasks

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[17] Such tasks were arguments, analytic essays, or interpretive essays

encouraged students to elaborate through the use of sensory language, background information, dialogue, interior monologues, and the use of details. Even though the language of asking for evidence or details varied depending on the type of writing task (i.e., one would not use evidence when composing an original poem), all three types of tasks overwhelming valued the use of details and/or evidence to at least a mid degree.

4.5.3   Warrants and reasoning

One trend throughout the data was the absence of asking students to explain their chosen details and evidence. Only 21% of text-based tasks that asked students to make and support a claim included explicit language requesting reasoning or warrants (i.e., explanations of why or how their evidence or examples supports their claim). Instead, most tasks (79%)[18] either (a) held the assumption that students will include reasoning or warrants without specifically asking for them or (b) did not value the use of warrants and reasoning in student writing. One example of a task that omitted explicit language for including reasons or warrants appeared after the text, "The Minister's Black Veil" by Nathaniel Hawthorne. This task asked students to read a very short excerpt by literary critic Paul Zweig about Edgar Allen Poe's contribution of a "dark perspective" to American literature. The task that followed stated:

> Nathaniel Hawthorne is also a master of the gothic genre. Do you think Zweig's comments about Poe can apply to Hawthorne's work as well? Write a brief response, citing evidence from "The Minister's Black Veil" to support your opinion. (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 485)

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[18] 79% of tasks that should include warrants or reasons (e.g., argument). Writing an imagist poem, for example, would not include warrants and thus not included when determining this percentage.

The task seems to assume that students will explain *how* their evidence supported their claim about whether Zweig's comments about Poe can apply to Hawthorne, yet the task does not explicitly call for students to make this connection. The omission of explicit language around reasoning or warranting is problematic because research has shown that students are unlikely to provide reasons in their writing because they presume a shared understanding by others (Anderson, Chinn, Chang, Waggoner, & Yi, 1997). Research has also shown that students need assistance articulating reasons, a crucial but often implicit component (Anderson et al., 1997; O'Hallaron, 2014). Given that the effectiveness of an argument depends greatly on students' ability to formulate reasons to explain why they chose certain examples, evidence, or details, explicit language in the writing tasks around the inclusion of reasons or warrants may prove helpful to students.

Only 21% of tasks asked students to provide warrants to connect their claim(s) and evidence or reasoning to explain their thinking. In an analytic essay on Twain's use of humorous elements, for example, students were asked first to "introduce the passage by indicating which aspect of the definition it will illustrate"; then to "provide a passage in the form of a quotation"; and finally to "[e]xplain the connection between the passage and Twain's definition" (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 584). Given the research on student struggles to provide warranting, explicit language serves as a reminder for the inclusion of this feature in student writing. Drawing from research in cognitive science, Hall and Resnick (2005) explained, "Only when students know what is expected and are able to assess their progress toward a set goal can they take responsibility for their own learning" (p. 23); thus, explicit language around the inclusion of warrants and/or reasoning in textbook writing tasks will not only promote student reasoning, but it will also support students in taking ownership of their learning.

4.5.4 Examples and models

A second trend that emerged while analyzing the features of elaborated communication was the inclusion of (1) examples and (2) models. Examples were included in writing tasks, presumably in an effort to support student thinking. At times, examples lowered the demand of the task by providing the thinking for the student. For example, a task may ask students to write about a theme and provide a theme for students can write about. A more specific example appeared after the short story "An Occurrence at Owl Bridge Creek": "Bierce was among the first writers to use stream of consciousness, a *stylistic device* that imitates the natural flow of thoughts in feelings. In an **essay**, explain how Bierce's use of this technique adds to the story's drama" (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 491, italics and bold in original). A more open task might ask students how Bierce's use of stream of consciousness impacts the story, thus providing students the opportunity to engage in more of the cognitive work of the task.

Another consequence of providing examples is confining student ideas. In other words, some writing tasks provided all or parts of the argument or interpretation students must write about and limit what students can choose to write about. One example of a writing task that confined student thinking asked students to compare the works of Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman. The task told students that Dickinson's lines are "short and concise" while Whitman's are "long and sprawling" and that Dickinson writes about personal experience while Whitman writes about the "representative experiences of American people" (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 557). The task then prompted students to further compare the work of the two authors. Since the examples in the task already identified two significant differences between the authors, much of the cognitive work of the task is done for students. Furthermore, students may not feel ownership of their work. Applebee and Langer (1987) identified ownership as a crucial feature of

scaffolding student learning and argued that tasks "must allow room for students to have something of their own to say in their writing" (p. 141).

In addition to examples, writing tasks also contained models[19] to help students understand the essence of the writing activity and develop a mental picture of what the skill or practice looks like when implemented. Graham and Perin's (2007) meta-analysis showed that the study of models had positive effects on students' academic writing. Using models of writing provides students with opportunities to read, analyze, and emulate good writing. Short models of writing appear in the Prentice Hall textbook in each of the thirty tasks labeled "Writing." These short models focused on topics such as building unity, revising language, using exact quotations, anticipating counterclaims, and planning a clear and logical organization. Not only can annotated models provide students with a concrete vision of how to strengthen their own writing, the models may also support students in extending their writing by providing support and direction for students on how to elaborate.

As these examples above demonstrate, there is a tension between providing support for students to successfully engage with a task and providing too much support so that it removes the cognitive work of the task. On one hand, both examples and models have the potential to support student writing by helping students create a mental picture of the expected work. On the other hand, too much support can detract from the cognitive work students should independently engage in and too little support may not be helpful. Given the research that suggests how writing tasks influence student learning and the prevalence of textbooks as classroom resources (Agee, 2004; Applebee, 1992; Ball & Cohen, 1996; Ball & Feiman-Nemser; Dutro, 2010; Grossman & Thompson, 2008; Smagorinsky et al., 2002), textbook writing tasks should encourage students to

[19] 46% of textbook writing tasks contained models

engage in independent thinking instead of confining student thinking. Therefore, the inclusion of examples and models in textbook writing tasks points to the need for textbook publishers to carefully consider the inclusion of examples and models used in textbook writing tasks to ensure that students are positioned to engage in the cognitive work of the task.

4.6   OVERALL RIGOR OF TEXT-BASED ELA WRITING TASKS

As discussed in Chapter 2, research has shown that high quality, cognitively demanding writing tasks are associated with gains in student learning as measured on standardized tests of achievement in ELA (Bryk et al., 2000; Matsumura et al., 2004); however, in order to engage students in ambitious intellectual tasks that are cognitively demanding, the texts accompanying text-based tasks must be able to support working to construct meaning beyond what is written on the page (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, & Kucan, 1997; Snow, 2002). High quality texts and tasks are essential in supporting students to write in elaborated ways that provide students with opportunities "to use composing as a way to think through issues, to show the depth or breadth of their knowledge, or to go beyond what they know in making connections and raising new issues" (Applebee & Langer, 2011, p. 16). Thus, I analyzed each text-based writing task for overall rigor combining the three features, cognitive demand, textual grist, and elaborated communication, in order to create a more accurate depiction of the task. The combining of the three features acknowledges how they work together to contribute to the overall rigor of text-based tasks. The findings for overall rigor for text-based writing tasks can be found in Tables 25, 26, and 27.

Table 25: Overall Rigor of Text-based Tasks in Holt McDougal (37 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	14	37.8%	20	54.0%	3	8.19%

Table 26: Overall Rigor of Text-based Tasks in Prentice Hall (66 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	26	39.4%	30	45.5%	10	15.2%

Table 27: Overall Rigor of Text-based Tasks in Both Textbooks Combined (103 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	40	38.9%	50	48.5%	13	12.6%

In total, nearly 40% of text-based tasks contained a high level of rigor using the three-part model[20]; nearly 50% percent of text-based tasks contained a mid level of rigor using the three-part model[21]; and nearly 13% of text-based tasks contained a low level of rigor using this model[22]. Each task fell into one of three categories: (1) writing tasks had the same rating[23] across all three features[24], (2) two similar ratings across the three features, or (3) one rating in each of the three features. Forty two percent of the text-based tasks had total agreement among the three

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[20] Within this 38.9%, slightly over half of these tasks (51%) had the same rating of high across all three features, and 48.5% had the same rating in two of the three features.

[21] Within this 49%, 30% had the same rating of mid across all three features, 54% of tasks had the same rating in two of the three features, and 16% had one rating in each of the three features. In two cases, two of the three ratings were the same yet the overall rating differed. See Appendix A for rationales of these exceptions.

[22] Within this 12.6%, 60% had low ratings across all three features, 33% of tasks had low ratings in two of the three features, and 7% of tasks had one rating in each of the three features.

[23] High, medium, low

[24] Cognitive demand, textual grist, elaborated communication

features (i.e., all three features were coded as high, medium, or low). Forty six percent of text-based tasks had two out of the three features the same as the overall rating. Three percent of the tasks had two out of the three features coded the same but differed from the overall rating[25]. Nine percent of tasks had a different rating for each of the features (or weren't similar in any category) with only one of these tasks receiving an overall rating other than a mid[26] level rating for overall rigor. Examples of tasks with overall rigor ratings of high, medium, and low can be found in Table 8 in Chapter 3.

Analyzing writing tasks for the overall rigor illustrates the complex ways cognitive demand, textual grist, and elaborated communication work together. One representative example of the complexity among the features appeared in the Holt McDougal textbook. The task is coded as mid range for overall rigor and had different ratings across the three features. The task asked students to do the following:

> Imagine that you are a publisher who is planning to print the works beginning on page 878 in a slim anthology called *The Harlem Renaissance*. You'd like to organize the works into thematic groupings to help your readers gain a sense of some of the issues and concerns that these writers, despite their varied experiences, collectively held in common. With a partner, work together to create a table of contents for your book, with the works grouped under thematic headings, such as "Social Protest" or "Reflections of Heritage." Then write a brief explanation of why you grouped the works the way you did. (p. 915)

The cognitive demand for this task was coded as high because the task positioned students to synthesize the issues and concerns across eleven texts from the Harlem Renaissance and to use this synthesis in an original way by creating a table of contents. There are eleven texts

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[25] See Appendix A for the rationales of these exceptions
[26] See Appendix A for the rationale of this exception

included in the section on the Harlem Renaissance, including nine poems by authors such as Langston Hughes, Nora Zeale Hurston's essay "How It Feels to be Colored Me," and an essay called "Thoughts on the African-American Novel" by Toni Morrison. Although there is variability in the grist of these texts, as a group the texts fell in the mid range. Overall, texts contained moderately complex ideas around topics such as identity, home, and protest. Some works contained a low level of ambiguity and some metaphors were present in the poems, but central ideas and themes were mostly presented in straightforward ways. Since the texts contained only a mid level of grist, students may easily identify the thematic elements due to the straightforward nature of the texts, thus requiring less advanced thinking from students. In other words, because the texts are straightforward regarding the issues and concerns of the writers, students will not necessarily have to deeply understand and synthesize each text in order to complete the assignment. Elaborated communication was coded as low for this task. Despite the synthesizing students might do in order to thematically group the texts, they were only called to write a brief explanation. Students could be prompted to provide detailed rationales of their choices but the wording of "brief explanation" does not explicitly prompt students to substantiate their responses with detailed reasons, rationales, or evidence from the texts. Without explicitly calling for such reasoning, students will not likely provide it (Anderson et al., 1997; O'Hallaron, 2014). Overall, this task is representative of the complex ways cognitive demand, textual grist, and elaborated communication work together to create an overall rating of rigor[27].

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[27] One task had a rating in each of the three features but was not coded as mid. See Appendix A for a rationale of this exception.

4.6.1 Analysis of overall rigor model compared to cognitive demand

When comparing the results of the overall rigor of the task to the results of the cognitive demand of the tasks, the number of tasks coded as "high demand" was reduced. Table 28 shows the differences in the ratings.

Table 28: Comparison of High Cognitive Demand and High Overall Rigor for Text-based Tasks

	Holt McDougal	Prentice Hall	Both Textbooks Combined
High Cognitive Demand	19 tasks	39 tasks	58 tasks
High Overall Rigor	14 tasks	26 tasks	40 tasks
Amount decreased	26%	33%	31%

In the Holt McDougal textbook, the number of highly demanding tasks fell from 19 tasks to 14 tasks, which is a decrease of 26%. In the Prentice Hall textbook, the number of highly demanding tasks fell from 39 tasks to 26 tasks, which is a decrease of 33%. Combined, the number of highly demanding tasks fell from 58 tasks to 40 tasks, which is a decrease by 31%. An example of a task that had a higher cognitive demand rating than overall rigor rating asked students to write an essay that compared and contrasted "From the Dark Tower" and "A Black Man Talks of Reaping" in order to "[i]dentify specific points of comparison, such as each poet's use of metaphor, and consider each poem's message and sound. Include vivid language and quote sufficiently from the poems to support your ideas" (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 927). Although the cognitive demand of this task asked students to engage in interpretation, the poems contained only a mid level of grist. Both "From the Dark Tower" and "A Black Man Talks of Reaping" used metaphors to describe the injustice of African Americans not being able to reap the benefits

of their labor. Both poems also similarly contained little ambiguity and were straightforward with the message they deliver. The task explicitly prompted students to use quotations to support their ideas; however, the task did not ask students to provide an explanation of how their chosen quotations support their opinions nor did the task ask for students to elaborate on the extent of the similarities and differences. Therefore, when considering textual grist and expectations for elaboration in addition to cognitive demand, this task moves from a high rating of cognitive demand to a mid category for overall rigor.

Even though the number of highly demanding tasks was reduced when using the three-part model for overall rigor, seven tasks (6.8%) increased in demand when considering textual grist and elaborated communication features. Two of these tasks contained a mid level of cognitive demand but had a high degree of overall rigor, and five tasks contained a low level of cognitive demand but had a mid degree of overall rigor. These tasks typically contained high expectations for students to engage in elaborated communication. A writing task that appeared after Thoreau's *Walden*, for example, asked students to write an editorial arguing for or against "the relevance of Thoreau's ideas of simplicity in today's world"; the task further requested that students introduce Thoreau and his ideas, write a statement advocating or rejecting their relevance, and to explain their reasoning through use of examples, anecdotes, or quotations (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 391). Thus, the explicit expectation for students to elaborate increased the overall rigor of the task.

Only one task increased in overall rigor because of textual grist (from low cognitive demand to mid overall rigor): After reading eleven texts from the Civil War era, students were asked to describe "both the historical and personal insights [they] gained from reading the nonfiction in this unit" (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 617). While the texts in this section varied in

complexity, overall the texts were complex due to the content, purpose, message, and high demand of content knowledge thus increasing the overall rigor of the task. The cognitive demand was coded as mid level for this task because it focused on building an understanding of the texts in order for students to explain their insights; however, the complexity of the texts increased the overall rigor of the task. Although the rigor of tasks was more likely to decrease when using the three-part model, these examples demonstrate how text selection and expectations for students to elaborate their responses with reasons and evidence can increase the overall rigor of a writing task.

By combining cognitive demand, textual grist, and opportunities for elaborated communication, I have provided a more nuanced perspective of what it means for students to construct knowledge through writing in rigorous ways. This three-part model of overall rigor demonstrates the integral role texts play in students' ability to write in elaborated ways using a high level of cognitive demand. Given that approximately 20% of the texts used in text-based tasks contained a low level of grist, even tasks that contain a high level of cognitive demand may not engage students in rigorous work, since low level texts are not able to support students' engagement in high level thinking or elaborated writing. This model is significant to research on writing task quality because it reveals the complexity of how cognitive demand, textual grist, and elaborated communication work together to create the overall rigor of the task.

4.7   DISCIPLINARY AUTHENTICITY

As discussed in chapter three, cognitive research as well as scholarship on task quality and the field of English Language Arts has shown why discipline-specific features of writing tasks need

to be taken into consideration when analyzing task quality. Therefore, I analyzed each writing task to determine the extent to which it is authentic to the discipline of ELA. Tasks containing a high level of disciplinary authenticity required students to work as a junior member of a discipline's community in order to create an understanding of what is valued within the discipline (i.e., what counts as a good question, evidence, or reasoning) (Petrosky et al., 2010). Tasks authentic to the field of ELA engage students in (1) fields and genres specific to ELA and (2) practices specific to ELA. Such work includes forming and warranting interpretations from within and across text(s), writing an editorial, and modeling expert writing. Tasks containing a mid level of disciplinary authenticity focused on basic skills and proficiencies that may apply across disciplines (e.g., creating a summary). Tasks containing a low level of disciplinary authenticity did not have application beyond completion of the task; that is, students will not likely encounter a similar task outside of school (i.e., use five identified vocabulary words in a sentence). Tables 29, 30, and 31 present the data for disciplinary authenticity.

Table 29: Disciplinary Authenticity in Holt McDougal (64 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	23	36.0%	9	14.0%	4	6.3%
Non text-based	6	9.4%	6	9.4%	6	9.4%
Creative	8	13.0%	0	0.0%	2	3.1%
Total	37	58.0%	15	23.4%	12	18.8%

Table 30: Disciplinary Authenticity in Prentice Hall (94 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	33	35.1%	29	30.9%	4	4.3%
Non text-based	7	7.4%	6	6.4%	2	2.1%
Creative	8	8.5%	1	1.1%	4	4.3%
Total	48	51.1%	36	38.3%	10	10.6%

Table 31: Disciplinary Authenticity in Both Textbooks Combined (158 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	56	35.4%	38	24.0%	8	5.1%
Non text-based	13	8.2%	12	7.6%	8	5.1%
Creative	16	10.1%	1	.63%	6	3.8%
Total	85	53.8%	51	32.3%	22	14.0%

Within the feature of disciplinary authenticity, three interesting findings emerged: the representation of fields and genres, the presence of contrived scenarios, and the inclusion of cross-disciplinary work.

4.7.1 Fields and genres

The first finding within the feature of disciplinary authenticity revealed that a wide range of fields and genres authentic to ELA are represented by textbook writing tasks. Across both textbooks, nearly half of all tasks contained a high level of disciplinary authenticity. In both textbooks, tasks in the field of English literature were most often represented. In other words, 57% of tasks coded as high for discipline authenticity were associated with the field of English literature; these tasks typically focused on literary analysis and interpretation. Other fields represented in the textbooks included creative writing, journalism, speech and rhetoric, and law.

Tasks in the fields of creative writing and composition included writing memoirs, poems, and short stories. Other fields represented included speech and rhetoric as well as journalism. Tasks containing a mid degree of disciplinary authenticity were general tasks such as summary writing, writing research reports, synthesizing information, and letter writing. Relatively few tasks contained a low level of disciplinary authenticity; most tasks had some application beyond fulfilling a school requirement.

Within the field of ELA, multiple fields (e.g., English literature, journalism) were represented. In addition to multiple fields being represented, multiple genres were also represented within each field (e.g., analytic essay, editorial). Table 32 shows the various fields and genres represented by tasks that were highly authentic to the field of ELA across both textbooks combined.

**Table 32: Fields and Genres in Tasks Highly Authentic to ELA in Both Textbooks
Combined (85 tasks)**

Fields (and percentages)	Genre (and percentage of tasks)
English Literature (57%)	• Interpretive Essay (9.7%) • Literary Criticism (7.3%) • Analytic (20%) • Argument (4.9%) • Informational (8.5) • Research (6%)
Creative Writing (24%)	• Autobiography (2.4%) • Reflective (2.4%) • Personal Account (1.2%) • Narrative (1.2%) • Short Story (6%) • Monologue (2.4%) • Poem (6%) • Memoir (1.2%) • Stream of Consciousness (1.2%)
Journalism (14%)	• News Story (3.7%) • Eyewitness Report (2.4%) • Letter to the Paper (1.2%) • Online Feature Article (1.2%) • Book Review (1.2%) • Editorial (3.7%)
Speech and Rhetoric (4%)	• Speech Writing (3.7%)
Law (1%)	• Court Brief (1.2%)

In addition to a wide number of fields and genres represented, two notable practices rooted in the field of ELA were also represented: using models of expert writing and perspective taking. Studying models of expert writing has shown positive effects on students' academic writing and is considered a best practice in ELA (Graham & Perin, 2007). Likewise, perspective taking is also an important practice in ELA classrooms because writing about diverse perspectives promotes using literature to act as window to explore other cultures as well as a mirror for students to examine their own (Cullinan, 1998; Galda, 1998; Glazier & Seo, 2005). Thus, these practices also inform disciplinary authenticity in ELA writing tasks. Table 33 presents the data on these identified practices in tasks that are highly authentic to ELA in both textbooks combined.

Table 33: Disciplinary Practices Authentic to ELA (85 tasks)

Task Type	Using Models	Perspective Taking
Text-based	10.6% (9 tasks)	8.2% (7 tasks)
Non Text-based	8.2% (7 tasks)	1.2% (1 task)
Creative	1.2% (1 task)	1.2% (1 task)
Total	20.0% (17 tasks)	15.5% (9 tasks)

Important to note is that only four tasks contained the requirement of multi-modal work. One example of multi-modal work was an analytic task in the Prentice Hall (2012) textbook that asked students to do the following:

Prepare a response to "One Art" and "Filling Station" in more than one genre, or form.

Illustrate the poems with drawings, paintings, photographs, or a collage of images from

other sources, including the Internet. Then, write an explanation of your choices. Finally,

combine the images with the text in a poster to display in your classroom. (p. 1078)

It is important for multi-modal tasks to be represented in ELA textbooks because in order to be

literate in today's society, students must be familiar with non-traditional texts such as wikis,

blogs, podcasts, films, and other digital and media texts (Beach, 2007; Hobbs, 2007; Kist, 2005).

Furthermore, research from ELA classrooms has shown that incorporating multimodal learning

can expand students' understanding of disciplinary content (Hobbs, 2007; Kist, 2010; Ranker,

2008; Stein, 2009); therefore, these tasks are an important inclusion as they support and expand

student understanding of authentic ELA tasks.

Despite an under-representation of multi-modal tasks, both students and teachers have an

opportunity to engage with a range of disciplinary fields, genres, and even practices in ELA

textbooks. If textbook writing tasks are written in ways that teach their users about the discipline,

tasks have the potential to positively impact both teachers and students by exposing them to a

range of disciplinary authentic work.

4.7.2   Contrived scenarios

The second finding within the feature of intellectual authority showed that some tasks[28]

contained contrived scenarios, presumably in an effort to increase student motivation. These

artificial scenarios often seemed to masked low level work and detracted from the authentic work

of the task. For example, after reading an excerpt from "Of Plymouth Plantation" where author

William Bradford described the experiences and hardships of the Massachusetts settlers, students

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[28] Eleven tasks embedded contrived scenarios (7%). Eight of those contrived scenarios were inauthentic.

were asked to "[i]magine that time travel is possible and William Bradford is coming to speak at your school. Write the opening **speech** that will be used to introduce him to the assembly…" (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 67, bold in original). This task asked students to recall information about Bradford from reading his biography and the excerpt from his narrative, fairly straightforward and low level work. This task also asked students to engage in speech writing, a task authentic to the field of ELA; yet the time travel scenario makes the act of speech writing an inauthentic exercise that may detract from the genuine experience of speech writing.

Not all contrived scenarios were inauthentic; some writing tasks incorporated scenarios that were authentic to the discipline of ELA. For example, after reading texts from authors during the Harlem Renaissance (e.g., Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, Claude McKay), students were asked to

> Imagine that you are a publisher who is planning to print the works…in a slim anthology called *The Harlem Renaissance*. You'd like to organize the works into thematic groupings to help your readers gain a sense of some of the issues and concerns that these writers, despite their varied experiences, collectively held in common. With a partner, work together to create a table of contents for your book, with the works grouped under thematic headings…. (Holt McDougal, 2012, 915)

Although this task also consists of a contrived scenario, it does so in a way reflective of the work of English Language Arts. Creating a table of contents is a genuine and authentic task because it potentially engages students in work that they may likely do if they pursue a career in the field of publishing or editing.

4.7.3 Cross-disciplinary work

The third finding within the feature of intellectual authority revealed that a notable portion of writing tasks, 32%, asked students to engage in work that applied across disciplines. These tasks included writing summaries, research reports, explanations, descriptive paragraphs, and comparisons. Additionally, a handful of tasks focused on "real world" assignments such as memo writing, writing a business letter, and constructing a resume. Thus, the writing tasks in ELA textbooks also supports learning in virtually all other content areas as well as writing skills needed for everyday life (Brinkley & Harper, 2007). Although there are benefits to cross-disciplinary literacy skills being taught in ELA classes, these tasks potentially take time away from learning opportunities that engage students in work specific to the field of ELA. The fact that 37% of tasks asked students to engage in general, foundational literacy work illustrates the tension that exists in ELA between teaching foundational literacy skills that students can use across content areas and the teaching of tasks authentic to the field of ELA. However, compared to general reading and writing tasks, tasks that position students to engage in inquiry within a specific discipline such as ELA are more authentic, meaningful, and significant (Petrosky et al., 2010). Therefore, the reduction of authentic ELA work in any ELA curriculum limits exposing students to rich content and promoting interpretive and analytic work within the field.

4.8   INTELLECTUAL AUTHORITY

As discussed in Chapter 3, cognitive research as well as scholarship on task quality and the field of ELA has shown intellectual authority to be a feature of high quality writing tasks. Therefore, I

analyzed each task to determine the extent to which it allowed students to hold intellectual authority. Tasks positioning students as intellectual authorities to a high degree situated students as experts (e.g., task included an expectation for students to publish their work), required students to make original claims or contribute new knowledge, or invited students into academic conversations. Tasks positioning students as intellectual authorities to a mid degree asked students to support a given interpretation or evaluation of a text, contribute personal knowledge for isolated or superficial reasons, or asked students to apply features or characteristics from a text to their own writing. Tasks positioning students as intellectual authorities to a low degree treated students as novices and asked them to repeat, memorize, or recall information, which was often superficial in nature; these low level tasks often functioned in isolation rather than as part of a greater discipline-based conversation. Tables 34, 35, and 36 present the data on intellectual authority for each textbook by task type.

Table 34: Intellectual Authority in Holt McDougal (64 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	12	18.8%	18	28.1%	7	10.9%
Non text-based	2	3.1%	11	17.2%	4	6.3%
Creative	2	3.1%	4	6.3%	4	6.3%
Total	16	25.0%	33	51.6%	15	23.4%

Table 35: Intellectual Authority in Prentice Hall (94 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	19	20.2%	36	38.3%	11	11.7%
Non text-based	8	8.5%	6	6.4%	1	1.1%
Creative	1	1.1%	5	5.3%	7	7.4%
Total	28	29.8%	47	50.0%	19	20.2%

Table 36: Intellectual Authority in Both Textbooks Combined (158 tasks)

Task Type	# of High	% of High	# of Mid	% of Mid	# of Low	% of Low
Text-based	31	19.6%	54	34.2%	18	11.4%
Non text-based	10	6.3%	17	10.8%	5	3.2%
Creative	3	1.9%	9	5.7%	11	6.9%
Total	44	27.8%	80	50.6%	34	21.5%

Across both textbooks, the majority of tasks, 79%, positioned students as intellectual authorities to a high or mid level. Data showed that text-based tasks were the most likely to position students as an intellectual authority and that creative writing tasks were the least likely to position students as intellectual authorities. More specifically, only three of the 23 creative writing tasks positioned students as intellectual authorities to a high degree (13%). An example of a creative writing task that positioned students with a high level of intellectual authority asked students to "write a **short story** that engages reader with a strong plot, complex characters, and a vivid story. Build your story around a central conflict" (Holt, 2012, p. 486, bold in original). This task positioned students as original authors of self-created works of fiction making original contributions to the field of fiction. In contrast to the few creative writing tasks and non text-based writing tasks that positioned students as intellectual authorities to a high degree, text-based tasks positioned students as intellectual authorities the majority of the time (83%).

Given the data on intellectual authority that emerged from open coding, three interesting patterns emerged: how the tasks invited students to participate in academic conversations, how tasks confined student thinking, and how tasks encouraged the sharing of student work.

4.8.1 Participating in academic conversations

The first pattern within the feature of intellectual authority revealed that writing tasks invite students to participate in extended academic conversations in various ways. One way tasks containing a high level of intellectual authority invited students into academic conversations was by asking students to consider other authors' responses to questions. One example of such a task asked students to choose one writer from four Civil War primary source documents (Robert E. Lee, Sullivan Ballou, Mary Chesnut, Sojourner Truth) in order to "imagine how this person might have responded to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address" by summarizing their chosen writer's imagined response and supporting their ideas with textual evidence (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 597). This task allowed students to participate in the "underlying structure of academic writing" by not only stating personal ideas but also deeply engaging with other people's views (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010).

A second way tasks invited students to participate in extended academic conversations was by positioning students to consider the themes, values, knowledge, or concepts in the texts to draw comparisons and analyze similarities and differences. Examples of such tasks asked students to compare how women's roles have changed since the times of Kate Chopin and Edith Wharton (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 833), to consider the similar values held by Native Americans and people today (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 65), and to state their opinion on whether we have reached the goals and visions of civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr.,

Malcolm X, and Anne Moody (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 1259). These examples invite students to join ongoing academic and civic conversations. As Kenneth Burke (1941) discussed in his book *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, the threads of academic discussion have began long ago, and, as such, one must "listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar" (p. 111). The ongoing nature of these types of academic conversations offers students a vision of the perpetual nature of discussion and presents them with the opportunity to put their ideas into larger contexts. In fact, research (Engle, Nguyen, & Mendelson, 2011) has shown that when students are positioned to contribute to academic conversations, those extending across time, places, people, and topics, they were more likely to transfer facts, conceptual principles, and learning strategies. Thus, when tasks position students to participate in disciplinary debates, they treat students as part of a disciplinary community.

4.8.2   Confining student thinking

The second pattern within the feature of intellectual authority revealed that many writing tasks confined student thinking[29] in multiple ways: (1) asking students to support given interpretations or arguments, (2) providing examples, and (3) rewriting and recalling. The first way tasks confined student thinking was by positioning students to support a given interpretation or argument. For example, one task asked students to explain why a certain author is a good example of the romantic era instead of allowing students to form their own evaluation of the author's work in light of the romantic era. Another task that may confine student thinking

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[29] Thirty-eight tasks (24.0%) confined student thinking in some way. 29% of tasks that confined student learning ask students to support a given interpretation or argument; 26.3% of tasks limited students' need to think independently; 26.3% of tasks asked students to recall or rewrite.

appeared after the text "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"; this task asked students to discuss whether Prufrock is a man who "fails to achieve his dreams" or if he "embodies larger failings of the modern age" (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 715). This task confined students' interpretation of Prufrock by forcing them to choose between two given interpretations of Prufrock's character in their literary analysis instead of forming their own interpretation of the character.

A second way tasks confined student thinking was by providing examples that potentially limited students' need to think independently. For example, one text-based explanatory task asked students to compare and contrast two poems, "From the Dark Tower" by Countee Cullen and "A Black Man Talks of Reaping" by Arna Bontemps. The task informed students that these poets are associated with the same literary movement, but that each poet had a distinct style. Students must "[i]dentify specific points of comparison, such as each poet's use of metaphor, and consider each poem's message and sound" (Prentice Hall, 2012, p.927). Thus the task provided students with stylistic elements with which to discuss rather than positioning students to choose the stylistic devices that they deem worthy of discussing in their essay. Another task asked students to think about the main character's feelings about her husband's reported death in Kate Chopin's short story, "The Story of an Hour":

> Think about the moment [Mrs.Mallard's] feelings suddenly shift from sorrow to joy. Imagine you are Mrs. Mallard. Write a three-paragraph journal entry in which you detail some of the thoughts that might have gone through her mind as she pondered her future. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 789)

By telling students Mrs. Mallard's feelings were initially sorrowful but ultimately joyous, the task does the cognitive work of interpreting the character's feelings and internal thoughts instead of asking students to do this high level thinking themselves. These examples illustrate the

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importance of determining when and how to use explicit language in writing tasks. On one hand, explicit language is necessary in order to provide clear expectations for students (e.g., the inclusion of reasoning) (Anderson et al., 1997; O'Hallaron, 2014). On the other hand, tasks including examples that detract from student thinking lower not only the intellectual authority but also the overall demand of the task. The implication of this tension points to the necessity for those who design writing tasks to carefully consider the affordances and limitations of the inclusion of specific examples in writing tasks and how included examples can both scaffold and detract from student learning.

A third way tasks confined student thinking was by limiting students to rewriting or recalling. As discussed previously in this chapter, creative writing tasks sometimes confined creativity by asking students to rewrite texts. For example, several tasks asked students to rewrite a text from a different point-of-view (e.g., retell a story from a different character's point-of-view) or to rewrite a text using a different genre (e.g., changing a creation myth to a play, rewrite a text as a newspaper article). Although these tasks can potentially engage students in creative activity and perspective taking exercises, these tasks also limit students by reducing the work to making changes to an existing text instead of allowing students to create their own, original work.

Tasks also limited the intellectual authority of students by asking them to recall the main points of a text. For example, after reading a page of biographical information and two poems by e.e. cummings, the task asked students to imagine that cummings will be giving a poetry reading in their town and to "write an **introduction** that provides background about the poet and prepares the audience for the poetry they will hear" (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 783, bold in original). Stating facts about cummings limits thinking to recall and summary whereas a higher

level task might ask students to evaluate, analyze, or interpret his poems. In other words, recalling information from a text does not invite students to wrestle with important and complex ideas, which is the type of work needed for college writing.

4.8.3   Contributing knowledge

A third pattern within the feature of intellectual authority revealed that writing tasks asked student to share knowledge in two ways: by contributing personal knowledge and by encouraging the sharing of student work. Seventeen percent of all tasks asked students to contribute personal knowledge. Non text-based tasks were most likely to ask students to contribute personal knowledge. In fact, the majority of tasks, 75%, that asked students to contribute personal knowledge were non text-based tasks. These non text-based writing tasks often asked students to describe or explore meaningful moments: to describe a time when their lives dramatically changed, to a share a time when they were inspired to pursue something they love, to write an essay of tribute to honor a person who has influenced them, to describe a turning point in their life.

Some text-based tasks also asked students to share personal knowledge. These tasks generally asked students to incorporate their own experiences within a text-based analytic task. The example task below asked students consider pastoral poetry and students' experiences in nature:

Robert Frost wrote during the early-to mid-20th century, an era that saw two world wars, growing industrialization, and increasing urbanization. Write a critical essay in which you explore this question: In the 20th and 21st centuries, how can poetry set in natural or rural settings be meaningful? In your essay, consider your own experiences in nature,

whether good or bad, and draw conclusions about the relevance of pastoral poetry today. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 887)

Tasks such as the one above demand high level thinking; this task required students to not only describe personal experiences, but they must draw on these experiences in order to make an original conclusion or interpretation about the relevance of pastoral poetry.

Some tasks also encouraged the contribution of knowledge by requesting the sharing of student work with authentic audiences. Fifteen percent of tasks asked students to make their work public through publication opportunities, which positions students as intellectual authorities by treating them as experts. Certain types of textbook writing assignments (i.e., Writing Workshops and Research Tasks) were more likely to provide students with opportunities to make their work public. The Writing Workshop tasks in both the Holt McDougal and Prentice Hall textbooks offered students opportunities to share their work in several ways. In both textbooks, the Writing Workshop tasks provided students various suggestions for publishing their work including a classroom literary magazine, oral presentations, online forums, a class newspaper, the school website, personal blogs, and even academic journals; additional suggestions for sharing work included delivering a speech or holding a debate. Additionally, "Writing" tasks in the Prentice Hall textbook asked students make their work visible through a blog and slide presentation. In total, 15% of all tasks provided explicit language advocating students make their work public. By allowing for even more opportunities for students to share their work, students can have their accomplishments recognized in a public way. This public sharing will help form a community. As Resnick and Hall (2005) described in "Principles of Learning for Effort-based Education," "it behooves us as educators to extend our efforts at creating intelligence by moving the audience for the student's work beyond the classroom into

the community and family" (p. 24). They further described the way that "[h]ard work and real achievement deserve celebration. And celebration invokes future effort" (p. 31). In this way, more opportunities to publicly share writing will likely promote student effort.

4.9   ASSUMPTIONS

Finally, I analyzed each writing task to determine what types of assumptions are inherent in them. Across all writing tasks, I found two main assumptions: cultural assumptions and genre-based assumptions. First, tasks were written as if people or groups of people (e.g., Native Americans) all hold the same values. Second, tasks often presumed student knowledge regarding genre features, stylistic elements, features of literary movements, and research.

4.9.1   Cultural assumptions

Less than six percent of writing tasks asked students to consider the cultural values held by particular groups of people. For example, one task in the Holt McDougal (2012) textbook asked students to "…write one paragraph describing an early Native American value that many people still hold today. Write a second paragraph describing something normally condemned, or disapproved of, by both early Native Americans and most people today" (p. 65). This task assumed that everyone in today's society holds the same values and that all early Native Americans held the same values. Furthermore, by framing the task as "our" values and "their" values, the task implied that no student is of Native American heritage. Such "othering" of cultures may reinforce stereotypes, myths, and preconceptions that students hold of other

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cultures as well as reinforce notions of "cultureless-ness" among students who are European American (Glazier & Seo, 2005).

Other tasks that assumed shared values by a particular group of people included a task on how women's roles have changed since the time of Edith Wharton and Charlotte Perkins Gilman; another task asked if equality has been reached since the Civil Rights era. Tasks such as these may infer that experiences and values can be generalized to fit all people. Language in such tasks may essentialize people of color or overgeneralize the experiences of upper class writers, representing them as the norm. However, the way that a student reads, values, and responds to texts are affected by race, gender, and class differences; for example, racial and ethnic identity impact whether readers see acts of racism in literature as an example of individual prejudices or societal and institutionalized (Beach, 1994). Although only a handful of tasks[30] make assumptions regarding the values of people in this manner, the impact of such a task has potential to promote unethical reading of texts. Similar to the non text-based tasks that positioned students to over-identify with minority experiences, these tasks may also benefit from a more ethical stance. An ethical stance promotes considering the text from multiple perspectives and acts as a "comparison point for students' own lives in order for it to be transformative, or life— and culture—affirming" (Glazier & Seo, 2005, p. 688). Reading texts that include diverse experiences and perspectives in ethical ways promotes using literature to act as window to explore other cultures as well as a mirror for students to examine their own (Galda, 1998; Glazier & Seo, 2005). This ethical stance allows minority students to feel recognized and understood and allows non-minority students the opportunity to learn and appreciate the perspectives and experiences of others (Boles, 2006).

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[30] Eight tasks

4.9.2   Genre-based assumptions

Almost a quarter of all writing tasks (20%) presumed student knowledge regarding genre features, stylistic elements, features of literary movements, and research. Textbook writing tasks asked students to engage in writing activities such as writing a letter to the paper, a book review, a newspaper article, an editorial, and a short story without explicit guidance as to the features each type of writing should include. Such assumptions inherent in writing tasks (1) place the burden of teaching genre features on teachers and (2) assume that teachers know how to teach these features. Since teachers rely on and are apprenticed by curriculum materials such as textbooks (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Ball & Feiman-Nemser, 1988; Grossman et al., 2000, 2008; Kauffman et al., 2002; Nicole & Crespo, 2006; Remillard, 1999, 2000; Valencia et al., 2006), these genre-based assumptions embedded in ELA textbook writing tasks have implications for student learning, such as superficial coverage of the genre or ignoring the genre features completely.

Ten percent of all writing tasks assumed students are able to incorporate stylistic features into their writing without guidance as to what these features are or why students should include them in a certain task. Again, the responsibility to teach these specific features lies with the teacher who may not have yet developed the pedagogical content knowledge[31] to teach these features. The tasks included stylistic elements asking students to include imagery, tone, action verbs, effective word choice, sensory words, rhetorical devices, tone, and mood.

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[31] Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) "represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (Shulman, 1987, p. 8).

In addition to genre features and stylistic elements, several tasks[32] required students to have a comprehensive understanding of the features of literary movements in order to complete the task. One task asked students to explain why two authors are "good examples" of the Romantic movement (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 341). Tasks with similar expectations asked students to consider "The House of Usher" in light of gothic literature (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 321) and to compare and contrast poems by two different authors from the Harlem Renaissance (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 927), respectively. Although background knowledge about literary movements is typically presented in the beginning of each textbook unit, these tasks build in the assumption that students have read and understood the information that outlines the characteristics of a specific literary movement. In other words, in order for students to be successful on the writing task, teachers need to use the textbook in a comprehensive way. Regardless of such assumptions though, these tasks contain a high level of intellectual authority as they position students to engage in academic conversations that integrate texts into a larger framework and contain evaluative work thus positioning students as experts.

Several tasks[33] required students to conduct independent research in order to complete the task. For example, this task is located after students read "The Turtle," part of John Steinbeck's novel *Grapes of Wrath* which chronicles the hardships of a family during the Depression: "Write an **essay** connecting the events described in 'The Turtle' to the lives of ordinary people during the Great Depression"; further direction requested students "[u]se print and online sources to research the Great Depression to learn how people reacted to adverse economic circumstances. Then review 'The Turtle' and draw parallels" (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 763, bold in original). This

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[32] Three
[33] Four

task and ones similar in nature, not only presume that students have access to online and/or print resources, but also that they can evaluate sources to determine credibility and reliability. These research tasks offered little guidance regarding how to use sources, thus placing the responsibility on the teacher to demonstrate how to search and select sources as well as how to use sources to research a topic or answer a question.

The assumptions embedded in textbooks tasks reflect the tension between offering too much guidance and too little guidance. On one hand, too much guidance may restrict the rigor of the task. On the other hand, too little guidance leaves unclear expectations and potentially omits information students need to complete the task. The teacher editions of ELA textbooks might better support the implementation of writing tasks if they included features to help teachers think through the writing task, such as ways to access students' relevant knowledge and experiences, articulate the goals and purpose for the lesson, and anticipate student responses to the tasks including potential misunderstandings (Smith, 2008). In the next chapter, I will offer some suggestions on the revision and supplementation of ELA textbook writing tasks.

5.0   CONCLUSION

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze two CCSS-aligned ELA textbooks in terms of the opportunities they provided students to construct knowledge through writing. Given the wealth of research showing high school students are not writing in ways that demand high-level thinking and reasoning (Applebee & Langer, 2013; Fanetti, Bushrow, & DeWeese, 2010; Mosley, 2011), it is unsurprising that high school seniors do not graduate with the writing proficiency they need for college writing (Achieve, Inc., 2005; ACT, 2005; Chait & Venezia, 2009; Conley, 2003a; Graham & Perin, 2007; National Commission on Writing, 2003; Persky et al., 2003; Salahu-Din, Persky, & Miller, 2008; SREB, 2006). In order to better understand how ELA textbook writing tasks asked students to construct knowledge through writing, I analyzed the cognitive demand, opportunities for elaborated communication, textual grist, disciplinary authenticity, and intellectual authority in every writing task in two eleventh-grade ELA textbooks.

This chapter opens by discussing the contributions and implications of my study's findings for research and practice. Contributions to research include the analytical tool I created to determine the quality of ELA writing tasks, the three-part model of overall rigor I created to assess text-based tasks, and the analysis of ELA writing tasks by task type (text-based, non text-

based, and creative). Major implications for practice include considering the CCSS alignment of textbooks and suggestions for teachers regarding the revision and supplementation of ELA textbook writing tasks. I close this chapter by discussing limitations and the importance of this study to the field of ELA.

As discussed in chapter 4, major findings from my study included information on (1) ELA writing task types, (2) elaborated communication, (3) overall rigor of text-based tasks, (4) disciplinary authenticity, and (5) intellectual authority. First, my findings pointed to differences in rigor among ELA writing task types (text-based, non text-based, and creative). For example, text-based tasks overwhelmingly included explicit language around the use of evidence and were most likely to engage students in highly cognitively demanding work compared to non text-based and creative writing tasks. Non text-based tasks were the least cognitively demanding and were sometimes problematically placed after reading works by minority authors in ways that generalized and essentialized minority experiences. Creative writing tasks, both non text-based and text-based, contained expectations for students to engage in genre-specific writing. A second major finding pointed to the ways students were asked to engage in elaborated communication. Although nearly three-fourths of tasks asked students to elaborate to a high or mid degree (combined), tasks often omitted the explicit expectation for students to articulate their reasoning or include warrants in their writing. Omission of explicit language for students to include reasons or warrants makes it unlikely that students will provide reasons in their writing unless asked because they presume a shared understanding by others (Anderson et al., 1997). A third major finding is that textual grist and expectations for elaboration play a prominent role in assessing the overall rigor of a writing task. My study showed that when comparing the results of the overall rigor of the task to the results of the cognitive demand of the tasks, the number of tasks coded as

high demand was reduced by over 30%. A fourth major finding is that a wide range of genres and fields were represented in ELA textbook writing tasks. I found that 53% of tasks were authentic to the discipline of ELA and that 32% of tasks promoted general or foundational work. Therefore, students and teachers have an opportunity to engage with writing tasks from a wide range of disciplinary fields and genres in ELA textbooks as well as build foundational skills that transfer across content areas. A fifth major finding is how textbook writing tasks position students as intellectual authorities: inviting them to participate in academic conversations and asking them to contribute knowledge and share their work. However, writing tasks also sometimes confined or narrowed the potential for student thinking. Three ways tasks may confine a student's intellectual authority is by requiring students to support a given interpretation or argument, providing examples that limit students' need to think independently, and focusing on recalling or rewriting activities.

5.2   IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Given these major findings, my study has made a contribution to existing scholarship on task quality and rigor in ELA writing by providing (1) a new approach to determine the quality of ELA writing tasks (2) a detailed assessment of the writing tasks in the most widely used secondary ELA textbooks, and (3) areas for future research.

5.2.1 A new approach for determining ELA writing task quality

My study provides a new approach for determining the quality of ELA writing tasks by contributing discipline-specific theories of writing task quality. Using discipline-specific theories of task quality not only allows for the assessment of ELA writing task quality, but also contributes to the scholarship on the design of high quality ELA writing tasks.

5.2.1.1 Task types

The analytic tool to assess task quality designed for my study also contributes to current research on task quality by accounting for differences within general types of ELA writing tasks. The ways that text-based, non text-based, and creative writing tasks require students to think, reason, and create varied, so I designed my analytic tool to account for these discipline-specific variations in cognitive demand among tasks in order to get an accurate depiction of task quality. Not only do the findings of this study point to the value of using features of high quality tasks specific to ELA, findings also show that differences *within* ELA tasks also need to be considered in order to get an accurate depiction of task quality.

The differentiation of ELA task types has implications for research as previous research has rightly called for ELA textbook questions to be more rigorous (Applebee, 1991, 1993; Beck & McKeown, 1991, 1992, 1994; Mihalakis, 2010). My study expands this research by showing which types of ELA textbook writing tasks are rigorous (text-based) and which ELA textbook writing tasks are not rigorous (non text-based and creative). The findings of my study showed that the majority of non text-based tasks guide students to use lower order thinking skills. These tasks asked students to write narrative essays describing an event or memory in a straightforward manner. The lack of rigor in non text-based writing tasks in CCSS-aligned textbooks seemingly

reflects David Coleman's[34] stance on narrative writing. In a speech given to New York educators, he stated:

> The only problem, forgive me for saying this so bluntly, the only problem with those two forms of writing [opinion and personal narrative] is as you grow up in this world you realize people really don't give a sh** about what you feel or what you think. What they instead care about is can you make an argument with evidence, is there something verifiable behind what you're saying or what you think or feel that you can demonstrate to me. It is rare in a working environment that someone says, 'Johnson, I need a market analysis by Friday but before that I need a compelling account of your childhood.' (Coleman, 2011, p. 10)

This excerpt shares Coleman's thoughts on the value of narrative writing beyond school and favors argumentative and informational writing and a decreased a role of narrative writing.

Research, however, has documented the value of narrative writing, which includes providing opportunities for students to make meaning of things they are learning so that writing serves as a process of inquiry and discovery (Hillocks, 1995). Engaging in worthy non text-based writing allows students to make meaning from their own lives (Atwell, 1994); in fact, Bruner explained that story writing helps one "explore what is expected of us and how we might want to resist this expectation" and functions as "an instrument not so much for solving problems as for finding them" (cited in Fredricksen et al., 2012, p. 17). Additionally, Frederickson et al. (2012) cited the importance of narrative beyond school because "narrative understanding can help people make sense of what they expected, what went awry or broke that expectation, and what they might see as new possibilities" (p. 20). Fischer, Frey, and Lapp (2012) argue that narrative

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[34] One of the lead authors of the CCSS

writing should promote a "critical stance" that requires interpretive work to explore how "the story you are told is probably not going to be the only story. The reader who looks beyond the literal meaning will find another layer of meaning" (Fisher et al., 2012, p. 64). Thus, narrative writing is essential to help people engage in collaborative problem solving. In order to increase the rigor of non text-based writing tasks, textbook writing tasks, such as narrative writing tasks, should invite students to write to prompts that involve making meaning from their own lives in order to develop an understanding of their experiences (instead of just describing them).

5.2.1.2 Three-part model of overall rigor of text-based tasks

The overall rigor model designed for this study contributes to research by considering how cognitive demand, textual grist, and elaborated communication can be combined to create a more accurate analysis of the rigor of a text-based writing task. These three features are all vital to the field of ELA, as described in Chapter 2, and this model promotes assessing ELA writing tasks in discipline-specific ways by analyzing their complex relationship. Writing tasks that are cognitively demanding have shown an increased quality of student work and student achievement on standardized tests; in addition, students find demanding tasks more engaging and interesting (Clare & Aschbacher, 2001; Matsumura et al., 2002; Matsumura et al., 2006; Newmann et al., 2001). Given that students write most often in their ELA classes (Applebee & Langer, 2013), ELA writing tasks need to promote the type of learning that will increase achievement. Considering textual grist and elaborated communication in addition to cognitive demand is especially important to the field of ELA as texts are a central learning tool in ELA classes and only texts containing grist can engage students to construct meaning and elaborate beyond what is written on the page (Beck et al., 1997; Snow, 2002). By assessing a writing task by cognitive demand alone (e.g., by using Bloom's taxonomy or Webb's Depth of Knowledge),

teachers may think they are giving students demanding writing tasks; however, without considering textual grist and elaborated communication these tasks may not be preparing students to write in the ways needed for college. Findings from my study showed that when comparing the results of the overall rigor model to the results of the cognitive demand of text-based tasks, the number of tasks coded as high demand was reduced. Thus, the model of overall rigor is significant to research on writing task quality because task assessment tools or models that only use cognitive demand to determine the rigor of the task might be inflating the thinking and reasoning students will be able to engage in when completing a writing task.

Examining the relationship among cognitive demand, elaborated communication, and textual grist revealed the complexity among these features and illustrated the necessity for text-based tasks to use texts that contain high levels of grist. Previous research on cognitive demand and writing tasks has mainly focused on students' opportunities to apply high order thinking skills, such as analysis versus recalling surface-level information, yet, for ELA tasks, all three features (i.e., cognitive demand, textual grist, elaborated communication) are integral in preparing students for college and career writing. Analyzed together, they provide a more accurate analysis of the rigor students will need to use to complete the task and provide a discipline-specific theory of rigor for analyzing ELA writing tasks. Utilizing discipline-specific theories of rigor are particularly helpful in not only assessing rigor, but also in considering the design of high quality writing tasks.

5.2.1.3 Disciplinary authenticity

The inclusion of disciplinary authenticity as part of my analytic tool demonstrates the need for discipline-specific theories of writing task quality and adds to the research on high quality writing assignments. Recent scholarship suggests that tasks authentic to the discipline of ELA

allow students to create an understanding of what is valued within a discipline (Carter, 2007; Newmann et al., 1998; Petrosky et al., 2010). Thus, ELA textbooks present a balance of writing tasks that engage students in both disciplinary specific work from a range of fields and genres and general or foundational writing tasks. This finding suggests that ELA textbooks equally value discipline-specific and general writing tasks being implemented in ELA classrooms. However, more research needs to be conducted to determine the level of authenticity in these discipline-specific tasks. For example, to what extent do the literary analysis writing tasks engage students in exploring historical, cultural, and theoretical perspectives in order to promote a certain way of knowing that captures the work of a literature major? This line of inquiry can serve as a next step to increase understanding about the disciplinary authenticity of ELA writing tasks.

There are current debates around what type of writing should be taught in ELA classes. Should ELA classes focus on general, foundational writing or writing that is specific to the discipline of ELA? On one hand, ELA teachers are seen as reading and writing experts whereas other content area teachers are often apprehensive about incorporating writing into their lessons (Lester, 2002). On the other hand, research points to the need to read and write in disciplinary-specific ways because disciplinary-specific tasks are less superficial and generic than general writing tasks (Petrosky et al., 2010). Furthermore, without learning strategies for reading and writing content-specific materials, including ELA materials, students have difficulty mastering concepts (Allington, 2002), which means that student achievement can be enhanced when teachers focus reading and writing within each specific content area.

The inclusion of disciplinary authenticity as part of my analytic tool adds to the research on high quality writing assignments, as existing scholarship has not included the importance or

balance of disciplinary authentic and foundational tasks. The field might further consider the ideal balance between disciplinary-specific and foundational writing tasks in ELA, since my findings showed that ELA textbooks contained a somewhat even balance between them. Given the new CCSS writing standards, which include writing standards in the fields of ELA, social studies, and science and technical areas, more data about a school system and teaching is needed to see what types of writing are being taught and by whom. Surveying ELA teachers in particular will shed insight on the balance between ELA-specific and general tasks that teachers are incorporating in light of the new CCSS.

5.2.2   Assessment of writing tasks

Previous work on ELA textbook tasks has highlighted the low quality of ELA textbook reading questions. Appleby (1990a) discovered textbook questions and tasks "presuppose the rightness of the question, the answers, and the form of the answers" (p. 94), Applebee (1991) found an overwhelming emphasis on superficial recitation questions across all grade levels, and Mihalakis's (2010) showed that the majority of post-reading questions in four tenth-grade ELA textbooks were low-level recitation questions that assume one correct response. Although my study differed from the previous studies by focusing on writing tasks, not reading questions, my findings showed that ELA textbook writing tasks still confined student thinking in a variety of ways. Like Mihalakis's (2010) recent work on post-reading questions, my findings showed that textbook writing tasks also positioned students to support a given interpretation or argument and sometimes limited students to re-writing or recalling the main ideas of a text(s). My findings also expand previous work by pointing to an additional way that writing tasks confine student thinking: providing examples within a task that limit students' need to think independently.

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However, my analysis showed that ELA textbook writing tasks have the potential to engage students in writing tasks that will prepare them for college writing. The majority of writing tasks, 77%, contained at least a mid level of cognitive demand and 43% of the writing tasks contained a high level of cognitive demand. The overall rigor of text-based tasks showed similar results with 87% of text-based writing tasks containing at least a mid level of overall rigor. Given these findings, my study concludes that ELA textbook writing tasks demonstrate a higher level of rigor compared to previous findings on ELA textbook reading questions. These ELA textbook writing tasks have the potential to engage students in the kinds of writing that will prepare them for college writing. Since teachers use and rely on textbooks for guidance on how and what to teach (Ball & Feiman-Nemser, 1998; Grossman & Thompson, 2004), this research demonstrates the need for educators of both preservice and practicing teachers to provide guidance with regard to the textbook materials that need to be adapted.

Conducting more focused research on how these writing tasks are implemented, such as how teachers address student difficulties or scaffold student learning, would benefit the fields of ELA and teacher education by creating a better understanding of how ELA textbook writing tasks are used in the classroom. Research in this area can provide an in-depth understanding of how implemented ELA writing tasks prepare students for college writing.

5.2.3   Future research

This study highlighted the features of high quality tasks that will enable students to construct knowledge through writing. In this study, I analyzed the writing tasks in two eleventh grade CCSS-aligned literature textbooks. Future research on this same topic may benefit from broadening the scope to include the implementation of writing tasks. Classroom studies on the

implementation of high quality tasks may focus on teachers' explanations of the task and student work. Previous research in mathematics (Henningsen & Stein, 1997; Stein, Grover, & Henningsen, 1996) has shown that high level tasks were likely to decline into lower level tasks when students began working on the task because teachers often proceduralized the task by providing step-by-step directions. Implementing these steps as part of a procedure led students to the correct answer without thinking or inquiry. Additionally, unfocused student work on a task deteriorated into unsystematic exploration whereas providing tailored scaffolding productively guided students' thinking (Henningsen & Stein, 1997; Stein et al, 1996). Drawing on task quality research in mathematics (Boaler & Staples, 2008; Hiebert & Wearne, 1993; Stein & Lane, 1996; Stigler & Hiebert, 2004; Tarr et al., 2008), Kisa and Stein (2014) explained that studying the enactment of tasks is important because "classrooms in which cognitively demanding tasks were used and their high cognitive demand levels were maintained during their enactment were much more conducive to students' learning than were classrooms in which the demand declined" (p. 7). More research along these same lines of inquiry needs to be conducted in ELA so that researchers can form a better understanding of the type of instruction that diminishes high quality writing tasks as well as the kinds of instruction and professional development that support high quality writing tasks. However, analyzing the quality of the tasks available to teachers, as my study does, is a necessary precursor to this line of work.

5.3   IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This study also suggests two major implications for practitioners: (1) considering the CCSS-alignment of ELA textbooks and (2) suggestions for revising and supplementing eleventh-grade ELA textbook writing tasks.

5.3.1   Considering the CCSS-alignment of ELA textbooks

The Common Core State Standards emphasizes three key instructional shifts for ELA: (1) building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction and informational texts, (2) reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text both literary and informational texts, and (3) regular practice with complex text and its academic language. The first and second key instructional shifts have implications for considering the CCSS-alignment of ELA textbooks given the findings of my study.

The first shift, building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction and informational texts,[35] is addressed through the CCSS's recommendation of the percentage of time students should read informational texts: 50% informational texts in grade 4; 55% informational texts in grade 8; 70% informational texts by 12th grade (CCSS, 2010, p. 5). The CCSS are clear that these percentages are across all content areas (not just ELA) and that teachers share the responsibility of students' learning, as evidenced by the inclusion of reading standards for social studies/history and science and technical subjects. In order for students to build knowledge through reading content-rich nonfiction texts, writing tasks in CCSS-aligned ELA textbooks

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[35] For a summary of the debate on the appropriate place of narrative reading and writing in the ELA classroom see Layton (2012)

should prompt students to grapple with the content of the texts. If tasks do not ask students to engage with nonfiction texts in complex ways, this key shift is not being addressed in a comprehensive way.

Findings of my study demonstrate that the writing tasks associated with nonfiction texts will not engage students in the type of work needed to build knowledge, such as interpretive work or critical stances that will promote students' thinking, reasoning, and knowledge building. My study found that 40% of the writing tasks accompanying nonfiction texts prompted students (1) to write in non text-based ways or (2) to consider the text in isolated or superficial ways or recall fragmented information about the text. These non text-based and low level writing tasks do not give students opportunities to grapple with the content of nonfiction texts in ways called for by the CCSS and potentially demonstrate a weak alignment to this particular key shift. In order for students to build knowledge through content-rich nonfiction, educators need to provide students with writing tasks that promote engaging with the content of the texts in rigorous ways.

The second shift, reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from literary and informational texts,[36] explicitly values students using sources. Students are expected to use evidence from the text(s) to present thorough analyses, articulate claims, and provide clear information instead of relying on prior knowledge or experiences. My findings indicate that although 98% of text-based writing tasks explicitly directed students to cite or use evidence, only 21% of these text-based tasks included explicit language requesting reasoning or warrants[37]. The 79%[38] of tasks asking students to "use evidence" do so in vague or superficial ways that do not fully promote writing that is grounded in evidence from text. In order for students to engage in

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[36] For a summary of the debate on close reading see Gewertz (2012)
[37] Explanations of why or how their evidence or examples supports their claim
[38] 79% of tasks that should include warrants or reasons (e.g., argument). Writing an imagist poem, for example, would not include warrants and thus not included when determining this percentage.

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the kind of evidence-based work promoted by the CCSS, more explicit language around the inclusion of evidence should be emphasized in CCSS-aligned textbook writing tasks in order for students practice the thinking and reasoning needed for college writing.

The key instructional shifts of the CCSS share a particular view of current instructional practice: existing instructional materials contain mostly fiction selections, have low text complexity, and that students rely on their background and prior knowledge instead supporting responses with sources. The key shifts aim to correct these practices. As such, CCSS-aligned textbooks should address these shifts through their materials. However, the findings of my study demonstrate that the CCSS alignment to ELA textbooks may be superficial. As such, educators should be cautious consumers of materials labeled as CCSS-aligned. Awareness of alignment issues includes considering the depth to which the standards are addressed as well as which key standards may be missing from instructional materials. Additionally, further research to determine the extent to which ELA textbooks align to the standards needs to be conducted.

5.3.1.1   Improving ELA textbook writing tasks

The findings of this study also have implications for how teachers might revise and supplement writing tasks so they provide students with opportunities to engage in high quality ELA writing experiences. There are two major reasons why teachers might revise and supplement ELA textbook writing tasks: (1) to add rigor to the writing tasks and (2) to convey clear expectations.

The first reason for teachers to revise and supplement ELA textbook writing tasks is to add rigor. As discussed in the above section, non text-based and creative writing tasks were less likely than text-based tasks to engage students in high levels of cognitive demand and opportunities for elaboration. Findings also showed that, overall, tasks did not engage students in extended writing. Instead, textbook writing tasks promoted short writing assignments that do not

provide students with opportunities "to use composing as a way to think through issues, to show the depth and breadth of their knowledge, or go beyond what they know in making connections and raising new issues" (Applebee & Langer, 2011, p. 16). In order to raise the rigor of these tasks, teachers should require more elaboration and ensure the cognitive work is complex.

The second reason for teachers to revise and supplement ELA textbook writing tasks is to convey clear expectations. My findings showed that textbook writing tasks were not explicit about the need for students to include warrants or reasoning in their writing. In fact, only 21% of tasks explicitly asked students to provide warrants to connect their claim(s) and evidence, thus not conveying the amount of elaboration explicitly required by students.[39] Revising tasks to include specific language around the inclusion of warrants is necessary because students are unlikely to provide reasons in their writing without specific direction to do so (Anderson et al., 1997). Without reasoning through writing, students may not be engaging in the type of writing needed to prepare them for the demands of college writing.

Practitioners may also consider revising and supplementing tasks to improve the annotated models of writing to support student writing because research has shown that studying models can clarify writing expectations and had positive effects on students' academic writing (Graham & Perin, 2007). Across both textbooks, 39% of writing tasks included models, which mostly consisted of one or two sentences focusing on a specific topic, such as transitions. Most of these models included annotations to explain the rationale of the skill or concept the model was highlighting. For example, one model demonstrated how to revise writing to incorporate quotations and included the annotation "Adding quotations strengthens the connection between

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[39] 79% of tasks that should include warrants or reasons (e.g., argument). Writing an imagist poem, for example, would not include warrants and thus not included in this percentage.

the writer's opinion and the text" (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 999). Although annotations like these may be helpful, the brevity of the models and explanations might limit their helpfulness for students. Teacher practitioners might consider adding to both the quantity and quality of annotated models in order to provide students with opportunities to read, analyze, and emulate good writing.

My study provides guidance on what and how to revise and supplement ELA textbook writing tasks for teachers to improve textbook materials. However, textbook designers should also consider ways to improve their materials. One main way textbook designers could improve textbooks is by incorporating features of educative curricula. Features of effective educative curricula include developing and supporting content knowledge (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Heaton, 2000; Schneider & Krajcik, 2002; Wang & Paine, 2003); making pedagogical decisions visible (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Heaton, 2000; Petish, 2004; Remillard, 2000); anticipating, understanding, and interpreting student ideas (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Collopy, 2003; Heaton, 2000; Remillard, 2000); and supporting teachers to understand curricular design (Brown & Edelson, 2003). Without including educative features teachers may use curricular materials unthinkingly and uncritically and tasks may be more likely to be implemented at a superficial level (Ball & Feiman-Nemser, 1988; Sosniak & Stodolsky, 1993). Prentice Hall's (2012) inclusion of annotated instructional models explaining why specific writing features are needed to produce effective writing begins to do the type of educative work that will support teachers. Textbook publishers inclusion of educative features in writing tasks could positively influence teacher practice by supporting them to better understand the provided writing tasks as well as how to implement them.

Educative textbooks have the potential to support teachers' pedagogical content knowledge of student writing. Pedagogical content knowledge, or PCK, "represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). The ways that curriculum support teachers' PCK is important because educators learn from and internalize the content and pedagogy contained in and implied by the materials available to them as they work to promote student learning. That curricular materials might also be purposefully educative for teachers (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Bruner, 1960) has garnered attention from researchers in mathematics and science (Davis & Krajcik, 2005; Heaton, 2000; Remillard, 1999; Schneider & Krajcik, 2002; Stein & Kim, 2009; Wang & Paine, 2003), but limited research has been conducted in the field of ELA. Such materials, now commonly referred to as educative curriculum materials, are those that are deliberately designed to promote teacher learning, developing both content and pedagogical knowledge, in addition to student learning (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Davis & Krajcik, 2005). Educative materials do not simply tell teachers what to do or solve the problem of what and how to teach; they provide teachers with support and rationales for content and pedagogical decisions specific to that lesson or unit as well as moving forward.

5.4   LIMITATIONS

There are two noteworthy limitations of this study. The first limitation of this study is that it focused on only two textbooks at one grade level. Future research may benefit from analyzing other textbooks and ELA tasks at other grade levels. However, the two textbooks used in this

study, Prentice Hall and Holt McDougal, represent curricular materials that are widely used in ELA classrooms across the U.S.

The second limitation comes from the lack of attention to how teachers utilize textbooks. Some critics of this study may point out that teachers often modify and adapt textbook writing tasks. Other critics may suggest that instruction around tasks greatly impacts the ways in which students construct knowledge and that the selection and set-up of high level tasks in the classroom does not guarantee that students will think and reason in cognitively complex ways (Stein et al., 1996). In this way, it is difficult to assure that high level tasks are actually implemented in ways that support students' high level thinking and meaningful engagement in disciplinary practices. Although additional studies of how teachers implement textbook writing tasks need to be conducted, this study aimed to provide foundational knowledge for studies of the use of textbooks by describing the quality of ELA writing tasks.

These limitations point to another pressing issue: teacher knowledge. Research suggests that many ELA teachers new to teaching rely on textbooks and strictly adhere to them, (Grossman et al., 2000; Grossman & Thompson, 2004, 2008; Valencia, 2006). Likewise, teachers with limited content and/or pedagogical knowledge are also more likely to follow the textbook more closely (Ball & Feiman-Nemser, 1988; Grossman et al., 2000). Further research (Benko, 2012) showed pre-service teachers inadvertently lowered the thinking skills of writing tasks by proceduralizing students' written responses, taking the thinking work out of writing, and implementing tasks for which students did not seem to have the appropriate background knowledge to complete. This research points to the need for educating teachers, both new and veteran, to understand and implement high quality ELA curricular materials, including writing tasks in textbooks, in order for students to write to rigorous and authentic writing tasks. Given

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the amount of research that outlines proficient writing as a necessity for an individual's academic success and a society's economic and civic well-being (Achieve, Inc., 2005; Fanetti, Bushrow, & DeWeese, 2010; Graham & Perin, 2007; Magrath & Ackerman, 2003; National Commission on Writing, 2004), building teacher knowledge about the features of high quality writings tasks is essential.

5.5   WHY THIS STUDY MATTERS

This study contributes to scholarship on ELA textbooks, which has primarily addressed reading questions, by focusing on the quality of writing tasks. Additionally, it expands current research on task quality in two ways. First, this study expands theories of cognitively demanding work in ELA. In addition to analyzing tasks for the cognitive demand students must use to complete the task, this study utilized a three-part model of overall rigor that considered elaboration and textual grist in conjunction with cognitive demand. Second, this study analyzed three distinct ways that writing tasks encourage the construction of knowledge: through rigor, disciplinary authenticity, and intellectual authority.

The findings of my study have potential to contribute to improving high school students' writing proficiency by promoting writing tasks that foster students' thinking and reasoning, preparing them for high school writing and beyond. As Graham and Perin (2007) wrote, beyond college readiness, young people without the ability to "transform thoughts, experiences and ideas into written words are in danger of losing touch with the joy of inquiry, the sense of intellectual curiosity, and the inestimable satisfaction of acquiring wisdom that are the touchstones of humanity" (p. 1). As teachers and researchers, we have a duty to prepare students for the types of

writing they will encounter after high school. Writing tasks should not just encourage students to display learned knowledge or to practice an academic genre but should provide opportunities for students to construct knowledge within the discipline of ELA. With low quality tasks, opportunities to engage students in our discipline are lost. My hope is that my study offers a small contribution in regard to writing task quality, as it is the best way to ensure that teachers provide students with opportunities to develop both an appreciation of writing and an appreciation of the discipline of ELA.

APPENDIX

CODING EXCEPTIONS

Table 37: Coding exceptions (Example 1)

Task	Thinking Skills	Textual Grist	Elaborated Communication	Total	Rationale
Write the information for a large museum placard that visitors might read at the beginning of a museum exhibit about Olaudah Equiano and the slave trade during the eighteenth century. Use details from Equiano's narrative, as well as facts and data about the North American slave trade that you gather through research in other sources. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 165)	mid	high	high	mid	Although the text contains complex information, students were only asked to recall information from the text rather than analyze it. Students were additionally directed to research additional information, but there is no direction to synthesize these sources nor are there guidelines for using reliable or credible sources. Thus, despite being able to elaborate on a rich text, the thinking skills required of students keep this task at a mid level.
Hemingway once said, "I always try to write on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven-eighths of it underwater for every part that shows." Reread "In Another Country" with Hemingway's statement in mind. Write an essay in which you explore how this "iceberg" approach to writing is evidence in the story. Clearly demonstrate your understanding of Hemingway's style and the way he achieves it, citing passages from the story as support. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 807)	high	mid	mid	high	Although this text falls in the mid category for textual grist, it contains subtle conflict and resolution as well as a somewhat abstract theme thus placing it in the high range of mid for textual grist. Combined with the analysis students were asked to engage in, the task was coded as high for overall rigor.

Table 37 (continued)

Task	Thinking Skills	Textual Grist	Elab. Comm.	Total	Rationale
Robert Frost wrote during the early-to-mid 20th century, an era that saw two world wars, growing industrialization, and increasing urbanization. Write a critical essay in which you explore this question: In the 20th and 21st centuries, how can poetry set in natural or rural settings be meaningful? In your essay, consider your own experiences in nature, whether good or bad, and draw conclusions about the relevance of pastoral poetry today. (Prentice Hall, 2012, p. 887)	high	mid	high	mid	This task asks provided students with opportunities to draw on personal experiences as well as Frost's poetry allowing students to elaborate about the given topic in a variety of ways. The task also asked students to engage in critical thinking about a complex topic, yet the texts provided were limiting and may not be able to readily support student responses to the task.

Note. These tasks have consistent ratings of two features and an overall different rating. These examples of exceptions exemplify the complex ways cognitive demand, textual grist, and elaborated work together to construct the overall rigor of a text-based ELA writing task.

Table 38: Coding Exceptions (Example 2)

Task	Thinking Skills	Textual Grist	Elaborated Communication	Total	Rationale
"The Story of an Hour" focuses on Mrs. Mallard's feelings about her husband's reported death. Think about the moment her feelings suddenly shift from sorrow to joy. Imagine you are Mrs. Mallard. Write a three-paragraph journal entry in which you detail some of the thoughts that might have done through her mind as she pondered her future. (Holt McDougal, 2012, p. 789)	low	high	mid	low	Despite the text being rich with complex ideas and ambiguity, the task could essentially be answered by relying on the information in the task itself. Although students are asked to write three paragraphs, the thinking skills of the task detract from the rigor of what students are elaborating on.

Note. This task has different ratings for all three features. All other tasks having different ratings for all three features were coded as mid. This exception demonstrates the complex ways cognitive demand, textual grist, and elaborated work together to construct the overall rigor of a text-based ELA writing task.

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