Fostering Critical Literacies in Order to Support Students' Reading of the World

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High school English classrooms are in need of critical literacy. This study examines the current research related to English classroom pedagogy and applies some pedagogical techniques along with critical literacy tools recommended in order to improve students' critical literacy.

I am a practicing high school English teacher. I used Improvement Science to develop and refine an instructional routine that would facilitate my students' critical analysis of texts. Over the course of one unit, I conducted three cycles of study and improvement of the routine. Primary data included the classroom talk, assignments, literary analysis essays, and journal entries of eight students, as well as my own teacher journals, lesson plans, and Plan, Do, Study, Act forms to analyze how to best support students in their growth.

I found that students could develop critical literacies when given the time, space, and scaffolding necessary, however, the growth in studied students was uneven. I also found that student compliance and point-based assessment could be a barrier to fostering critical literacies.

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A supplemental source of data was student-authored journal entries. The student journals acted as both a driver and process measure allowing me to see how they progressed through the process. I wanted to include this source of data to understand what students thought of the unit. I collected four journals entries from eight students during all three iterations, for a total of 24 entries. The journal prompts focused students' attention to how the routine

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1.0 Problem Statement

"There is an urgent need to create humane classrooms where students and teachers learn to use language and literacy in critical and empowering ways" (Boyd et al., 2006, p. 331).

1.1 Problem of Practice

In our time, teaching students to see the world through different perspectives is more important than ever (Janks, 2013). But these efforts are contentious precisely because they challenge the status quo. Teaching literacy and specifically critical literacies is a form of political action (Cadiero-Kaplan, 2002). Although *not* teaching critical literacies is also a political action, contemporary teaching of critical literacies is charged and more publicly controversial (Olin-Scheller & Tengberg, 2017).

I teach high school English language arts (ELA) in a majority white, suburban district outside of Pittsburgh. Many people in my community hold right-winged political and social beliefs. Pressure exists in my school to avoid controversial topics, including critical theories and texts by authors of color. Most recently, my district grappled with worries from families about the teaching of critical race theory. Within this context, I am seeking a new pedagogical approach that would enable the awakening of students' critical thinking with texts. In short, I want to facilitate critical literacy learning opportunities for my students while still maintaining my job.

I seek to support my students' critical literacies for a number of reasons. As is typical of many suburban high schools, my school's curricula are organized around competencies students

need to pass the standardized tests. This causes me to worry that students do not have the necessary skills to truly analyze and think critically about the texts they read. In my classroom, students can easily identify literary devices (e.g., symbolism) when reading. I try to help them learn to analyze how those literary devices affect meaning. Through this process, I created levels of questioning that I ask my students to implement in order to develop their understanding of the text, but the questions I tend to ask are not typically questions of power, ideology, and justice (e.g., Freebody, 1992).

My current group of honors students are thoughtful and curious. In September, many of them already seemed bored with the skill progression that the current honor's curriculum offers. The third week of school the curriculum had us read the Brothers Grimm *"Cinderella"*. While we were analyzing theme and style, some students quickly pivoted to a discussion where they unknowingly applied feminist theory to the text. Some students were frustrated about feminist readings of the text that highlighted gendered oppression, while others were shocked about the anger that many of their classmates exhibited. Still others did not understand why this classic children's tale elicited the ire of their classmates. Moments like this one happen frequently within my classroom. I have not taught my students critical literacy tools, but many of them seem ready for this kind of instruction that would allow them to better understand who they are in the world.

1.2 Professional Context and Role

I have taught high school English for 18 years. I typically teach academic English 9, honors English 9, and Advanced Placement Seminar.

My suburban school district is made up of 88% White students. Recent census data states that 93% of the community is White, 4% Asian, 1% Black, and 1% Hispanic. The median household income between 2015 - 2019 was $102,081.

The students of my high school are generally high achieving, and they perform relatively well when it comes to formulaic writing. Slightly over 60% of our sophomore standardized test takers score proficient in ELA and 25% score advanced. These scores are much higher than the state average, but lower than what is predicted for our students. We use a skills-based pedagogical approach that helps our students achieve a proficient score; I suspect that this may partially explain why students are not scoring higher on such measures.

In my eight years in the district little discussion of equity and justice has occurred within our school community. Equity and justice are not the focus of the administration or the school board. Community members do not generally seem to expect school leaders to strive to make social change; instead, in their voting and their participation at school board meetings, they seem to favor leaders who maintain consistency.

The school board exerts tremendous pressure on the day-to-day decisions of school administrators and teachers. My recent interactions with the school board were not particularly encouraging. I sought to receive approval for a change in the ELA curriculum, and I received pushback on a book by an African American author. The board favors canonical literature, and they seem to favor White and male authored texts. Any text suggested by teachers in curriculum meetings that might be controversial with regard to race were dismissed by administration prior to the public board meeting. The school board is comprised of seven White middle-aged and older men and two White middle-aged women.

As a teacher, my pedagogy is most within my locus of control. I can make equity and diversity a performative little by little, starting in my own classroom. Thus, I seek to bring critical literacy teaching into my regular practice. I can bring this pedagogy to any text and not need special approval; thus it represents a space that is not highly regulated by my school board.

2.0 Review of Literature

2.1 Purpose of Review

I conducted a literature review to help me understand the groundwork that has been laid for critical literacy teaching and learning in secondary classrooms. My literature review questions were:

1) What constitutes critical literacy learning with literature?

2) What are some promising approaches for facilitating critical literacy with literature in the ELA classroom?

2.2 What Constitutes Critical Literacy Learning with Literature?

My first literature review question was, what constitutes critical literacy learning with literature? I wanted to understand how others in the field have understood this concept so that I could ultimately design an instructional unit that would potentially support my students' critical literacy. Two major themes emerged: 1) critical literacy involves the close examination of literary texts for language and power; 2) critical literacy involves building community through dialogue about literary texts.

2.2.1 Key Theories

2.2.1.1 Language and Power.

In the colonial model of education, the teacher has the knowledge and the student acts as the receptacle or the bank where the teacher deposits knowledge. Freire (1970) envisioned a form of education that would honor students' knowledge and support the group's collective understanding of a topic or concept. In a Freirian model, members of the learning community must mutually work together to eradicate the oppressive forms of education that make up the status quo, and when that occurs, all will benefit.

Critical literacy, for hooks (1994), is essential for self-actualization in the struggle for liberation. Similar to Freire (1970), the liberation she sought is from oppressors; unlike Freire, hooks focuses specifically on the oppression of women. hooks argued that the whole student must be educated. By this, hooks was referring to teaching the mind and soul, which requires the students to understand their relation to power dynamics. In order for the whole student to be educated, the whole teacher needs to be present. A teacher must draw on a combination of the personal and public life in order to curate meaning for the students. When educators doff their power and allow the students to see the person behind the title/power, everyone learns.

2.2.1.2 Community and Dialogue.

Dialogue and community building is a condition for building critical literacy in literature. Freire (1970) wrote at length about the learning benefits of dialogue for both the students and the educator. Students develop a fuller understanding about the world around them, and educators are privy to students' perspectives and how they view the world. Through dialogue, much can be learned, and critical literacies can be developed.

Similar to the ideas of conversation and dialogue presented by Freire (1970), hooks (1994) prizes the conversation-based model in nurturing and educating the whole student. She argues that most learning occurs through discussion. Discussion is actively engaging both the student and the educator while positioning them on a plain of respect. Through the process of conversation, the learner can see the text through another perspective.

2.2.2 Framework for Critical Literacy Learning

As Friere (1970) and hooks (1994) make clear, concepts of language and power and community and dialogue are symbiotic. One truly cannot exist without the other. Lecturing to students instead of partaking in dialogue about literature reinforces the colonist power dynamic, which refers to a dynamic where the white teacher is the giver of information and the students receive it. This pattern is counter to the effort of building critical literacies because it uses the exchange of knowledge to perpetuate oppression whereby students are made to be reliant on those in power. Pedagogy that purports to foster critical literacy must contain elements of both language and power, and community and dialogue. I have found three particularly helpful frameworks that specify what might be involved in supporting young people's critical literacies in the ELA classroom.

Deconstruction and Reconstruction. Janks (2010) focuses on the political act of teaching students about the power language holds. Using the four constructs of domination, access, diversity, and design, Janks asks students to deconstruct or decode texts. Students are asked to read the text for domination, which is the means in which a text reproduces a domination of one group of people over another. Who has access to the text? Who does not have access? When reading for diversity the reader is asked to experience the text through different perspectives that could change

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one's understanding. For example, students can analyze the intended design along with the unintended design of an advertisement in order to develop further understanding of how the piece. This means that students critically read the text considering the four constructs, which ask students to. Through this process of deconstruction and reconstruction—the process where students focus on power and language by pulling the text apart and then recreating new understandings of it and the world--students gradually build critical literacy.

2.2.2.1 Deconstructing and Reconstructing.

Janks (2010) focuses on the political act of teaching students about the power language holds. Using the four constructs of domination, access, diversity, and design, Janks asks students to deconstruct or decode texts. Students are asked to read the text for domination, which is the means in which a text reproduces a domination of one group of people over another. Who has access to the text? Who does not have access? When reading for diversity the reader is asked to experience the text through different perspectives that could change one's understanding. For example, students can analyze the intended design along with the unintended design of an advertisement in order to develop further understanding of how the piece. This means that students critically read the text considering the four constructs, which ask students to. Through this process of deconstruction and reconstruction—the process where students focus on power and language by pulling the text apart and then recreating new understandings of it and the world--students gradually build critical literacy.

2.2.2.2 Four Resource Model.

Freebody and Luke (1990) (see also Freebody, 1992) offer a four resources model of literacy that is another framework for considering what critical literacy involves: code-breaker,

text-participant, text-user, and text-analysis. The model is not a step-wise model that assumes that students "move up" from level to level over time. Instead, it represents a set of resources and dispositions that all readers can use in their reading. The resource of text analyst, in particular, is one way of representing what critical literacy involves. When acting as a text analyst, readers read from different perspectives in order to truly understand the implicit meaning of the text. The important takeaway here is the focus on how the text relates to the reader, and how that helps the reader position herself the world around her. Acting as a text analyst, readers consider how texts are positioning them, and the analyst is able to critically speak back to dimensions of the text that indicate taken for granted worldviews, ideologies, and norms.

2.2.2.3 Critical Literary Literacy.

Rainey and Storm (in press) focus on how critical literacy has special dimensions when reading literary texts (as opposed to informational texts, which Janks and Freebody and Luke largely focus on). Rainey and Storm name three literary literacy practices: puzzling, noticing, and theorizing. Puzzling is the act of creating questions, by the reader, that will guide analysis of and through a literary text. Noticings are identifying and analyzing key concepts within a text. Theorizing is analyzing the text through critical theories in order to gain a larger understanding. Critical theory is implemented when analyzing a text, however, the students share their theorizing in a dialogic setting; combining the concepts of this section, critical theory analysis, and the next section of this paper, dialogic approach. Storm—a practicing high school English teacher—has designed and refined instructional routines and other forms of support for students' criticality with texts. Storm introduces and supports students' use of critical theories with a wide range of texts, including the texts of students' lives. Over the course of the semester or year, Storm's students ask

increasingly complex questions with texts and they bring increasingly sophisticated tools to the pursuit of those questions.

For example, Rainey and Storm offer the case of Dante, a highschooler in Storm's classroom. Dante began the year by noticing the gender representation of Frankenstein's monster. His interest in examining gender continued as the class discussed Nick in *The Great Gatsby*. Through his reading of the text, he puzzled about the roles gender and sexuality played in the description of the men. Across multiple months, Dante's considerations of gender and sexuality in texts increased in complexity. Ultimately, supported by Storm's instruction, Dante drew on the theoretical work of gender theorists such as Judith Butler to create a final gender analysis of a range of focal texts.

2.3 What are some Promising Approaches for Facilitating Critical Literacy with Literature in the English Language Arts Classroom?

Although the frameworks above are quite useful for specifying what might be involved in learning critical literacy and using it with literary texts, no specific map for teaching critical literacy exists. Contributors to this field agree that critical literacy will look vastly different from one classroom to the next, one school to the next, and one district to the next, because each individual community is composed of people from different demographics and cultures.

Although no simple template exists, I detected three commonalities of critical literacy pedagogies in my search for classroom-based studies: engaging students with critical theories, using dialogic approaches, and prioritizing inquiry and action. While these three approaches are different in their style, they all intersect with one another.

2.3.1 Engaging Students with Critical Theories

This section focuses on scholarly work that applies literary theory in the classroom in order to foster critical thinking.

2.3.1.1 Empirical Studies.

Dyches (2018) addresses the need for students in White suburban classrooms to implement postcolonial theory. Rather than asking students to read and examine texts, as most literacy teachers would, Dyches instead encouraged high school students to treat the school's English curriculum as a text and analyze it to better understand issues of power and society. She examined the questions: "What are students' perceptions of and experiences with canonical literature? And how can investigating the history and current status of British literature help students recognize and problematize the political nature of canonical curricula?" (p. 539). Her students identify that many of the chosen authors were white and male and not representative of the entire British population. The students also determined that many canonical pieces are taught to reinforce and normalize White male domination. Behrman (2006), a researcher who examined the most common approaches to critical literacy research, found that Dyches's (2018) second step in developing critical literacies is common. Both speak of producing counter narratives in order to move the stories away from the "oppressor versus oppressed" story line and toward empowerment.

2.3.1.2 Teacher Resources.

Appleman (2000) focuses on specifics critical theories and how they can be applied in the ELA classroom. She argues that through the process of teaching theory, we move away from the transmittal of information that is deemed social important, and move into helping students learn to

learn, which mirrors Freire (1970). Appleman focuses on four critical theories and how to apply those theories to texts in a classroom setting; she examines reader's response (i.e., a reading of the text allows the reader background and experiences to determine the meaning for the reader), Marxist theory (i.e., the study of class, labor, and power), feminist theory (i.e., the study of gender and power), and deconstruction (i.e., thorough readings of the text that reveal what the author is unaware is present), while providing examples of classroom application. Notably, even though all four are critical theories used by literary scholars, only two—Marxist and feminist theory—center power.

Appleman argues that through these theories, students and teachers can better address the world around them and understand how they operate in that world. Appleman includes several activities at the end of her text to assist teachers in facilitating critical theory. One particularly interesting activity is a "Theory Relay", where students spend ten minutes at each theory station reviewing the text through that specific theory. Guided questions help students focus their analysis through each specific theory. An example of a guiding question that Appleman offers is:

> Consider the quotation you find at the feminist station. As a group, construct an interpretation of the quotation that is informed by your collective understanding of feminist literary theory. When you consider *Native Son* from a feminist perspective, what characters, incidents, or themes are brought into greater relief? (p. 160)

This activity is designed to help students begin to understand the different theories and support them in their reading of the text.

Storm and Rainey (2018) describe a weekly routine that Storm developed and used with his high school students. Students brought in texts from their lives that they deemed important. The routine is as follows. In a large circle, the students read or play their chosen text for the class.

Students write their responses to text while being supported by the teacher. The class co-constructs interpretive arguments with a student as the facilitator, drawing upon critical theories, especially theories of power. The group debriefs, which could include talking about how the process went or feelings about the texts and theories. This pedagogical approach invites a plurality of voices, which supports critical literacy. This approach also supports critical examinations of world texts and critical consciousness of a range of texts.

Borsheim-Black and Sariganides (2019) focus on specific canonical texts, and how to conduct discussion around those texts. The goal of this text is disrupting literary whiteness, pushing White students toward antiracist stances. The authors argue that by doing so students can better identify racism, understand concepts like color blindness and White savior complex, talk about race, and recognize the role literature plays in reinforcing or interrupting construction of race and racial stereotypes. Borsheim-Black and Sariganides examine an early-career teacher's use of New Critical analysis when teaching Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird.* The teacher was uncomfortable teaching this text through the lens of New Critical analysis sans the use of more relevant analysis tools, like Critical Race Theory. The authors introduce four principles for applying the Critical Race analysis. The first principle has English teachers beginning analysis with literary elements, such as character and plot, which Rainey and Storm (in press) refer to as noticings. The second principle is to racialize those literary elements by considering how race and power are operating in the text. In the third principle, students are asked to synthesize and determine the significance of those racialized literary elements. With the fourth principle, students must use the context they have of racism in order to build a complex understanding of how the text is functioning.

2.3.2 Using Dialogic Approaches

Dialogic pedagogy refers to using conversation to flesh out ideas and concepts the students are encountering in their readings. Critical theory requires the use of conversation and dialogic teaching frequently uses critical theory to understand thoroughly the content of the literature. The two depend on one another in order to succeed.

2.3.2.1 Empirical Studies.

Morrell & Duncan-Andrade (2005) explore students' use of critical theories with hip hop and rap in a dialogic urban classroom. This study examined whether or not the analysis of hip-hop and rap could develop students' critical literacies, whether those literacies also be applied to canonical texts, and whether applying critical literacies would heighten students' political awareness in the texts of the world. The students were senior students in an urban high school. Morrell and Duncan-Andrade introduced a poetry unit that examined poetry from several different literary time periods, aligning rap with the postindustrial time period in the US. The hope of the researchers was students would see rap as a form of poetry specific to a time period, and thus be able to apply different theories to both rap and poetry. Asking the students to examine both the canonical piece and the rap song, the students develop the tools to not only read the curriculum, but also read the world around them. Through the student discussions and presentations, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade recounted, students applied different critical theories to the text. Students were able to synthesize the two genres and critically examine both the canonical texts along with the texts of their lives.

Foss (2002) employed a heavy dialogic approach in her classroom in order to foster critical literacies. She was tasked with teaching Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird,* but given the liberty

of teaching the content her way. Her class was composed of eighth graders, mostly White students of privilege. Her goal was to ensure that every learner was exposed to critical literacy. Through her unit on *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Foss focused on both journaling and the dialogic approach to teaching critical literacy. She implemented the supplementary text, Dyson's (2000) "A Useful Hero: Let's Honor Dr. King with Progress, Not Sainthood" that allowed students to see the same themes through different perspectives. Then, she asked students to journal on specific questions that she had cultivated. These questions gave students the opportunity to dig deeper and think more critically about the texts in which they engaged. Creating identity maps coupled with explicit discussion of privilege enhanced students' ability to utilize critical literacy skills in Foss's classroom. Students moved from being unaware of the privilege they held to understanding that their lives were a result of their privilege rather than simple meritocracy. Students applied this new understanding of privilege to the text *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which resulted in rich discussion.

Dallacqua and Sheahan (2020), like Foss (2002) introduced supplemental texts in order to facilitate a richer dialogue of canonical texts in hopes to foster critical literacy. The researchers focused their work with a group of 10th graders from a diverse, high-poverty, urban school. While Dallacqua and Sheahan's work emphasizes the importance of the dialogic approach, their focus is teaching multimodal texts not as supplemental pieces but as "legitimate texts for academic work" (p. 68). Their goal is multimodal texts will allow students to develop their critical consciousness through analysis and discussion of the dominant ideology of canonical literature. Their guiding research question asked, what happens to students learning when nontraditional texts are paired with canonical texts in a 10th grade ELA curriculum? Dallacqua and Sheahan employed the dialogic approach as the students read both texts simultaneously. Students discussing of color, shading, and images of the graphic novel, took a deep dive into the entire text instead of simply

skimming the comic. Comparing and contrasting the two texts, William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Neri's *Yummy*, students saw the nuances in both texts about themes of privilege and power. Students were able to draw connections to the texts and their world. While the dialogic approach was secondary in the study, the choice of engaging students with texts that were accessible and high interest allowed the reluctant students to think critically about the canonical text.

2.3.2.2 Teacher Resources.

Kay (2018) provides practitioner guidance for dialogic teaching. Kay emphasizes the importance of building a strong classroom community where students feel comfortable sharing their ideas on incredibly difficult, personal topics. Kay also emphasizes the importance of critically constructing the questions for discussion. He uses backward planning to help his students get to his end goal for the unit or text, which is always critical analysis of the text. Like Storm and Rainey (2018), Kay asks his students to collaboratively create notes on the board. Students can then use any of the notes from the board to construct their final critical analysis of the text. Kay's goal is to use the dialogic approach to help students formalize their thinking and apply their critical literacy skills. Through this process of read, journal, discuss, write, students spend time developing their analysis and benefit from hearing the thought process of their peers.

From the research included here, a dialogic approach is an important factor in facilitating critical literacy.

2.3.3 Prioritizing Inquiry and Action

The third pedagogical approach for facilitating critical literacy is prioritizing inquiry and action. Approaches in this category asks students to take an active role in the learning process from inquiry to action.

Young (2009) questions, how does a critical inquiry project that is created by the students allow the students to build their critical literacy? In order to find an answer to that question she structures her unit as follows: she asks students to agree on a topic that is interesting to them, then the class researches, learns, and actively participates in work to help the cause. The issue Young write about is the students' lack of knowledge and understanding of the LGBTQIA+ community. After the students decide on the topic that they want to focus, they looked critically at the language they use on a daily basis, dissecting the connotation of the words they use. Students focus on applying theory as a tool to examine that language. From there, Young walks her students through the inquiry process as they continue to learn about different facets of the community. The knowledge they gain throughout the course is applied as they move to action. Young found that students respond well to having choice in their learning. Students engage in the learning process, and work to bring awareness to the issue they chose. With guidance from Young who fosters her students' critical literacy, students move from lacking knowledge on a topic to becoming allies when inquiry and action are prioritized.

Campano, Ghiso and Sanchez (2013) also foster inquiry and action in their pedagogical approach. However, their projects were created with the partnership of a school-based researcher. They sought to answer the questions, how do students and teachers engage with literacy learning/teaching within the climate of high-stakes testing and accountability? What literacy practices do students display when teachers and university researchers create opportunities for

them to pursue their own inquiries in the curriculum? Many different projects were implemented over the course of the partnership, but an interesting project asked students to reclaim their local history in order to create a library of books for independent reading about their community. Students researched the history of the community in order to write informed books, which led to conversations that required critical literacy. Students questioned why so much of their community's history was disregarded and forgotten as they created history books that painted a more accurate picture of the history of their community. When students were given the ability to make their own choices related to their learning, something shifted. Another project in the study asked several students to research the White flight out of the city and how it changed the community in which they live. This changed their understanding of the text, Sachar's *Holes*, particularly related to the nickname "Zero" given to the protagonist. The students were able to see his real worth. Through the research process, students were able to focus on concepts that were interesting to them that related to the text and inevitably helped them build their critical literacy while reading the text. This process also allowed students to determine their role in their community.

In both studies, Young (2009) and Campano, Ghiso and Sanchez (2013), the teacher acts as facilitator. The teacher guides students in the direction they want their inquiry to take. Prioritizing inquiry and action allows the students to ask questions that develop their critical inquiry and facilitate the transition to autonomous learners. Behrman (2006) also found prioritizing inquiry and action presented in the research he conducted. He notes that not all social action plans are successful, but learning exists in the failures as well the successes. The process of inquiring about a topic, researching, learning, and moving to action is indeed a learning process

that allows students to observe how the world works and address that world through multiple theories.

2.4 Synthesis

Through the theoretical and empirical pieces I read, I found that critical theory, especially theories of power, ran through all the pedagogical approaches mentioned. Considering power is key to understanding the world outside of the classroom through textual analysis.

A small gap exists in the empirical work completed by many of these researchers. While researchers have examined how to foster critical literacies within canonical texts and text of the world, little research exists in regards to building critical literacies in a White, affluent community using both canonical or core texts and texts of the world to examine the students' place in the world and challenge their perceptions of privilege. Borsheim-Black and Sariganides (2019) and Foss (2002) focus on engaging White affluent students in questioning the perceptions of the world that they hold. I would like to contribute to the work here.

Critical literacy is the thorough examination of a text, or text analysis that causes the learner to build new, broader understandings about the text and the world that includes the examination of power, and application of critical theory. The construction of a critical literacy unit is open to a wide set of texts, tools, and instructional approaches. Importantly, though, literary classrooms that only ask students to notice literary elements within the text are not teaching critical literacy. Critical literacy education facilitates the skills that allow students to draw upon noticings, formulate puzzles, and theorize the meaning of a text so that students can view a text from multiple perspectives and, ultimately, challenge and question dominant perspectives. In a context like mine,

this is especially important because students may hold uninterrogated racist and sexist views. Using literature as a common point of analysis, I think I can start to chip away at these perspectives.

The current political climate does hinder the ability of the classroom teacher to apply critical theory in the ELA classroom. Skill and drill tactics are prevalent. Additionally, critical race theory has been politicized, and many are trying to ban its very existence in the public school realm. The current trend in my district is to ban "critical race theory." In practice, this means that there is pressure to ban the media's interpretation of critical race theory that all white people are guilty for the continued systemic abuse of people of color, which is a fundamental misunderstanding of what critical race theory actually is. I have received pressure from parents to avoid "critical race theory" in my classroom.

Within these contexts, I seek to use my synthesis of critical literacy pedagogy to develop my approaches to teaching with texts in my English classroom. I seek to routinely incorporate all three themes that were highlighted in the literature review: theory, inquiry, and dialogic teaching. By stitching all three themes together in one routine that we can practice again and again, I hope to develop my students' critical literacy practice as a habit they will use throughout their lives. Based on my review of the literature, key elements of a critical literacy routine would be as follows. First, I want to prioritize inquiry. I would like students to identify common threads in their noticings and create questions or puzzles that can lead to their learning. Rainey and Storm (in press) described the success of a high school student Dante, who through the act of puzzling, constructed a thoughtful, theorized analysis of a canonical text. Dante's success is important in demonstrating the autonomy students can achieve with critical literacy. I want my students to have that same autonomy. Without autonomy, the critical literacy skills may fade once I am no longer their teacher.

Second, I want my students to bring in texts of the world that are important to them, and perform class reads of these texts using critical theory. In Storm and Rainey (2018), students move beyond noticing, puzzling, and theorizing of canonical texts and incorporate choice texts. This allows students to apply the same skills they learned in a classroom setting to texts of the world. I, ultimately, want students to continue to use and build their critical literacy well after they leave my classroom. If I teach students how to apply these skills to texts of the world, the use of these skills is likely to endure beyond the students' time with me.

These dimensions inform my goals to design a learning environment that will support students to critically read their world. Both mark shifts in my teaching practice. I have tended to stop short of supporting students' examinations of power, mostly focusing on elements of craft. I have also tended to privilege teacher-selected texts (mostly prose fiction).

3.0 Method

3.1 Inquiry Questions

My inquiry questions were:

1. Within a unit focused on critical analysis, how did students use critical literacies to make sense of one focal text?

   How did I try to support students' critical analysis of a curricular text?

3.2 PDSA

Based on my literature review, critical literacy teaching involves bringing an inquiry-based approach, dialogic pedagogy, and supporting students' engagement with critical theories. My test of change involved elements from all three. I implemented this Plan, Do, Study, Act plan, or PDSA, with my third period honors English 9 students in Spring 2022.

Within a unit on Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, I sought to employ three iterations with data collection. This routine is important, and I wanted to take multiple opportunities to refine it, which is why I chose three iterations of data collection.

In the first iteration (approximately one week), I used the routine with *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the core text of my unit. After I did this, I used a four-day break in the process to analyze the data I collected and make necessary adjustments to the routine. Then, I used the routine in two more weeklong iterations, analyzing data and making changes after each week.

3.2.1 Critical Literacy Inquiry Routine

I sought to focus on bringing the following routine into my classroom as a way of shaping my instruction and my students' opportunities to learn. I studied this routine and tried to refine it over the course of a unit. The routine went as follows:

The first step in the routine asked students to share noticings from the assigned reading.

Then, the groups organized and categorized the noticings in charts they created, so they could see the visual organization. This step is important in helping students identify possible connections and themes, engaging students in the dialogic approach of discussing a common topic in a collaborative format, which is important to building critical literacy.

Once the noticings were categorized, the small groups tried to apply different theories in hopes of determining what the theories could help the group see that was not seen before.

Students formed puzzles in relation to the organized noticings. Puzzle creation allowed me to implement an inquiry approach, or perusing concepts that are interesting to students that fostered curiosity as students closely examined the text.

Students presented their puzzles in a Socratic Seminar or Fishbowl discussion, which was a whole class dialogic approach, and the class formulated tentative claims about the text based on those puzzles.

Finally, students journaled about the routine and the how it assisted them in constructing critical understandings about the text.

3.2.2 Time Frame

The change unit was three weeks in duration and went from March 14 – April 1, 2022.

3.3 Theory of Improvement

3.3.1 AIM Statement

My aim is: *80% of students within all ELA Honors 9 classes will be able to engage with critical literacy tools in order to analyze the texts of their lives by 2024*. This requires several strategic interventions and improvements.

3.3.2 Driver Diagram
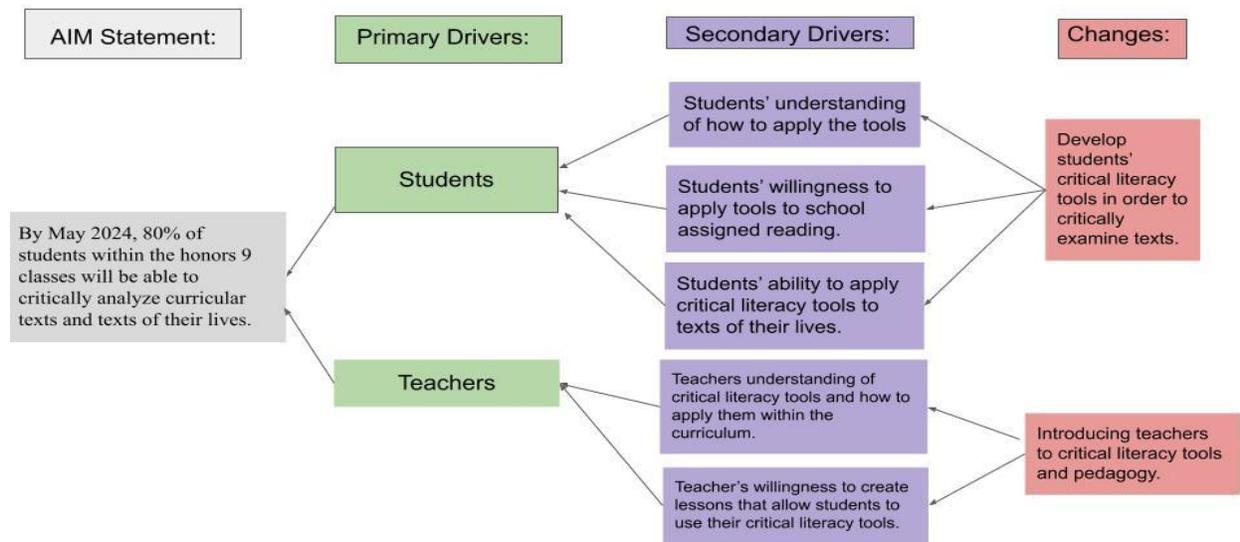
Figure 1 Driver Diagram

3.4 Unit Design

In what follows, I describe my instructional unit and rationale. Then, in the next sections, I describe my data collection and analysis process.

3.4.1 Rationale for *To Kill a Mockingbird*

When I originally planned this research study, I sought to use the graphic novel *Persepolis* because I thought would allow students to easily read and cycle through this process several times. Since *Persepolis* is multimodal, I thought that students might be more likely to be engaged by the text. I received board approval to teach with *Persepolis*, a process that took me many months of work. The day before I was to begin the study, responding to parent protests about the book, my district required that I not use it in my whole-class instruction.

Pivoting, I replaced *Persepolis* with *To Kill a Mockingbird.* The literature review I had conducted examined several research studies that used *To Kill a Mockingbird* to develop critical literacy, offering me some guidance. In the novel, author Harper Lee uses the young character, Scout as her protagonist. Scout's innocence at the beginning of the text is essential. Lee uses Scout's coming of age journey to paint a picture of the inequality and racism Black people face. If Scout is able to see this at her young age, then the intelligent reader should be able to see the blatant and systemic racism as well.

The structure of this novel allows the reader to come of age with Scout and see the horrors that exist in her previously believed idyllic town. Lee develops Scout's character as both childlike and perceptive through the first eleven chapters of the novel. During this time, the reader taps into a nostalgia that triggers emotions and memories experienced when life was simpler. Once in

tranced in nostalgia, Lee exposes the ugly underbelly of the racist south, jolting the reader into the realities of life. Reading with a critical lens, it becomes evident that Lee's world replicates racism, sexism, and social class stratification.

In choosing this text, I hoped my students would see the inequities that Scout narrates, but also realize the replication of the very social structures Lee is trying to call attention to. Scout is a compelling character filled with flaws that draw the reader in from her rebellious use of curse words, to her impetuous use of her fists when angered. Through these flaws, the reader is able to empathize with the emotions that plague young Scout. As the reality of life becomes more apparent to Scout, she already has our empathy.

3.4.2 Theories

I focused this unit on gender theory and class theory. Other theories could and should be applied but for the scope of this unit, and for fear of being accused of teaching Critical Race Theory, I taught and applied gender and social class theories. I allowed students to bring up questions of race and racism, but I did not explicitly teach them to ask questions of race and power.

3.4.2.1 Gender. Reading the focal text through the gender lens shows how it is a commentary on traditional gender roles and behaviors.

The characterization of Scout, the protagonist of the text, works to reinforce traditional gender roles. While Scout is female, she is a self-proclaimed tomboy from the start. She does not want to wear dresses, play with dolls, have tea parties, or do anything that is stereotypically feminine. The biggest insult her older brother Jem slings Scout's way is, "You are acting like a girl!" Horrified by this, Scout does what she can to prove to Jem and their friend Dill that she is

brave, which seems to be an inherent male trait to Scout. Through the insults Scout receives and the behavior's she exhibits, the reader can come to the conclusion that being a female or acting feminine is diminutive or lesser than acting or being male.

The female characters in the text further reinforce gender stereotypes. While every adult female in the text lives independently of a male except for Aunt Alexandra, which is a strong attempt by Lee at demonstrating independence, Scout devalues what they have to offer except for Ms. Maudie. Miss Stephanie Crawford and Miss Rachel Haverford are both gossips, Calpurnia favors Jem and according to Scout is unnecessarily hard on her. Aunt Alexandra is short sighted and believes heavily in the traditions of the south. Both of the teachers in the text, Miss Caroline and Mrs. Gates, are hypocrites. Miss Caroline expects understanding and empathy from the children she teaches, but does not extend the same curtesy to them. Mrs. Gates empathizes with the Jews in Hitler's Germany but condemns the African Americans in her own community. Mrs. Dubose is simply the devil incarnate. This leaves only Miss Maudie as the singular female of value in the community to help Scout navigate the world around her. Miss Maudie is rather traditional in her behavior; she works in the garden, and she enjoys baking, and possesses no power, except the power to influence Scout, and she supports Atticus, which is the extent of her capabilities. The female characters of the text represent the attitude of the time. While the novel takes place in the 1930s, it was written in 1960. The women of Maycomb seem to be strong and independent, in that very few even live with a man, but they reinforce the roles of women of the time. They have no power, thus reinforcing to Scout and the reader that power exists in being a man.

With few men around, Atticus, Scout's father has the opportunity to take the role of the paterfamilias of not just the Finch household but also the community. This role allows him to become the White male savior on several different occasions. Atticus is able to save the town from

a rabid dog, because Sheriff Heck Tate lacks the accuracy with a firearm that Atticus surely possesses. Parallel to the story of Atticus saving the children from a rabid dog, he also serves to save his children from racism. Atticus serves as the lawyer defending Tom Robinson, a Black man falsely accused of raping a young White girl. While Atticus argues a compelling and convincing case, Tom is still found guilty. He was not able to save Tom, but he was able to save the youth from becoming racists like many members of the community. When he is unable to save his children at the end of the text, the phantom Arthur "Boo" Radley is able to drive a knife into Bob Ewell, thus passing the torch to an omniscient protector, who is also a White man. Readers may wonder why Lee decided to craft the plot lines in this way. Is there more value in saving the White children from the atrocities of racism than saving the Black man for those same atrocities? What does all of this mean?

Atticus' actions replicate gender stereotypes, but so does his language when he talks with his son Jem about juries. Atticus states, "'For one thing, Miss Maudie can't serve on a jury because she's a woman--- […] I guess it's to protect our frail ladies from sordid cases like Tom's Besides,' Atticus grinned, 'I doubt if we'd ever get a complete case tried---the ladies'd be interrupting to ask questions'" (Lee, 1960, p. 296). In front of both of his children, Atticus, the man they see as near to a god as any human, disgraced the ability of women to sit on a jury, and he suggested that asking clarifying questions in a trail where a man's life is on the line is a bad thing that only a woman would do. Again, readers may wonder what this means. What is Lee indicating about gender?

3.4.2.2 Class.

The focal text can be read through a social class lens to show how it is a commentary on traditional/existing disparities between those with wealth and privilege from those who are resigned to working for the people who possess wealth and privilege.

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To Kill a Mockingbird is a commentary on racial perception in the 1930s, but the class stratification also plays a major role throughout the text. This stratification can best be seen through the characterizations of the Cunninghams and the Ewells. Both families live in extreme poverty, though, the work ethic of the Cunninghams make their racist behaviors more digestible to the people of Maycomb, giving them social capital over the Ewells. Scout tells Miss Caroline about the Cunninghams, "The Cunninghams never took anything they can't pay back—no church baskets and no scrip stamps. They never took anything off of anybody, they get along on what they have. The don't have much, but they get along on it" (Lee, 1960, p. 26). The Ewells are depicted as social pariahs; Atticus' describes the Ewells to Scout saying, "The Ewells had been the disgrace of Maycomb for three generations. None of them had done an honest day's work in his recollection. […] They were people, but they lived like animals" (p. 40). This differentiation defines the entirety of the text. Both Walter Cunningham Sr. and Bob Ewell take action that would naturally be described as racist, but Atticus pardons the behavior of Cunningham and crucifies Ewell. The main difference between the two is one works for his meager wages while the other takes from the state.

The text does imply that Ewell rapes his own daughter, which is certainly justifies the social stratification of the two families. Nevertheless, the Cunninghams are not innocent of wrongdoing. Atticus has a conversation with his children:

"I thought Mr. Cunningham was a friend of ours. You told me a long time

ago he was."

"He still is."

"But last night he wanted to hurt you."

Atticus place his form beside his knife and pushed his plate aside. "Mr.

Cunningham's basically a good man," he said, 'he just has his blind spots along with

the rest of us" (Lee, 1960, p. 210).

What the conversations leaves out is not only would Cunningham kill Atticus as a byproduct of his mission, his mission that evening was vigilante justice against an innocent Black man. Why the conversation revolves around Cunningham's possible intent towards Atticus but no reference is made to the threat to Tom's life further enforces the power and importance that Atticus, a White man has over Tom, a Black man. Atticus believes that Cunningham is good because he works hard and his family attempts at being presentable. Meanwhile, in Atticus' defense against Tom, he shredded Ewell's dignity in front of the entire town as Atticus recounts to Jem, "'Jem, see if you can stand in Bob Ewell's shoes a minute. I destroyed his last shred of credibility at that trail, if he had any to begin with. The man had to have some kind of comeback, his kind always does" (Lee, 1960, p. 292). The diction that Lee uses when talking about the separate men reflects her negative tone towards the Ewells who are perceived as "White trash", versus the Cunninghams who are trying to pull themselves up by the bootstraps. Walter Cunningham intended to kill a man, where Tom's death is a byproduct of Ewell's lies. Lee reinforces social capital in structure throughout her text through Atticus' actions towards the men.

3.4.3 Instructional Design

3.4.3.1 Critical Literacy Tools.

Three focused critical literacy tools are implemented throughout this lesson and routine. All three are rooted in the research conducted in the review of literature. Providing a clear context

of what each tool is and the benefit of that tool is important in understanding how this routine

works.

3.4.3.1.1 Noticings.

Noticings are defined as aspects of the text students notice. Noticings can be general in nature because they are the first step in critical understanding, such as identifying literary devices or patterns. Noticings can also consider conventional elements or elements of the text such as, character, setting, conflict (Rainey & Storm, in press). Noticings are important in developing critical literacy. Students need to notice things about the text before they can critically understand what the text is trying to tell them. The question that drove this portion of the routine was, "What do you notice about the text?" This question encouraged students to dive back into the text in order to determine what they noticed of importance.

3.4.3.1.2 Puzzles.

Puzzling is when students come up with literary questions or puzzles that they can further pursue with analysis (Rainey & Storm, in press). An example could be as simple as, I am interested in Atticus' social stratification of two different families from the same class. Puzzles are the second step in building critical literacy, because student begin to see relationship between noticings—or, put differently, between the form of the text and its potential meanings. Building puzzles allows students to explore those relationships further. My questions included, "What patterns or surprises do you see across your noticings? What seems most interesting or puzzling to you?" Posing these questions, I reasoned, would help students identify relationships among elements that they may not have realized in the first read.

3.4.3.1.3 Theory.

Theorizing is asking students to take their noticings and puzzles and apply theory, whether that be gender, historical, post-colonial, Marxist, etc (Rainey & Storm, in press). To support students' theorizing, I planned to ask questions such as, "How does theory help us understand something about the text that wasn't apparent to us on our first read? What is your preferred reading of the text?" The goal of theorizing is applying a theory that provides students with a different perspective or lens in which they—and others--can read the text. Before I taught the unit, I envisioned students' possible noticings, puzzling, and theorizing (see Table 1).

Table 1 Examples of Noticings, Puzzles, and Theorizing

	Possible Examples	Possible Examples
Noticings	Scout gives her father godlike reverence. She never seems to question him or his authority.	Even though both the Cunninghams and the Ewells are poor, the Ewells seem to be viewed as lesser.
Puzzles	How does Scout's question of all of the women in the text, but never her father reflect Lee's tone towards women?	How does Atticus' diction reveal a social distinction between two men from the same class?

Claims from Theorizing	From a gender reading:	From a social class reading:
	Lee creates a world where all of the adult female characters are single, which on the surface level seems like she is trying to disrupt the gender stereotypes, however, this world with no other strong men allows Atticus to become the White savior of the town, thus enforcing gender stereotypes.	The diction used when talking about the Ewells almost equates them to feral humans, suggesting that monetary wealth is not the only defining characteristic of a family's social status, but work ethic and public perception play a significant role as well, the reinforcing social class stereotypes.

I wanted my students to apply the tools above in order to develop their critical literacy. In order to achieve the aim of 80% of students engaging with critical literacy tools, I planned a unit that first introduces students to historical context. Students spent several days examining the time period in order to understand the historical context of the time. The goal of this introduction was building context for the novel. From there, I spent a class period refreshing student understanding of theory. After the introduction of these two concepts, I gave students time to read in class.

Once students read the first nine chapters of the novel, we moved into the routine. For the first day of noticings, I had several examples for students. Ultimately, I wanted students to work to develop their own puzzles.

3.4.3.2 Introducing the unit.

The first day of the unit the goal was to build context to the routine (see Appendix A). After the context was constructed, I moved into historical context. My students had little experience with the Jim Crow South, so building this context and understanding of why certain decisions were made and the effects of those decisions was important.

3.4.3.3 Introducing the routine.

This routine was different from our normal analysis of a text. For that reason, I explained to the students what we were doing and why. I explained this before they began reading the text, so they understood the expectations throughout the unit. I posted the guiding questions for each phase of the routine and discussed the importance of these questions with the students.

I unveiled the new routine by asking students to set a purpose for reading. We discussed the importance of curiosity; I wanted them to examine elements of the text in which they found interest. I created three anchor charts and hung them around the room that covered both the definitions and examples of noticings, puzzles, and claims with theory.

I organized the students into collaborative groups, where they conducted most of their learning. Eight students were study participants; they were grouped into two groups of four.

3.4.3.4 Literary Analysis Essay.

At the end of the unit, I assigned the following essay prompt:

For this essay, you will analyze a puzzle you created in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. You can choose any puzzle that you created, but it must address craft, power dynamics, and apply at

least one theory as a way of interpreting these elements of the text. Your thesis statement should be a concise version of your main claim that you derived from analyzing the puzzle.

Students received our department-crafted rubric for this essay, which I used to determine their grades. The department-generated rubric would not suffice for analyzing students' claims and analysis of their puzzles. So, for the purposes of this study, I created a coding scheme to determine students' development of critical literacy (see data analysis section, Table 5).

3.5 Data Collection

My design included eight student participants. To select participants, I invited all students of one section of my class to participate; I included all eight students whose guardians gave their consent and who themselves gave their assent.

Table 2 Student Information

Student	Gender	Race	Ability Label	Group
Leann	Female	Caucasian	Not identified as gifted	1
Reese	Female	Caucasian	Gifted	1
Ricky	Male	Caucasian	Gifted	1
Mike	Male	Caucasian	Gifted	1
Alexis	Female	Caucasian	Gifted	2
Noah	Male	Caucasian	Gifted	2
Hannah	Female	Asian	Gifted	2
Ivy	Female	Caucasian	Not identified as gifted	2

I collected multiple forms of data from my classroom, focusing on these eight students. See Table 3 for overview of data collection.

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Table 3 Data Collection Method

Category	Data Collected	Description	Mode
Inquiry Question 1	Student Puzzles Students shared their puzzles with their group, and they were asked to submit a puzzle that they would like to further explore.	Collect from 8 students Iteration 1 – March 14, Iteration 2 –March 23 Iteration 3 – March 30	Google docs/Schoology
	Socratic Seminar Discussions Students turned their puzzles into claims and I supported students in their discussion (see Tables 2, 3 & 4)	40-minute classroom discussion. Iteration 1 – March 17, 18 Iteration 2 – March 24 Iteration 3 – March 31	Audio recording of conversation Rev.com was used to transcribe the discussions
	Collect journal entries from 8 selected students each iteration.	Google docs Iteration 1 – March 18, Iteration 2 – March 24 Iteration 3 – March 31	Prompted responses to the process and what students perceived about the process.
	Four paragraph literary analysis essays Students turned their puzzles into claims (see Table 3)	Collect literary analysis from 8 selected students.	Google docs/Schoology
Inquiry Question 2	Teacher Lesson Plans	Unit plans for iteration 1 & 2 (see Appendix A)	Google docs
	Teacher Process Journal Response focused on the process of the	Focus on how the process is unfolding. Collect daily journals once a week on Friday or the end of	Google docs

	routine detailing how the routine was used	the week based on school holidays March 11, 18, and 25 April 1, 8, 13, and 20	
Inquiry Questions 1 & 2	PDSA Test Form Charted the plan, how the plan was implemented, along with any results noticed (see Appendix C)	Focus on how the process is unfolded, and analyze the data in order to change the process. Complete test forms every weekend March 19, & 26 April 2	

I used Google docs to collect all of the data aside from the audio recording. The students were familiar with Google docs and this was a regular part of my classroom procedures.

3.5.1 Inquiry Question One

My first inquiry question was: *Within a unit focused on critical analysis, how did students use critical literacies to make sense of a focal text?*

3.5.1.1 Classroom discussion.

I collected audio recordings of classroom discussion each week. Students' ability to make claims based on puzzles during the classroom discussion was a driver measure. Through the dialogic approach, I determined if students were able to make claims based on the puzzles created. The outcome measure was the literary analysis paper, but this discussion process allowed me to see if students were on the right track. I conducted one Socratic Seminars or Fishbowl discussion that spanned the course of two class periods or 84 minutes in the first week and two others that spanned the course of one class period (approximately 40 minutes) in the subsequent weeks.

3.5.1.2 Written student work.

      I collected student work, which included students' noticings, puzzles, and claims and literary analysis essays.

3.5.1.2.1 Weekly written noticings, puzzles, and claims.

Student-authored puzzles were a part of the routine, and they were an outcome measure for the first and second inquiry question. I collected puzzles, noticings, and claims from the eight participating students via Google docs during each of the three weeks, for a total of 24 submissions. After discussing our noticings as a class, students submitted a document including their noticings, puzzles, and claims.

3.5.1.2.2 Final literary analysis essay.

The literary analysis essay was an outcome measure for the first inquiry question, within a unit focused on critical analysis, how did students use critical literacies to make sense of a range of texts? The literary analysis was the summative assessment for the unit, which demonstrated whether students were able to make sense of the text using critical literacy skills. Students had the freedom to formulate their puzzles into a full literary analysis, where they asked to examine how the structure of the text revealed an understanding of power.

3.5.1.3 Student perception of the unit.

A supplemental source of data was student-authored journal entries. The student journals acted as both a driver and process measure allowing me to see how they progressed through the process. I wanted to include this source of data to understand what students thought of the unit. I collected four journals entries from eight students during all three iterations, for a total of 24 entries. The journal prompts focused students' attention to how the routine helped them to develop their understanding of the text. The prompt students responded to was: How has it been for you to focus on noticing and puzzling when reading literature?

3.5.2 Inquiry Question Two

My second research question was, *How did I try to support students' critical analysis of a curricular text?* To answer this question, I focused on work of my own.

3.5.2.1 Teacher lesson plans.

I collected my own lesson plans as a driver measure. This data point allowed me to reflect on the intent behind the plan. See Appendix A for unit plan.

3.5.2.2 Teacher journal.

I kept a reflective journal throughout the process to keep a record of my own observations from my classroom and how I implemented the routine. I journaled daily about the implementation of the routine and the process. I created a total of 25 journal entries. These were the prompts I chose from daily:

How did the students engage with the routine today?

From what occurred today in my classroom, how are students changing their ways of analyzing text?

Did anything about my pedagogical approach feel new or different? How am I growing as a teacher?

Is anything going on in the building or district that is affecting my implementation? How is my teaching bringing about change in the school/district?

3.5.2.3 PDSA test form.

After each iteration, I charted the PDSA cycle in a PDSA test form that allowed me to analyze trends in order to make changes to achieve my aim. This form allowed me to focus explicitly on the PDSA formula and makes the changes that I needed to make within my routine.

3.6 Data Analysis

I wanted to help students create and pursue puzzles that would in turn assist them in applying theory and developing critical literacy. I analyzed students' ability to construct puzzles and create claims based on those puzzles.

3.6.1 Analyzing Classroom Discussion

Analyzing students' discussions quickly between each week of the unit was a difficult task, so I created a clear process in order to do so effectively. In Week 1, immediately following discussions, I downloaded the audio recording to rev.com, which is a website that generates verbatim transcripts from audio files. Once the site completed processing the file, I listened to the discussion and edited the suggested transcript, correcting the errors in transcription while I listened. I stopped the recording frequently to note important moments of criticality in the notes section of rev.

After, I listened to and read the transcripts of the recordings again. I used thematic analysis to create a codebook based on reoccurring themes (see Table 4). I used Google Sheets to indicate occurrence of themes throughout discussions and the timestamp in which they occurred. In each of Weeks 2 and 3, I repeated the same process as in Week 1. After each cycle ended, I listened to the weeks recordings again, and I used the thematic coding scheme created in Week 1 to code the discussions. Then I reviewed the coded discussions from previous weeks in order to ensure I was coding consistently. At this point, I changed the definitions of some codes and added or deleted others based on their significance.

Table 4 Student Discussion Codebook

Code	Definition	Data Excerpt
Noticings:		
Plot	Talk was based in the plot, dealing with the setting, conflicts, rising action, resolution, and climax	"They talk about him on the street. Like I, I remember reading where people would be whispering when Jem and Scout walk by."
Character	Talk revolved around character assessment, and usually students referred to the characters as they are real people	"The public is afraid of them and the Radleys don't care."
Craft	Talk addressed the creation of the text or the craft of the text	"I think the fact that you're trying to have this book about this really serious topic, but then you decide to tell the story, um, through the eyes of someone who would not really experience this as like a personal threat to their safety. I think it just makes it seem less serious."
Puzzling:		
Questioning	Student asked a question about the text that includes elements of craft and or power.	"How does Jem's diction on Mr. Dolphous Raymond's family reflect the geographical influence on race discrimination and social standing?"
Curiosity	Student talk seemed to reveal genuine curiosity.	"How does Lee's town show her thoughts on femininity?"
Analyzing Text:		
Critical Concepts	Talk included a critical concept (e.g., racism, sexism).	"Frankly, the entire idea that they had to assign him a lawyer is plays into systematic racism, but also classism, and monetary wealth. I guess that could be an idea."
Craft, Criticality, and World Insight	Talk interwove attention to craft and power to draw a connection about the world	"I think the idea of making him disabled was, um, to show how, um, the white jury would disregard the evidence that directly contradicts this, um, directly contradicts the fact that he could have done this to show just how much they hated black people and people of color at that time."
Craft and Critical Concepts	Talk included both craft and critical concepts, but the student did not do not apply the two in order to come to	"I think that the diction shows how little respect she got from her father, from her family members, from society as a whole, um, uh, in the, a description of where the Ewells lived. Um,

| without World Insight | a deeper conclusion about the world around them. | they talk about to, um, flowerpots that are like the only upkept thing in the like area. And I think that shows how sort of Mayella was like constantly surrounded by, uh, Horrible things. And so she didn't get the level of respect that she needed. And she therefore think that like treating her as a normal citizen would be insulting because no one has done that before." |

3.6.2 Analyzing Student Writing

I collected two forms of student writing: students' submitted puzzles, noticings, and claims, which they submitted each week in class, and their final essays, which they submitted at the end of the unit. I created a codebook to code both forms of student writing. See Table 5.

Table 5 Student Writing Codebook: Noticings, Puzzles, Claims, and Literary Analysis Essays

	4	3	2	1	0
Noticings			Noticings are Present		Noticings are not present
Puzzles	Puzzles explore the connections to power and craft through the exploration of multiple theories.	Puzzles delve deeply into power and connect power to craft of the text.	Puzzles are generally about power and connect to the plot instead of the craft of the text.	Puzzles ask questions, but they generally do not address either craft or power.	Puzzles were not present.
Claims	Claims explore the connections to power and craft through multiple theories.	Claims delve deeply into power and connect power to craft of the text.	Claims are generally about power and connect to the plot instead of the craft of the text or vice versa.	A claim is made, but it does not involve craft or power.	Claims were not present.

Analysis	Analysis explains how the craft, belonging to the author, reveals something larger about the world through a theory reading	Analysis examines craft and theory, but does not connect the two by explaining how theory reveals a greater understanding through craft	Analysis examines either craft or theory but not both	Analysis is off task and fails to address craft or theory	No analysis is present

To code the student writing, I read and re-read each file and assigned holistic scores for each dimension. I created this scheme after working with the discussion data, so the dimensions are similar to the first codebook. Ultimately, I was trying to help myself notice when students were analyzing craft, when they were analyzing power or using critical concepts, and when they were doing both in order to generate new insights about the world. I understood that asking questions of the text and noticing elements of the text were both key dimensions of this work, so I tried to trace these as well.

3.6.3 Analyzing Students' Perceptions through Journal Entries

All of the analysis I have described so far focused on students' development of critical literacy. I also collected weekly journal entries that were intended to give me insight into students' feelings and perceptions about the unit as learners. In order to code the journal entries, I needed a different code scheme (see Table 6).

Table 6 Coding Scheme for Student Journals

4	3	2	1	0
Only mentions the benefits of the routine	Sees the benefits of the routine, but struggles with some aspect	Frustrated with the routine	Does not see a benefit in the routine	The response was not about the routine or was not submitted

I created these codes to analyze students' feelings towards implementation of the routine. I wanted to systematically trace how positive or negative students seemed about the routine because a major goal I had in the unit was to support students to develop tools that they could use in their lives. I created a simple rubric to help me code for this, from a 4, which I coded when a student's journal entry solely expressed positive feelings or perceptions about the routine, to a 1, which I coded when students solely expressed negative feelings or perceptions about the routine.

At the end of Week 1, I read the journals and determined reoccurring ideas or themes. I compiled the major ideas into a table and noted some common themes at the bottom of the column. At the end of Weeks 2 – 3, I again read the journals and determined reoccurring ideas or themes. Then, I went back and read the notes from the previous week' journals to determine if the students and I were reacting differently to the process than in previous weeks.

3.7 PDSA and Iterative Improvement

I analyzed my own lesson plans, teacher journals, and PDSA forms in two ways.

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First, each week I referred to these files alongside the emerging student patterns in order to make decisions about my instruction for the coming week and to record those decisions. For example, after reading my teacher journals and students journals, and finding common themes, I made change decisions that I highlighted in the PDSA form.

Second, at the end of the unit and after I completed my full analysis of student work, I returned to these files to consider how they would complement or extend the findings I had created.

3.8 Interrater Reliability

In order to begin to test the reliability of my analysis, I conducted a small test of interrater reliability. I asked a colleague to code 24 data excerpts with my coding scheme, and I compared their coding with mine. Of the 24 excerpts, we coded 66% of the excerpts the same as each other.

To conduct this process, began with the first week of student discussion. I chose the first week because it is the natural starting point. I ask my colleague who teaches Academic English 9 if she would code 24 points of the discussion using three of the codes. I asked my colleague because she is familiar with my work, and plans on implementing the same change with her students in the fall. When choosing codes, I chose craft, which I pulled from noticings, questioning, pulled from puzzling, and critical ideas pulled from analyzing. I wanted one code from each category in order to see how my colleague coded for the categories. I spent 15 minutes reviewing my codes with my colleague and I gave her examples of those codes (see Table 3). While this colleague is familiar with qualitative analysis, this was the first time she coded student discussions.

Of the codes I tested, the one with the strongest percent agreement was my analysis code, which was in agreement 100% of the time. The ones with the weakest percent agreement were

craft and questioning. This may indicate that craft and questioning are codes that need continued refinement.

Overall, our percent of agreement would have ideally been higher than 66%. Many researchers hold 85% or 90% as a standard level of agreement. For my purposes, I would like to conduct a fuller test of interrater reliability in the future and include someone who is familiar with qualitative analysis to participate in that process.

3.9 Positionality Statement

I am white, privileged, agnostic, cisgender, and feminist. My fiercely independent mother raised me; I lived with both parents until I hit my teenage years when my beliefs of the world began to form. I spent many years as a military wife, where class and gender stereotypes replicated daily. When the troops deployed, the families left behind dismantled those same stereotypes. Through my experiences my identity molded into a person who is critical of those who never left the suburbs, who never tried to see something through another's perspective. While I am a mother of children whose identities intersection with the identities of the children I teach, my patience for precociousness is minimal. That being said, when students grew during this study, I did not always recognize that growth. My expectations demanded all students develop their ability to analyze a text critically within four weeks. In order to combat these expectations, the aim was adjusted to reflect some growth instead of total growth and measures, including rubrics, were put into place to measure varying degrees of growth.

As a practitioner who implemented change via improvement science, I need to note that I am frustrated with my district's lack of attention to equity and justice. Having worked in several

other districts, I know we could be doing more for our students. Focusing on the development of critical literacy, I understood the possibility of irritating my administration and jeopardize my job. I was hopeful that both my students would succeed in developing critical literacy, and the study would succeed. Finding a balance was important to ensure I did not push students beyond what the community and the district felt was important, but still asked students to embrace the challenges of learning. Based on my position and my feelings of my district, I may not fully recognize the growth that is present in my students.

3.10 Study Limitations

As is the case with Improvement Science, my study was conducted within my own contexts, which in this case was a classroom with my own students.

In the first four iterations of this study, I only examined my honors 9 students. I would like to see the results of application of similar changes to academic level students. I would like to test similar changes with my academic 9 students.

Limitations of my design included time. This unit was short, and it needed to adeptly fit into a specifically carved out time. Time between iterations was short as well. Having a limited amount of time threatened my ability to conduct a thorough analysis of my data. I only had four days to code and adjust the routine before beginning the consecutive iteration. The quick turnaround allowed for more iterations of the same routine, thus providing me with a more robust data set.

This study was designed to collect indicator of students' critical analysis skills. I understand that these indicators and artifacts do not fully measure the robustness of students' critical thinking. I cannot measure or see all of the ways my students have developed criticalities.

I also acknowledge that interrater reliability is an important component of qualitative research, and I did not conduct a complete test of interrater reliability. The results of my initial test of reliability were somewhat lower than expected (with only 66% agreement between my reviewer's codes and my codes). Therefore, I will conduct a complete test of interrater reliability (testing at least 10% of my data) as a key step in advancing my work.

4.0 PDSA Results

I began my cycles with two goals in mind, I wanted to develop students' curiosity when analyzing literature. I knew developing a new routine was essential to support students in this task. My inquiry questions were:

1. Within a unit focused on critical analysis, how did students use critical literacies to make sense of a focal text?

How did I support students' critical analysis of a curricular text?

In what follows, I describe results of my unit.

4.1 Question 1: Within a unit focused on critical analysis, how did students use critical literacies to make sense of a focal text?

Based on my analysis of student data, I assert that over the course of the first three weeks of the unit, students showed increasing evidence of criticality in their reading, writing, and talk. My claim is based on my analysis of students' weekly classroom discussions, the puzzles, claims, and noticings they submitted in class each week, and their final end-of-unit essays.

Students seemed to develop their critical analysis from Week 1 to Week 3 of the unit. In their weekly classwork, students' writing indicated this shift toward criticality. For example, Alexis claimed in Week 1 in her submission, "The imagery associated with the Radley's house show one reason as to why the town is scared of them, also showing that the Radley's don't care about public perception." Here, Alexis addressed imagery, but only examined what the imagery

revealed about the occupants of the house being described. Alexis' claim from Week 1 did not include attention to power. In Week 3, Alexis claimed, "The diction towards the trial shows how scared Tom was to accuse a white female, showing how little power someone of color [had]." This claim from Alexis included both craft and power. This claim progression demonstrates growth in critical literacy because Alexis was able to make the connection that the craft is revealing something about power within the text.

Students' small group discussions also suggested growth in their criticality from Week 1 to Week 3. In Week 1, small group discussions revolved around asking questions in rapid succession. In recordings that totaled an hour and 46 minutes for Group 1, students asked 26 questions of one another. For example, Leann asked, "How did Scout's diction about herself and the other women in town reinforced 1930s, stereotypes, all women?" Leann's puzzle included craft and theory. Instead of then taking up that question, the group debated for four minutes on what Leann meant about female stereotypes in the 1930s, and then they moved onto another question without any discussion about the craft or what the craft revealed. This behavior was typical of student talk in the Week 1. The quick succession of questions suggested that students were not sure how to address the questions related to craft. When they discussed plot and character, they often spoke of the characters and the town as though they existed in real life.

The nature of students' discussions seemed to shift in Weeks 2 and 3. Students began to talk about craft more frequently. Craft talk is seen when Noah puzzled to his group during discussion, "How are Tom Robinson's, Bob Ewell's and Mayella Ewell's, dictions and tones, similar and different when testifying at the trial, and what does that show about their needs to prove themselves based on the racial and social class of early 1900s Alabama." What is notable

here is not the puzzle itself, but the responses to the puzzle. Leann mentions during her group discussion,

> And even then during the trial, he apparently did say something wrong. Cuz he pointed out the fact that if her father doesn't help her, her siblings aren't there. No, she really is very lonely. And Gilmer was like, you felt sorry for her. You felt sorry for her repeating it as if this black man can't feel sorry for this white woman or that pity of a black person towards a white woman is so abnormal and so disrespectful.

Leann spoke of the repetition in the text and of race similarly to the way she spoke about the text in Week 1, but her groupmates took up this idea and discussed it for ten minutes, staying on topic and delving deeper, instead of quickly moving to the next puzzle or talking tangentially about the puzzle before moving on. This demonstrated growth and an understanding in how to discuss the craft using theory.

Additionally, within the same discussion, the group demonstrated evidence of critical analysis. The group began the discussion with the crafts of tone and diction and later included character development to determine Lee's goals during the trial, focusing on the message she was trying to convey. Hannah helped her group by critically discussing how Black people were viewed historically stating, "Yeah, this whole time I've been thinking like, three fifths, how like African American people were three fifths of a person and that's just like what I'm getting." Noah responded to Hannah stating, "I think the idea of making him [Tom] disabled was, um, to show how, um, the white jury would disregard the evidence that directly contradicts this, um, directly contradicts the fact that he could have done this, to show just how much they [white people] hated black people and people of color at that time." Noah was able to examine the crafting of a character through the lens of race and he arrived at a critical understanding of the world with the support

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and critical discussion of his group mates. This discussion demonstrated growth from Week 1 in that students were able to sustain discussion on one puzzle over a longer duration of time instead of moving rapid fire through the puzzles. While students did change the craft they were discussing, they were working towards the ultimate goal of determining how the three characters who testified were perceived by the court. The development and robustness of the discussion demonstrated a form of critical literacy that was not present in Week 1.

Although all students seemed to develop critical literacy over the first three weeks of the unit, they did not necessarily do so evenly. Noah and Reese were perhaps the most advanced in their use of critical literacy tools. Four of the other students seemed to be on the cusp of demonstrating critical literacy. These four did speak about craft and used theory to examine critical concepts, but they did not address how the craft viewed through theory revealed something about a critical concept.

At the end of the unit, students returned to *To Kill a Mockingbird* to compose analytic essays. These essays showed development of critical literacy, much like the patterns I found when analyzing discussion data and classwork in Weeks 1-3. See Table 7 for overview of essay scores. See Table 8 for descriptive analysis of essays by student.

Table 7 Student Literary Analysis Scores

	Puzzle	Claim	Analysis
Leann	3	3	3
Reese	3	3	4
Ricky	2	3	2
Mike	4	4	2
Alexis	3	3	1
Noah	3	4	4
Hannah	3	3	3
Ivy	3	3	3

Table 8 Analysis of Literary Analysis Essays

Student	Puzzle	Claim	Best Example of Analysis	Analysis Justification
Leann	What does symbolism in the text show through a racial lens?

Justification: The puzzle addresses craft and one theory. | The symbolism in *To Kill A Mockingbird* viewed through a racial lens upholds racial stereotypes and power dynamics.

Justification: The claim addresses craft through theory | While this gift of her precious camellias solidifies the idea that she was passing on her racist ideology to these kids through her discussions of her favorite things, it also symbolizes the passing of that way of thinking and all of that prejudice. With the spreading of this ideology and the prolonged notion that white people are inherently better than black people, no system will ever change because it only adds fuel to the fire. If no system changes and African Americans can't fight back against things like inadequate education and generational poverty, it only adds to the idea that they're lesser, despite being set up to fail because ideology like this is still so pertinent. Through the use of symbolism in | Leann explained the symbolism of the camellias earlier in her essay, so here the analysis focuses on applying theory. She organized her body paragraphs that way throughout the essay, after the claim and introducing the first piece of evidence; she would analyze the symbolism and with the second piece of evidence apply theory. Leann is analyzing both craft and theory, but in proximity to one another. She is beginning to analyze how the craft viewed through theory reveals something larger about the world, but she needs to further develop the how. |

			the form of Mrs. Dubose's camellias, it's shown that there is a cycle of racism going on in the Jim Crow South, and it only furthers the racist notion that black people are inherently lesser than white people.	
Reese	How does the narration used throughout the novel contribute to the stigma surrounding gender stereotypes and identity that is still prevalent today?

Justification: The puzzle examines craft and suggests a theory in which to examine that craft. | By doing so, whether consciously or subconsciously, Lee negatively contributes to the stigma surrounding gender stereotypes and identity that were present both in the 1930s as well as in modern America through the use of narration in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Justification: The claim examines a craft through gender theory. | The narration eventually goes on to explain how the women in the town approve of this decision and she then continues to go to the tea parties even when she didn't much enjoy them. By praising a character for putting herself through discomfort in order to please others' perceptions of her and only doing this after she's given in to the stereotypes is to directly send the message that at one point or another, one should do the same. Without having Scout as a narrator, this message may have not been received the same way, as there's nothing inherently wrong with embracing what you once abhorred. The issue with this is presented when the reader is made aware that Scout didn't actually enjoy these | Reese thoroughly examines the narration in the evidence she chose, then she proceeds to apply theory and examine what is revealed through the analysis of the two together. While I would like to see more gender analysis here, Reese is concise with her language and adeptly examines the narration through the gender lens. |

			things, but rather was giving in for the praise she was receiving and in turn, sends the message that rejecting stereotypes is nothing beyond a choice and a phase that children endure. Lessons like these do not expire with time and thus are not limited to the 1930s, especially when it is being studied in a contemporary classroom. It is for these reasons that Harper Lee is negatively contributing to stigmas surrounding gender stereotypes both in the 1930s and in present-day America.	
Ricky	Social Class and it's Implications in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Justification: Ricky does not create a puzzle in the format of a question, which is fine. He does theory here, but he does not include the craft intends to examine. | In Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the use of diction when referring to lower class people, reveals the power associated with social standing while also perpetuating social class stereotypes.

Justification: In his claim, Ricky does include the craft and the theory in which he intends to use | Because Dolphus associates himself with African Americans who are of low status, he is also seen that way. As a result of his low social standing, Dolphus goes out of his way to please the "higher classes" by pretending to be an alcoholic. The diction Dolphus uses indicates that somehow it is his responsibility to please other people for being intolerant, demonstrating the backwards power dynamic as Dolphus feigns being an | Ricky does mention diction here, but he fails to analyze the diction that he included in his evidence, instead he states what the diction achieves without analyzing how Lee accomplishes that task with her word choice. Ricky relies heavily on his analysis of theory here. |

	to analyze the craft.	alcoholic just to "justify" his behavior. The repeated instance of lower class people having to capitulate and accept injustice, to please society, shows the power dynamic insinuated in the 1930's South.	
Mike	How does diction when looking through a gender and race lens affect a reader's understanding of the characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird*? Justification: Mike has a complete puzzle. He suggests that he will examine the craft of diction through two separate theories, gender and race.	The diction during the court case in "To Kill a Mockingbird" reveals a victim mentality from the viewpoint of white people and women, in the 1930s south. Justification: This claim includes craft along with two separate lenses, so it scores the highest score.	Mr. Ewell does not address Tom by his name and instead refers to him by a racial slur. He also says that Tom was "ruttin" on Mayella which is another form of dehumanization in that he is comparing Tom to an animal. He sees Mayella as a victim of a violent black man even though he knows that Tom did not actually do any of the things he is accusing him of. Mr. Ewell uses dehumanization and racial slurs to portray himself as a white victim whose family was targeted by a violent black man.	Mike does a nice job analyzing craft here; he examines specific words and phrases in order to derive meaning and author's intent, but he does not apply theory in order to find a larger meaning about the world. He remains in the world of the text and writes as though the diction belongs to the characters and not to the author.
Alexis	How does Lee's use of diction emphasize gender stereotypes in the 1930s? Justification:	In Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the diction used when recalling the events involved with a lynch mob, gender stereotypes are	Gender stereotypes in the 1930s were men of the family were stubborn and did all they could to protect their family, and although Jem's family wasn't in danger he felt as if his family had been verbally attacked.	Alexis is making an effort to conduct a reading of the text through gender theory here, but she is applying theory to plot instead of craft. In fact, most of her analysis is summary and not analysis at

	Alexis suggests she will examine craft and gender theory.	upheld revealing ways the world was viewed and people portrayed. Justification: This claim is oddly phrased, but suggests that Alexis intends to analyze diction through gender theory.	He had enough and stubbornly ignored what Atticus had asked him not to do; to hold your head high and be a gentleman. Ever since news of the trial broke out, the Finch family has been talked about and gotten put in difficult situations involving the people of maycomb. Atticus had been reading to Tom Robinson in the county jail one night (possibly as protection, we may never know) when Jem, Scout, and Dill showed up after following Atticus out of curiosity. Atticus was scared of what could happen to Scout Jem and Dill as a result of men he knew had arrived with bad intentions and tried to make them leave.	all. She does not attempt to decipher what the author's craft is saying about the world, but just examines the plot, mentioning that males are protective. Since she does not examine examine the implications of that protection, but simply states that they are, no analysis is completed here. Alexis is off task, which earns her a 1.
Noah	What does the diction related to dialect in *To Kill a Mockingbird* show about social norms? Justification: This puzzle examines craft. When he states "social norms" I believe he is implying that he will use social class	The diction related to dialect in *To Kill a Mockingbird* shows that the social norms of the 1960s were created to apply to those with social power, rich white people. Justification: The claim address the specific craft that Noah plans to	Social norms are created by those with social power to apply to themselves. When someone does not fit these social norms, they are seen as different and they are given less social power. This creates a cycle of oppression that keeps those without power from being able to gain power. This is shown by Lee, a white woman, choosing to	Noah examined the diction related to dialect in this analysis. He was focusing his attention mostly on the transcription of dialect by Lee. In the analysis prior to this, he analyzes the diction of the white people of Maycomb versus the black people of Maycomb, noting that the southern accent of the white people is

	theory to examine the craft, but that is not made clear.	analyze along with two theories	include diction in which the white characters do not have transcribed accents, but people of color do, showing that Lee sees them as distinctly different from herself.	not transcribed, but the accent of black southerners is transcribed. This excerpt does not demonstrate the entirety of what Noah accomplished with his analysis because it is only an excerpt. However, Noah astutely analyzed the craft and what the craft viewed through theory revealed about the world.
Hannah	How is Lee's portrayal of a powerful white hero like Atticus in an anti-racist book contradicting the intended purpose of the text? Justification: This puzzle hints at characterization as the craft to be analyzed through race theory.	Lee's portrayal of a powerful white hero, Atticus, is contradictory to the purpose of her anti-racist book. Justification: The claim does not directly state the craft but suggests Hannah will examine characterization and with race theory.	Even though Jem is Atticus's own son, he is still willing to put him through trial for wrongdoing. This reveals that Atticus holds himself to high standards and that his honesty is above a normal level. Had it been somebody else, they would have lied to get out of trouble. Implied is the fact that somebody with a weaker sense of honor would be unable to grasp the concept of anti-racism. Atticus's relative strength and resolve distinguish him from the townspeople and skews the view of anti-racism that the book is trying to give.	Hannah is on the cusp of pulling everything together in this analysis. She does analyze the character of Atticus, but she does so in a way that suggests he is a real person and not a character created by Lee. Since she examines Atticus as real, Hannah is unable to ultimately connect the craft to world outside of the text. Hannah does analyze the craft using theory, and she addresses the how, but throughout her literary analysis, Hannah fails to address the fact that Atticus is a character created by an author, so her craft analysis is not a thorough

				analysis of Lee's craft.
Ivy	What does racial theory show us when examining the narration of the story? Justification: This puzzle clearly states Ivy is going to examine the narration of the text through race theory.	In Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the choice to tell the story through the perspective of Scout reinforces numerous racial stereotypes in the South. Justification: This claim addresses the craft of narration and race theory.	Scout excuses the actions of the people in the courtroom because she is so used to the racism present in Maycomb. By saying that Tom is just a black person, Scout presents the idea that people of color should not be viewed as equal. She is saying that he is allowed to be treated horribly due to his skin tone, reinforcing stereotypes in the South during this time period. By telling the story through the eyes of someone who is racist herself in addition to downplaying obvious racism in the town, the reader may not understand major points of the story. Through these two examples, you can see how power dynamics between races are revealed through the white perspective of the narrator.	Ivy is discussing craft and viewing it through theory, but she also neglects to examine the narration as created by Lee. Viewing the craft through the eyes of Scout suggests that Scout chose those words and narration, when in fact she is a fictitious character. Ivy does attempt to analyze the how here, so she is attempting to pull craft and theory together in order to come to a larger realization about the world, but with the limited scope of viewing craft as created by the character, she cannot truly achieve a four.

Noah and Reese continued to offer the clearest evidence of critical literacy both scoring a four in the codebook scheme. Three of the eight students scored a three on their analysis, suggesting they were on the cusp of demonstrating critical literacy. Two of the three students, Hannah and Ivy, wrote about their craft as though the craft belonged to the character instead of the

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author. Leann was so close to earning a four for her analysis, but she failed to explain how the symbolism viewed through theory revealed something about the world. She simply stated that symbolism revealed something about the world.

Both Ricky and Mike demonstrated an uneven development of critical literacy. Ricky's essays mostly reflected the understanding of criticality and the discussion of critical ideas, but he did not make the connection explaining how the craft revealed these critical understandings of the text. His claim states, "In Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the use of diction when referring to lower class people, reveals the power associated with social standing while also perpetuating social class stereotypes." While Ricky did include evidence of the diction used, he did not analyze the diction in his writing. Instead, he analyzed stereotypes and perceived social class.

> In the 1930's South, being of non-white race almost always resulted in lower
>
> perceived social value from others. Because of these stereotypes Tom Robinson
>
> answering a question in good faith can be met with a statement by Mr. Gilmer,
>
> that serves to say that Tom cannot feel bad for a white woman because of his
>
> class. Harper Lee's use of diction in this scenario, displays the power differential,
>
> with Mr. Gilmer acting as if what Tom had said warranted a rhetorical and
>
> sarcastic remark.

While Ricky mentioned the diction, he does not examine how the use of diction here displays the power differential. He is missing the connection between the two. The analysis of the diction would reveal Lee's use of repetition for emphasis that a black man should never feel sorry for a white woman. That analysis was skipped and Ricky focused on 1930s stereotypes instead to build to his understanding of power. The analysis of Mike's work reads much like Ricky's, however, Mike analyzed the text but does not explain how the text revealed something about

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power. Mike claimed, "Bob Ewell's diction towards Tom Robinson in the court case reveals that he views himself and Mayella as white victims of a violent black man." Mike wrote:

> Mr. Ewell does not address Tom by his name and instead refers to him by a racial
>
> slur. He also says that Tom was "ruttin" on Mayella which is another form of
>
> dehumanization in that he is comparing Tom to an animal. He sees Mayella as a
>
> victim of a violent black man even though he knows that Tom did not actually do
>
> any of the things he is accusing him of. Mr. Ewell uses dehumanization and
>
> racial slurs to portray himself as a white victim whose family was targeted by a
>
> violent black man.

This analysis looked at the text but did not explain how the text reflected issues of power. Mike began to hint at the power dynamic, but he did not analyze it.

Alexis used gender theory to analyze the diction during the lynch mob scene of the text, but Alexis spent most of her essay summarizing the plot instead of analyzing diction through the gender lens (see Table 8). While she stated she would analyze diction, she never examined Lee's word choice. Alexis' critical literacies were less developed than I had intended at the outset of the unit.

4.2 Question 2: How did I try to support students' critical analysis of a curricular text?

Curious about the patterns in students' talk and work from Weeks 1-3, and the criticality in the final essays, I closely examined my own teaching and my process. From Weeks 1-3, I sought to develop students' critical literacy skills. I developed and refined a unit over these weeks.

But, reflecting on my teacher journal and lesson plans, I conclude that there were missed opportunities to support students' learning.

In Week 1, I introduced the routine to students. We began discussing what they noticed in the first several chapters of the text. Students then categorized their noticings in their small groups. The following day students created puzzles that examined their curiosities while applying theory to craft. Students puzzled in small groups while I circulated and helped foster their puzzle exploration. On Day 3, students engaged in small group Socratics Seminar. Again, I walked around and help them focus on applying theory and claim making with theory. Finally, on Day 4 students had a whole class Socratic Seminar, where I stayed relatively quiet after three days of helping and supporting in small group.

After reviewing the data from Week 1, I determined students were making strong puzzles and strong critical claims. The puzzles made by group one combined elements of craft and power and seemed to examine curiosities the students had about the text. For example, Ricky's puzzle in his assignment submission was, "How does Atticus's diction towards Scouts language show his disapproval towards racism?" Based on the rubric I created, I thought I saw students in this group master the puzzling skill. Ricky's claim went on to address similar concepts, not changing much from the claim, "The diction towards African Americans in Mayfield [Maycomb] supports the idea that racism is normalized, as kids and adults alike say offensive slurs with little to no consequence." Ricky's example, along with others, demonstrated students' success with both puzzling and claim making.

After working with many groups during Week 1, I concluded that students found success. In my journal entry during week 1, I wrote, "Many other students seemed to have 'ah ha' moments of clarity and were able to produce many puzzles that addressed both craft and theory." Based on

the conclusion I drew from the initial data analysis of this cycle, I made the change to increase the rigor in puzzling for Week 2.

During Week 2, I increased the rigor with puzzle writing. I determined that students needed the challenge of puzzling two theories at once. This might look like, "What does Lee's tone towards the Ewells and Tom Robinson in the trial reveal about social class and race stereotypes?" I taught a mini lesson with this new skill and asked students to analyze puzzles that I created beforehand. We reviewed the rubric and assessed the puzzles based on the rubrics. After the mini lesson, students discussed their noticings with their small groups and we repeated the same cycle as Week 1.

In a Week 2 journal I wrote, "Pedagogically, this felt like an awesome lesson. I felt like I was further supporting my students in a difficult task. I walked around and worked one on one with groups who are struggling a bit more. They were all able to find success in regards to creating puzzles." For instance, Reese's puzzle from her week two submission suggested to me that she was able to find success in this task. She wrote, "How does Scout's character development in terms of how she views women affect the narration and in turn the story's message about social status?" I assumed that Reese was finding success with puzzling because her puzzle examined craft and both the social class, and gender theories. Her puzzle met all of the requirements to score the highest score on the newly revamped rubric.

Both my initial reaction to students' understanding and the submitted puzzles led me to believe students could use multiple theories to examine a specific craft in order to come to conclusion about the text. I did notice that some groups were struggling to implement the routine, but with one-on-one support and through analysis of their puzzles I determined they understood

the process. Based on my initial conclusions of my data analysis, I assumed that students were prepared for increased rigor with their claims as well.

During Week 3, I continued to increase the rigor of the routine. I focused on students' claims by asking students to make a claim that included multiple theories. I taught a mini lesson explaining what I expected; we looked at the rubric and examined how it differed from the previous rubric for claim making. Instead of creating the examples claims on my own, I asked students to break up into their small groups and create examples for the four different levels of the rubric. After ten minutes, we reconvened as a class, and the small groups shared their claims for the different levels of the rubric. Students analyzed the small group created claims and discussed whether they addressed the elements the rubric suggested.

In a Week 3 journal, I wrote, "Today in class we worked on writing deeper, more thoughtful claims. Instead of giving students examples, I had each group come up with examples for each category of the rubric. This allowed for collaboration and demonstrated an understanding of what they should be doing in class." I noticed students' ability to create claims quickly based on the guidelines the rubric set forth throughout my students' talk and writing.

Halfway through Week 3, I noticed something that had eluded me throughout the two and half weeks of routine implementation. Student talk seemed to change. Students in the first two weeks puzzled in quick succession without truly discussing the puzzles they introduced. Week 3 revealed more discussion of critical concepts, but students were not always including craft when discussing critical concepts. Students were posing questions such as, "How does Dolphus Raymond's diction show that the black and white people of the town of Maycomb assign him less social capital because of his black wife and bi racial children?" After Mike posed this question, however, his group proceeded to spend the next twenty minutes discussing the concept of colorism

within the Black community. While the groups were all talking about critical concepts, they still were not examining the text itself. I had seen indicators of attention to craft and power, but I had assumed that students were integrating them much more substantially than they actually were.

I wondered about whether my students were "doing school" and more or less acting out of compliance. Were they using my rubric to accomplish the points of achievement it included without actually pursuing questions that were deeply motivating to them? Were they just early in their learning about how to integrate attention to craft and power in textual analysis?

A final pattern I noticed and reflected on throughout the unit was that some of my students seemed very uncomfortable by the shift in my classroom toward no right answers based on in-the-moment comments they would make during class. Students would sometimes complain about the routine and the process required to make a claim. In my teacher journals I wrote:

> Students are being forced to think in ways that they are not accustomed to, which can be beyond frustrating for some and ridiculously exciting for others. It's interesting to see where students fall. The student I spoke of the last two days, I thought for sure she would be excited. She is insanely intelligent, so I thought she would enjoy the opportunity to think more broadly about the text. However, she feels as though she is being confined. I think that she is being pushed in ways that she isn't accustomed to, so is struggling and is blaming that on being confined.

I saw this behavior several times throughout the unit. Students somewhat frequently complained about the process. Of another student, I wrote,

> One girl said to me, 'I am just skipping right to the claim making because it's dumb to do all of these steps separately.' When I asked her to share her claim with me, we looked at

her claim using the rubric and she quickly realized that her claim did not meet the

advanced criteria.

When I focused my attention on this issue after the unit ended, I noted that students may have

been experiencing a great deal of discomfort in not having a solid answer. It seemed that at least

some students were uncomfortable with the shift in the classroom to no right answers. This was

not something that I was fully prepared for.

One reason that I did not clearly see this dimension of student challenge during the unit

itself was that one source of data—the students' weekly journal entries which were intended to

help me understand students' perceptions of the unit and routine week to week—were quite

positive. When asked to write about how the routine was going for them each week, almost every

student wrote mostly or fully positive statements about it.

Table 9 Students' Reported Feelings about the Routine

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Leann	4	3	0
Reese	4	4	4
Ricky	4	3	4
Mike	4	4	4
Noah	4	4	0
Alexis	4	2	4
Hannah	4	2	3
Ivy	4	3	3
	Average= 4	Average= 2.8	Average= 2.4

NOTE:
4= Only mentions the benefit of the routine
3= Sees the benefit of the routine, but struggles with some aspect
2= Frustrated with the routine
1= Does not see a benefit in the routine
0= The response was not about the routine or was not submitted

In Week 1, students wrote that they were excited and eager to embark on the new routine. All students discussed the benefit of the routine in their Week 1 journals; no one was frustrated or annoyed with the process. The Week 2 scores suggested an elevated level of frustration with the routine. While this elevated frustration persisted into Week 3, students suggested the importance of the routine even though they were experiencing roadblocks. In Week 2, I intensified the rigor of puzzle creation, which I assumed explained the dip in feelings regarding the routine. When students became more accustomed to that rigor, their feelings of the routine seemed to improve.

For example, in Hannah's Week 1 journal, she wrote, "I like how the routine is structured. Finding simple noticings, turning them into though provoking questions with a group, and then making claims during a Socratic seminar helped me think critically about the text and analyze things I would have ignored if I was just reading the text on my own." Hannah admitted that if she were left on her own, she would not examine the text deeply. In Week 2, she wrote, "Personally it has been difficult for me to focus on noticings and puzzling when reading literature. For this unit, I have disliked reading the way we do, but I can tolerate and understand why we do it." Hannah suggested that she just wants to read, she does not like stopping to think and analyze what she has read. In Week 3, Hannah's frustration seemed to ebb if only a little. She wrote, "I find it difficult to come up with more original puzzles that go deeply into the craft of the text, power, and multiple theories. However, I still think that this is a good way for me to understand the deeper meaning behind the text. This process allows me to analyze and organize my thoughts on the book in a way that is easier to understand."

Because my observations of students' comments about the routine did not neatly align with their journal entries about the unit, I was left at the end of the unit with questions about how students really experienced it. But, upon reflection, I see that perhaps although students were

writing somewhat positively about the routine, they were also signaling to me in their in-the-moment talk that they were experiencing some challenges throughout the unit and they may not have been inclined to write these perspectives in their assigned journals. I also see that students may have needed more support throughout Weeks 1-3 than I offered them. By upping the rigor so quickly, I missed opportunities to help all of my students dig in deeper and build confidence with the routine.

4.3 Far Transfer Task

At the end of the unit, I explored another variation of the routine by asking students to choose their own texts to analyze. I taught a mini lesson about how craft could differ from genre to genre. I explained that if they found a video, they would need to examine what the author was choosing to include in the frame, and what the author was leaving out. We talked about the performance aspect of music versus just examining the lyrics. Students began looking for their texts. In my teacher journal I wrote, "After I introduced the change in the procedure, students seemed almost excited to get to work and analyze what they are interested in."

I asked students to choose a text of the world and prepare a puzzle for their group. Everyone came into class the following day with their text and a puzzle. Some students had TikTok videos, some poems, some short stories, and others had song lyrics. They presented to their small groups, and then introduced their puzzles. Students did not have the opportunity to analyze their classmates chosen text before class. When students introduced their texts and puzzles, I noticed that their groupmates did not have much to say. They did not have an opportunity to write down noticings or puzzles beforehand. The class was a bit chaotic this day. I spent my time jumping from group

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to group supporting students' application of the routine because the routine was not being attended to by my students. Several groups could not find any elements of power in the text of the world, so they required a great deal of help from me.

Students' written work from this task did not reflect their learning over the course of the unit. They did not used critical lenses or considered social implications. For example, after this activity, Alexis puzzled in her assignment submission, "What does the structure of the video using stick figures say about the creator's intentions of this video and whether it was made as a joke or not?" Noah wrote, "How does the poet's use of structure demonstrate the message of the poem?" These questions show that students were asking questions of form, but they were not relating their noticings to issues of power or social significance.

Student discussion also generally did not include attention to power. In Week 3 the two groups talked about critical concepts a total of 44 times, but in this texts of the world activity they only mentioned critical concepts a total of six times. For example, while talking about song lyrics, Reese said, "And then I think it also contributes to, to the idea we get of the singer's perception of himself. And you can see that in some of the other, the part where it's like, I brought a knife to a gun fight like that. Oh, also here contributes to the way he views himself kind of the way he loves." In this part of the discussion, Reese spoke of the diction in a song, but did not consider power at all.

These data patterns suggest that while students made progress developing critical literacy between Week 1 and Week 3, they were still developing the routine. I believed students would have increased curiosity when implementing the routine to texts of the world, and they did seem to be especially interested in the texts. However, transferring the routine to a different genre seemed to complicate the task, and my structuring of the activity did not help matters. Students

were not yet ready to independently select and analyze texts, and they clearly needed social and

instructional support in order to engage critically with these different texts.

5.0 Discussion

5.1 Summary of Findings

Over the course of a multi-week unit, I detected a shift in my students' criticality. I attribute this to my shifts in instruction. Yet, with close analysis, I see that students' development of criticality was uneven and the shift was not as large as I had anticipated. From this, I draw conclusions about ways that I can continue to refine my teaching practice.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

When I consider my findings alongside the key pieces in my literature review, I see ways in which my results support and extend the literature.

5.2.1 Supporting Themes from the Literature

A success of my unit was the growth of criticality in my students, which at times felt remarkable. The chatter in the classroom was energetic after the routine was implemented. Students seemed eager to engage with a dialogic classroom where their voices were heard and valued, and the ideas the students desired to discuss were prioritized.

My students' success is important in part because of my school context. My review of the literature pointed to the importance of bringing critical literacy pedagogy into predominantly white suburban school classroom contexts. Other than Foss (2002), Dyches (2018), and Borsheim-Black

& Sarigianides (2019), most of the research I read was in urban classrooms with mostly students of color. My efforts to develop critical literacy as a part of my place of practice, therefore, are important. From what I learned, I think these efforts can support other teachers working in similar contexts as mine. Teaching critical literacy aided my students in understanding that other perspectives exist. My students practiced seeing the world through those different perspectives, trying on the lenses to see if they could learn something new about the world.

My review of the literature offered me helpful ideas about how I could bring critical literacy into my classroom. One of the key arguments of Rainey & Storm (in press) is that puzzling, noticing, and theorizing with texts supports students' critical literacy. Together, these make up a flexible practice with literary texts. They write:

> Generating puzzles without the tools to pursue them is a more or less useless activity; noticing on its own, although possibly the most commonly taught dimension of the work, is all too easily experienced as a mere exercise; and even noticings and theorizing together would make little sense without carefully crafted puzzles motivating the work (p. 9).

While my students were discussing their noticings and introducing their puzzles, without applying all of the tools their discussions were little more than casual discussions about a text. When they applied all three tools, they were able to see the text through critical literacy. I therefore found this framework of interweaving puzzling, noticing, and theorizing incredibly helpful as a heuristic for supporting my students' learning.

Similarly, over the course of this unit, I saw my students begin to act in more curious ways. I did not realize how much curiosity was missing from my classroom until I conducted this study. Prioritizing curiosity will be a priority moving forward, because students became more engaged

in the learning process. They particularly enjoyed applying the routine to text of the world. Students seemed to have interest in choosing the texts that we examine, especially when that text could come from anywhere, even TikTok. Storm and Rainey (2018) write about practicing critical literacy with texts of the world once a week. This high interest activity seems to generate curiosity and engagement.

Another point of Rainey & Storm (in press) is that there are risks of "naming 'practices' including the risk of reducing what is highly complex embodied activity to a mere list of steps to follow" (p. 3). Through my research process, I inadvertently instituted a routine that took complex activities and reduced them to a several step process in order to build critical literacy. While the naming of the practices was beneficial, I think that I may have oversimplified the complexity of these practices. Lens theory is far too nuanced to teach as a technical skill. Rainey and Storm were right to caution practitioners against making lists of steps to follow in trying to teach critical literacy, and they were right that it is a difficult inclination to resist in the context of US K-12 schooling.

A key idea of critical literacy is that all texts carry social meaning. Therefore, all texts can be analyzed critically (Appleman, 2000). At the beginning of this process, I was quite focused on the texts I would use in this unit. However, aligned with the arguments of many in my literature review, I now see that the focal texts of my classroom do not matter as much as I thought they did. Encouraging students to use tools to think beyond the plot of a text and truly critically analyze the text for the breaking or holding of stereotypes gives students the tools they need to see the world around them. This develops student thinking in a way that cannot be undone, and that is an act of rebellion. In my unit, I had originally planned to use *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi and ended up pivoting to Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird.* I am encouraged that I was able to do meaningful

critical literacy work with my students even with a more canonical text. This supports the argument of Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides (2019).

5.2.2 Extending the Literature

As a practitioner, my experience bringing critical literacy into my classroom is valuable not just because of my learning and my students' learning but because of what it can suggest back to the field. I highlight some of the challenges I encountered below. Each of these marks an area that other practitioners would likely face in their own work. I suggest that more classroom-based research and design of critical literacy is necessary, especially in suburban contexts.

One challenge that I faced of bringing critical pedagogy into the suburban classroom was the strong pull of achievement culture. My students have been encultured to "do school" really well. Some were very uncomfortable by the shift toward no right answers. Similarly, students experienced more challenge than I expected asking their own questions of texts. Also, although students' written journal entries were on the whole positive about the routine, this was not necessarily the picture I had from my day-to-day interactions with students. Those interactions, which I sometimes recorded in my teacher journal, revealed students' frustrations, uncertainties, and discomfort about the work of critical meaning making. I suspect that given my school's strong culture of compliance and achievement my students may have been reluctant to describe their discomfort and uncertainty in writing. Therefore, of my data sources, I weight the journals least heavily. I wonder how I might collect other forms of data in the future that would help me have more insight into students' thinking.

I took for granted that my students tend to grasp concepts quickly assuming that they were meeting with success when asking their own questions, but sometimes they may have been just

creating questions to earn points, they were not asking questions of the text. I see now that a few weeks is not enough time to dismantle the compliance the education system fostered over the nine years these students participated in schooling. This point was not highlighted in most of the literature I read, and it was a major insight for me out of this project.

Even though I experienced some shift in student engagement, I was not able to fully shift my classroom into the sanctuary of learning that bell hooks (1994) described in her writing. The dialogic approach attended to the whole child for some students, but others may have felt alienated and pressured to talk. Developing critical literacy cannot occur when students are anxiously thinking about speaking. Kay (2018) writes about allowing students who do not feel comfortable to opt out of the discussion. A big component of this is time. Now, I see very clearly how much time these shifts really can take.

Another dimension of this was my use of rubrics and points to assess students' participation. Even though I was trying to move away from school expectations and toward promoting students' critical thinking and questioning, I still was using many of my old tools to run the day-to-day operations of my classroom. I think this sent students mixed messages about what was valuable. Students prioritized earning points over asking questions of the text. The rubric and anchor charts focused student attention on several concepts and ideas and may have stifled the creative process of critical thinking. The literature was more or less silent on these matters, but managing assessment and student and parent expectations of success needs to be a larger part of my focus moving forward.

I was hoping to see large success with the change to text of the world at the end of the unit. I thought students would enjoy the opportunity to have choice in text, and I thought choice would improve curiosity and help students transfer the routine from one genre to the next. I did not see

the success I was anticipating because I did not provide the same level of support for students with this activity.

In order to see success with this activity, I would make several changes to support students' continued engagement with critical literacy. I would ask students to post their individual text of the world to a discussion board days before we engage with the activity, so their classmates have an opportunity to experience and think about those texts prior to class. The first time my students engage with this activity, I will ask my class to pick one of the texts submitted by any student. As a class, with students taking the lead, we would use the dialogic approach to move through this text with our noticings, puzzles, and claim making. This gives me the opportunity to support my students as they work through the process, and provides my students with a model of the implementation of the routine on text of the world.

5.3 Next Steps

My work with critical literacy is not over. This inquiry has only piqued my interest in the importance of curiosity in reading curricular texts as well as the world, along with making big changes to my instructional approaches. I am working with my curriculum partners and my principal to plan for next year's implementation of this routine with some modifications.

5.3.1 Next Steps in My Honors English Class

I plan to set up my classroom differently next year to step away from a culture of compliance. Doing this early on is key and it will make it more possible to build a dialogic, curious

community of learning if I establish those expectations at the outset. Like is mentioned in Storm and Rainey (2018), I will institute a weekly analysis of a text of the world. Students will drive the discussion in order to build curiosity. This weekly practice will hopefully pique students' interest in examining the world around them and prepare them to look more critically at the text that they read on a daily basis. By scaffolding elements of the routine, I hope more students are able to develop critical literacy throughout the school year.

I will also begin the year by thoroughly teaching craft. Craft will be the focus of the first quarter of school. When examining both the texts of the world and the curricular texts early in the school year, we will talk about the elements of craft, question why the creator made the decisions they made, and how that affects the overall theme of the text. I also plan to conduct more close reads of the curricular texts, thus targeting the craft on which I want students to focus. While examining the texts, I will begin introducing theory. I plan to start with gender theory as we analyze The Brothers Grimm, "Cinderella." As students demonstrate success with the early crafts and gender theory, I will increase complexity. But, I will do so more slowly than I did in this unit, and I anticipate this slowing down of pace will support students' meaning making.

Over time, I would like to bring in theorists' texts. Including writing from notable theories, like bell hooks when examining gender, which may solidify this routine and allow my students to better understand how some individuals interpret the different theories.

5.3.2 Next Steps in My Academic English Class

I conducted this unit with my Honors 9 students. I also teach Academic English 9, which is the lower-tracked English 9 section. I think the students in Academic English are hungry for intellectually rigorous work, as they tend to have more apathy when it comes to school in general

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and they tend to receive boring remedial assignments. I plan on implementing the routine with this group in the fall. I will look at one craft and one theory at a time. For example, at the beginning of the year I might examine characterization along with gender theory. When students can repeatedly demonstrate success across multiple genres, I will add another element of craft and theory.

My implementation for this group looks different from my honors group because they have different needs. I am not sure what those needs are at this point, since I have yet to meet those students, so this may look different when I meet my classes in August. However, I am committed to bringing a version of the routine from this study to my Academic English students. I want all of my students to have the tools they need to read and understand the world.

5.3.3 Additional Ideas to Consider

Two of the studies mentioned in the literature review, Young (2009) and Campano, Ghiso and Sanchez (2013), discussed the importance of inquiry and action. While I addressed inquiry within my routine, I did not include action or activism. I would like to incorporate these aspects down the road. Once I reestablish genuine inquiry in my classroom, I hope to implement units that promote inquiry and action.

Foss (2002) asked her students to read supplemental text incongruence with *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and she asked the students to journal on a teacher-created question before they shared with the class. Kay (2018) also spoke of writing before discussing. While I asked my students to write in journals, their writings focused on the process of the routine and not on the analysis of the text. I may incorporate this key concept of writing before speaking in order to give my students an opportunity to formulate what they are thinking before they discuss it with the class.

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5.3.4 Next Steps in Assessment and Grading

I experienced a tension in my use of assessments to measure students' development of critical literacy. That has spurred many discussions in my professional learning communities and with my principal. As a result, my professional learning community along with my principal are coming together to research how to best assess critical thinking within the institution in which we work. While much evidence concludes that grading is a detriment to the learning process and enforces compliance, grades are a part of our system. We hope to change our grading system in order to better support students in their learning. We will begin with a thorough literature review over the summer as a next step toward envisioning change.

5.4 Developing Driver Diagram
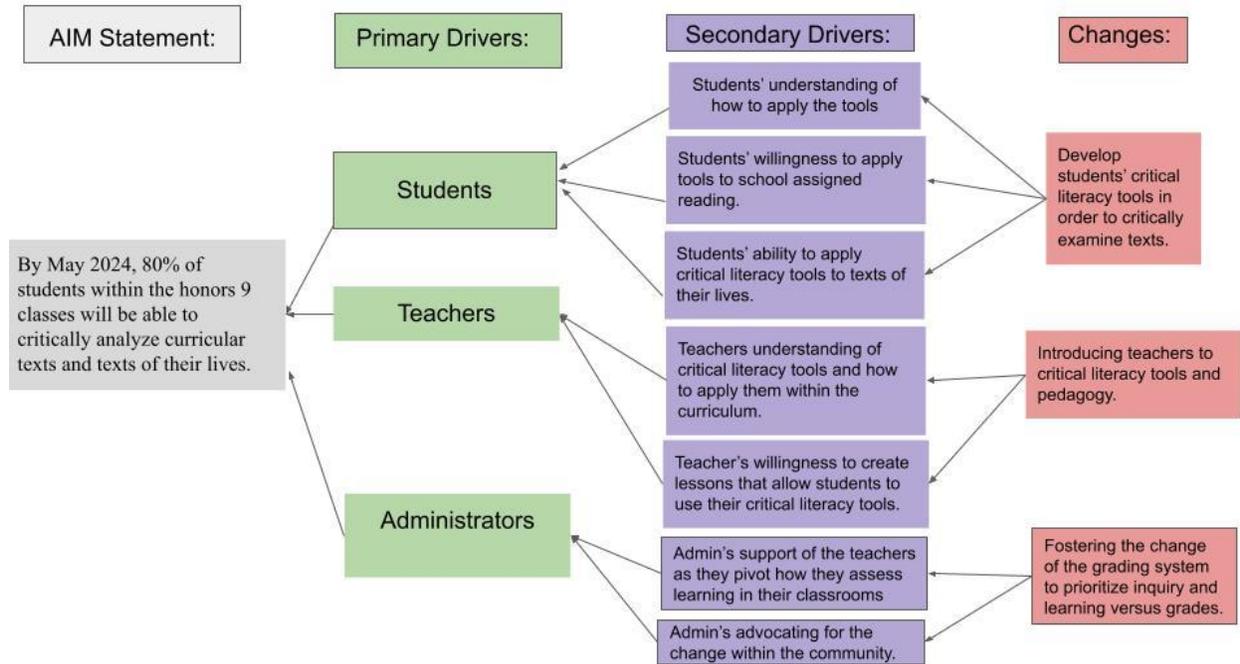
Figure 2 Developing Driver Diagram

One change needed in order for me to achieve my aim is the culture of assessment. Ultimately, the primary driver of this change is administration; the secondary drivers are focused on the support the administration provides the teachers in exacting this change, and helping the community adjust to the change, focusing on moving from the emphasis of scores to emphasizing inquiry and learning. With the addition of this change, the hope is that the students and the community will shift to prioritize inquiry, which will allow students to pursue their curiosities instead of simply doing the work to get the grade. This change is a momentous undertaking that will require much work and support. The teachers are also a primary driver here, but without the initial support from the administration, no change will take place with classroom assessment.

Teacher colleagues are reaching out in hopes of changing their pedagogy. As primary drivers, teachers implementing critical literacy tools into their classrooms is essential for the success of this study. After three weeks of study implementation, other teachers were already coming to me to ask me what I was doing differently in my class. The ninth grade social studies teachers hosted a mock Congress, where students were assigned roles that did not reflect their political preferences. The students easily slipped into those roles, and when the social studies teachers questioned how they did so without any trouble, the students explained that they had been practicing using different lenses while reading. The social studies teachers are interested in teaming up to learn how implement critical literacy tools into their classrooms. Change is happening in the system. I have not achieved my aim, but due to the shifting system, I may be able to do so sooner than expected.

5.5 Personal Reflection

My learning as both a researcher and practitioner marks the true success throughout this study. At the start of my program in 2019 I began thinking about belonging, primarily the belonging of racially minoritized students in my district. As my learning progressed, I reframed my problem realizing that white supremacy in my school and community was the true barrier to student belonging. I did not change my commitment to finding a solution for my students of color, but I did change how I viewed the problem and subsequent solution. The re-centering of the problem allowed me to adjust my change and find a solution that could benefit all students.

As elements of my project developed, I realized how I needed the challenge of changing my pedagogy. Curiosity was missing from my approach to my curriculum. Looking back, I was

banking information into my students; I was the source of knowledge, and I was delivering that knowledge (Freire, 1970). This routine, specifically teaching theory and prioritizing curiosity created an atmosphere where no two lessons were the same. The discussions were different between classes and groups, which made the process of teaching more thrilling. I shared in the learning with my students.

I see important shifts in myself as a practitioner. I realize that my students will not prioritize curiosity and critical thinking if I am not modeling it. Prior to this study, I needed to plan everything down to the specific questions I was going to ask my students. I wanted to mold discussion to cover the topics I deemed important. This overplanning did not allow room for inquiry and critical thinking. This process marked the key moment in my career with a shift in my teaching practice, from privileging teacher-selected texts (mostly prose fiction) to inviting students' use and selection of a range of text types, genres, theories, and crafts.

Ultimately, I now see myself as a scholar-leader-practitioner. Improvement science allowed me to focus intently on the changes I implemented and the measure I chose to demonstrate growth. I am in awe of how much I learned from this zoomed in process. I was able to carefully examine my measures in order to drive change in my classroom. Improvement science allowed me to find that my students were just acting compliantly more often than I wanted to admit. I had not been able to clearly see that before.

The value in refining an intervention across multiple iterations, which is a key of improvement science, allowed me to adjust and learn. I misread my data at one point, but the process of modifying after each iteration gave me an opportunity to think and readjust in order to meet my goals. This is a powerful approach that I would like to continue to use in my practice.

While improvement science allows for a quick timeline, I will make iterations longer than one week or allow for more time in between iterations in the future. I did not allow myself enough time to thoroughly analyze my data in order to make the adjustments I needed to make. I needed to fit the unit into a small window of time; I made the unit timeline my priority instead of the iteration timeline. Next time, I will incorporate activities in between iterations that build on concepts of craft and allow time for analysis of measures.

Improvement science has taught me to be a careful practitioner. In the past when I changed my pedagogy, I examined one data point to determine the success of the change. One data point, or one outcome measure, does not provide the feedback a practitioner needs in order to support change or understand how that change is affecting the students and the classroom.

The process of coding and examine data to a minute degree is something I have not done before. Thematic coding is not specific to improvement science, but careful research. As an educator, I wish I had more time and support to carefully examine different data points in my classroom. It was fascinating to learn what the data had to offer. I hope to continue to use careful examination of data and coding within my practice and in a way that I can sustain. As I redesign my units to fit the routine, I will choose two or three data points to examine and code to see what themes arise.

Additionally, the changing political contexts of my study challenged my work and ultimately helped me to grow as a scholar-leader-practitioner. The day before I began my study, my school board and superintended made the sudden decision to pull the text I intended to use for my study, *Persepolis*, due to parent concerns over content. The school board and the superintendent approved *Persepolis* the year prior when I went through the appropriate process to have a new text approved. Pulling the text was unprecedented in my district. The district informed

my team and me that we could teach *To Kill a Mockingbird* instead. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a text that we taught many times prior to this year, so it was not a difficult pivot to make for the unit. However, I had to consider my research study as well. My goal was to foster critical literacies in my students, so they could learn to question the texts they were assigned and to read the world around them. Fortunately, several of the studies I read in the literature review focused solely on *To Kill a Mockingbird.*

I began to restructure our previous *To Kill a Mockingbird* units to fit the routine I wanted to study. With my colleagues, I made the change and introduced the new text to the students. While we were changing plans, the school board was meeting, and parents and students were attending to share their feelings about the last-minute change. Five of my students, on their own freewill, wrote speeches and spoke in front of the board and the community. Six news articles were written about the district's decisions.

The book ban affected me as a teacher, a leader, and a researcher. As a teacher, I needed to continue teaching the curriculum with minimal interruption. I was angry about the school board's decision, but I did not want that anger to seep into my classroom. I wanted my students to see when a person faces challenges, giving up is not an option. I wanted them to see me work within the system in order to achieve my goal. I did that. The ban of *Persepolis* facilitated student discussions of xenophobia and representation in curricular texts for some of my students. Remaining cool-headed and allowing the students to read the school board decision on their own demonstrated to me that some students could successfully read the world around them.

Leading a study carries leadership responsibilities. When the book was banned, I worked with my colleague to look at the situation from the balcony where we could see the stakeholders and the shifting power dynamics (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009). We centered our goals, and

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we began the work of creating an entire unit in two days' time. I was confident in the work we were doing, and I wanted to ensure we could implement our change. Banning the book tested my ability to be an adaptive leader, and ultimately, I succeeded.

Finally, I was challenged as a researcher. My goal for teaching critical literacy was rooted in equity and justice. I want my students to see and experience perspectives outside of their own. Even in the face of an adaptive challenge (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009), I recreated a study that held true to my goal and aligned with my literature review. The timeline and the text changed, and that certainly affected my possible outcomes. I persevered through a tight analysis timeline in order to ensure I could remain true to my research.

5.6 Conclusion

The future of education is unknown, districts are banning texts and removing content from curriculums, and efforts are underway to limit what students are learning. With a focus on critical literacy, I can continue to make a difference in the lives and understanding of my students. Teaching critical literacy gives students the tools they need to read the world around them, even carefully crafted curricula. I will continue to refine my pedagogical approach to ensure that my students have the tools they need in order to read the world.

Appendix A Unit Plans

Unit: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
Objectives:
- Students can view and annotate for noticings

- Students develop critical puzzling with texts

- Students can critique the text with student created puzzles in order to make critical claims

Unit Overview:

Day 1 - 2:
Objective: Students can contextualize the historical events and social opportunities that are depicted throughout *To Kill a Mockingbird*.
Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Teacher: As we enter into a new unit, we are going to see and read ideas and concepts that we haven't been exposed to previously. I want to ensure you have the ability to see and think about these things in a manner that feels safe and familiar. In order to do so, we will apply theory, which we examined briefly at the beginning of the year to the text. Keep in mind, applying theory is like using different tools. I don't need a hammer to change a lightbulb. You do not need to use all tools on all texts. Within the unit of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, we will focus on the gender theory and social theory to better understand the text. What are the foundations of those theories? If you still have your theory flashcards, you can pull those out to refresh your memory.

Possible Student Response: An assumption of gender theory is that men have more power and status than women.

Teacher: Yes, that is correct. How we view ourselves when we read a text is important to that power structure. We have to understand who we are in order to understand the characters.
I will create an anchor chart to be in the classroom for the full unit. Together, we will draft examples of puzzles that can be pursued from feminist theory (e.g., How does the [element of author's craft] reinforce or disrupt traditional gender roles or divisions?).
What are the foundations of social class theory?

Possible Student Response: People who possess money and status have the ability and power to exploit lower workers.

Teacher: Yes, status is important to our modern day lives. We can reference movies like Mean Girls to explore this. How is status used for power in that movie?

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Possible Student Response: The administrators tend to believe Regina George over Catie because Regina has wealth and status, where Catie's parents are academics who have lived in Africa for the past 15 years.

Teacher: Exactly! Before we dive into theory with this text, we need some context to understand what is going on around the protagonist, Scout, when the text takes place. The story begins in 1930s in Maycomb, Alabama, what is going on in the south at that time?

Possible Student Response: Black people are being treated unfairly with Jim Crow laws?

Teacher: Yes, *To Kill a Mockingbird* will provide a much smaller scope of the south from the perspective of a young girl, coming of age, who has lived in Maycomb County her entire life. The first eleven chapters work as an exposition for the text. We don't learn the main conflict of the novel until chapter 12. That being said, early in the text Scout is young, and she doesn't quit understand what is important yet.

Now that we have that basic understanding, we need to learn more about what political and social climate is like in the 1930s south and why it persisted for so long. With your group, you will conduct some basic research in relation to the topic I will give you. You will compile that information and share it with the class. This will help us all build a collective understanding of what was taking place and why.

- Students conduct some research to determine what was taking place in the 30s in the south
    - o I will break students into groups giving each group a topic of focus
    - o With their group, they will find information that allows the class to build a collective context for the historical events that work as the conflict in this text. Each group will complete several Google Slides that answer the questions I posed in a meaningful way. The class will then have access to the document they can reference as they read.
    - o Each group will present the information they found.

        - Group 1: What is the New Deal and how did it affect the lives of people in the South during the 1930s?
        - Group 2: What are Jim Crow laws and how were they enacted and enforced?
        - Group 3: How did the Great Depression affect the people of different social classes? What were the effects of the Depression on the South?
        - Group 4: What role does education play in the 1930s? What does education look like for different social groups?

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- Group 5: What did housing look like in the 1930s? Did everyone have access to housing? Who lived where?

- Group 6: What did literature, film, radio, and fine arts look like at this time? Who was consuming it? Who was producing it? What were recurring themes that the fine arts addressed during this time?

Homework:
- Read chapters 1 - 4 by Thursday/ Day 4.

Day 3:
Objective: Students present their findings on the historical context of the 1930s south.
Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Day 4:
Objective: Students understand the context of power within the 1930s south.
Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Now that students have some context, I will use a modified version of Activity 14 (Appleman, 2000, pp. 163-165). Students will receive an excerpt about feminist/gender theory, and then a second about social class theory. Students have not yet read the text, so we will use what they know of the 1930s south to complete a T chart about power. Who has power and who lacks power?

- Who has power?

- Who lacks power?

- How does that power define the South in the 1930s?

- If you were dropped into the South in the 1930s, would you have power or lack power?

- Our protagonist is a young girl, from an economically stable family. Her grandfather was a large landowner; where would she rank in relation to power?

Once we discuss their charts, we will add to yesterday's poster with examples of puzzles that can be pursued from social class theory (e.g., How does the [element of author's craft] reinforce or disrupt traditional class/labor divisions?).

Objective: Students understand and can analyze elements of a graphic novel.
Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

- I will address in a presentation (this will assist in setting the intentions for reading)

    o Noticings

    o Puzzles

    o Claim making with theory

HW:
- Read chapters 5-9 by Monday/ Day 6

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Day 5:
Objective: Students can read and annotate for noticings in the first nine chapters of the text.
Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

- Set objective for reading

- Students take time in class to read and annotate *To Kill a Mockingbird* for noticings

Day 6 & 7: Data Collection on puzzling
Objective: Students develop critical puzzling with texts
Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- Students write their noticings on the board

- As a class, we organize the noticings into groups or categories

- We apply theory

- Students question, how does this theory help me to ask question about these noticings

- Students craft puzzles that help them apply theory to their noticings

- We share the questions within groups and workshop them

HW: Read chapters 10-13 by Thursday/Day 9

Day 8 & 9: Data collection on claim making & student journals
Objective: Students can analyze the text with student created puzzles in order to make critical claims
Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- Students ask their questions they crafted the day before in a Socratic Seminar

- Homework – Students reflect over the puzzling and Socratic performance

HW: Read chapters 14-16 by Tuesday/Day 12.

Day 10:
Objective: Students make predictions about the second half of the text
- Students begin reading and annotating for noticings in chapters.

Day 11:
Objective: Students can read and annotate for noticings in chapters.
Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

- Set objective for reading

- Students take time in class to read and annotate *To Kill a Mockingbird* for noticings

Day 12 & 13: Data Collection on puzzling
Objective: Students develop critical puzzling with texts
Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

- Students write their noticings on the board

- As a class, we organize the noticings into groups or categories

- We apply theory

- Students question, how does this theory help me to ask question about these noticings

- Students craft puzzles that help them apply theory to their noticings

- We share the questions within groups and workshop them

HW: Read chapters 17 - 21 for Tuesday/Day 16

Day 14: Data collection on claim making
Objective: Students can analyze the text with student created puzzles in order to make critical claims
Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- Students ask their questions they crafted and workshopped the day before in a Socratic Seminar

- Homework – Students reflect over the puzzling, claim making, and Socratic performance

Day 15:
Objective: Students make predictions about the second book in the text
        Students can read and annotate for noticings in chapters
Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- Students take time in class to read and annotate *To Kill a Mockingbird* for noticings

Day 16 & 17: Collection on puzzling
Objective: Students develop critical puzzling with texts
Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

- Students write their noticings on the board

- As a class, we organize the noticings into groups or categories

- We apply theory

- Students question, how does this theory help me to ask question about these noticings

- Students craft puzzles that help them apply theory to their noticings

- We share the questions within groups and workshop them

HW: Read chapters 22 - 25 by Monday/ Day 20

Day 18: Data collection on claim making
Objective: Students can analyze the text with student created puzzles in order to make critical claims
Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

- Students ask their questions they crafted and workshopped the day before in a Socratic Seminar

- Homework – Students reflect over the puzzling, claim making, and Socratic performance

Day 19: Viewing Trial
Objective: Students can analyze the film depiction of the trial.
Text: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

- View the trial

Day 20 & 21: Data collection for puzzling
Objective: Students develop critical puzzles with text
Text: Student chosen texts of the world

- Students write their noticings on the board

- As a class, we organize the noticings into groups or categories

- We apply theory

- Students question, how does this theory help me to ask question about these noticings

- Students craft puzzles that help them apply theory to their noticings

- We share the questions within groups and workshop them

HW: Read chapters 26 - 31 by day Monday/Day 25

Day 22: Data collection on claim making
Objective: Students can analyze the text with student created puzzles in order to make critical claims
Text: Student chosen texts of the world

- Socratic Seminar

- Homework - Craft synthesizing puzzles

Day 23: Data collection on claim making
Objective: Students can analyze the text with student created puzzles in order to make critical claims
Text: Student chosen texts of the world

- Socratic Seminar

- Synthesize all of the pieces we have experienced

- Reflection over seminar

Day 24 - 28: Data Collection – Final Literary Analysis Essay
Objective: Students can analyze the text with student created puzzles in order to make critical claims
Text: Student constructed literary analysis essays
- Students embark on the writing process

- Brainstorm

- Outline

- Draft

- Edit

- Revise

- Submit

PDSA TEST FORM

Tester:		Date:	Cycle #:

Change Idea: What specifically are you testing? I will be testing whether or not implementing a specific routine provides an opportunity for student to develop critical literacy.

Goal of the Test: Students will begin to develop critical literacy when examining any text or media.

*Identify your overall goal: To make something work better? Learn how a new innovation works? Learn how to test in a new context? Learn how to spread or implement?

1)PLAN			3)STUDY	
Questions: What questions do you have about what will happen?	**Predictions**: What predictions do you have? Be specific, use numbers		**What were the results?** Comment on your predictions in the rows below.	
		→		

		$\rightarrow$	
Details: Describe the who/what when/where of the test (The basic change to test may come from the ACT section of the previous cycle.) What is the data plan?			**What did you learn?**

2)DO		**4)ACT**
Briefly describe objectively what happened during the test. Did it go as planned? What obstacles arose? Possible change ideas?		Describe what you will test in the next cycle. Simpler and small-scale changes are easier to test and can help learning.

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