Teaching Social Justice With Literature Circles To Improve Reading Discussions: An Action Research Study

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TEACHING SOCIAL JUSTICE WITH LITERATURE CIRCLES TO IMPROVE READING DISCUSSIONS: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

by

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DEDICATION

First, I want to thank my Lord and Savior for honoring the desires of my heart in becoming a better teacher, reader, and writer throughout this journey. Thank you to my incredible children, Cody, Ryan, and Kailie, for being patient while, “Mom is working on her paper, still.” Thank you, Michael for your encouragement and belief that I could achieve this. I appreciate my parents for instilling a love of learning in me. Thank you to my mom, a retired English teacher, and my mom-in-law a retired administrative assistant for the proofreading help. I love you all.
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses a problem of practice stemming from the lack of engagement students exhibit for reading social justice texts. Students today are in more culturally and socially diverse classrooms; their curriculum needs to reflect these social changes. A review of the problem of practice led to the research question: Does implementing literature circles with social justice texts in a secondary classroom foster engagement in reading and classroom discussions for students? The primary purpose of this proposed action research study was to examine if implementing literature circles with social justice texts leads to increased conversations and engagement in the classroom. The results showed that the students’ self-reported median scores Likert scale from the pre-survey to the post-survey regarding social justice issues and reading engagement showed no significant change. However, the qualitative coding from observations with role sheets and journal entries showed themes which emerged of (1) significance of social justice/social injustice issues; (2) using social justice texts (3) effects of literature circles for engagement.

Keywords: literature circle, engagement, social justice, classism
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELAGSE</td>
<td>English Language Standards of Excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESEA</td>
<td>Elementary and Secondary Education Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GADOE</td>
<td>Georgia Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRA</td>
<td>International Reading Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBPTS</td>
<td>National Board for Professional Teaching Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCLB</td>
<td>No Child Left Behind Act</td>
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<td>NCTE</td>
<td>National Council of Teachers of English</td>
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

United States classrooms are more culturally and linguistically diverse today than ever before (Alsubaie, 2015; Herrera & Kidwell, 2018). The curriculum, classroom discourse, and literacy practices should match the diversity of the classroom (Herrera & Kidwell, 2018). It is critical for students to see representations of themselves in the curriculum that they are studying. Furthermore, the students should also see social justice upheld in the literature. In most secondary curriculum, the focus still remains on White Anglo literary traditions and writing tasks (Heller, 2010). Progressive educators such as Dewey (1938) and current activists such as Comber (2015) have challenged the traditional pedagogies of schools with modern methods intended to incorporate interests and diversity of students (Williamson, 2016). Even with such educators promoting transformation, few changes in literacy instruction have occurred in the United States (Williamson, 2016).

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (1996) claim in Standard 9 that students should respect and understand the diversity of language dialects of other cultures and social roles. Georgia English Language Arts Standards for Ninth and Tenth Grade (Georgia Department of Education, 2015) require students to analyze other cultures, as the standard states “Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature
from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature” (Georgia Department of Education, 2015, p. 1). According to NCTE and IRA (1996), secondary students require training in sharing and creating meaning with peers of other races and cultures through language.

The NCTE and IRA (1996) as well as the NBPTS (2016) emphasize the significance of reading about diversity, but they do not prescribe a specific approach. The NCTE and IRA advocate that multiple reading and writing strategies should be used because all students learn differently (National Council Teachers of English & International Reading Association, 1996). They further encourage the use of research and observations to create the best materials and processes to develop language arts skills (National Council Teachers of English & International Reading Association, 1996). NBPTS (2016) implores educators to provide occasions for students to use inquiry to observe multiple aspects so that students may develop critical questions from what they are examining. One research strategy which provides a diversity of learning competencies for students is literature circles (Daniels, 2002).

Literature circles enable high school English students to become conscious of their own values and how to express them, as well as stereotypes they may have regarding such ideas as racism or classism (Madhuri, Walker, Landmann-Johnsey, & Laughter, 2015). Herrera and Kidwell (2018) found that since literature circles are student-centered, learners are able to present the literacy practices of their own communities. Validating the literacy methods of their community and allowing the students to build and develop those literacy skills. The students learn how to discuss texts freely with peers while they use role sheets to respond to different parts of the text. The
readers are successful in this type of setting because they are involved with one another (Leland, Lewson, & Hartse, 2018). Herrera and Kidwell (2018) found that these reading discussion groups grant students the opportunity to discuss works with the teacher serving as facilitator.

In the study by Madhuri, Walker, Landmann-Johnsey, and Laughter (2015), literature circles were used. Class members conversed about topics without restraint and they used role sheets to respond to different parts of the literature. When using literature circles, sometimes the responses can be online, but mostly the responses are face-to-face. In literature circles, student groups are usually, pre-selected by the teacher and composed of five to six students either homogeneously or heterogeneously mixed (Wilfong, 2009). Grouping of students can be essential to the group dynamics, as social roles and expectations enter the discussion and members use these for power and voice at times (Madhuri, Walker, Landmann-Johnsey, & Laughter, 2015). Sometimes each group will read the same text as the rest of the class, but other times each group will read a different book (Daniels, 2002). The teacher serves as a facilitator and circulates among the groups; she or he is not usually a participant (Young & Mohr, 2018). Traditionally, students are assigned different roles within the group which change each time they meet (Barone, D. & Barone, R., 2016). Assignments in the literature circle differ, but common ones include discussion director, connector, illustrator, vocabulary enricher, connector, and passage master (Elhess & Egbert, 2015).

Literature circles are social exchanges which depend on the participants to be involved and engaged with the reading and discussion (Young & Mohr, 2018). The participants complete a role sheet or assignment while they read the text prior to meeting
with their groups while they read the text (Herrera & Kidwell, 2018). Each member realizes that he or she has a part to play in the group understanding the whole book (Beers & Probst, 2013). During their group time, they present their completed role sheets to the members of their literature circle (Herrera & Kidwell, 2018; Daniels, 2001). Literature circles provide efficiency for students in that they allow their voice to be heard as they discuss the texts with their peers (Beers & Probst, 2013).

1.2 Statement of the Problem of Practice

The problem of practice is that an increasing number of secondary students, grades 7-9, become disengaged with education (Bland, Carrington, & Brady, 2009). When a student is also from a low economic background the results of this disengagement can display itself in lack of school attendance, lack of academic success, and a failure to graduate (Bland, Carrington, & Brady, 2008). Teachers experiment with new technologies and new literacies based in research to keep students focused (Herrera & Kidwell, 2018) because being able to read is critical for securing a well-paying career and becoming a participant in society (Neugebauer, 2016). Educators analyze their instructional methods to promote student motivation for reading, and teachers need to measure their students’ degree of motivation correctly and match their instruction to that level (Neugebauer, 2016). Students disengaged in reading will have difficulty in an English class and other classes while those who are engaged will perform well academically (Mitchell, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2010). Additionally, learners are often silent in classrooms when they feel that their language and voice will be judged (Mahar, 2001). These class members tend to disengage with the novel and begin to focus instead on off
task behaviors; they justify their lack of engagement on the teacher’s pedagogy or the content of the novel (Kiddey & Robson, 2001).

When teachers desire to discuss social justice in the classroom, they may find students disengaged for several reasons, such as family situations, low self-esteem, or the inability to adapt, and they may not want to read and discuss social issues (Bland, Carrington, & Brady, 2009). Often, young people are not having meaningful class discussion on social texts, either because the books are not being required, the students are not reading them, or they do not know how to discuss the texts (Rennie & Patterson, 2008). Students’ disengagement is not the only obstacle to including social justice texts in the classroom, as teachers may shy away from a controversial text (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012). The educator may not feel the text should be included in the curriculum, or the teacher may feel himself or herself inadequate to discuss a political book (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012). Some teachers are concerned that issues of racism, classicism, and sexism may upset students (Cruz, 2015; Suzuki, Huss, Fiehn, & Spencer, 2015). According to critical literacy theorists Leland, Lewison, and Hartse (2018), “Reading critically means that we see texts as expressing assumptions or perspectives that we may or may not want to accept” (p. 24). Other problems the teacher must contend with include students becoming distracted by other things when they are asked to read at home or at school, such as cellphones, which are even brought into the classroom, and may be more interesting to the student than the teacher’s lesson (Rennie & Patterson, 2008). This unwillingness to teach a controversial text may also be due to the instructors’ lack of exposure to social justice texts in their own education and not being taught how to teach social justice texts (McLean & Davies, 2012).
Teachers know that students must be motivated in order to learn and instructional frameworks help them to engage the learners (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). Engaged learners create personal meanings and read for authentic purposes so the readers can respond in meaningful ways. Readers read because they are curious, need social exchanges, and need to meet their emotional concerns (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004).

Many teachers did not read diverse social justice texts when they were students. Research shows that high school students who learned to debate and discuss topics through reading tended to learn the material better (Yazzie, Mintz & McCormick, 2012). Sometimes whole group and individual reading did help students also engage in social justice texts, but literature circles offer a crucial strategy to address all of the concerns of engagement and discussion with social justice texts. When students talk about a text their understanding is increased because they gain multiple perspectives and interpretations (Leland, Lewison, & Hartse, 2018). Learners become excited about reading and discussing books when they collaborate with other students, and they developed their academic vocabulary while participating in literature circles (Barone, D. & Barone, R., 2016).

The teacher-researcher often witnessed students disengaged in literature class unwilling to attempt reading aloud or to undertake independent reading. Literature circles, for this teacher-researcher, served as an opportunity to give students a voice to discuss their books and provided participation opportunities for reluctant speakers. Because the students led the literature circles, the students had ownership of their learning.
In the teacher-researcher’s English classes, her students looked forward to participating in group work more than any other activity. However, she often found that when assigning independent reading, many students did not read; if they did read, they could not always interpret the text. Upon asking these students to describe the reason for not completing individual reading, most of them explained that independent reading was difficult and time consuming. Teens preferred group or partner reading, and some even preferred whole class reading. Unsuccessful reading students often justified their disinterest on the book selection by stating they had no time to read, or the instruction of the teacher did not interest them. Many students did not consider that they were distracted or lacked background knowledge on social justice. As a result, many students waited for the teacher to explain assigned material, asked a friend to describe the book, watched a movie of the book instead, or just failed. When students begin failing in the action-researcher’s school, then the students tend to drop out of school. If students do not read, they may end up failing academically (Pendergast & Bahr, 2005; Bland, Carrington & Brady, 2009). Literature circles can be a hands-on discussion group that can address the often-ignored issues of social justice (Hsiah, 2012; Madhuri, Walker, Landmaan-Johnsey & Laughter, 2015). From the teacher-researcher’s class experience, when students cared about the characters in the text and their social experiences, then they wanted to continue to read them. The students needed relatable issues to their own social justice concerns. In this particular school, poverty was a chief concern as the school was 100% free lunch and Title 1. Reading social justice texts gives students a new awareness of their own stereotypes and beliefs; such stereotypes are often unnoticed and require guidance as
students work their way through the material (Madhuri, Walker, Landmann-Johnsey & Laughter, 2015).

1.3 Research Question

Research indicated that students who disengaged in reading classroom texts also had infrequent school attendance and poor academic performance (Bland, Carrington & Brady, 2009). The goal of this action research was answering the following question in response to the problem of practice regarding reading engagement and discussion of social justice texts.

RQ: Does implementing literature circles with social justice texts in a secondary classroom foster engagement in reading and classroom discussions for students?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

Reading was a key component to the teacher-researcher’s English language arts class. Students were asked to read regarding other cultures and classes, but this was difficult if the students were not learning or being introduced to social justice texts. Disinterest and unawareness of multi-cultural readings on the part of students led the NCTE and IRA (1996) to suggest students must read texts to gain understanding of cultures within the United States and around the globe. Despite the complications of teaching texts that explore social justice issues, Thein, Guise, and Sloan (2012) accepted the challenge from the NCTE and IRA (1996) and utilized literature circles to enable students to analyze texts depicting cultural differences with regard to class, race, gender, and sexuality.

The purpose of the present action research study was to determine if English language arts students engaged in reading and examining social justice texts when placed
in a literature circle. The intended goal of this study was to discover whether teaching
students with literature circles would engross them in social justice text readings and
have a positive effect on their ability to discuss social justice issues. This study was in
accordance with the identified Problem of Practice of addressing social justice texts
engagement and discussions with literature circles.

Educators want to create life-long readers and learners. By using literature circles,
the teacher-researcher endeavored to improve students’ engagement and knowledge of
social justice texts. Literature circles offered a strategy based on extensive research that
provided a framework to use in supporting students, and in helping them become engaged
and socially cognizant readers (Daniels, 1994, 2001).

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This action research study is framed around the use of literature circles which is a
teaching method drawing on both critical literacy and social-cultural theories (Leland,
Lewison, & Harste, 2018; Tracey & Morrow, 2006) that sanctions students to discuss
novels in groups (Daniels, 2002). Critical literacy comes from the theories of Paulo Freire
(1970). According to Freire, learning involves students using language to ask questions
about the power structures that consist in their environments and to use the answers they
formulate to take social justice action (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2015).

Also, the sociocultural theory is used with literature circles. With sociocultural
communication, students gather understandings from each other, parents, and teachers.
Vygotsky (1978) contended that children acquire knowledge from connecting with
others. Learners create together when their individual and social environments meet.
Vygotsky looked at the child’s development as it interacts with sociocultural,
psychological and history (Vygotsky, 1978). According to the social cultural theory, the child’s mental and educational progression develops from his or her social and cultural environment, as well as from the child’s personal history. The culture shapes the child; the child does not shape his or her culture (Vygotsky, 1978; Daniels, 2001; Panhwar, Ansari, S & Ansari, K, 2016).

Literature circles use social settings and assign roles for each group member to maintain focus (Daniels, 1994, 2001). Roles include tasks such as interrogator, group leader, artist, connector, researchers, vocabulary master, summarizer, and group leader (Daniels, 1994, 2002; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). The stratagem worked for requiring children to improve their reading habits (Avci & Yuskel, 2011). Participating readers in literature circles were said to develop a love of reading and gained improvement in reading skills and comprehension skills were reasons to use this strategy, too (Avci & Yuskel, 2011). Educators also stated that numerous readers were excited to learn with books in a group setting (Barone, D. & Barone, R., 2016).

The literature circles use the educational philosophies of John Dewey (1902). Because education is social and interactive the school is a setting for social reform. Dewey defines experience in Experience and Education (1938), as what is necessary to imbue that experience with educational value. The student experience comes from the student’s involvement with his or her environment while the teacher serves as a guide for problem-solving (Dewey, 1938). With literature circles the teachers serve as guides while the students read and make connections. Dewey (1902) stated that there is a correlation between democracy, reading, and education. Literature circles are a way to combine all of these factors.
Literature circles build on the critical literacy theory of Paulo Friere (1972). Critical literacy strategies enable learners to use their language to question their world, their culture, their power relationships, and then to decide how to take action toward social justice (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2015). With critical literacy students learn to make decisions about social issues that will impact their lives. Students can use various means such as arts and technology to show their ideas about social justice (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2015). Literature circles can use both the arts and technology as students report their findings and analyze a social justice text. The goal of critical literacy is for teachers to form a partnership with their learners as they together dive into critical analysis (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2015).

1.6 Action Research Design

This study uses action research instead of traditional research. In traditional research the teacher is not the guide for learning, and the researcher often comes from outside of the school or class setting. Action research, however, allows the teacher to be both teacher, researcher, and active participate within the school or classroom (Mertler, 2014). The purpose of action research is to use change to improve education (Mertler, 2014). Action research is relevant, participatory, and practical since educators work together to change their own pedagogies and strategies (Mertler, 2014). This research is reflective, critical, and a planned system of learning (Mertler, 2014).

This action research study involved a pre/post survey of the same group of participants. The action research study focused on seven students enrolled in the teacher-researcher’s English 10 course. Preliminary data was collected through the pre-survey (see Appendix D) at the start of the data collection period (Davis & Engel, 2011).
Surveys according to Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) are helpful when assessing students’ attitudes and conceptions. The surveys aid in analyzing students’ changes in attitudes and understandings over a certain time period (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014).

After the first pre-survey, the teacher-researcher guided students in a novel study of *Tears of a Tiger* (Draper, 1994), and with background information on social justice. The novel is a social justice texts which contains themes of racism, sexism, and classicism. The text used with critical literacy invites the reader to look at the others and hear their voices despite their own personal experiences to gain a greater understanding of social justice issues (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2015). Students received information on responsibilities and roles within a literature circle. Students collaboratively worked in literature circles. Prior to literature circle meetings students read the novel, answered comprehension questions, took lecture notes, and completed role sheets. During literature circles students met and discussed the reading assignment. Three times during the study students wrote response journals to the text. The role sheets, literature circle discussions, and journals were measured with coding and qualitative themes emerged. At the conclusion of the study, students took the post-survey. The results of the pre-and post-surveys were scored with the Likert scale.

Convergent parallel mixed-methods with triangulation was the approach of this action research study for the group of tenth-grade students in rural Georgia. The quantitative and qualitative information were gathered at the same time and the information was combined and then analyzed (Creswell, 2018). A survey regarding students’ attitudes towards reading and social justice was administered; data about free and reduced lunch in a Title 1 school was collected. Data collection from the literature
circles regarding social justice discussions at the start of the study was compared with students second survey about reading attitudes and social justice issues at the conclusion of the school year; this type of narrative data was qualitative. These surveys were quantitative and the numbers from the Likert Scale were compared, and differences were noted. The research question was used within the six weeks of the literature circle and action research study. The phases included planning, action, developing, and reflecting. Phase one, the planning phase involved identifying the problem of practice and developing a research plan. During phase two, the acting phase, the teacher-researcher collected and scrutinized information. Phase three, the developing phase, involved creating a plan for improvement based on the findings. Lastly, in phase four, the reflecting phase, the research question and answers were presented to others. The goal of the action research study was to improve reading engagement and discussing social justice within a literature circle. The improvements in reading involvement and understanding of social justice should benefit students throughout their school careers.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The importance of the study was that it directed the need for increasing reading engagement and discussion through the use of social justice texts. The study used existing research about reading discussion and reading groups as well as examining how literature circles would pertain to a secondary classroom. The results of this study have implications for teachers not only in English classes, but also in any content area where reading engagement is lacking. This can be used to benefit discussion and participation when student voice and choice are given (Daniels, 2001).
When designing this study, the teacher-researcher was particularly interested in whether students would take leadership and ownership for their learning when discussing the texts. The teacher-researcher has taught in a number of schools for seventeen years. Most of these schools were high school and Title 1 schools. From that experience and through observations and discussions with colleagues, it was apparent that teachers struggled to help secondary students engage with and comprehend their readings. Students, however, would read when the information affected them; for example, they would read news articles and social media if the story pertained to their community. The teens would talk to one another about news and trends in the media. Research shows that when the reading relates to the student and when they have some choice in how they learn, they will engage (Bland, Carrington, & Brady, 2009; Mitra, 2003).

This study was meaningful because it focused on the social justice issues within the texts. There was research that supported the claim that students would engage with a social justice text when allowed some control with the method of pedagogy (Daniels, 2001; Bland, Carrington & Brady, 2009). The action research study was to examine if the approach of literature circles would enable teachers to guide students in a discussion group. The intention of the literature circles were to have students absorbed in collaboration and critical thinking about the social justice texts when allowed to discuss social justice issues (Madhuri, Walker, Landmann-Johnsey & Laughter, 2015).

Social injustice is prevalent in the adolescent population, especially in communities of color (Ayala, Lantz, & Hage, 2011). Social justice is fair and equal sharing of power, obligations, and resources for all people (Van den Bos, 2003); it includes collaboration and cooperation for all. Schools often continue the injustices of
teens (Kozol, 2005). Implementing an awareness and preventative intervention improve school conditions when risk factors are examined. The prevention strategies need to be systematic to provide teens, their families and communities with strategies to promote social justice. Such plans need to recognize the norms, attitudes, and beliefs of teens in order for the implementation and evaluation to be effective (Ayala, Lantz, & Hage, 2011).

If students do not read and discuss social texts, they may fail to understand their increasingly multi-cultural world (National Council of Teachers of English, 1996; National Board Professional Teaching Standards, 2016). For these reasons, the focus of this action research project was on teaching students to use literature circles to engage in reading and discussing social justice texts. The goal of this action research was to assess student involvement in discussions about social justice when they used literature circles.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

Decisions and designs for the duration of the study were intentional with the methods research to minimize limitations; nonetheless, limitations still existed. The results of the study cannot be generalized beyond the research participants, but it could be possible to generalize the findings for other English language arts classrooms in the teacher-researcher’s school. Another limitation of the study was the participant size of only one teacher and seven students. Information from a larger sample of both educators and students would provide more generalizable outcomes. This was due to the study being an action research study within the teacher-researcher’s classroom. An additional limitation is the length of time for the study which was only six weeks.
1.9 Dissertation Overview

The following overview explains how the DiP was organized. Chapter One introduced the reader to the need for social justice texts in the curriculum. The chapter explained how high school students were disengaged in reading. It identified the problem of practice (PoP) in English class, together with the purpose for the action research study, and it advanced the research question that were analyzed.

Next, Chapter Two will review related theories and provide a review of relevant literature. The chapter evaluates the associated works on literature circles, reading engagement, social justice texts, and social justice discussions. Chapter Three describes the mixed method research that was used to accumulate and investigate data and report the results.

The purpose of Chapter Four was to evaluate the findings, discoveries, reflections, and analyses as they related to the PoP; the results were examined. Lastly, Chapter Five included a summary of significant points, conclusions, and suggestions for future research. This chapter presented an overview and suggestions for future research and sharing of the findings with colleagues.

1.10 Definition of Terms

**Connector:** In a literature circle, the connector will cite connections between the reading assignment and either another text, world events, personal events, a song, or even a movie (Daniels, 2002).

**Critical literacy:** Reviews social systems that continue dominant systems of knowledge and power in place in the world (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2015).
**Discussion Director:** To prepare for the literature circle this student will create and answer discussion questions about the book, its characters, setting, theme, or plot (Daniels, 2002).

**Engagement:** Students are involved with community and social interests that can evolve into political issues which lead to a democratic society where social justice and injustice can be reviewed (Bland, Carrington & Brady, 2009).

**Illustrator:** To prepare for the literature circle, this student will create a picture, graph, poster, cartoon, or computer graphic design depicting a key scene, idea, character(s), or setting from the reading assignment (Daniels, 2002).

**Literature circles:** A peer-led discussion group of six or fewer participants whose members read the same book. The members make notes and complete a role sheet while reading either in class or out of class to help them participate in the discussion. The role sheets change each meeting, but they help the members come to the group with insights to communicate (Daniels, 2002).

**Passage Master:** To prepare for the literature circle, this student will find critical passages while reading that are important to the understanding of the text (Daniels, 2002).

**Sociocultural theory:** The theory began with Vygotsky (1978) and involves education with the individual and his or her culture. This consists of the child speaking with others and learning both individually from society, and culture for his or her development. Learning comes from both sociocultural forces and internal stimuli (Panhwar, Ansari, S. & Ansari, K, 2016).
**Social justice education:** Education that allows students to increase their critical skills in order to comprehend aspects of oppression in their own lives (Bell, 2013).

**Summarizer:** To prepare for the literature circle this student will summarize what is read by retelling the story in his or her own words (Daniels, 2002)

**Vocabulary Enricher:** To prepare for the literature circle this student finds new, unusual, or challenging keywords, and explains how they are used in the reading assignment (Daniels, 2002).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This research study was focused on engaging students in social justice texts with literature circles. To appreciate the focus of this action research, the review of the literature begins with the examination of the historical context detailing the origin of literature circles in Arizona classroom (Daniels, 2001). After the examination of the historical context, a summary of the significant literature for the theoretical framework that guides this study will be presented. This theoretical framework is grounded in sociocultural theory and critical literacy theory (Freire, 1970). Additionally, the review examined research related to teaching and using social justice education (Williamson, 2016). Both the historical context, theoretical framework, and social justice education underscored the problem of practice addressed in the study. Lastly, the review of literature examined research studies focusing on historical inquiry.

2.2 Historical Context

Using literature circles to increase reading engagement has been practiced for many decades, but the literature circles were initially called book clubs or study groups (Daniels, 2002). Literature circles utilize standards for English language arts (National Council of Teachers of English, 1996; Elhess & Egbert, 2015). During the 1960s educators were following Elton McNeil and Daniel Fader’s Hooked on Books (1969) for its
collaborative learning and book talks. Students then began self-selecting books and participating in small group discussions (Harvey & Daniels, 2009). Literature circles as they are known today can be traced back to the book talks that *Hooked on Books* (Fader & McNeil, 1969) first introduced.

Daniels (2001) traced the inception of literature circles to 1982 when elementary teacher Karen Smith in Phoenix, Arizona, found an old box of books and allowed her students to read them in groups and discuss them. Smith had a box of novels but had three copies of one title or four of another. Her students asked if they could read them during independent reading. After a couple of days, the students spontaneously began meeting with other students reading the same book, assigned readings, and discussed portions of the same book (Daniels, 2001). Literature circles were student led from the beginning as the students were actually the inventors (Daniels, 2002). Smith was amazed at the depth and energy of their conversations and sought to formalize their informal reading groups as part of the class.

Smith knew her new method deserved more research and implementation, so she shared her success with literature circles with researchers and her graduate professors such as Ralph Peterson, Dorothy Watson, Jerome Harste, and Kathy Short (Short & Pierce, 1990). The researchers observed and theorized literature circles with regard to independent readings and collaborative learning. Daniels (1990) noted that they helped Smith discover how she as the teacher could facilitate the reading discussion and not dominate it. As she began using literature circles in her classroom, Smith read the books, too, but was a participant or facilitator (Short & Pierce, 1990; Daniels, 2002).
Harvey "Smokey" Daniels, a city and suburban teacher, furthered Smith’s work with literature circles. He has conducted research using literature circles and now conducts professional development teaching other educators globally this strategy (Daniels, 2002). In 1993, Daniels, who was a city and suburban teacher worked with twenty teachers with literature circles to create “Best Practice: New Standards for Teaching and Learning in America’s Schools” (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1993). Daniels adopted Short’s coined term of literature circles to describe book clubs as she coined it in her dissertation research (Daniels, 2002). Ralph Peterson and Maryann Eeds (1990) had the only other book, Grand Conversations about book clubs (Daniels, 2002).

Following Daniels’ implementation and refining of literature circles, literature circles have now been used for several decades in English classrooms to promote literature discussion and textual interpretations (Low & Jacobs, 2018). Literature circles developed quickly and spread rapidly in education classrooms (Daniels, 2002). Literature circles are a reading strategy for building literacy that can be used at many grade levels with students of diverse backgrounds (Herrera & Kidwell, 2018). Students benefit from the discussion groups because they have ownership and responsibility (Ehless & Egbert, 2015; Marchiando, 2013). Learners were engaged in reading with student led discussions because their voice was heard and respected; the students participated with writing and giving their viewpoints (Ehless & Egbert, 2015). Principal researcher Harvey Daniels continued to refine literature circles for better implementation by teachers (Daniels, 2006). Daniels travels the world presenting literature circles as professional development for teachers, serving as a consultant to educators, and he has published numerous books on the subject of literature circles (Daniels, 1994, 2001, 2006). Other researchers, such
as Tracey and Morrow (2006), Avci and Yuskel (2011), and Barone, D. and Barone, R. (2016) have expounded upon Daniels research and used his initial procedures for operating literature circles. Researchers such as, Herrera and Kidwell (2018) have taken literature circles digital.

### 2.3 Procedures for Literature Circles

In order for students' voices to be heard in literature circles, specific procedures must be followed (Daniels, 2001). First, literature circles were used for students to work independently through a text; the students share their experiences of reading and discussing the book with their group members (Kim, 2017). Usually, the groups were pre-selected by the teacher and were composed of five to six students either homogeneously or heterogeneously mixed (Sportsman, Certo, Bolt & Miller, 2011). The group members were responsible to one another for collaboratively interpreting the assigned text (Low & Jacobs, 2018). The teacher served as facilitator and circulated among the groups (Kim, 2017; Ehless & Egbert, 2015; Thomas, 2014). Traditionally, students were given different roles for their participation which changed each time they met; roles in the literature circle differed, but the ones listed by current researchers Elhess and Egbert (2015) were discussion director, connector, illustrator, vocabulary enricher, connector, and passage master. Students within the same group read the same text and usually created a final product that they presented to the whole class who may be reading a different text (Kim, 2017). The students completed a role sheet before meeting with their groups while they were reading the text (Avci & Yuskel, 2011; Herrera & Kidwell, 2018). During their group time, they presented their completed role sheets to the members of their literature circle (Appendix G-L; Daniels, 2001; Avci & Yuskel, 2011).
2.4 Challenges With Implementing Literature Circles

Even with role sheets for each member literature circles are not without challenges when they are implemented (Daniels, 2002). Students needed guidance during literature circles when they tackle material that is controversial such as social justice issues (Madhuri, Walker, Landmann-Johnsey & Laughter, 2015; Thomas, 2014). Daniels (2002) provided guidelines which included a need for role sheets, accountability, and assessment. The structure was needed for the discussion groups or literature circles to impact engagement and increase a depth of conversation regarding social class (Madhuri, Walker, Landmann-Johnsey & Laughter, 2015). This is why many educators use the role sheets to maintain structure and purpose for the discussion groups (Low & Jacobs, 2018; Elhess & Egbert, 2015).

Because educators are not always able to gauge reading motivations and shifts in motivation occur daily during reading activities, teachers need support in determining when the motivation for reading changes and they need strategies to help them capitalize on activities that do engage students (Neugebauer, 2016; Burns et al., 2015). Literature circle motivation needs structure and purpose to evaluate the motivation (Herrera & Kidwell, 2018). Role sheets have been replaced in some circles for logbooks, but the remaining goal was accountability and purpose for the students’ participation (Daniels, 2006).

From the history and evolution of the literature circles, teachers reported that engagement developed from literature circles when utilized correctly (Ehless & Egbert, 2015; Madhuri, Walker, Landmann-Johnsey & Laughter, 2015; Hughes, 2014). Text selection is critical for teachers when choosing texts for literature circles, and the texts
should reflect students’ values and interests socially and culturally (Kim, 2017; Barone, D. & Barone, R., 2016). Students became engaged and reported that they liked reading because of the literature circles (Avci & Yuskel, 2011).

2.5 Creating Effective Literature Circles

For the circles to be productive students have to have a predictable schedule and bring writings or drawings to each meeting to aid in the preparation and implementation of the discussions with the group (Daniels, 1994). While students are independently reading, they may gain help from the teacher (Beers & Probst, 2013; Kim, 2017). The teacher needs to facilitate and observe the groups while taking notes; the lesson should provide scaffolding prior to the literature circle and sometimes while the literature circle is happening (Young & Mohr, 2018; Ehless & Egbert, 2015). The literature circles operated much like a book club, but the students have assigned roles to guide the discussion (Daniels, 1994; Herrera & Kidwell, 2018). Students want to hear what their classmates discover in the text, and they will often go back to the text for support for their contributions to the discussion (Barone, D. & Barone, R., 2016). Learners enhance their comprehension and knowledge while they discuss and write about the novels (Barone, D. & Barone, R., 2016).

Choice and responsibility for the students were included for literature circles to work; they also needed engagement and positive peer pressure (Hughes, 2014; Herrera & Kidwell, 2018). Dialogue journals were used to prepare the students for the groups (Daniels, 1994; 2006; Kim, 2017). Such techniques added in literature circles usefulness in discussing social class (Madhuri, Walker, Landmann-Johnsey & Laughter, 2015).
Scaffolding with literature circles was necessary for implementing literature circles (Daniels, 2006; Herrera & Kidwell, 2018).

### 2.6 Benefits of Literature Circles

The benefits for literature circles are numerous. Literature circles encourage improvement in language, reading comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition (Elhess & Egbert, 2015). Besides promoting better reading skills, literature circles foster engagement for students (Thomas, 2014; Hughes, 2014). The students do well because the lessons permit more than one right answer or interpretations of the readings (Kim, 2017). The teacher’s role in literature circles is as a guide, and not the direct instructor (Elhess & Egbert, 2015). The learners often are more at ease speaking with their classmates in discussion groups than being corrected by the teacher; thus, the students are confident to share their views without fear of making an error (Elhess & Egbert, 2015).

The discussions during literature circles should resemble that of friends meeting and discussing the same topic (Daniels, 2002). Middle school students learn well from this because they enjoy peer relationships and cooperation (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick, 2012). This is a way for students to collaborate and discuss their understandings of the book (Daniels, 2002). When the implementation of literature circles is done correctly, they create an atmosphere which promotes connections and engagement among students, which develops reading skills (Hughes, 2014; Ehless & Egbert, 2015). Learning to work with a team in a literature circle is also a transferable skill for college and career (Marchiando, 2013).

Through literature circles, authentic engagement arises between what the student is reading, and the student’s experience, and contentment comes from the reading
strategy; this contentment leads to creativity, critical thinking, and better language skills (Hughes, 2014; Kim, 2017; Sanacore, 2013). The students become more empowered and responsible for their learning; collaboratively the students comprehend more (Daniels, 2002; Day & Lum, 2011; Day, Spiegel, McLellan, & Brown, 2002). Students can more easily share their critical thinking about the book in the non-threatening environment of the small group (Sanacore, 2013). In a literature circle, learners experience multicultural books, viewpoints, and positions (Coles-Ritchie, 2013; Kim, 2017; Sportsman, Certo, Bolt, & Miller, 2011; Sanacore, 2013).

Literature circles aim for equitable experiences for all; the literature circles are a means for all students to have a say in the smaller groups. Students are allowed a voice with these groups (Marchiando, 2013). The strategy is made for differentiation for the lowest reader to the highest and for those with mastery of English language to those where it is their second language (Sanacore, 2013). Literature circles encourage students to develop their connections, interests, and enthusiasm in the reading texts.

2.7 Theoretical Frameworks

**Literature Circles from Sociocultural Theory.** Sociocultural theory is a theory used in the pedagogy of literature circles. Russian educator, Lev Vygotsky (1978) did not think that learning could ever be extracted from a social context; instead, Vygotsky offered that the thinking developed initially from social encounters (Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding was developed from the theories by Vygotsky (1978) for the teacher to guide the students; scaffolding key components are (1) to promote interest and involvement in the students, (2) chunk the tasks or break them into smaller ones, (3) help the students stay on task with the small task while maintain the final goal, (4) help knowledgeable
others support the students, and (5) show the students ways to complete the assignments so learners can internalize the skills (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky considered being able to teach and to learn the most significant aspect for humans (Daniels, H., 2016). The learner must interact and construct knowledge from his or her community (Vygostsky, 1978). The sociocultural theory has the capability of creating innovative language strategies to aid teachers with instructing in language and reasoning (Panhwar, Ansari, S., & Ansari, K., 2016). The theory shows that acquiring knowledge is a process which develops individually from a person’s relationships and experiences to enable the person to solve problems for his or her society (Larson & Marsh, 2015).

Vygotsky (1962) claimed that languages developed from the connection between thinking and speaking and begins with social interactions (Larson & Marsh, 2015). Vygotsky (1978) took sociocultural theories further with incorporating learning experiences with cooperative interaction from the environment in the proximal development. He writes of guided participation in world cultures and explains that it would work for classrooms (Vygotsky, 1978). The zone of proximal development builds upon the scope of a student’s ability from a starting level to where the student can solve a problem with guidance (Larson & Marsh, 2015). With the zone of proximal development in mind, Vygostsky (1978) also used More Knowledgeable Others (MKOs) which would be anyone or anything with a higher learning level than the learner for a particular task; he felt learning could not occur without an MKO. Vygotsky explains how teachers guide students to participate which leads to thinking creatively while they engage in conversations with a person of knowledge (1978). Literature circles use Vygotsky’s theories of guided participation and his zone of proximal development. Thus, students
engaged in literature circles create a cooperative learning group to complete their tasks of reading and discussing their texts, acting as MKOs through different roles within the group (Daniels, 1994).

Learners develop knowledge from interacting with others and their environment (Vygotsky 1978). To study a student and omit his or her social or cultural communities would be to remove the most crucial parts of the child’s life (Panhwar, Ansari, S., & Ansari, K., 2016). The sociocultural theory is the basis for reading social justice texts. Activities for engagement of students should evolve around sociocultural norms of the particular content. The students work collaboratively to solve critical problems from their prior experiences and with their new information they gather (Panhwar, Ansari, S., & Ansari, K, 2016).

The theory is successful because teachers serve as guides for the learners as the learners are responsible for their learning like they are with literature circles (Thomas, 2014; Herrera & Kidwell, 2018). The classroom is student centered as they make the decisions for their learning, while the teacher is the facilitator (Thomas, 2014; Pahdwar, Ansari, S., & Ansari, K., 2016). Students learn with this theory when curriculum is guided by sociocultural theory because learners are engaged instead of passively receiving information (Pahdwar, Ansari, S. & Ansari, K., 2016).

The students collaborate and autonomously use their critical thinking, which leads to new ideas from their background knowledge and experience (Sanacore, 2013). The sociocultural approaches and activities are a process approach to language and are interactive, and the students are active investigators with this model, engaged in the process of acquiring knowledge (Pahdwar, Ansari, S. & Ansari, K., 2016). In literature
circles, students solve their problems while they collaboratively discuss the texts and use their critical thinking (Sanacore, 2013). The literature circles are autonomous and student-centered. The discussions are student to student and student to teacher, which is based on the theory of sociocultural theory and constructivism (Pandwhar, Ansari, S. & Ansari, K., 2016).

Additionally, the review examined research related to teaching and using social justice education (Williamson, 2016). Both the historical context, theoretical framework, and social justice education underscored the problem of practice addressed in the study. Together the review of the literature informed decisions for the problem of practice and led to the better usage of the literature circles to increase reading engagement and discussion (Hughes, 2014).

**Literature Circles with Critical Literacy.** Critical literacy is a theory that can be used alongside literature circles. Paulo Freire (1972) is often called the creator of critical literacy. He was a Brazilian educator who worked with those in poverty to help them use literacy to change their lives (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2015). He stated that praxis is involved in social justice to reflect on the world before it can be changed. Freire asked workers and farmers to ask questions about their working conditions as a way to argue for their own rights. For him teachers were cultural workers who could help students understand how systems are organized for privilege (1972). He was not concerned that the issues that effected his students might be controversial to others because his concern was to ground his instruction in their reality in order for them to transform their futures (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2015). Freire’s theory developed because of his work with adult learners who needed to explore issues of oppression that might interfere with
learning (Larson & Marsh, 2015). Freire taught that problem-posing education allowed people to educate each other by thinking about the world as transformative (1970).

Critical literacy involves four dimensions according to Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002):

1. disrupting the commonplace, 2. interrogating multiple viewpoints, 3. focusing on sociopolitical issues, and 4. taking action and promoting social justice (p. 7).

The goal is to see everyone through an equal lens, with multiple perspectives and sociopolitical viewpoints. A key component that makes critical literacy applicable for this study is that it takes action and promotes social justice which is critical when students read a social justice text (Lewis, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002). Freire builds on the teachings of Dewey in Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), he calls traditional teaching practices that Dewey identified a “banking model.” In this model students are like piggy banks that teachers fill with knowledge instead of money. Both Freire and Dewey encourage students to partner with teachers and other students to develop new knowledge instead of being filled with knowledge like a bank. Learning then becomes social and political (Freire, 1970). Freire allows writes of the “transmission ideology” which explains how a dominant group or ideology sustains control. Exploration is not part of this model as teachers transmit knowledge and students do not construct knowledge (Freire, 1970). Background knowledge of students is not important of a transmission classroom unless it represents the dominant ideology.

Students reflect on societies practices and reimagine how the social practices could be instead of following the status quo from their bankable knowledge (Freire,
The theory of Freire (1970) is to critically transform the content from “speaking the word” to “names the word” (p. 69). The goal is to create democratic participation while they become critically aware citizens. This gives students the language to become more critically aware (Freire, 1970). Freire (1985) took critical social theory into education. For him like the social theorists, language would bring about social reconstruction. Sociopolitical and historical forces required examination for critical pedagogy to effect learning (Freire, 1970). Teachers know that critical literacy invites students to both question and examine power relationships between readers and authors for the purpose of reflection, action, and transformation (Freire, 1970). According to Freire (1973), the critical transformative strategy contains, “active, dialogical, critical method” which encompasses “changing the program content of education” (p. 45). When selecting curriculum sociocultural and critical dimensions become crucial (Freire, 1973).

Critical literacy strategies allow students to engage with texts from a critical perspective. Students look at texts for social and power relationships within the story (McLauglin & DeVoogd, 2004). The focus on students learning to be critical thinkers is critical literacy that promotes critical questioning, collaboration towards a positive social change in the world (Early & Shagoury, 2005).

With literature circles students review different perspectives and viewpoints with the members of their group because they are discussing and interpreting the text together. Open-ended questions, quotable quotes, and finding key ideas can be done within the framework of critical literacy and literature circles (Leland, Lewison, & Hartse, 2018). Traditional roles assigned by the teacher is also done as means for finding critical key elements (Marchiando, 2013; Leland, Lewison, & Hartse, 2018).
2.8 Review of Related Literature to Literature Circles

The influence of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and critical literacy theory (Freire, 1970) are found in the literature regarding literature circles. Daniels’ (1994, 2001, 2004, 2006) research served as the foundation for literature circles to show that the strategy did help students grow in their reading abilities. Sociocultural theory and critical literacy theory continue to impact the literature circles of today. Literature circles work for allowing children to develop the habit of reading (Avci & Yuskel, 2011). A goal of the National Board Standards in English is for children to read for pleasure and the love of reading (2016); participating readers in literature circles are said to develop a love of reading (Thomas, 2014).

Improvement in reading skills and comprehension skills are reasons to use this strategy, too (Avci & Yuskel, 2011; Ehless & Egbert, 2015). Literature circles and book club discussions have been connected to higher reading achievement in all grade levels and social classes; reading discussion groups aided bilingual and English as second language learners, also with encouraging higher reading achievement (Daniels, 2001). Students participated in reading groups and used critical thinking and meaningful discussion as opposed to whole class group discussion (Sanacore, 2013). The groups promoted independence and interdependence as well as student choice and voice for discussion (Sanacore, 2013). Educators also state that many students learn books better in a group than when they read the books individually (Mahar, 2001; Avci & Yuskel, 2011).

Learning in literature circles occurs in collaborative communities in reading groups that aid with engagement (Hughes, 2014). The teacher assigns the task of discussing a book and may assign roles for the discussion, but the students construct their
methods of completing their role sheets (Herrera & Kidwell, 2018). In literature circles students sketch and discuss with their members when they have the role of illustrator. The sketching and discussing leads to engagement (McLauglin & DeVoogd, 2004). The student voice and choice of these groups help students develop as independent learners and thinkers; sometimes students even choose which text they want to read (Marchiando, 2013). Literature circles aid in building community in that they can be done through blogs and family literature circles (Day & Lum, 2011). This would mean building community beyond the classroom through literature circles. Family literature involves the student and their parents, and sometimes grandparents and siblings reading the same novel and often meeting with other members of a school community to discuss the novels (Day & Lum, 2011).

Daniels (1994, 2001, 2004, 2006) used literature circles to produce growth in the lower grades, but not as much research has been done in the middle and higher-grade levels, especially with regards to engagement in reading from the literature circles (Hughes, 2014; Daniels, E. 2011). Reluctant students toward reading engaged when they were part of the decisions about how and what they read, such as in literature circles (Sanacore, 2013).

Differentiation is built into literature circles as each participant has a different task to complete. Sanacore (2013) explained that his bi-weekly limited meetings for literature circles expedited differentiation as a tool for teachers. He also used open-ended questions for his mixed disability and non-disability groups with their reading selection (Sanacore, 2013). The group members determined the pace of the discussion and reading rate within the literature circle. Sanacore (2013) observed members in a literature circle and wrote
about his observations in “Slow Down, You Move Too Fast”: Literature Circles as Reflective Practice. Sanacore (2013) stated that literature circles helped learners slow down and develop metacognitive skills about the lessons. The literature circles built confidence in students who created all their responses about social justice (Sanacore, 2013). The students gained confidence because they slowed down to complete their role sheets and study the textual evidence. Students needed time to reflect on literature regarding social justice, and literature circles helped them to do this; students needed a balance between personal and critical reflection about their readings. Sanacore (2013) researched as a participant/observer. Sanacore’s method was to “hook” the readers in a personal way to something they already showed interest in with their personal life. Sanacore (2013) suggested students practice with literature circles before using them with multicultural and social justice texts. Also, he stressed the use of scaffolding for both literature circles and social texts (Sanacore, 2013).

2.9 Review of Related Literature to Social Justice Texts

Scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978) is a way to ensure equity in education, but inequalities in communication standards for race and class have been in the curriculum of the United States for many decades (Williamson, 2016). Many secondary instructors seldom reviewed issues of social justice or how their pedagogy often reinforced privilege (Vandrick, 2014). Educators often do not want to challenge the established curriculum by pointing out systems of inequality in the society reflected in the literature (Williamson, 2016). Teachers often stated that they did not want to disturb the stakeholders in the school with their challenges (Williamson, 2016). However, equipped teachers address the
issue of social justice in the same way they taught how to discuss other complex and controversial topics.

Social justice is often overlooked in secondary classrooms, but social justice discussions should not be ignored (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012). Educators have difficulty in agreeing what social justice is because there are multiple meanings of the term (Williamson, 2016; Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2012). Often teachers have never received lessons about what social class is nor have they received lessons on how to teach about social classes (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012). Pre-service and in-service educators discovered from reading literary texts about social class that they had much to question and investigate within their societies (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012). If English educators ignore social justice in the classroom, however, it will affect students’ literary interpretation (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012).

Teachers need to instruct concepts of race and other social justice issues and the vocabulary with before using literature circles or other strategies to approach the social justice text (Madhuri, Walker, Landmann-Johnsey, & Laughter, 2015). Also, teachers need to define the vocabulary of social justice issues in order for students to be able to apply them to the literature when they encounter them (Madhuri, Walker, Landmann-Johnsey, & Laughter, 2015). Class is one of the social justice issues that may be difficult to define and often uncomfortable to discuss; even so, teachers of English language arts cannot ignore discussing classism or any of the other social injustice issues such as, racism or sexism (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012; Madhuri, Walker, Landmann-Johnsey, & Laughter, 2015).
Reading about social justice was invaluable to students’ global development (Price-Dennis & Carrion, 2017; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016). Educators may wonder why a discussion on social justice matters, but researchers (McLachlan Gilfillan, & Gordon, 2013; Comber, 2015) know there is a connection between economic disadvantage and academic achievement. Many students from lower socioeconomic classes struggled to compete in a secondary education system (Neugebauer, 2016). Children in poverty statistically score lower in academic achievement than their peers in higher economic brackets (Comber, 2015). Students need to make personal connections to topics of race and class in what they read (Madhuri, Walker, Landmann-Johnsey & Laughter, 2015). Social justice was an aim and a process; social justice’s aim was for society’s groups to equally participate in all the same resources (Bell, 2013). Teachers should have a say in social justice curriculum as this leads to improved instruction based on the influence of students and colleagues (Williamson, 2016).

### 2.10 Similar Research Studies

Teachers have used literature circles as a way for them to guide students through social justice (Williamson, 2016). Several cases were examined for their effectiveness in implementing literature circles. The first case study came from Thein, Guise and Sloan’s *Exploring the Significance of Social Class Identity Performance in the English Classroom: A Case Study Analysis of a Literature Circle Discussion* (2012). The purpose of the study was to explore how social class identification and the effects it had on literary interpretation. The period was a six weeks’ qualitative research study that focused on a literature circle consisting of the sample size of four white students with
socioeconomically diverse backgrounds (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012). The pseudonyms of the towns are Venice and Mapleton outside of a large Rust Belt city. The class setting is a tenth grade English class in a Caucasian school (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012). The instructional model they used was based on the work of Harvey Daniels’ (2002) literature circles, and the students rotated through the various roles of the connector, discussion director, and the like. Students met thirty minutes twice a week. The roles for each group member were assigned in order to maintain focus (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012; Daniels, 1994; 2002; Herrera & Kidwell, 2018). Thein, Guise, and Sloan (2012) stated that their findings show the complex nature of social class identity with the relationship to textual interpretations within a literature circle. They stated, “As our case study will demonstrate, discussion of Bastard Out of Carolina in a literature circle context compelled each of these students to improvise a unique social class identity that became increasingly sedimented through social class performances related to both their participation and interpretations in this context” (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012, p. 226). Teachers need to construct curriculum based on social class and with an awareness of social justice based on social class (Labadie, Pole, & Rogers 2013). Discussion regarding inequalities with income should not be a low priority with regard to categories of identities and should have priority with how social class relates to gender in race for school curriculum (Hunt & Seiver, 2018).

Thein, Guise, and Sloan (2012) wanted the students to read and comprehend the novel Bastard of Carolina (Allison, 1992) which is a social justice text. The novel’s heroine, Bone is from a financially disadvantaged class. Her mother was a teenage mom when she had her, and drug abuse and sexual abuse from her mother’s boyfriends are part
of her childhood (Allison, 1992). The setting of the story is the South during the fifties and is a view of the social class hierarchy of the Southern town (Allison, 1992). It is a depiction of a social class that many students in other areas of the United States and the world may not know firsthand but can learn of through reading, as the NCTE and IRA suggest (1996). Researchers wanted the students engaged in meaningful discussions concerning social justice themes in small groups. The outcomes of the collaborative discussions involved hands on, role specific activities (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012).

For the methodology, the researchers used data from a larger qualitative study of ninety tenth-grade students' literacy practices. In that study, Thein, Guise, and Sloan (2012) had interviewed fifty-seven students from the school about their opinions of the differences between the communities of Venice and Mapleton. The researchers used data from the focal group in the form of transcripts from twelve digitally recorded discussions and semi-structured interviews with the participants regarding their involvement in the discussions. The researchers used coding for their interpretations of their observations regarding the students’ social class identity with their family, community, and school, their participation in the literature circle, and their primary textual interpretations. The data showed the complications of social class identity performance with the relationship of textual interpretation and participation in a literature circle (Thein, Sloan, & Guise, 2012). Thein, Guise, and Sloan (2012), also used the sociocultural theory of emotion and studied how emotions impacted literature learning. Emotions were a part of every lesson in every classroom.

In this study, the researchers suggest that social class is a social contract that enforces identity performance need attention in the English classroom as much as other
social constructs of race and gender (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2012). The researchers following their study encountered challenges with other teachers wanting to implement literature circles for social justice texts in their classrooms but not knowing how to do it; they discovered that English educators did not want to continue to ignore social issues that may not be in their comfort level (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2012). Language arts teachers may not have the background in instructing in social issues and may be uncomfortable discussing the topics in whole group discussions (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2012). Also, they found that teachers have to collaborate with their students to learn their students social and cultural background for literary engagement to occur (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012). The educators must have prior knowledge of their students and knowledge of how to instruct about social issues. Instructors had to learn how to instruct with hands on methods such as literature circles (Null, 2004; Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012).

Later, Thein, Guise, and Sloan (2015) wrote of the same qualitative case study further studying qualitatively literature responses from social justice texts. Their purpose in the study was to examine the sociocultural theory of emotion to see how emotion helps students with learning literature. Emotions impact classroom learning. Emotional rules that the students set for themselves were used both in a seminar circle and a literature circle while discussing literature (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2015).

They reviewed what Nina, a white, middle-class student said in the context of two different literature discussion methods. The sample size was Nina, but she was also part of sixteen students reviewed for participation in a month-long unit on To Kill A Mockingbird (Lee, 1960). The students discussed the To Kill A Mockingbird (Lee, 1960) in seminar and Bastard of Carolina (Allison, 1993) during the literature circles. Nina, the
participant, was part of data they collected of ninety tenth-grade students (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2015). The tenth-grader was chosen because of her high academic achievement and her range of reading interests, engagement, and abilities (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2015). Her responses to literature in a seminar versus the literature circle differed and caused researchers to wonder if the emotional response to the situation of the format for discussing the literature was the reason (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2015). Nina’s social-cultural experience in how she discussed the literature impacted her learning because it was a new experience of how she talked about the works (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2015).

Thein, Guise, and Sloan (2015) recommend that despite the complications of teaching social justice texts, the benefits for the students outweigh any obstacles. The NCTE, IRA (1996) and NBPT (2016) stress the importance of this topic as well and lament the absence of such classroom discussions about social justice issues. In order to review how students, participate in literature circles and discussed social justice, some key concepts and methods should be clarified. The key concepts for the Thein, Guise, and Sloan study were literature circles, classism, social justice, and engagement (Hughes, 2014; Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2015). Thein, Guise, and Sloan (2015), suggested students analyzed texts through literature circles depicting cultural differences concerning class, race, gender, and sexuality. Thein, Guise, & Sloan, (2015) stated:

Our findings advance scholarship on the relationship between response and emotion by suggesting that emotion cannot simply be invited in or left out of the literature classroom in the interest of moving students toward literary engagement, but instead is already fundamentally a part of literary engagement
and must be noticed, interrogated, and sometimes disrupted in the interest of expanding interpretive possibilities. (p. 202)

Thein, Guise, and Sloan (2015) showed how focused curriculum about race, gender, and class impacted a classroom. These discussions cannot be ignored because social justice played into aspects of students’ lives (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2015). Teachers needed to be equipped to address social justice in the same way they learned to discuss other complex and controversial topics (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2015). These researchers aimed to clarify perceptions regarding class identity including backgrounds, education, region, and family (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2015). These studies were limited with time restraints; for example, in the Thein, Guise, and Sloan (2015) study, students only met for thirty minutes twice a week. Teachers needed to know “how to group students, what kind of discussion tasks are better to be used with students, understanding cultural differences of those involved in social interactions, and reconsidering their definition of ‘struggling’ readers” (Chen, 2008, p. 81).

Literature circles enabled teachers to instruct about social justice to students in a Title 1 school (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2015). Title 1 schools are a classification that developed from the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and these schools came from the section of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This act first passed in 1965 and then was revised in 2004 as Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged (U.S. Department of Education). The purpose of this act was to have a higher quality of education for low-income and minority students with grants, scholarships, and allocations (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).
Another study examined how effective forty-six, conveniently sampled, teachers in Istanbul, Turkey, found literature circles to be as an effective strategy when they participated in the discussion groups themselves (Aytan, 2018). The study used the qualitative approach with unstructured interview (Aytan, 2018). This means that sixteen of the teachers consented to be interviewed. The interview was considered unstructured because the interviewer could use his personal opinion and judgment to move the conversation and be spontaneous without being dependent on a set of prepared questions (Aytan, 2018; Gall, Borg, & Gall 1996). As a result of the study, the teachers stated that they would implement the practice of literature circles in their classrooms (Aytan, 2018). Educators found literature circles useful for building collaboration, teamwork, analyzing other viewpoints, building vocabulary, and displaying unknown talents in the pupils (Aytan, 2018).

In another study, the engagement of middle schoolers were examined for their enthusiasm for participating in online literature circles with college students (Thomas, 2014). Sixty-eight students and eighteen college students were the sample size for the study which lasted for four weeks (Thomas, 2014). The study was a qualitative analysis of the data consisting of surveys, interviews, and online discussion posts. The results showed the middle school students were motivated to participate in online literature circles (Thomas, 2014).

In an additional study, literature circles were used in a vocational, secondary school in Indonesia. The data were qualitatively analyzed, and the empirical findings displayed that the students were actively involved in selecting texts, assigning roles, and meanings of texts through discussions (Widodo, 2016). Also, the students learned English
grammar and developed their language with the books and discussions as well as vocational content knowledge. The teachers worked as guides and provided scaffolding for the students who worked collaboratively in the discussion groups (Widodo, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978).

2.11 Conclusion

When teachers are guides and provide scaffolding for literature circles, students can work collaboratively (Widodo, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). As the literature review revealed, scaffolding has long been a part of literature circle implementation (Vygotsky, 1978). In addition, the literature review looked into the history and current status of literature circles usage in English classrooms (Daniels, 1994; Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2015). Challenges teachers and students face when participating in discussions of social class texts was also reviewed in the literature review (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2012). The literature review also covered a historical overview of what a literature circle was and how classrooms implemented them, with a focus on particular role features (Daniels, 1994, 2001). Related methodologies and cases were also reviewed (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2012, 2015; Widodo, 2016, Thomas, 2014; Aytan, 2018).

The literature review examined why students needed to focus on the often-neglected topics found in social justice texts (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2012, 2015). Teachers should be equipped with how to address the issue of social justice texts in the same way they learned to discuss other complex and controversial topics (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2012, 2015). Instruction on social justice issues is paramount for lessons before reading the social justice texts, so students know how to identify the issues in the readings and connect them to their lives (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2015). The strategy of
literature circles gave teachers a tool to talk about difficult yet essential topics of social justice (Daniels, 2004; Thein, Guise & Sloan 2012).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This action research study examined the challenge of engaging secondary students in reading social justice texts. The Problem of Practice (PoP) arose from secondary schools continuing to attempt to connect learners with reading, amid all the digital tools taking up students’ interests and time. In addition to the challenges connecting students with reading, students today are in more culturally and socially diverse classrooms, introducing a greater need for the readings chosen to reflect the cultural environment of the students. According to the GADOE (2015) and NBPTS (2016), students’ reading and discussion of texts should reflect social justice changes, and a method for facilitating such discussion is literature circles.

3.2 Research Question

The dissertation in practice answered the following research question using the triangulation mixed-method action research design.

RQ: Does implementing literature circles with social justice texts in a secondary classroom foster engagement in reading and classroom discussions for students?

Success in this context comes from engagement from reading social justice texts and improved classroom discussion.

3.3 Chapter Overview
The first purpose of this study was to consider if the use of literature circles would engage students in a social justice text. The researcher of this study was positioned with insider/outsider status within the study. In this mixed-methods, triangulation study, the researcher worked as a tenth grade English Language Arts (ELA) teacher. The class was a heterogeneous group of students. Over the course of six weeks, the researcher implemented literature circles and collected data about one literature circle's engagement.

The second purpose of the study was to discover whether teaching students with literature circles would engage them in social justice text readings and have a positive effect on their attitudes regarding social justice texts. Literature circles offer a teaching strategy which allows students to engage in social justice texts with other students. This action research study helped to determine the impact literature circles could have on reading engagement. Students who lose interest in reading often contribute to poor school attendance and bad grades (Bland, Carrington & Brady, 2009). Both state and National standards address students need to read about social class, diversity, equity, and fairness to stay knowledgeable and current of world standards (National Council of Teachers of English & International Reading Association, 1994, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016, Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Disengaged students will not read texts and could continue to have poor attendance, poor grades, leaving school and then continue with social and educational disadvantages (Bland, Carrington, & Brady, 2009). Students not involved in reading and discussing social texts will not gain the benefits of social justice curriculum (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016).
3.4 Description of Intervention

Before the study began, the researcher reviewed her district standards and curriculum to see if any current texts would meet the criteria of being a social justice text. The researcher was not allowed to stray from the assigned curriculum. *Tears of A Tiger* (Draper, 1994) was required district reading. It also meets the criteria to be classified as a social justice text since it deals with issues of racism, sexism, and classism. Many books can facilitate critical literacy experiences. However, it is not the text that creates critical awareness but instead it is the critical analysis and discussion that students engage in through their questioning and examining (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). The teacher-researcher continued to investigate the best methods of using literature circles and introduced the teaching strategy early in the year, so the students were familiar with the pedagogy before the action research. First, the researcher needed administrative and district-level permission to conduct the research study. The administrator approved a consent letter as long as it met the approval of the district research review board which the study did. At the beginning of the term in which the action research occurred, the students in tenth-grade ELA received permission slips to be a part of the study. The parents or guardians signed these permission slips.

Since the text was part of the tenth-grade district curriculum already, parental permission to read the social justice text was not necessary. *Tears of a Tiger* (Draper, 1994) is a high interest text that tell the story of four African-American teenage boys who celebrated a basketball win by drinking and then driving and then crashing. One of the boys did not survive the car crash. The boys face the guilt from surviving the accident. The boys experience incidents with racism, classism, and sexism throughout the novel.
Permission to teach the text out of sequence from the district plan was obtained. The teacher-researcher gained approval from the assistant-principal in charge of curriculum and instruction and the English department head. The books were obtained from the school librarian and were considered a textbook for the school. All students had one hundred percent access to the book. It was best to check them out to the individual students for accountability and to cover their finances should the book be lost. Additionally, if the students were responsible for their book, then they could read at home and make up any reading assignments when they were absent.

The intervention in the action research study required the collaboration of learners participating in a discussion group using the strategy of literature circles. The teacher-researcher selected literature circles to give students the opportunity to discuss social justice themes while reading *Tears of a Tiger* (Draper, 1994). Working with peers to discuss controversial topics was intended to provide a level of comfort and a basis for exploring issues of social injustices in other works, content areas, and in careers.

Literature circles were used as an intervention strategy to keep the students involved in the text and as a vehicle to discuss social justice issues in the comfort of a peer group. The teacher-researcher served as the facilitator of the literature circles and not as a participant or as the voice of authority, as an intervention. The researcher intervened when the students finished discussions too quickly. When students had not completed literature circle response sheets, the teacher-researcher provided extra time to complete them before the discussion.

The researcher selected the introductory lesson to be a computer-based module that explained literature circles’ history, the roles of the members, and the purpose. The
lesson included two video clips of the teacher-researcher explaining literature circles to another group of students and then facilitating a literature circle. Students completed the lesson in the computer lab. They took a Google assessment at the conclusion of the lesson. The intervention transformed the English classroom with the computer module. The teacher-researcher then administered the pre-survey about social justice the following class period. Students were then placed in literature circle groups. The teacher scaffolded the development of the discussions on the social justice texts with video clips on social justice, comprehension questions on *Tears of a Tiger* (Draper, 1994), and explanations of role sheet tasks. During completion of the role sheets the teacher-researcher circulated to answer questions about the task and provide suggestions for completing role sheets. When students met in literature circles, the teacher-researcher helped students stay on track while asking each other questions for the discussion.

Next, students continued to read and discuss the novel and have literature circle time. Finally, the literature circles provided extensive or intensive intervention time during the extend portion of the intervention. The implementation of this specific strategy intervention shifted English instruction from an explicitly direct instruction about the theme of social justice to peer group discussions for all students.

### 3.5 Rationale for Mixed Methods Research Design

This action research is based on a mixed-methods design. The method for collecting data over six weeks’ study was a mixed methods research design incorporating triangulation of the data (Creswell, 2014). Because mixed methods use both quantitative and qualitative data, both types were used in this study. As defined in Chapter Two, mixed methods design uses qualitative and quantitative research and analysis (Chen,
2008; Creswell, 2014; Ye, 2017). Birnbaum, Emig, and Fisher (2003) claim that triangulation comes when “researchers use multiple perceptions to clarify meanings,” (p. 193). Triangulation increases validation because more than one data source was used to measure the research question for reliability of the results (Mertler, 2013). In this action research study, triangulation of data was conducted from gathering surveys, observations which were video, and audio taped, student journals, and unstructured interviews. The observations and unstructured interviews were transcribed.

The teacher-researcher used Mertler’s (2014) four-stage process for the action research. First, planning was done which in this case was identifying the topic which was the need to use literature circles with social justice texts. To gain better understanding of the topic, the teacher-researcher gathered sources on literature circles, engagement, and social justice pedagogy from journals and books. After reviewing the literature, the teacher-researcher created an operative research plan for collecting the data. The teacher-researcher used concurrent triangulation mixed-methods design. The teacher-researcher used the surveys, interviews, journals, and observations to answer the question of engagement with a social justice text.

Research using mixed methods may use different forms; the research question for this study used a convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell, 2014). With convergent parallel mixed methods, the teacher-researcher "converges or merges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem" (Creswell, 2014, p. 44). At the conclusion of the data collection, the results were interpreted, and the findings presented and discussed with suggestions for
changes to the study in the future. An action plan including an outline with implications for the future was given.

Member checks were done to ensure the validity of the data as it was collected, then transcribed and analyzed. Student participants were allowed to add or take away information on their journals and literature role sheets prior to submitting them. In addition, they could review their video-taped recordings and add additional comments if they felt further explanation was needed.

**Quantitative data.** Quantitative data deals with numbers (Trochim, 2010). Quantitative data measures data types such as surveys and then uses numerical data in the form of descriptive or inferential statics to analyze the information (Loewen & Plonsky, 2015). The data used in this study was from the pre- and post-surveys of the attitudes in reading and knowledge of social justice issues. Pre- and post- surveys were conducted at the beginning of the study and then again at the conclusion of the study, then analyzed using a t-test (Stagoom, 2018).

Quantitative data looks for causality relationship between time and change (Taguchi, 2018); the teacher-researcher analyzed the changes in opinions and knowledge of social justice issues from the beginning to the end of the six weeks’ study. Descriptive statics were used to analyze the results from the pre/post surveys (Loewen & Plonsky, 2015). Pre-and post-surveys about social justice texts were used for the quantitative data of this study.

**Qualitative data.** Qualitative methods are varied in qualitative research, but some of the more traditional methods were used for this action research study (Trochim, 2006). Qualitative research deals with words and talks about terms as size and frequency; it
deals with open-ended interviewing and observations of participants (Trochim, 2006). This type of research is exploratory and open-ended and does not work from pre-determined variables, but it uses interviews, observations, and field notes to explore a concept (Taguchi, 2018). Qualitative approaches include any information that cannot be captured with numbers.

The nature of qualitative data collected for this study was narrative and was collected from observations of the literature circles, literature circle role sheets, unstructured interviews, and the students’ social justice text response journals. The data collection was done simultaneously throughout the study, allowing the teacher-researcher to gain an understanding of the problem of reading engagement with social justice texts.

The format of an English classroom lent itself to using such formats, as journaling and response sheets are already a part of the student’s typical English class assignments.

The first type of data collected for this study was participant observation, which can be a demanding task for traditional research as the observer becomes part of the research context (Trochim, 2006), but for the teacher-researcher, she or he is already an active participant in the classroom. The teacher-researcher made field notes throughout class for later analysis. Direct observation was also conducted when the teacher-researcher watched the interactions of the literature circle without participating in the discussion. The discussion groups were videotaped, and transcripts were made of these interactions. Unstructured interviews were also videotaped, and transcriptions were made of these interactions, too. The teacher-researcher reviewed the recordings later for evidence of engagement and critical terms that the students might say related to social justice, such as classicism, racism, or sexism. Students also submitted journals, and role
sheets were also used to determine what themes would emerge from the written
discussions. These were analyzed and coded for key ideas and themes.

3.6 Action Research Validity

The research question drove the investigation of the researcher’s research
question to improve her teaching practices (Giles, Wilson, & Elias, 2010). The purpose of
this action research was to improve reading engagement. Action research requires the
teacher-researcher to plan, act, develop, and then reflect on his or her teaching (Mertler,
2014). Action research was used for this study because the teacher-researcher was
actively involved with teaching and researching with her students. Action research is
often dismissed as being not authentic or strenuous enough when compared with
traditional research (Mertler, 2014). In education, traditional research is done by
researchers who are removed from the environment they are studying. In other words,
they are not the teachers of the students they are observing (Mertler, 2014). The action-
researcher of this study was the teacher of the participants.

3.7 Context of Research Study

School context. The participants were from the high school where the teacher-
researcher taught within Georgia. The school has seven periods a day with a half hour for
lunch. The school and district are all under Title 1. The school district for the study was a
large district and was the tenth largest district in the state, with a student enrollment of
more than 32,000 in fifty-six schools. The district had the oldest public school in the
South and the fifth oldest public high school in America. All students in this district
except for the one located on a military installation, are Title 1 schools and receive free
lunch and breakfast.
The school had 981 students in grades 9-12; the ratio of students to teacher was 18.1. The high school was in the lower 10% of Georgia middle schools based on students' performance on the state reading and math exams. The high school was ranked 165 out of 457 most diverse public high school according to the Niche reporting (2018). On the standardized Georgia Milestones Assessment, 11% of the student body scored proficient in reading. Tenth grade English language arts students in the literature circles were the sample from the teacher-researcher’s class that had eighteen students enrolled in it.

The teacher-researcher’s role in the school was that of English language arts department member and classroom teacher. The state required all students in ninth grade to take the state ELA standardized test. Therefore, the students in this study took the state standardized End of Course English I test in 2016-2017 when they were freshman unless they were behind on their credits and would have taken the test 2015-2016.

**Context of standardized testing.** The Georgia Milestones Assessment is used to measure standard norms in English Language Arts skills. A score of *beginning learner* means the student does not have proficiency in the skills for the grade level course. *Developing* means that the student has partial skills for the grade level. *Proficient* means the student is prepared for the next grade level and on track for college and career success. *Distinguished learner* means the students are very well prepared for the next level and college and career beyond the next grade level (Georgia Department of Education, 2015-2019).

The participants' Lexile ranges from their ninth-grade year are 1005-1390 as a group (see Table 3.1). A Lexile Framework is a test developed by MetaMetrics, Incorporated that matches a reader to the right text reading level. The test is based on
quantitative methods derived from individual words and sentence lengths, instead of a qualitative analysis of the content in order to gain a reading score. The students are given sentences with different ranges of difficulty based on the word frequency and difficulty of the passages. The scores are reported on a scale; OL would be a beginning learner, and 1700L would be an advanced learner. The Lexile Framework matches readers with texts of the appropriate level of difficulty. The test is used frequently for K-12 readers to ensure that students are matched to their right reading level (Wilkins, Hartman, Howland, & Sharma, 2010).

**Timeframe of study.** The timeframe for this study was a six-week period in the spring semester. During week one, the teacher-researcher introduced literature circles with a computer module self-paced lesson. The module included video clips of the teacher-researcher introducing the concept of a literature circle and then conducting a literature circle with other students. Following the module, the students took an assessment in a Google document online to show their greater understanding of the literature circles and the specific roles. The next day, students completed pre-surveys about social justice texts, and the novel was introduced. Assigned literature circles were announced. The third day students met and decided how they would discuss the texts. Then, the following class period was a silent reading time of the next chapter with recall questions, and they completed their literature circle role sheet. Students could finish reading at home if necessary.

Week two involved observations regarding engagement. Students rotated to a new role in the literature circle. Literature circle time was thirty minutes, but students could also use the extra class time to prepare their role sheets for the next meeting.
During week three the teacher observed as students rotated to a new role in the literature circle. During weeks four and five students continued to read both independently with lectures and with literature circles. The final week was week six.

During this week, students rotated to a new role in the literature circle (see Figure 3.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Research Project Timeline</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send letters to parents and students outlining the research and goals for the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send a letter to parents explaining the research and asking permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have students’ complete pre/survey about social justice texts and reading engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assign literature circles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce literature circles and social injustice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze the pre/survey results from the “Experiences with Social Justice Texts.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students in the literature circles should be collaborating at a high level now and show engagement with the texts. With the completion of the first role sheets, plans for the next reading session should be made. First journal responses should be reviewed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to serve as a guide during the literature circles and observe students for engagement and social text conversations, and higher order thinking skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check students’ journals and role sheets for progress. Observe literature circles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss findings with another teacher or administrator over data collected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe literature circles and review role sheets to see how their final projects are coming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer the surveys of “Experiences with Social Justice Texts” again and compare these results from the initial surveys. Summarize results and conclude the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give a final test on the novel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review observer notes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1 Project Timeline

3.8 Role of the Researcher

Teacher-researchers should determine their positionality at a research setting when determining their role in the action research with their participants (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Insiders with an organization conduct their action research (Herr & Anderson, 2015). The teacher-researcher of this study had insider status as the classroom teacher of the participants of the literature circle. The teacher-researcher was a certified,
full time English teacher. Improving reading engagement and scores on English state scores was a concern at the research site, which motivated the teacher-researcher’s study.

During the study, the teacher-researcher took on the role of observer and researcher (Merriam, 2009). These roles allowed the teacher-researcher to maintain reliable data throughout the study while being involved with the literature circles activities and (Merriam, 2009) and students were able to express their thoughts and ideas in a comfortable environment with their classroom teacher and peers. In order to share their ideas and attitudes without reservation, the students needed to see the teacher-researcher as the facilitator, teacher, and researcher.

3.9 Participants

The teacher-researcher selected participants for the action research. The participants for the study were members of the teacher-researcher’s English language arts class in a tenth-grade class. Seven of the students from this class made up one literature circle and were used for the analysis of this study. The students were selected based on non-probability convenience sampling (Mertler, 2014). The class was considered an average 10th grade English class. None of the participants in the actual literature circle were classified as honors students, gifted, or having an Independent Educational Plan. The students obtained parental permission to be involved in the study (Appendix A). The teacher-researcher wanted to have females and males, and African-American and Caucasian students as those genders and ethnicities are representative of the school's population. All of the students were in the tenth grade and sixteen years old at the time of the study. The participants were all in the teacher-researcher’s seventh period class which was their last class period of the school day.
The participants were the following tenth grade English language arts students. Of the seven students, three were female, and five were male. All of the participants have pseudonyms for the action research study.

- Shayla was a Black, sixteen-year-old female. She was outgoing and liked to help the teacher pass out papers, answer questions, or take messages to other parts of the school. Shayla was a cheerleader and sometimes missed for games, but she stopped cheering before the completion of this study.
• Kevan was a White, sixteen-year-old male. He participated well in class discussions and could be considered a class clown. He was a baseball player. He often left this class period early in order to travel for away games. Keven did fail a quarter of English. He did bring his grade up to a passing grade with grade recovery, however.

• Nathan was a White, sixteen-year-old male. Whenever the action-researcher needed parental support for him, he would give his aunt’s contact information. She was supportive. Nathan’s performance in English could go from almost failing to an “A” in the classroom very quickly. He said of himself that he had trouble focusing and would sometimes give the teacher-researcher his phone as he entered class so that he could focus better. He was very talkative in group discussions.

• Xzee was a fifteen-year-old, Black female. She walked to school and would often stay after school to help teachers in their classrooms. She was friendly and easy-going.

• Shailey was a sixteen-year-old, White female. She was still labeled a freshman in this sophomore English class due to missing a great deal of school the previous year. She also had poor attendance at the beginning of this year. She was very quiet and reserved and preferred to work independently.

• Dom was a sixteen-year-old, Black male. He was a football player and honor roll student. He was quiet but was very insightful, and articulate when he did make contributions to group discussions.
• Tray was a sixteen-year-old, Black male. Tray was a basketball player and very outgoing. He was often chosen by one of the assistant principals to assist with activities at school such as passing out brochures and textbooks to classes.

The school, Hillman High School (pseudonym) was in rural Georgia and was Title 1. The participants all received free lunch and breakfast because the school was one hundred percent free lunch. Together all the students made up one literature circle.

All of the students took The Georgia Milestones Assessment the previous school year. A score of beginning learner meant the student did not have proficiency in the skills for the grade level course. Xzee scored a beginning learner. Shayla scored as a developing learner which meant she had partial skills for the grade level. Data regarding each participant in the literature circle with regard to reading levels and most recent English End of Course tests was obtained from students’ school online records (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Lexile</th>
<th>Georgia Milestones Assessment-9th grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shayla</td>
<td>1075</td>
<td>73, developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevan</td>
<td>1305</td>
<td>83, proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan</td>
<td>1345</td>
<td>81, proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xzee</td>
<td>1005</td>
<td>62, beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shailey</td>
<td>1265</td>
<td>81, proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dom</td>
<td>1390</td>
<td>85, proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tray</td>
<td>1209</td>
<td>80, proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All the other members of the literature circle scored proficient which meant the students were prepared for the next grade level and on track for college and career success (Georgia Department of Education, 2015-2019).

**Ethical Considerations.** A teacher-researcher must be concerned with ethical considerations when a research plan is implemented. Students knew they did not have to participate in a study in order to pass the class (Owen, 2006). The students are all minors, so parental permission to participate in the action research study was first obtained before the study. This was obtained in a letter to parents explaining the study and the voluntary participation.

The writing about the participants kept the identities of the participants a secret by using as pseudonyms for their name, school, and district. Questionnaire data was key to the research study. In addition, the teacher-researcher, during the reflection phase, the researcher shared data with other educators did not reveal the identities of students and classes (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 151). The research study was implemented not to take away from instruction time or interfere in any way with class goals (Owen, 2006). Within the classes were a wide range of learning styles and abilities. The information from the research will address these differing levels of instruction.

**3.10 Data Collection Instruments**

To gain understanding of reading engagement several interventions occurred. Other English teachers and a special education teacher reviewed the Likert Scale social justice survey and stated that the pre/post survey should not be any more than ten questions and should allow the students to circle the answer. The teacher stated this was because the students do not often read long passages and do not like to write. She stated
that an open-ended survey would not work for students at the research site. An assistant-principal suggested that giving the students a definition of "social justice" would also be helpful before asking the students to complete the survey. These interventions were added before administering the survey.

**Pre and Post Survey.** The summative assessment was one tool of the action research along with the pre/post surveys. Surveys enable the teacher-researcher to obtain written data from the research participants with open ended or close ended questions (Mertler, 2014). Surveys for collecting information are simple to make, distribute, collect, and analyze (Butin, 2010). The use of surveys enables the teacher-researcher to obtain data in quantity and variety quickly (Mertler, 2014).

A pre-survey of the students was conducted at the beginning, and then a post-survey at the end of the study. Using pre- and post- surveys enabled the teacher-researcher to obtain data that was compared and contrasted from the interaction of the social justice text reading and discussions. This enabled the action researcher to monitor increasing knowledge of what a social justice text is and how to discuss themes of social justice when reading (McMillan & Hearn, 2009).

These surveys were in a paper form and were distributed for students to complete during the first class of the unit for the novel study of *Tears of a Tiger* (Draper, 1994). The students were given about ten minutes to complete the pre-survey. The teacher-researcher offered explanations of directions in order for the students to complete the survey. For example, she further explained the term “social justice.” She wrote on the board, “Justice or fairness in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges, within a society” (*Your Dictionary*). She also explained verbally that a “5”
meant the student fully agreed with the statement and a “1” meant that they did not agree with the statement. The pre-survey also consisted of both closed questions which students agreed with on a Likert scale (see Table 3.3).

The post-survey was also in paper form and distributed on the last day of the unit during the final exam for the class. Students were allowed to complete the post-survey after the exam at their own pace. They received the exact questions they had for the pre-survey. The students responded with agreement to the questions with a Likert scale.

Table 3.2

Survey Questions

1. How much do you enjoy reading on your own about social justice issues?
2. Outside of assigned homework, how much reading on social justice issues have you done in the past?
3. In the past week, how many days have you read for at least 30 minutes?
4. How many books on social justice issues would you say you own?
5. How many books on social justice issues would you say are in your house?
6. When you read, do you like to read independently?
7. Do you like to read with a group?
8. Reading about social justice issues makes you a better-informed citizen?
9. Divorce is a social justice issue?
10. Free and reduced lunch is a social justice or class justice issue?
The pre/post surveys asked questions concerning some themes of social justice and students’ time spent reading during their leisure time. With these concerns in mind, the teacher-researcher designed the pre/post surveys to obtain student answers on their knowledge of social justice texts and their time spent reading texts with social justice themes. The colleagues also reviewed the data of the pre/post surveys. The pre/post surveys used the following five-point Likert scale: (5) the highest, (4), (3), (2), (1) lowest. Participants used this Likert scale to respond to ten statements (see Table 3.3).

The Likert scale includes the above questions. A definition of social justice issues was displayed on the SmartBoard while the students completed the survey. The definition stated, “Justice or fairness in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges, within a society” (Your Dictionary, 2018). Additionally, if students still did not know what the term meant, the teacher-researcher explained it on a one-to-one basis when the students asked for further clarification.

**Journals.** During the unit implementing literature circles, journal writings were also included. Three journals from the students were completed throughout the study for qualitative data. (see Table 3.3). One was done at the start of the study, another at a midpoint in the study and the final at the end of the study. The journals were response journals which were a “place where kids can capture and save responses while they read or immediately after they read” (Daniels, 2002). The teacher-researcher’s reason for designing these prompts was to gauge the students’ knowledge of social justice texts and their growing ability to discuss social justice texts and to identify themes found in such texts (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016).
### Table 3.3

**Journal Prompts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Prompts</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give examples of social justice issues from <em>Tears of a Tiger</em>. Remember that social justice issues can include racism, sexism, and classicism. Be specific in your answer and make it at least a half a page.</td>
<td>May 2, 2017</td>
<td>Novel- (Draper, 1994). <em>Tears of a Tiger</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you still classify <em>Tears of a Tiger</em> as a social justice text? Do you think teachers should have students read social justice texts at school, why or why not? Have literature circles helped you stay engaged in the reading? Why or why not? Make your response at least a half a page.</td>
<td>May 25, 2017</td>
<td>Novel- (Draper, 1994). <em>Tears of a Tiger</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observations with Student Role Sheets. Observations of the literature circle meetings were conducted each session. The teacher-researcher observed students becoming involved in the conversation as they took turns describing their actions in completing their role sheets (see Table 3.4; see Appendix E). Students turned in their texts to show answers to their role sheets, they asked each other for clarification, and agreed and disagreed with each other on certain points from the novel. Because observations took place at any time, the observer had to be deliberate when looking for some specific behavior. However, the observing for action research never interfered with the teaching and the students' learning. Besides, the teacher-researcher did not force students into an opinion and allowed them also not to voice an opinion if the student chose that option, so as not to skew the data. During the observations, students read from their role sheets. Student role sheets were developed from the Daniels (1994) model of how to conduct a literature circle, and to evaluate engagement and growing discussion abilities. The student roles rotated each meeting which allowed for each learner to experience each of the tasks. The learners were able to participate in each role and to view and respond to each other using each role sheet lens. Students were asked to critically discuss the texts to become more critically aware of their world with applying the critical literacy theories (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). The roles were illustrator, connector, discussion director, vocabulary enricher, passage master, and summarizer (see Table 3.4). These roles are the traditional roles with the traditional method of using role sheets (Daniels, 1994). The teacher-researcher created the paper sheets and aligned a Georgia 10th grade ELA standard (Georgia Department of Education, 2015) with each role sheet (see Appendix G-L; see Table 3.4).
Table 3.4

**Literature Circle Roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature Circle Role</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>GA-ELA Standard</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Director</td>
<td>Create Questions</td>
<td>9-10RL2</td>
<td>create and answer questions about the text, its characters, setting, theme, or plot (Daniels, 2002).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Enricher</td>
<td>Define Words</td>
<td>9-10RL4</td>
<td>find new, unusual, or challenging keywords, and explain the words (Daniels, 2002).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage Master</td>
<td>Select Key Passages</td>
<td>9-10RI5</td>
<td>find critical passages important to the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrator</td>
<td>Create a Picture</td>
<td>9-10SL5</td>
<td>create a visual depicting a key scene, idea, character(s), or setting from the text (Daniels, 2002).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connector</td>
<td>Identify Connections</td>
<td>9-10W9</td>
<td>cite connections between the text and another text, event, song, or a movie (Daniels, 2002).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Unstructured Interviews.** These interviews were conducted to provide more understanding of the data and to examine the complexity of the participants responses (Merriam, 1988). The interviews were held two times and they were group interviews. The first one had five of the seven participants, and the last interview had all seven of the participants. The interview questions were developed spontaneously, but with the guiding
research question leading the discourse. The semi-structure allowed for further probing of points by the teacher-researcher. Both interviews were held in the classroom during class time and after a literature circle discussion meeting. These interviews were videotaped and transcribed by the teacher-researcher (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). The first interview was held on May 21, 2017 and the second on May 25, 2017; both of the interviews were at the end of the six weeks’ study (See Appendix F).

3.11 Research Procedure

This study consisted of four stages of research: planning, acting, developing, and reflecting on the research question. The process for this action research used the steps outlined by Mertler (2014). Empathizing with students drove this action research and led to the design of the research study. Discussions with colleagues in the English department and the teacher-researcher's experiences with student disengagement led the teacher-researcher to want to research students’ disengagement. Beyond disinterest in reading, students became disengaged with texts they felt did not relate to their own lives due to the lack of diversity in class material. The relevant literature was reviewed (Chapter 2) to discover how social justice texts through literature circles would benefit students. While literature circles benefited students in many ways, implementing social justice texts gave them a curriculum to prepare them for inequalities in the workforce and for participating in society. The discovery of this connection led to the research question:

RQ: Does implementing literature circles with social justice texts in a secondary classroom foster engagement in reading and classroom discussions for students?

This action research study explored literature circles and the discussions shared by students in a tenth-grade classroom using mixed methods methodology. This method
allowed the teacher-researcher to provide a clearer understanding of the problem of practice and its research question with the use of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Creswell, 2012). Pre-and post-surveys, observations of literature circles, role sheet documents, journals, and were examined to understand how literature circles effect reading and discussion of a social justice text in one classroom. Within this environment that data was gathered and reviewed.

The teacher-researcher explored the interactions of one literature circle within a classroom and gathered quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously (Creswell, 2012). The teacher-researcher analyzed field notes, student journals, pre-and post-surveys, and unstructured interviews to review how one literature circle within a tenth-grade class implemented literature circles.

**Rationale for Research Design.** Mixed method research has become more widely used recently (Zohrabi, 2013). Two of the main instruments used in mixed methods include questionnaire or survey and classroom observation. Both of these measures were used in this teacher-researcher’s action research study and are usually presented and explained through mixed methods (Zohrabi, 2013). The mixed methods design allowed the teacher-researcher to combine quantitative and qualitative data to gain more information (Mertler, 2014) of the participant as a reader and discussion participant with social justice texts. Data collection included surveys, observations and the literature circle documents and journals.

**Pre-and Post-Surveys.** Surveys are used with quantitative data collection for the teacher-researcher to administer a survey of sample participants to gauge their attitudes, beliefs, and opinions. The collection involves a questionnaire and gathering of numeric
data which can be statistically reviewed to show trends and to relate the statistics back to the action-research study (Creswell, 2012). With a survey or questionnaire, the teacher-researcher needs to ensure the instruments’ reliability either with close-ended questions, open-ended questions, or a mixture (Zohabri, 2013). This survey for this action-research contained close-ended questions.

Observations. Six observations were reviewed from the six weeks of the literature circle study. During the observations the teacher-researcher was an active participant (Creswell, 2012) as the facilitator of the literature circle. She took field notes and video recorded the observations of the literature circles. These notes were typed up in a word document and stored on the teacher-researcher’s computer. The notes were then coded with key words noted. Observations were preplanned and used to answer research question with a narrow focus for the observations (Zohrabi, 2013).

Journals. The teacher-researcher read the three journal prompts and identified common patterns and themes within the journals. Journals are a diversified assessment activity that can be used to foster academic success (Ukpokodu, 2010). Student journals were used to collect qualitative data about their reflections of the social justice text (Chen, 2014). Journal reviews are dependent upon the teacher-researcher’s judgement. To guard against integrity threats of the data interrater reliability was used by having three colleagues examine the journal entries to establish agreement about the selection of themes (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). The journal data shows overall themes that came from patterns of keywords from the three student journal entries. The teacher-researcher created the journal prompts to help guide and reinforce the engagement and discussion in the literature circles.
Procedure

Action research requires specific steps of planning, action, developing, and reflecting to ensure the best results (Mettler, 2014).

Planning. During the planning phase, the research plan was developed based on the Problem of Practice. Within this phase, the topic was limited, information was gathered, the literature reviewed, and the research was developed. During this researcher’s planning phase, she first reviewed issues of pedagogy in the classroom, then discussed issues in the curriculum with other English teachers. Next, the researcher narrowed the topic from reading engagement to reading engagement with social justice texts in order to incorporate a diversity component. The literature review helped to formulate the research question. The final literature review examines current research. Specifically, the review focuses on social justice texts and disengagement of secondary students. The review examines educational choices, specifically literature circles for a strategy of engagement and discussion. Following this review, the researcher created the study and located the data to answer the research question: Does implementing literature circles with social texts in a secondary classroom foster engagement in reading and classroom discussions for students? Action researchers seek to improve practice (Mertler, 2014). When reflecting on the tenth-grade English class, the researcher knew reading improvement had to be a part of the research. The teacher-researcher wished to address social class. The student body was predominantly African-American, and all the students receive free lunch based on their family's income. The teacher-researcher sought to make the students more aware of social class injustices through the use of literature. Reviewing the NBPTS (2016) request to include social justice texts in the English language arts’
classroom, along with the teacher-researcher’s own coursework on diversity, created a lens for developing the Problem of Practice.

Also, within this phase the topic was limited, information was gathered, the literature was reviewed, and the research plan was developed. During this researcher's planning phase, issues of pedagogy in the classroom were reviewed, then discussed issues in the curriculum with other English teachers. Next, the researcher narrowed the topic from reading engagement to reading engagement with social justice texts in order to incorporate a diversity component. The literature review helped to formulate the research question. The review examined educational choices, specifically literature circles for a strategy of engagement and discussion. This involved creating the study and locating the data to answer the research question: *Does implementing literature circles with social justice texts in a secondary classroom foster engagement in reading and classroom discussions for students?* Through discussions with the other secondary English teachers at the school, the researcher identified a PoP. Students who lacked engagement in reading do not tend to read social justice texts. Students who lack engagement in reading fail to fully comprehend any texts they are asked to read. Adjacent to that is the idea that the text they are asked to read are often irrelevant or unrelatable to them, fostering higher disengagement with reading in general (Bland, Carrington, & Brady, 2009). Teachers might select social justice texts in order to encourage students to more fully engage with reading in general while utilizing literature circles to give them better tools for grappling with texts compelling to them for their readily apparent social value. Students who have a voice in their learning and work with peer groups tend to perform better academically (Yazzie, Mintz, & McCormick, 2012). The teacher-researcher noticed in her class that the
students wanted to learn together and could explain topics to each other with clarity. From further discussions with other teachers and the literature review, the teacher recalled successfully using literature circles at multiple grade levels and settings including a detention center. Literature circles improved engagement in those classes.

The literature circles’ instruction included reading assignments and role sheets that the students used for discussion. Students first learned the basic structure of how a literature circle should operate. Students participated in literature circles earlier in the year to read and discuss a poem or a short story together. The students first watched a PowerPoint (APPENDIX B) explaining the process and then completed role sheets in class and held their discussions the next day. Students then answered an assessment about literature circles from a Google Form (see Appendix C; see figures 4.2-4.8). All seven participants understood that engagement involved all learners. A sample of the responses from the 11 questions from the Google Form shows that 85% of the students understood that the role of the illustrator is to draw a picture about the text, while 14.3% thought that was the function of the passage master. All seven of the students understood that the connector made connections between the text and other texts or incidents from the reader’s own life. The students completed the Google Form in the school computer lab during class time. Students were also permitted to review the PowerPoint module (APPENDIX B) at any time during the study using their own technology at home or at school so they could review any roles from the literature circle. From this information, she determined that the students understood the basic function of literature circles into a discussion about the text *Tears of a Tiger* (Draper, 1994). She wanted them to read the text with the lens of social justice.
The purpose of a strategy for teaching a text in a classroom striving for engagement is to involve all learners.

Figure 3.4 Response to Question About Strategy Involving All Learners

If the member of the literature circle is drawing a picture of key events what is his or her role?

Figure 3.5 Response to Question About Identification of Illustrator

If the member of the literature circle is making connections between the text and a movie, what is his or her role?

Figure 3.6 Response to Question About Identification of Connector

The timeline for reading the text was at the end of the year when students ideally should be the most independent of the teacher. Students completed an online module mini-lesson about literature circles which included two videos of the teacher-researcher.
conducting a literature circle with another class in a different setting. At the conclusion of
the module, students took an assessment to determine if the students had a basic
understanding of the literature circle roles. Permission slips went home to all the students
for parental consent to be a part of the action research study (Appendix A). It was then
determined that the teacher-researcher's last class of the day would be the best class to
use for the study. The class did not include a co-teacher, and none of the students are
served with an Individual Education Plan. The class from which the participants were
chosen was small, at eighteen students, when most of the teacher-researcher classes were
thirty to thirty-five. The selection was random, but a willingness to participate and return
their parental permission slip did play a factor in the selection as no one could participate
who did not return a consent form.

The final part of the action research planning phase was the research plan. This
incorporated collection of data and the research study design. While the research plan
was developed, the teacher-researcher formulated both a research question and
hypothesis and identified variables for the study. The independent variable in this action
research study was the literature circles, which were presented to all English students in
the class. Literature circles were hypothesized to improve reading engagement. The
dependent variables were the social justice text surveys, observations, and journals, both
at the start of instruction and at the end of the program.

**Action.** The second phase was action, which is when the researcher collects and
analyzes the data. In this phase, the research question was answered. Quantitative data
and statistical analysis were used to verify if the data showed engagement in social justice
texts discussions. The teacher-researcher administered a survey regarding social justice
texts to determine the students’ knowledge of these issues before the novel study. This was done at the beginning of the unit and then at the conclusion of the unit. Correlations between the surveys and observations were noted. This teacher-researcher collected qualitative data through the journals and observations of the students during the literature circles. The engagement was measured with observations from the teacher. The teacher-researcher used the data to see if students were engaged in discussions during the literature circles.

Literature circles were used as part of a district required thematic unit called *Guilt*. Students were assigned randomly to groups, and each role was explained to them before they were assigned, too. Learners knew that the literature circles were discussion groups based on their assigned reading of *Tears of a Tiger* (Draper, 1994). Unlike some implementations of literature circles in which students only read and discuss in a literature circle, the class also participated in whole group discussions, lectures, and comprehension checks with the novel. Literature circles were used as an intervention strategy to keep the students involved in the text and as a vehicle to discuss social justice issues in the comfort of a peer group. The teacher-researcher served as the facilitator of the literature circles and not as a participant or as the voice of authority, as an intervention. The researcher intervened when the students finished discussions too quickly. When students had not completed literature circle response sheets, the teacher-researcher provided extra time to complete them before the discussion. After several class periods, when students were still struggling with how to discuss in the circles, the teacher-researcher had students review a video of another class participating in a literature circle. The whole class viewed the video and discussed what went well and
what the students in the video could improve upon. The participants in this study
participated in viewing the video and analyzing the literature circle. Their next literature
circle discussion time lasted longer after viewing the video and the students. The students
were more engaged with one another (see Table 3.2).

The time table was outlined over a six weeks’ time span (see Table 3.5).

Table 3.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Research Step</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Developing.** The next phase was the *developing phase* where the data lead the
researcher to develop a plan to improve instruction. During this phase revision and
improvements to the action research study took place as well as, plans of action (Mertler,
2014). The action plan was used and reviewed throughout the study. The survey
information was used to engage the students better and introduce social justice texts. If the data in the study showed that literature circles increase engagement in social justice texts, then future instruction will include a literature circle. However, if literature circles proved an effective way to maintain engagement with social justice texts, then the researcher will implement literature circles when teaching novels. Also, she will share her findings with her administrator, instructional coach, and her vertical and grade level ELA teams.

Reflecting. The final phase in the cycle was reflecting (Lieberman & Miller, 2013). If students improved their reading comprehension and understanding of social justice texts, then literature circles were useful. The goal was action research that produced a change in teaching social justice texts (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Students served each other as they used the different literature circle roles of vocabulary enricher, discussion director, illustrator, connector, and passage master to help each other better comprehend their novels. The action plan followed the stewardship leadership model (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Notes on the observations from the literature circles and discussion groups were kept, labeled, and analyzed for coding. Research-based lesson plans, such as Daniels (2002), were applied for this project. During the reflection phase, the teacher-researcher had to examine her own critical stance, too, when it came to how she taught issues of social justice and not be complicit with the status quo and systems of injustice (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2015). The teacher-researcher had teachers of other races and genders than herself review the data collection tools to provide other perspectives.
The action research results from this study were presented to other English teachers (Sergiovaanni, 2013). In this district, many schools are Title 1 schools; thus, they were made up of students coming from a lower economic background. These students were often disadvantaged in competing for college education and navigating "middle class dialogue" for college (Payne-Bourcy & Chandler-Olcott, 2003).

3.12 Data Analysis: Quantitative

**Pre-and Post-Surveys Analysis.** Score values from observations were evaluated along with the pre/post surveys. The surveys collected during this research were pre/post surveys, containing close-ended questions. These surveys contained self-assessment data regarding the students’ knowledge of social justice texts and social justice themes. The closed-ended questions provided quantitative data.

The closed-ended questions asked the students to respond in a quantitative way to the questions using a Likert scale with the following: (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) no opinion, (2) disagree, (1) strongly disagree. Ordinal, descriptive statistics were used with this analysis. (Mertler, 2014) Central tendency, median, and interquartile range were used to measure the variability (Mertler, 2014). These statistics were calculated for the literature circle members.

The data from the surveys used a Likert scale and was ordinal data. Descriptive statistics were used because these are simple mathematical measures used to shorten, condense, and manage vast quantities of numerical information (Mertler, 2014). The median was the measure of central tendency and was appropriate for analyzing the central tendency and the interquartile range as the measure of variability (Mertler, 2014). To compute the median, the scores were arranged from low to high and then counted to
the middle. The median was then the measure of central tendency and provided an accurate representation of the average and kept it from being skewed from outliers (Mertler, 2014). The range of the middle 50% of scores was used to determine the interquartile range. This range measured the spread of data. The interquartile range was the difference between the third quartile and the first quartile which is a more accurate depiction of the spread of the range because it is the range of the middle half of the data (Mertler, 2014). The Likert scale survey regarding social justice texts and reading engagement habits were analyzed and coded (Dana Hoppey, 2014).

This study was mixed methods with triangulation, and both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The mean was used to evaluate the central tendency, but the median was used for any skewed information. The statistics show summaries about the sample and measurement. The researcher used descriptive statistics to measure the relationship of the students' engagement and knowledge of the texts. A measure of central tendency was used to measure the collective level of attitude and opinions of the group regarding social justice texts. In addition, inferential statistics were utilized to infer the impact literature circles were having with the engagement of social justice texts. Discussing differences in social justice found in texts gave these students tools for recognizing social injustices.

3.13 Data Analysis: Qualitative

Journals. Three Journals were written by students close to the beginning of the study, in the middle of the study, and then at the conclusion of the study; these were analyzed with coding. Determining if journals helped students discuss more effectively was a goal of using this tool. To better manage the data, the teacher-researcher created a
chart and listed each participant and their comments on journal entries. She then pulled out key phrases and words related to social justice, engagement or literature circles (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The notes were then reread to look for more patterns, and the teacher-researcher also had another teacher review the literature circle role sheets and journals for additional comments and agreement with categories with the teacher-researcher. The codes were emergent codes which means they were actions or concepts and meanings that evolved from the data (Saldaña, 2008). Similar keywords became patterns and codes.

**Literature Circle Role Sheets.** In like manner, the teacher-researcher analyzed the literature circle role sheets. Literature circles were assigned before the study as a method to promote engagement and discussion about social justice texts. For the first meeting, the teacher assigned the roles in the circle. This will be done using any number of methods such as observation and students' interest. For example, if the teacher observed a natural leader, she made that student the discussion director. Alternatively, if a student had an interest in art and showed aptitude to art, then that student was the illustrator. The goal was to have a successful and comfortable experience with literature circles right from the start. The response sheets were analyzed for key words that related to the themes that were emerging from the discussions and the book such as justice, racism, prejudice, sexism, and fairness. These were added to the teacher-researcher’s notes on her word document.

3.14 Summary

Students in this action research study had full access to the reading assignments to gain an understanding of social justice texts for participation in discussion groups. The ninth and tenth-grade English curriculum did not include many social justice texts, and
The standards did not require multicultural or multi-class texts. The purpose of this action research study was to determine the impact of literature circles in the tenth grade English classroom. The research question that guided the study was, *does implementing literature circles with social justice texts in a secondary classroom foster engagement in reading and classroom discussion for students?* The research question was answered using planning, action, developing, and reflecting (Mertler, 2014).

Statistics were only numbers unless the educator remembers that each number represents a student and what he or she can learn. At this school, statistics about test scores, income, and Lexile levels were widely discussed. In a school where everyone receives free lunch, these students’ reality is being from a lower income level. Students and teachers lacked the discussion skills needed to address sensitive issue expressed in social justice texts. Social justice texts provided a bridge for teachers and students to engage in meaningful learning about social justice. The purpose of this action research study was to determine if English language arts students benefited from literature circles. The research question was as follows:

**RQ: Does implementing literature circles with social justice texts in a secondary classroom foster engagement in reading and classroom discussions for students?**

The questions were answered using planning, action, developing, and reflecting (Mertler, 2014).
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Overview of Study

The purpose of the study was to identify if participants in a tenth-grade English language arts class would be more engaged in reading and discussing social justice texts when participating in a literature circle. The literature circle consisted of seven students who participated in a one group pre/post survey, observations with student role sheets, and journals. The pre/post surveys were measured quantitatively. The journals, observations, and student role sheets were also measured qualitatively with coding.

Research Question

The instruments were measured in accordance to the research question.

RQ: Does implementing literature circles with social justice texts in a secondary classroom foster engagement in reading and classroom discussions for students?

Intervention Strategy

The research question required the usage of literature circles. Using literature circles was the intervention strategy the teacher-researcher used to improve reading engagement and discussion of social justice texts. Before the study, the teacher-researcher had observed prior to the student students not completing reading assignments, going on cellphones to find answers to comprehension questions, talking, or sleeping, during reading times. During whole class discussions, only a few students would answer
questions and discuss topics. Many students would not answer at all, even when called upon to do so. Literature circles were used to involve all the students in a comfortable, peer group. The teacher-researcher was a guide to the students during the discussion groups; she was not the one to whom the students directed their role sheet answers, as they were to present their findings to one another. The teacher-researcher would, however, sometimes help a student complete their role sheet before they went to the literature circle. For example, if a participant was struggling with an idea for an illustration, especially if he or she did not view himself or herself as an artist, the teacher-researcher would offer ideas of what the student might illustrate. If the teacher-researcher observed that the discussion group was going off topic she occasionally asked the student who was the discussion director to redirect the discussion and call on others to keep the discussion going. Students used language to question privilege and injustices (Comber, 2001). The text makes differences visible and questions why some have no voice, but others take a stand (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002). Social justice texts make large and small changes in the lives of students because they can make students aware of the ways systems of meaning and power impact lives (Leland, Lewison, & Hartse, 2018).

The teacher-researcher intervened by prompting students to ask better questions. To prevent closed discussions, she often reviewed role sheets before students presented them to their literature circles. For example, if a discussion director asked a question that only required one-word, specific answer or a yes or no answer, the teacher-researcher asked the student to revise his or her question to solicit a discussion. Often, she would model a question for the discussion director or show the student that if he or she added the word why it would produce a discussion question. This attenuated the student’s
frustration, too, and made it so that he or she did not have to so that he or she did not have to rewrite his or her whole role sheet. The teacher-researcher also would reassure students given the role of illustrator that they just needed to provide a drawing from the textual evidence or a graphic, reducing their fear of not drawing “well.” Sometimes the teacher-researcher would offer suggestions of what to draw from the reading if a student had trouble visualizing a section himself or herself.

Midway through the study, the teacher-researcher became concerned that students still seemed confused how to transition from one speaker to the next and how to contribute to the discussion in the literature circle. She decided to use anchored instruction to better explain how the literature circle should proceed. The teacher-researcher wanted to ensure that the literature circle discussion was effective, so she used the three-pronged strategy of demonstration-facilitation-instruction (Villaume & Worden, 1993) to provide support and clarification with the anchored instruction and the clarification of social justice issues. She demonstrated appropriate type comments for the role sheets, then participated in the literature circle and helped guide discussion and instructed on what she expected during the discussions (Leland, Lewison, & Hartse, 2018).

The collaborative communities of literature circles aid with engagement for students. The student voice and choice of these groups helped students develop as independent learners and thinkers (Daniels, 2002). Literature circles aid in building community in that they can be done through blogs and family literature circles (Day & Lum, 2011). The roles of the literature circles and the complexity of the texts make social literature accessible to students of all classes and reading abilities. The strategy was made
for differentiation for the lowest reader to the highest and for those with mastery of the English language to those for whom English was their second language (Sanacore, 2013).

In the anchored instruction method, the basic skills needed for a literature circle were typically taught through teacher demonstration and workbooks (Zydney, Bathke, & Hasselbring, 2014), but this step was not done at this time since the students had been doing the basic skills of completing the role sheets throughout the study. The lesson was part of a thematic unit called Guilt from the district language arts teachers. The classroom teacher-researcher highlighted the themes of social justice within the text. The lessons were also derived from the Georgia state standards. The final assessment for the class was to take the final tenth grade exam which consisted of textual based questions from the novel Tears of a Tiger (Draper, 1994). Because the students needed to work on both reading engagement and discussion skills and because the students like technology, the anchored model worked well for the class. The model helped the students gain an understanding of literature circle and how they each had a role to play in the discussion groups. Anchored instruction provided visual engagement for the students to learn the strategy of literature circle, so they could better participate in the discussions. The teacher-researcher served as the facilitator and showed the groups the examples of the literature circles and guided the students with scaffolding as they determined what worked well with the literature circles and what did not work. The use of anchored instruction ensures that students will work together in groups to determine the effectiveness of the collaboration and how each literature circle role helped or did not help the discussion engagement. Students collaboratively worked to analyze the literature circles strategy.
Sometimes the whole group discussions and individual reading also helped students engage in social justice texts, but literature circles offered a key strategy to address all of the concerns of engagement and discussion with social justice texts. The goal was for students to take ownership of their reading and discussion to become life time readers and learners (Daniels, 1994). However, many students still did not know how to participate in a literature circle. Since the teacher-researcher was a facilitator during the discussion time students particularly needed to fine-tune their skills for greater independence. A step towards better and student-guided discussion was for students to watch literature circles modeled for them in video clips.

4.2 General Findings

Findings of the Study. In this action research study, quantitative data was obtained using a one-group presurvey-postsurvey design. Student participants completed a five-point closed-response questionnaire using a Likert scale (see Appendix D) at the start of the six-week data collection period and once again at the end of the study. The questionnaire was created by the teacher-researcher to measure the students’ knowledge of social justice issues and to gauge their attitudes about reading and particularly reading social justice texts. The students completed the 10 questions questionnaire on paper. Students’ names were listed on the form, but that was to be able to compare the results with the postsurvey given at the end of the study. Students’ were assured that their real names would not be reported in the study, and their answers would in no way impact their grades in the course.

Results of the pre-survey. After the administration of the pre-survey, the teacher-researcher analyzed the pre-survey data using descriptive statistics. Using the
web-based software program *StatCrunch* (Pearson, 2018), the teacher-researcher calculated measures of central tendency to determine the collective responses to each item on the pre-survey (see Table 4.1). Scores for each item were analyzed to determine the mean, the median, and the standard deviation (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

*Item Means, Medians, and Standard Deviations for Pre-Survey Likert Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Mdn</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How much do you enjoy reading on your own about social issues?</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Outside of assigned homework, how much reading of social issues have you done in the past?</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In the past week, how many days have you read for at least 30 minutes?</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How many books on social issues would you say you own?</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How many books on social issues would you say are in your house?</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. When you read, do you like to read independently?</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you like to read with a group?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Reading about social issues makes you a better-informed citizen?</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Divorce is a social issue?</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Free and reduced lunch is a social or class issue?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reviewing data from a Likert scale using the mean may not be the best measurement for central tendency according to Mertler (2014). For a five-point Likert scale, like the one used for the pre-survey, the average scores are challenging to evaluate and a thorough review of the median scores is suggested (Mertler, 2014). Median refers to scores from the data in equal halves, therefore, fifty percent of the scores would be above the median score, while the other fifty percent would be below the median score.

The teacher-researcher used both the median scores and the mean scores for review for the pre-survey and post-survey. Sixty percent of the ten questions on the
presurvey had median scores of three (see Figure 4.1). This shows that the majority of the students own and have read about social justice issues at a level three and agree at a level three that it makes them a better citizen. The level three on the pre-survey allows opportunity for growth to a level four or five for the students’ evaluation of their knowledge and awareness on social justice texts.

![Pie chart showing percentage of median scores]

Figure 4.1 Percentage of Pre-survey Median Scores

The teacher-researcher also calculated the mean, median, and standard deviation for highest scoring item which was, Question 6 When you read you prefer to read independently (see Table 4.2). Student participant scores were highest in the category of with $M = 3.43$ and $Mdn = 3$ and lowest for Question 5 How many books on social justice would you say are in your house with $M = 1.57$ and $Mdn = 2$.

Results of post-survey. After applying the intervention of literature circles in the action research study with the social justice text of Tears of a Tiger (Draper, 1994), the teacher-researcher administered the post-survey and analyzed the data using descriptive statistics. As with the pre-survey results, the teacher-researcher utilized the StatCrunch software program (see Table 4.2). The results were recorded and then analyzed.
Table 4.2

*Item Means, Medians, Standard Deviations Post-Survey Likert Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Mdn</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How much do you enjoy reading on your own about social issues?</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Outside of assigned homework, how much reading of social issues</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have you done in the past?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In the past week, how many days have you read for at least 30</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minutes?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How many books on social issues would you say own?</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How many books on social issues would you say are in your house?</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. When you read, do you like to read independently?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you like to read with a group?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Reading about social issues makes you a better-informed citizen?</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Divorce is a social issue?</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Free and reduced lunch is a social or class issue?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The highest score on the post-survey was for question 6.

- “When you read, do you like to read independently?” showed that the mode score on this item was 4 out of 5 agreement with the statement. (Mdn=4, SD=1).

The lowest score for a question on the post-survey was for question 5.

- “How many books on social issues would you say are in your house?” showed that the mode score was 1.71 out of 5 agreement with the statement. (Mdn=2, SD=0.53).

Another question which had low results was question 4.

- “How many books on social issues would you say you own?” showed that the mode score was 1.85 out of 5 agreement with the statement. (Mdn=2, SD=0.53).
Results Comparison/Contrast Pre/Post Survey Responses

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the pre-survey results regarding social justice texts and attitudes about reading and the post-survey results regarding social justice texts and attitudes about reading. The data were rounded to 2 significant figures, but not when calculating the values of $p$ and $t$. There was not a significant difference in scores for pre-survey ($M=2.50$, $SD=2.50$) and post-survey ($M=2.80$, $SD=3.60$) conditions, $t(-1.15233) = .13213$, $p=p<.05$. These results suggest that there was not a significant difference in the results of the pre-survey questionnaire with the post-survey questionnaire results (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

T-Test Pre and Post Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre/Post Survey</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Standard Error of the Mean.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.16666666666667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teacher-researcher entered the median scores from the pre-survey and post-survey into the t-test online calculator (Social Science Statistics). The t-value is -1.15 and the p-value is .5 which is standard for educational studies (Mertler, 2014). The result is not significant at $p < .05$ (see Table 4.3).

From the post-test Likert scale survey, most students’ level of agreement on the questions only went up or down one point in either direction from the pre to the post survey. There was not much change or levels of variance from the beginning of the study
until the end. Students did not increase the number or books on social justice issues that they were reading or owned in their household (see Table 4.4). Six questions from the surveys showed an increase in median scores. While one question, “Outside of assigned homework, how much reading of social issues have you done in the past?” showed a decrease in median score from the pre-survey to the post-survey. Three of the questions showed no change from pre-survey to post-survey.

Table 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Pre-M</th>
<th>Post-M</th>
<th>Diff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How much do you enjoy reading on your own about social issues?</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>I/.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Outside of assigned homework, how much reading of social issues have you done in the past?</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>D/.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In the past week, how many days have you read for at least 30 minutes?</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>I/.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How many books on social issues would you say you own?</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>I/.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How many books on social issues would you say are in your house?</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>I/.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. When you read, do you like to read independently?</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>I/.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you like to read with a group?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Reading about social issues makes you a better-informed citizen?</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Divorce is a social issue?</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>I/.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Free and reduced lunch is a social or class issue?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note- I = increase from pre to post survey; D = decrease from pre to post survey

The data showed that the students showed their beliefs and attitudes needed to confront social issues within their community (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Freire stated that learners need to reflect on their world in order to transform it (1970). After reading the texts and
reflecting with the journals, interviews, and the role sheets the surveys allowed the participants to pause as they scored the post-survey. As critical literacy researchers, Leland, Lewison, and Harste (2018) state:

Literature represents our collective human knowledge base, including beliefs, self-perceptions, philosophies, assumptions, and interactions with the world at large. Some of life’s most important lessons are subtly expressed in literature. We learn these lessons only if we pause to think about what we read (p. 177).

**Results from Journals, Observations, and Unstructured Interviews.** This part of Chapter 4 addresses the findings based on data collected from several instruments including the journals, the observations with the student literature circle sheets, and unstructured interviews. In the next sections, the themes and supporting data patterns will be analyzed in detail. The qualitative data contained six lessons that included video-audio recorded discussions in the literature circles within the classroom. Each recorded literature circle was transcribed by the teacher-researcher. The transcriptions were coded and analyzed with the goal of finding patterns and themes (Saldaña, 2008). Through these data collection methods and their ensuing analysis using the processes of coding and categorizing three major themes emerged: (1) students increased understanding of definition and significance of social justice/social injustice issues; (2) students’ recognition of the significance of using social justice texts (3) students’ realization of effects of literature circles for increased engagement (See Figure 4.2). These three emergent themes recurred throughout the six weeks of the action study and were the lens for the teacher-researcher and the students when discussing the social justice text *Tears of a Tiger* (Draper, 1994).
Figure 4.2 Themes from the Qualitative Data

**Themes and Supporting Data Patterns.**

**Theme 1: Students Increased Understanding of Definition and Significance of Social Justice/Social Injustice Issues.** The first theme focused on participants comprehending what social justice and social injustice issues are and how they are to correctly react to social injustices. Repetitions within this theme included identifying and defining social justice and social injustice and the impact social injustices had on the characters in *Tears of a Tiger* (Draper, 1994) and on the student. The students discussed and wrote about their understanding of social justice and social injustice to identify occurrences of social injustices within the text. The following quotations were coded for their significance. In the second classroom lesson, the students viewed two videos that gave definitions of social justice (CrashCourse, 2016; Prager U, 2014). Students wrote about social justice in their journals three times, April 18, 2018, May 2, 2018, and May 25, 2017, within the action research study (see Table 3.4). This addressed if they understood what social justice was and if they could identify it.
Journals. The first journal question was the following:

Based on what you already read in *Tears of a Tiger* and viewing *Friday Night Lights* as well as the two You-tube clips about social justice, do you think the novel is a social justice text? Why or why not? Include textual evidence and write at least a half a page.

Tray showed identification of a symptom of social injustice in the following, “One of the social justice is about being guilty…BJ shouldn’t let Andy drive the car because Andy was drunk.” Tray’s journal response relates to questions 1, 2, and 3 from the pre-and post-surveys because it shows that after reading about social justice issues for more than thirty minutes he was able to critically analyze the text for examples of social justice.

Many of the students wrote about drinking being a consequence of social injustices.

The next journal was the following:

Give examples of social justice issues from *Tears of a Tiger*. Remember that social justice issues can include racism, sexism, and classicism. Be specific in your answer and make it at least a half a page.

Shailey answered with the following, “I saw racism when the adult was telling the child that he needs to just stick to basketball because he wasn’t smart enough basically.” Since the students had read more chapters in the novel as journal two was presented they had more examples from the text that they could use for their responses than they had with journal one. Shailey showed that after reading the social justice text independently as pre-and post-survey question 6 states she was able to make more social justice connections.

Dom commented on both racism and sexism:
Andy and Rob went through racism when they were in the mall and ad lady though they were on the verge of stealing, mostly based on their skin color. Sexism is from how the boys idolize some girl characters like they are items not human. I think that the boys growing up and maturing will stop their thoughts of females as objects. I learned from experience. I used to think the same way about females until I fell in love with one. After that, I saw things different. To not get classified by their appearances, they should dress and carry themselves different. If you walk in a store with your pants sagging and talking loud and slang, people have reason to believe you will steal.

Dom made connections in the book to his own life experiences, and what the characters could do to counter experiences with social injustice. His reflections also relate to question 8 on the survey, “reading about social issues makes you a better-informed citizen.” He stated that reading about how boys view girls as objects might help males realize they should not see girls just in that manner.

The final journal prompt was the following:

Do you still classify *Tears of a Tiger* as a social justice text? Do you think teachers should have students read social justice texts at school, why or why not? Have literature circles helped you stay engaged in the reading? Why or why not? Make your response at least a half a page.

Shailley stated, “What I learned about social justice is that when things happen to people or they are depressed they should always get helped by a parent, teacher, or counselor.” Shayla stated, “Justice doesn’t always get served right away.” Nathan stated, “I learned that even teachers can stereotype people and be racists.” Shailley, Shayla, and Nathan
showed that they had read social justice texts which correlates to questions 1, 2 and 3 of the surveys. This correlates to question 8 of the survey, “reading about social issues makes you a better-informed citizen,” too.

*Observations with role sheets.* The role sheets were completed by each student individually and then analyzed by the teacher-researcher following each literature circle session. The teacher-researcher scored each participant during the literature circles from 1 to 5 with 1 being highest for fully participating in his or her role in the discussion and for referencing social justice or injustice during the discussion (see Appendix E). Fully was 1, 2 was mostly, 3 was somewhat, 4 was sporadically, and 5 was minimally on the observation checklist. During the observations, the teacher-researcher noticed that the students wanted to participate from the very beginning as they actively completed their sheets, asked questions of the teacher-researcher and each other, and went back to the text for support of their role sheets. However, the students were often unprepared, or some would be prepared while others were not. This frustrated the prepared members, and some would leave the group to talk to other members of the class. When given time in class to prepare the literature circle sheets the students could all effectively participate. Shailey stated:

So far, I have seen racism and sexism. I saw racism when the adult was telling the child that he needs to just stick to basketball because he wasn’t smart enough basically. I saw sexism when they were talking about the girls’ skirt.

Both Tray and Nathan were effective in their roles as a connector. Kevan told how a girl at Hillman Middle School (pseudonym) had committed suicide. He stated that although he did not personally know the girl, “the suicide affected everyone at the school.” He
related this social justice issue back to the suicide of Andy in *Tears of a Tiger*. All of the members of the literature circle listened attentively to his connection and recalled how the news of the girl’s suicide affected them too. Tray connected Andy replaying his friend, Rob’s death to “seeing” his step-grandmother in her room every time he goes back to his grandfather’s house. Again, the students all made eye contact with him as he shared this story. Results from Tray’s observations showed that he referenced social justice frequently during literature circles. The teacher-researcher scored Tray as mostly engaged in the discussions with fulfilling his role. Tray was not observed during sessions 5 and 6 because he was absent. Figure 4.3 shows Tray’s rankings each time he was observed during the literature circle. The blue bar signified fulfillment with his literature circle role and engagement in the discussion. The red bar showed his reference and conversation about social justice issues (see Figure 4.3).

![Observations of Tray During Literature Circles](image)

*Figure 4.3 Scale Observations of Tray During Literature Circles*
Nathan was not scored for session 6 because he was also absent. He scored 1 fully and 2 mostly for fulfilling his roles in the literature circles. His references to social justice issues were usually at a 3 by the teacher-researcher (see Figure 4.4).

![Graph showing observations of Nathan during literature circles]

**Figure 4.4 Scale Observations of Nathan During Literature Circles**

*Unstructured Interviews:* Participants answered semi-structured questions regarding their participation in the literature circle two times. The questions all related more to the final theme of literature circles for engagement. The teacher-researcher conducted these group interviews that were both done towards the end of the study. The interviews were videotaped and then transcribed by the teacher-researcher. The students were allowed to view the interview and clarify any information or responses that they had given. The answers were coded and matched to the themes for the study. The participants recognized through critical literacy that social justice must be examined based on the details in the text, the author, the audience, and the authenticity it depicts (Leland, Lewison, & Hartse, 2018). Critical language study needs to be part of any curriculum (Lewison, Leland, & Hartse, 2015).

**Theme 2: Students Recognition of the Significance of Using Social Justice Texts.** Improvement in classroom discussion was measured from classroom observations
and the coding of key words which came from these discussions. The journals and role sheets the students completed were coded as evidence of key words such as social justice, racism, sexism, and classism as they appeared in the discussions and on the journals and role sheets used during the discussions. These keywords were observed being spoken during the literature circles or recorded on their role sheets.

Journals: The participants wrote about the significance of using social justice texts. Tray stated, “I learn a lot about social justice texts from Tears of a Tiger. Yes, I think classes should include these types of texts cause really help kids.” Xzee wrote, “That some of the stuff in the book people actually does. It could help other before they do something like drinking and driving and killing yourself.” In Shailey’s journal she wrote, “I think classes should include texts like this because it could help a student in need.” These statements relate to survey question 8, “reading about social issues makes you a better informed citizen.”

Dom stated,

This book has taught me the difference between enjoying your childhood and ruining your life. Things like this could happen with any kid. Yes, classes need these types of books to teach kids about the real world. They need to know that it is more to life than just school.

Dom’s statement also correlates to the survey question 8 regarding social justice texts informing citizens.

Observations with role sheets: The students spoke from their role sheets about the significance of using social justice texts. Shayla stated, “Some justice issues that I see in the book is classism and racism. Classism is said because their story is a stereotype of
what sometimes really happens in a black community in real life.” Shailey’s observations from the teacher-researcher showed that she was mostly at a 2 for being engaged in her role. She scored mostly 1s for fully referencing social justice in the discussions.

Figure 4.5 Scale Observations of Shailey During Literature Circles

Dom’s observations showed him at 2 mostly and 1s fully for engagement with his role in the literature circles. He had 1s and 3s for references to social justice from the teacher-researcher (see Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.6 Scale Observations of Dom During Literature Circles
Shayla during observations scored multiple 3s of somewhat engaged in her role and somewhat referencing social justice issues (see Figure 4.6).

![Observations of Shayla During Literature Circles](image)

**Figure 4.7 Scale Observations of Shayla During Literature Circles**

From these literature circle meetings, students’ understandings were challenged because of the perspectives and interpretations of each of the members (Leland, Lewison, & Hartse, 2018). When the critical conversations become a regular part of the curriculum, then exciting curriculum is engaging at school (Leland, Lewison, & Hartse, 2018). The participants became socio-politically aware through conversations with others who were socially and politically aware (Lewison, Leland, & Hartse, 2015).

**Theme 3: Students Realization of Effects of Literature Circles for Increased Engagement**

*Journals.* Kevan had a difficult time focusing in a seventh period class. He was quite social, and his grades would fluctuate due to his attention. He noticed this himself and would often hand his phone to the teacher-researcher to keep for him until he finished his tasks during class. Literature circles gave him an opportunity to talk and be social while staying on task. He wrote the following poem based on his discussion during
the literature circle. Kevan wrote a poem about engagement at school for making better grades:

I wish I had better grades
If I really tried
I would have straight As

I wish I had better grades
I woke up
And go to school everyday

I wish I had better grades
If I pay attention
Everything will be okay.

Tray wrote, “Yes, it engaged and helped me understand the book more and you know how other people feel about situations about the book.” In Shailey’s journal she wrote, “The literature circle helped me engage because I get to explain my ideas. And hear others. Xzee stated, “Yes, it did because everyone in the group did one and we got to see what they know say if we didn’t know something in the book maybe; they know it.

Observations with literature role sheets. Literature circles as a strategy engaged the students because the text captured their attention even if it angered them, and it taught them about the book. The conversation among peers was more engaging than the teacher-researcher giving a list of characters and their viewpoints. All of the students’ journal entries and observations point to a better understanding of survey question 8 that social justice readings make for better informed citizens. All of these statements came after the students had the opportunity to read more than thirty minutes a week (survey questions 1 and 2).

Shailey and Dom were great summarizers. Shailey did an excellent job summarizing the character Andy’s experience in English class when the class discussed
color imagery and told what they thought *black* represented versus *white*. Dom (black, male) did not realize Shailey (white, female) was quoting from the book about black being bad and said he was offended by her comments. She stated the following:

This is where Christmas break ends. Andy is in class explaining his deep feelings about the snow. The white and black is used a different way in his idea. He claims the “white is taking over his life.” They talk about how in literature black means bad and white means good, along with other colors. He learns to “accept or reject” the idea. Andy then starts talking to Keisha explaining her thinking Rob is freezing as if he were still alive. He mentions he feels out of touch with reality on that subject.

He smiled as he said this. They were friendly with each other before this discussion if not friends, but the teacher researcher sensed some tension and interjected her comments. The teacher-researcher let Dom know that Shailey was referring to the novel and had all the literature circle members turned to the section of the book. Kevan’s observation data showed that he scored all 2s for mostly engaged in his literature circle role. He scored mostly 3s for referencing social justice issues during the discussion (see Figure 4.7).

![Figure 4.8 Scale Observations of Kevan During Literature Circles](image-url)
Xzee’s observation data showed her as having mostly 3s for somewhat and 2s for mostly fulfilling her role in the literature circle discussion. She had all 3s for somewhat referencing social justice issues and one 4 of sporadically referencing social justice issues.

![Observations of Xzee During Literature Circles](image)

**Figure 4.9** Scale Observations of Xzee During Literature Circles

**Unstructured Interview.** The questions for the first interview dealt mostly with the effectiveness of the literature circle as a strategy (See Appendix F).

- **Question 1:** Do you think if this wasn’t at the end of the year the strategy would be more effective? Is it a good strategy to use during the year? All five students, Shailey, Shayla, Xzee, Nathan, and Keven, nodded and said, “Yes.”
- **Question 2:** Do you feel like doing the literature circles and having these meetings got you more involved in the book? Helped you understand it? “Yes,” was stated by all but Shayla. Shayla said, “a little bit, I mean, I actually had to read to have something to say.”

In the second interview, students answered questions about their roles that they completed. They each told which tasks they liked the most and the least. They commented on if they felt the strategy worked well for them (See Appendix F).
• How would you say the literature circles helped you better understand the story? Tray stated, “It helped us, basically, because we were all able to communicate with one another. It helped us get to know each other.” Kevan agreed and added, “Yea, and you had to actually read the book.”

• So, you liked being able to talk with your peer group? Xzee said, “Yea.” Tray added, “Yah, it’s more easier cause you could discuss what really happened.”

• Well. Let’s go down the row and see what is everyone’s favorite sheet to fill out and the least favorite. The connector was the favorite of 2 and the least favorite of 3. The summarizer was the favorite of 1 and the least favorite of 1. The passage master was the favorite of 2 and least of 1. The illustrator was the favorite of 2 and the least of 1. One participant said his favorite was the passage master and he disliked everything else.

With critical literacy, the students came to realize that with the text there was always another perspective and the language in key passages and the key vocabulary needed to be examined for stereotypes and power words (Leland, Lewison, & Hartse, 2018).

4.3 Analysis of Data

The teacher-researcher will continue to use literature circles in the future. The action research was mixed methods with triangulation. The teacher-researcher used descriptive statistics to measure the relationship of the students’ engagement and knowledge of the texts. The final phase in the cycle was reflecting (Liberman & Miller, 2013). Literature circles will be used in the future because of the study showed that students’ engagement and discussion skills about social justice texts improved with the
use of literature circles. Daniels (2002) research-based lesson plans will continue to be utilized for future lessons with literature circles.

When teachers examine students’ responses both in writing and artistic expression they can assess the students’ relationship with social and global issues (Leland, Lewison & Harste, 2018). Teachers should ask themselves the following questions when viewing their students’ critical literacy responses:

- Do students find stereotypes and inauthentic characters while reading?
- Do these issues become the focus of class discussions?
- When students are asked about their best-loved book, do some choose social issues, multicultural, or international books as their favorites?
- Are social, political, cultural, and global topics a regular part of your curriculum?
- Do social, political, cultural, and global topics become the center of classroom conversations even when you didn’t start them?
- Are kids making comments that show they feel connected to other places in the world and/or global issues? (Leland, Lewison, & Hartse, 2018, p.128).

The following was addressed in the study, *how does the implementation of literature circles impact discussion about social class in an English language arts classroom?* Literature circles were used for engagement and socialization. The literature circle role sheets were analyzed daily to see if the students were understanding the basic concepts of the texts and learning to express concepts of social justice. Students completed chapter comprehension questions on days they did not meet as an official literature circle. They also were given reading time in class to finish reading the novel. Additionally, they sometimes received Power Point notes on key plot lines of the novel.
These all aid in a greater understanding of the novel. Additionally, they were to aid them in their literature circle discussions.

During week one, the teacher introduced literature circles with a computer module self-paced lesson. The module included video clips of the teacher introducing the concept of a literature circle and then conducting a literature circle with other students. Following the module, the students took an assessment in a Google document online to show their greater understanding of the literature circles and the specific roles. The next day students completed surveys about social justice texts and the novel was introduced. Assigned literature circles were announced. The next day students met and decided how they would discuss the texts. Then, the next class period was a silent reading time of the next chapter with recall questions and they completed their literature circle role sheet. Students could finish reading at home if necessary.

**Supplemental analysis of data.** Using the mixed method triangulation approach the data was surveyed throughout the six weeks’ study. Other educators reviewed the tools of the survey for validation. The surveys, unstructured interviews, the journals, and the observations, and the literature circle response sheets were reviewed. The teacher-researcher’s co-teacher, who taught with the teacher-researcher in other classes that were also reading the same novel, offered suggestions on journal topics and clarification of role sheets. When students did not seem to be participating in literature circles for an extended period, the teacher-researcher helped to guide the circle more with modeling questions. She also used anchored instruction to have the students view videos of literature circles and discuss each of the student’s in the video and their contributions to the literature circle. The whole class, which included students outside of the research
study participants, gave input on how the literature circle members could participate better.

4.4 Summary

This action research study asked the following research question: Does implementing literature circles with social texts in a secondary classroom foster engagement in reading and classroom discussions for students? The research question was, therefore, answered by examining English language arts students in a literature circle. Using a triangulation mixed methods design, qualitative and quantitative data were gathered simultaneously, and merged in the analysis (Creswell, 2014). The results of this data collection and descriptive statistical analysis indicated that when responding to the influence of literature circles, students showed the greatest positive responses with engagement to social justice texts through discussions. The findings of this study suggest that, overall, students responded positively with the engagement of literature circle discussions. Qualitative data was collected and analyzed, and the results of this analysis demonstrated that literature circles using social justice text provided insights into improved collaboration, with providing voice and choice for students which also increased engagement and interest in social justice issues.

This chapter has outlined the findings and discussion of the research question addressed in this study. The action research cycle of planning, acting, developing, and reflecting was followed (Mertler, 2014). With the implementation of the action research study, the teacher-researcher daily reflected on the action research process. All of the chapters including this one have demonstrated the planning, acting, and developing that took place throughout this study. The next chapter discusses the action research process
of the reflecting phase and includes an outline for improvement. The steps of improvement include a discussion on changes and the limitations of the study. Implications and an action plan are included for the next steps of the action research.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Student curriculum in the United States should match the ever-growing diversity of cultures in the classroom (Alsubaie, 2015; Herrera & Kidwell, 2018). Learners must read about their own cultures and that of others’ cultures in order to gain an understanding of other societies (NCTE & IRA, 1996; NPBTs, 2016). A strategy for helping students to develop their reading skills in the context of sociocultural and constructivism is literature circles (Daniels, 2002).

5.2 Problem of Practice

During secondary school many learners become disengaged with education (Bland, Carrington & Brady, 2009). For students coming from a low economic background this disengagement is critical and can impact later success in school and beyond (Bland, Carrington & Brady, 2009). Students who struggle with reading motivation tend to have difficulty academically, too (Mitchell, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2010). When students can read social justice texts, they tend to identify with the characters and become more engaged (Madhuri, Walker, Landmann-Johnsey & Laughter, 2015). Using literature circles with social justice texts can be used for engagement (Hsiah, 2012; Madhuri, Walker, Landmaan-Johnsey & Laughter, 2015).

5.3 Research Question

The research question was the following.
RQ: Does implementing literature circles with social justice texts in a secondary classroom foster engagement in reading and classroom discussions for students?

5.4 Purpose of Study

The purpose of the present action research study was to determine if English language arts students benefited from literature circles about social justice. This study followed the PoP of addressing social justice for this dissertation in practice. The NCTE & IRA (1996) emphasize both the importance and current insufficiency of social class discussions. The students discussed the issue of social justice as it related to the selected text, Tears of a Tiger (Draper, 1994). Literature circles gave the student’s discussion tools for collaboratively engaging in the text. Secondary students not engaged in reading struggle in English classes, while students engaged in reading will perform well in English class (Mitchell, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2010).

Students may participate in literature circles for improved engagement in reading (Daniels, 2002). Many students do not respond to direct instruction or rote ways of learning in which strategies are often taught with recall questions or quizzes. These students tend to disengage from discussing texts, and they begin to focus instead on off task behaviors; they justify their lack of engagement on the teacher’s pedagogy or the content (Kiddey & Robson, 2001). Students who do not know how to participate in a literature circle will need help to function well in the discussion format, but overall literature circles can provide a way for many students to better engage with literature.

5.5 Overview of Methodology

Data for this study was collected in a tenth-grade English language arts class during the 2017-2018 academic year. The action research assessed student engagement
regarding social justice and discussion with literature circles. The aim was to improve student engagement in reading and discussion of social justice using mixed-methods with triangulation. Data from pre/post surveys about reading attitudes and knowledge of social justice were analyzed quantitatively. Observations with role sheets and journals were analyzed qualitatively to gauge reading engagement with social justice issues. The research question was analyzed within a six weeks study. The phases included planning, action, developing, and reflecting. The goal of the action research study was to improve reading engagement and discussion of social justice within a literature circle.

5.6 Results and Findings

The findings from this study reiterate the significance of using literature circles with social justice texts. It is critical to involve students in social justice issues to improve engagement and discussion while making them globally aware citizens (Leland, Lesion & Hartse, 2018). The participants in this action research study engaged in literature circles and were able to identify social justice issues, the importance of using social justice texts, and the value of literature circles. From the pre-survey to the post-survey students’ growth in reporting knowledge of social justice issues, social justice texts in their homes, and according to the t-test, a change in reading engagement was shown to be not significant. However, the median score on the Likert scale for the questions was at a three at the beginning during the pre-survey so there was not much room for growth to a five for the post-test. The observations with role sheets and the journal entries showed thirty-six times that the key words were discussed by the students from the twenty-eight accounts of observations and journals. Some of the keywords were used during the same observation or journal. The emergent codes led to the labeling of three themes which
were (1) significance of social justice issues, (2) significance of using social justice texts, and (3) the effects of using literature circles for engagement. The unstructured interviews provided times for the students to discuss the theme of the effects of using literature circles for their engagement. The risk of using a potentially controversial social justice text is outweighed by the benefits it provides with an engaging conversation where multiple perspectives and diversity can be examined (Leland, Lewison, & Hartse, 2018).

5.7 Action Researcher as a Curriculum Leader

In order to grow as a successful leader in the school and classroom, the teacher-researcher needs to reflect on her teaching process (Mertler, 2014; Liberman & Miller, 2013). One way to focus on the teaching process is through examination of a teaching strategy such as literature circles. If the teacher-researcher’s students improved their reading comprehension and understanding of social class through this unit, then literature circles were effective. The goal as an action researcher was to produce “research intended to bring about a change of some kind, usually with a social justice focus” (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014 p. 8). Students served each other as they used the different literature circle roles of vocabulary enricher, discussion director, illustrator, connector, and passage master to help each other better comprehend their novels. If a student did well in art, then that student was chosen as the illustrator for the literature circle so he or she can use his or her talents to uniquely express himself or herself. The action plan followed the stewardship leadership model.

The teacher-researcher assessed her own teaching and facilitating regarding social class instruction (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). She kept notes with reflections of the instruction, and she applied research practices, as expected from the school district.
Besides this, the teacher-researcher also remained involved in a professional learning community to gain ideas from other educators that might aid with instruction on social class.

The teacher-researcher was the leader of her classroom and as such developed her own leadership style (Jefferies, 2000). Because others have served her with stewardship leadership, she served her students and colleagues, too. As Kotter (2001), stated leadership is “mystical and mysterious” (p. 85). As a team leader and a National Boards Certified teacher, the teacher-researcher has been able to influence other teachers and hopes to do so with literature circles too.

5.8 Action Plan

The development of an action plan was a critical part of the action research process (Mertler, 2014). The action plan outlined how to conduct the research and the follow up steps for after the research. The action research plan helped the teacher-researcher analyze what she learned from the study (Mertler, 2014). The teacher-researcher’s interest and the plan for sharing were both parts of steward leadership (Sergiovani, 2013). She discussed how she used literature circles with social justice texts in English meetings (Daniels, 2002). The teacher-researcher shared with other teachers how social injustice texts and literature circles increased engagement (Hicks, 2004). Discussing the results of implementing literature circles for student engagement was done both formally at English department meetings and informally through conversations and emails with colleagues. Reflection was part of the action research study, and the teacher-researcher must consider what to do with the knowledge she has gained from the study and make recommendations (Mertler, 2014).
In the future, critical literacy with the literature circles can be applied even more. Problem posing can be used where the students watch a movie or read a text and then answer questions such as whose voice is missing from the story (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). These questions can be analyzed in the literature circle. In addition, students can switch with problem-posing. Instead of using the traditional literature circle roles each student could be assigned some type of “switch” to use to retell the story. One student could have a gender switch, another a theme switch, and another one an invented character as a lens for analyzing the story (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). Another student might be asked to examine the language in regard to who has the power in the conversation and how that impacts the text (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2015). The traditional role sheets will not be used extensively as they may hinder discussion as their creator Harvey Daniels (2002) warned against and instead logs and post-it notes could be used for discussions (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2018). The teacher-researcher will share the videos of her students in the literature circles for future students to view noting that there is not only one right way to discuss in a literature circle, and she will continue to create videos with current classes to show the multiple perspectives of discussion (Leland, Lewison, & Hartse, 2018).

5.9 Recommendations for Practice

While consulting with other English teachers in the teacher-researcher’s school, she realized the current curriculum and strategies for teaching reading were not engaging the students. Little focus was given to any discussion on social class equalizers which is ironic since the school receives 100% free lunch and is Title 1 (Hillman High School, 2016). Students who became engaged with the reading from the critical analysis would
potentially improve their comprehension as well (Abdelhalim, 2017). The use of literature circles is a strategy that will continue to be shared with the teacher-researcher’s colleagues as well. The teacher-researcher recommends the following when using literature circles.

5.10 Implications for Future Research

Recommendation #1. Teachers should choose the curriculum carefully to include social justice texts that make students more globally aware. The texts should include characters who represent different classes, genders, and races (Hunt & Seiver, 2018). The specific curriculum used with the literature circles will continue to be important. Critical literature, such as social justice texts means examining controversial topics that effect students’ lives (Lewsion, Leland, & Hartse, 2015). Teachers should select literature that is both of high interest and that shows social justice issues to keep students engaged in the reading and discussions. Social justice texts are important because they ignite people to look further into others’ viewpoints and emotions on issues (Leland, Lewison, & Hartse, 2018). Critical curriculum leads to critical and alive conversations for the school (Leland, Lewison, & Hartse, 2018).

Recommendation # 2. Teachers should deliberately choose texts that address social justice issues (National Council of Teachers of English & International Reading Association, 1994). English language arts teachers should be selective when choosing social justice texts because text selection is crucial for the students to be able to relate to the characters with their own lives. Characters should come from diverse backgrounds for students to develop empathy for others that may have different backgrounds than
themselves so that they recognize the value of equity for all (National Professional Board Teaching Standards, 2016).

Recommendation #3. Teachers should use social justice texts to develop empathy. The issue of the social and economic class assistance was not thoroughly explicated in class which is something the students in this study face on a daily basis belonging to a 100% Title 1 school. The teacher-researcher wants to better equip all students, enabling them to feel that privileges of middle and upper classes such as secondary education are accessible to them. Students should find a representation of themselves in the texts for their gender, class, and culture or those of their classmates to develop globally (National Council of Teachers of English & International Reading Association, 1994). Students should become actors not spectators after they read social justice texts (Friere, 1970). Teachers cannot be content to have a conversation about social justice, but to go out and do something, too, such as a project to transform students’ communities (Lewison, Leland, & Hartse, 2015). Students should be ready to transform their world. This can be done with students creating their own narratives, letters, plays, essays, posters, and so forth to promote a social change (Lewison, Leland, & Hartse, 2015). From such projects and discussions, the students use resources and critical literacy to combat social injustices (Lewison, Leland, & Hartse, 2015).

The strategy should benefit the students and only add to their learning environment, not detract from it. The goal as an action research-teacher was to produce “research intended to bring about change of some kind, usually with a social justice focus” (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014 p. 8). The teacher-researcher will use literature
circles with social justice texts and encourage other English teachers to do so for better engagement.

Teachers should use the strategy of literature circles to help all students with their reading because students learn from social contexts (Vygotsky, 1978; Chen, 2008). This would be beneficial in all content area where reading is a primary focus of the way students learn the material (Daniels, 1994). Teachers may find that newer versions of the literature circle model might fit their needs better. Daniels (2001) stated that role sheets were designed to help students begin discussion and to give students something to prepare for the meetings. The role sheets were not supposed to be read directly from sheets with each student taking a turn (Daniels, 2001). In addition, many teachers may prefer to go digital with their literature circles as a way to incorporate technology, too. With technology, the literature circles could have members from all walks of life and from anywhere in the world (Price-Dennis & Carrion, 2017). Teachers can implement literature circles with a learning wall bulletin board for students to keep track of when and how they will meet. The student can create their own tasks of how to respond to the text and then present a final product to share with the class (Leland, Lewison & Hartse, 2018).

Many implications for future research came from the action research study. The first was to recreate the study over a longer period of time and use a larger group of students. While the results of this action research study showed that language arts students responded well to literature circles, it did not show how it would work with gifted students, English as a second language students, or with special needs students. If this study was conducted for a longer period of time and in multiple classrooms with
different types of students, more data could show statistically results with all types of students. The sample size could be larger to gain more information about the effectiveness of literature circles across grade levels and across learning abilities. The study could be done in different schools across the nation and world (Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2012; Avci & Yuskel, 2011). Studies in other cultures and multi-lingual environments could be beneficial.

Also, the teacher-researcher would like to develop literature circles for families (Day & Lum, 2011). Because understanding social classes is essential, the teacher-researcher would like to extend the learning methods to go beyond the classroom (Payne-Bourcy & Chandler Olcott, 2003). Her school could invite parents to read a social text with their children. Then they could meet monthly for dinner in the school cafeteria to discuss in literature circles the social injustices observed in the books. Thus, they could build community and invest in the stakeholders while addressing a key concern of economics within the Title 1 school. After a review of the literature, the teacher-researcher found herself in the advantageous position of “providing a stronger foundation of knowledge for the next cycle of your research” (Mertler, 2014, p.214). The teacher-researcher will use the findings of literature circles with social justice texts to increase engagement and discussions about social injustices in a Title 1 school community.

Social class and culture are ever-changing, and educators continue to review how students interpret social justice texts (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012). Participation in literature circles helped students clarify their own class identity with regard to their background, education, region, and family. Students socially develop from being within a social group known as a literature circle (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012, p. 218). Teachers
do not take classes on how to teach about social contexts. The teacher-researcher will ask students to take action towards improving social injustices for their next steps. When students read social justice texts, students will research ways they can take action for social justice (Lewison, flint, & Van Sluys, 2002).

Students must actually read and be engaged in diverse texts to gain an understanding of cultures within the United States and the world (NBPTS, 2016). More studies to compare individual readers and their reading programs to literature circles with different types of variables should be done, too (Avci & Yuskel, 2011). To ascertain the effectiveness of literature circles they should be implemented in multiple grade levels. Literature circles have been shown to make reading comprehension permanent and to increase a reading habit, but more study for multiple grades is needed (Avci & Yuskel, 2011). Students need to read about other cultures, and educators need hands on methods for engaging students in reading. Traditional methods of reading and direct instruction do not seem to be maintaining students’ attention (Banks, 2003). Specifically, literature circles create collaborative learning groups for students and teachers to engage in discussion about a text. Daniels’ (2002) model of literature circles is effective.

5.11 Summary

Before this action research study, the teacher-researcher used texts that contained social justice, but instruction did not focus on social justice; her research exposed her inexperience with instruction of social class (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2012 p. 244). Now critical literacy theories are part of her curriculum. The teacher-researcher conducts action research to improve her own practice and to share knowledge with her colleagues (Mertler, 2014).
The teacher-researcher will continue to use literature circles to foster greater student engagement. Additionally, the teacher-researcher will spend time learning of her students’ background including their social class identification. Prior knowledge of social class creates a lens for students’ interpretation of the reading. Literature circles provides a point of view for each student to contribute to the collaborative discussion in a learning community. Literature circles provide discussion tools because the students brought role sheets to the conversation and engaged in talking with peers. The process of literature circles promotes greater comprehension for learners (Avici & Yuskel, 2011).

The problem of practice gave the teacher-researcher the tool of literature circles to help engage students regarding social justice. Reading about individuals who overcame the obstacle of class may better prepare economically disadvantaged students to overcome this hurdle too. The teacher-research wants to apply servant leadership in the classroom, so students will learn to love reading, understand social class, and be able to communicate about literature and social injustices. As Robinson (2013) states, “The knowledge that others care reduces one’s sense of vulnerability, increases social affiliation, and invites reciprocal regard” (p. 308). If they too, learn to be servant leaders from their experience in the teacher-researcher’s classroom, then it is education at its highest.

During the study, role sheets were used to collect data from the students on how they were responding to the social justice text Tears of a Tiger (Draper, 1994). Data from the seven students involved in the literature circles were examined. The motivation of the language arts students and their knowledge of social justice issues were examined through their role sheets, discussions, journals, and pre- and post- surveys. The analysis
of the data showed that in general, the language arts students responded well to the literature circles for discussions. This study showed that when students used literature circles they became engaged in discussing social justice texts.

The teacher-researcher shared the action research results with other English teachers as an obligation of a curriculum servant leader (Sergiovani, 2013). This was to help other teachers assist students in understanding other cultures and social classes as the NCTE has shown this to be an area of concern (National Council of Teachers of English & International Reading Association, 1996; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016). In the district where the study occurred, indicating that the schools are Title 1, thus the students were from lower economic backgrounds. These students were often disadvantaged in competing for college education and navigating “middle class dialogue” for college (Payne-Bourcy & Chandler-Olcott, 2003). Discussing differences in social class gave these students tools for overcoming obstacles of discourse based on social justice issues. The teacher-researcher understands how important it is for students to have a discussion tool such as literature circles when engaging in talks that might be an uncomfortable topic like social class. The steps of the action plan enabled the teacher-researcher to systematically answer her research question regarding student engagement with social justice texts.
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APPENDIX A: PARENT/PARTICIPANT LETTER

Dear Parent/Guardian(s):

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at Hephzibah High School with your child. I am currently enrolled in the education doctorate in curriculum and instruction with the University of South Carolina, and I am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled Using Literature Circles for Engagement with Social Justice Texts.

I hope you will allow me to use your child’s survey regarding knowledge of social justice. Students will complete a survey to determine their personality type for group work. Students will then participate in literature circles during class time as a regular instructional strategy for engagement using alternate role sheets. This will not interfere with other instruction and methods of instruction. Sample of students’ works and participation in the study will be recorded anonymously. Parents will be given consent forms to be signed and returned to the primary researcher which explains the study and procedures.

If approval is granted, student participants will complete the survey in a classroom during school time. No costs will be incurred by either your school or the individual participants.

Your permission to include your child in this study will be greatly appreciated. I will be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have. You may contact me at my email address: teutolo@boe---------k12.ga.us.

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form.

Sincerely,

Lori Teuton

Enclosures

Approved by:

____________________  ____________________  ________

Print your name and title here    Signature    Date
APPENDIX B: LITERATURE CIRCLE MODULE SLIDES
GOALS

1. IDENTIFY THE PURPOSE OF THE LITERATURE CIRCLE
   - Describe the purpose of a literature circle.
   - Discuss the benefits of a literature circle.
   - Explain the structure of a literature circle.
   - Participate in a literature circle discussion.

OBJECTIVE 1

DESCRIBE THE PURPOSE OF A LITERATURE CIRCLE.

KEY TERMS

- Literature Circle: A group of readers who meet regularly to discuss a book.
- Critical Analysis: A method of examining texts to identify their strengths and weaknesses.
- Interpretation: A personal understanding or explanation of a text.

KEY TERMS
- Variables
- Arm-Weighted Force Pressure
- Time Interval
- Arm-Weighted Force Pressure

EXAMPLES OF PURPOSES
- TRUE
- FALSE

CORRECT ANSWER!! YES, PROVIDING AUTONOMY IS A PURPOSE.

INCORRECT ANSWER-PLEASE TRY AGAIN. MOST STUDENTS ENJOY THE AUTONOMY.
QUESTION 2

The purpose of most literature circles is to provide students with an opportunity to discuss books with students.

* True
* False

MCQ

MCQ ANSWER TRUE, PLEASE TRY AGAIN. STUDENTS ARE THE ONES DISCUSSING.

GOAL 2

DESCRIBE THE HISTORY OF A LITERATURE CIRCLE.

2.0 OBJECTIVE - IDENTIFY THE HISTORY OF A LITERATURE CIRCLE

KEYFOUNDER-HARVEY DANIELS

* Get students to develop their own ideas and models. Students can find information on how and why they read. Students can identify with the story and see themselves in the story.

* Answers are questions required for the student to think and discuss the story. They.

* Key founder Harvey Daniels.
QUESTION 3

The history of literature circles did NOT start with students. It started with the problems they faced and the conversations they had about their experiences.

*TRUE

FAKE

CORRECT ANSWER! FALSE. YES.
LITERATURE CIRCLES DID NOT START WITH
THE PROBLEMS.

QUESTION 4

"The history of literature circles begins with the problems students face and the conversations they have about their experiences." Non-fictional writing is supported with both facts and their own experiences.

* TRUE

FAKE

CORRECT ANSWER! YES. TRUE. TEACHERS
DID NOT NOTICE HOW INVOLVED THEIR
STUDENTS WERE.

GOAL 3

DESCRIBE EACH ROLE OF THE
MEMBERS IN A LITERATURE CIRCLE.

3.1 OBJECTIVE

IDENTIFY THE ROLE OF EACH MEMBER IN A LITERATURE CIRCLE.
KEY TERMS/ VOCABULARY FANSCREEN:
- fan screen
- video clip

VIEW THE FOLLOWING VIDEO CLIP:
* Fan Screen Video Clip

QUESTION 5
The discussion director's role is to develop questions for your student's circle that cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" answering.
- Yes
- No

QUESTION 6
The illustrator must be a teacher or artist in order to properly illustrate the text.
- True
- False

CORRECT ANSWER: TRUE, THE DISCUSSION DIRECTOR MUST ASK THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS.

CORRECT ANSWER: FALSE, THE ILLUSTRATOR DOES NOT HAVE TO BE AN ARTIST TO DISPLAY A VISUAL PRESENTATION. CHARTS AND CHARTS WORK WELL.
GOAL 4
EXPLAIN THE STRATEGY USED TO TEACH ABOUT A TEXT IN MOST SECONDARY ENGLISH CLASSES VS USING LITERATURE CIRCLES.

OBJECTIVE 4.1
- IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES TO TEACH ABOUT THE TEXT USING LITERATURE CIRCLES.

TRADITIONAL WAYS TO TEACH READING

KEY TERM: STRATEGY
- Strategy: A method of teaching that focuses on helping students develop skills and understanding in a particular area.

QUESTION 7
- TRUE OR FALSE: MANY TEACHERS STILL USE THE TRADITIONAL METHOD OF DISSERTATION INSTRUCTION.
QUESTION 6

Most secondary English language arts classes begin independent reading often followed by comprehension check questions.

* True
* False

CORRECT ANSWER: True. Many teachers assign independent reading often followed by comprehension check questions.

OBJECTIVE 4.2

KEY TERM: Engagement

* Engagement can be measured by student participation in classroom discussions and student responses to questions during class.

QUESTION 9

The strategy of a secondary English language arts classroom striving for engagement is a focus on student active learning, rather than passive listening and note taking.

* True
* False

CORRECT ANSWER: True. Classes focusing on engagement of learners involve active learning.
QUESTION 10

Correct Answer: False. Direct instruction is NOT wrong but it often doesn’t fully engage the student.

Correct Answer: False. The illustration does not have to be an artist to display a visual presentation. Charts and graphs work well.

REMEMBER YOUR GOALS

1. Discuss the purpose of a literature circle.
2. Discuss the benefits of a literature circle.
3. Discuss how the benefits of the literature circle.
4. Explain how to strategy. How to.
APPENDIX C: LITERATURE CIRCLES ASSESSMENT

1. What is your name?

2. The purpose of a literature circle is to make grading easy for the teacher (true/false)

3. The purpose of a literature circle is to allow students to discuss a text using a given role. (true/false)

4. What is the history of the literature circle?
a. bored students invented it.
b. teachers with limited resources invented it.
c. the history is unknown.

5. The history of literature circles includes which type of schools?
a. all boys' school
b. private schools
c. title 1 schools

6. If the member of the literature circle is making connections between the text and a movie, what is his or her role?
a. connector
b. discussion director
c. illustrator
d. passage master

7. If the member of the literature circle is drawing a picture of key events what is his or her role?
a. connector
b. discussion director

c. illustrator

d. passage master

8. What is a strategy for teaching a text in most English language arts classes?
   a. direct instruction with the teacher lecturing
   b. reading online
   c. student led discussion groups.

9. What is another strategy for teaching a text in most English language arts classes?
   a. literature circles
   b. collaborative learning
   c. independent reading with comprehension questions

10. The purpose of a strategy for teaching a text in a classroom striving for engagement is to involve all learners. (true/false)

11. The purpose of a strategy for teaching a text in a classroom striving for engagement is for the teacher to provide a vigorous lecture. (true/false)
APPENDIX D: PRE/POST SURVEY

1. How much do you enjoy reading on your own about social issues?

   1. not at all
   2
   3
   4
   5. a great deal

2. Outside of assigned homework, how much reading on social issues have you done in the past?

   1. (never finished an entire book)
   2
   3. (1 book every 3-6 months)
   4
   5. (at least 1 book per week)

3. In the past week, how many days have you read for at least 30 minutes?

   1. no days
   2. 1-2 days
   3. 3-4 days
   4. 5-6 days
   5. every day

4. How many books on social issues would you say you own?

   1
   2
   3
   4
   5

   none
   15 books
   30+ books (approx. number)

5. How many books on social issues would you say are in your house?

   1
   2
   3
   4
   5

   none
   100 books
   200+ books (approx. number)

6. When you read, do you like to read independently?

   1. never
   2
   3
   4
   5. always

   1. sometimes
   2
   3
   4
   5

7. Do you like to read with a group?

   1. never
   2
   3
   4
   5. always

   1. sometimes
   2
   3
   4
   5

8. Reading about social issues makes you a better-informed citizen?

   1. never
   2
   3
   4
   5. always

   1. sometimes
   2
   3
   4
   5

9. Divorce is a social issue?

   1. never
   2
   3
   4
   5. always

   1. sometimes
   2
   3
   4
   5

10. Free and reduced lunch is a social or class issue?

    1. never
    2
    3
    4
    5. always

    1. sometimes
    2
    3
    4
    5

   always
APPENDIX E: OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Date: ________________ Book: __________________________ Meeting #: ___

Student Name: __________________________

**Participated in discussion throughout/Fulfilled “Role”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fully</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Sporadically</td>
<td>Minimally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Referenced social justice or social injustice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Sporadically</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F: UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1st interview:

1) Do you think that if this wasn’t at the end of the year it might have worked more effectively?

2) Do you feel like doing the literature circles and having these meetings got you more involved in the book? Helped you understand it?

3) Would it be better if you were friends that you picked for the circle? Or would it distract you?

4) What would be a good way for teachers to group students?

5) Did you like doing the different literature circle tasks?

6) What was your favorite task?

2nd interview:

1) How would you say that the literature circles helped you better understand the story?

2) So, you liked being able to talk about it with your peer group?

3) And doing the little sheets, did you like doing that?

4) Well let’s go down the row and each of you tell me what your favorite role was and your least favorite role sheet to complete was.
APPENDIX G: ROLE SHEET DISCUSSION DIRECTOR

Name______________________________________ Group________________________
Date_______________________________________ ReadingAssignment________________

Discussion Director:
Your job is to lead the group in discussion. As you read, think of questions that you have about the story, its characters, setting, theme, or plot. Jot these down and then look for the answers. Some questions may not be answered entirely until the end of the book. Make sure your questions cannot be answered with only “yes” or “no.” Have everyone answer at least one question and record some of their answers as well as your own. You should have six discussion questions. (Continue on the back).

Discussion Director: ELAGSE9-10RL2: Determine a theme and/or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
APPENDIX H: ROLE SHEET CONNECTOR

Name_________________________________ Group_________________________________________________________
Date__________________________________ ReadingAssignment__________________________________________

Connector:
Your job is to look for connections between the reading assignment and either another text, world events, personal events, a song, or even a movie. Write about the connection and how the events or person are the same and different. Share this information with the group and ask them for their comments, questions, and similar connections that they found. Use the space below and continue on the back if needed.

Connector: ELaGSE9-10W9-Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
APPENDIX I: ROLE SHEET ILLUSTRATOR

Name_______________________________ Group________________________
Date________________________________ReadingAssignment____________________

Illustrator:

Your job is to create a picture, graph, poster, cartoon, or computer graphic design depicting a key scene, idea, character(s), or setting from your reading assignment. You may do this on the back of this sheet or in another format.

Describe why you chose this section or person to illustrate. Why is it important? How did you know how to draw your picture? For example, if a character has red hair it would be important that you depicting that detail accurately.

Illustrator: ELAGSE9-10SL5: Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest).
Passage Master:
Your job is to find key passages while you read that were important to the understanding of the text. Make sure you bookmark or sticky note these passages while reading. The passage could be funny, sad, dialogue, or very descriptive. When you finish reading, look back at what you’ve marked and select four to share with your group. Tell them why you found them important and ask for their comments, too. Have your group members share key passages, too. You need to find four key passages. (Continue on back)

a) Page #______ The first four are ______________________________________

The last four words are_______________________________________________

I selected this passage because _______________________________________

Passage Master: ELAGSE 9-10RI5: Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).
APPENDIX K: ROLE SHEET-SUMMARIZER

Name______________________________________ Group_____________________________________
Date_______________________________________ Reading Assignment_________________________

Summarizer:
Your job is to summarize what you read. You have to retell the story in your own words. Pick out the main details and share with your group. Describe what you read as if you were a reporter on the scene. Think of who, what, when, where, why, and how questions and answers to help you. Your summary should take up most of this page, and you may continue onto the back. Be sure to write in complete sentences. Ask your group how they would summarize the story and if you need to add any other details to your summary.

Summarizer: ELAGSE9-10RI4: Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
APPENDIX L: ROLE SHEET VOCABULARY ENRICHER

Name______________________________________ Group_____________________________________
Date______________________________________ Reading Assignment_________________________

1- retaining (adj) keep something in place; hold fixed Crash, Fire, Pain- pg. 1
2- honorable (adj) worthy of high respect or esteem Hit the Showers! Hit the Streets!- pg. 4
3- stunted (adj) slow the growth or development of something “Dear Lord”- pg. 16

Vocabulary Enricher:
Your job is to find new, unusual, or challenging, or keywords and explains how they are used in the reading assignment. Define the word as it is used in the reading. You may use a dictionary if you need to, then, list the page number, and part of space. Next, use the word in a sentence. Explain this to your group and ask if they found other words that were new to them, too. Make sure you find eight words. Continue on the back of this page or on notebook paper if needed.

Word: ______________________ page #________ part of speech________________

Definition
Original Sentence:

1) Discussion Question:
My answer:

Group member’s answer

Vocabulary Enricher: ELAGSE9-10RL4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).