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The Impact of Poetry Annotations on the Critical Thinking Skills of High School Juniors and Seniors at a School in a Southeastern State

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THE IMPACT OF POETRY ANNOTATIONS ON THE CRITICAL THINKING
SKILLS OF HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS AND SENIORS AT A SCHOOL IN A
SOUTHEASTERN STATE

by

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DEDICATION

To my wonderful husband, Jon,
you are the reason I embarked on this endeavor.

To my mom, dad, and sister,
your constant support is the reason I believed in myself.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This process was certainly not a solo venture, and it took many people offering their advice, support, and assistance to complete this journey. Above all, I would like to thank Dr. James D. Kirylo, who has been invaluable in the writing of this dissertation. I truly cannot express how much I have appreciated his feedback and support. I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Todd Lilly, Dr. Victoria Oglan, and Dr. Toby Jenkins-Henry for their time and input in completing this dissertation. My husband and classmate, Jon, has been by my side through this program, and our master's program over a decade ago. I could not imagine this experience without him. Thank you to Sarah Atkins, my co-teacher in the evaluating process, and thank you to Rachel Rabon, who took the time to discuss poem selections with me. Finally, thank you to the students who so willingly participated in this study. I hope they know just how valuable their contributions are to future students.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of poetry annotations on students' critical thinking skills. This action research study took place in the spring of 2019 with eight high school participants. Participants were enrolled in an English IV-Honors class that was a combination of juniors and seniors. The setting was a public high school in a southeastern state. A mixed methods design was used; however, the study was more dominantly a qualitative study, and data was collected from participant pre and post-surveys and interviews, student-participant work, teacher-researcher observation notes, journal entries, and rubrics for annotations and responses to poetry analysis questions. The data revealed that practice, collaborative opportunities, and reflection led to growth in participants' self-efficacy, confidence, use of poetry annotations, and critical thinking skills as reflected in the rubrics.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking is one of the most challenging skills for teachers to teach and for students to acquire. Teachers can efficiently guide students in their learning when their work is concretely represented on paper or when their thoughts are shared during class discussions, but it is difficult to determine the process that occurs in students' minds. In the secondary English classroom, teachers frequently use academic writing, writing that "asks [students] to demonstrate knowledge and show proficiency with certain disciplinary skills of thinking, interpreting, and presenting" (Lowe & Zemliansky, 2010, p. 8), as a culminating activity to allow students to demonstrate their thinking on paper.

While academic writing provides students with opportunities to relay their conclusions, it is the culmination of critical thinking. This culmination is a collection of ideas that has resulted from class discussions, activities, or other sources. It is not the same critical thinking experience that occurs during active reading and simultaneous analysis of a text. Academic writing is the big picture and represents a thorough development of a student's thoughts. It does not reflect the intricate step-by-step process that occurs cognitively as students tackle challenging areas in their reading. Therefore, in order to effectively prepare students for the challenges they may encounter as they read to foster intellectual growth, teachers must first effectively teach students how to think critically (Kovalik & Kovalik, 2007).

There are a variety of methods that teachers can use to teach students how to think critically. The challenges do not lie in there being a deficit of critical thinking strategies,

but rather in students understanding when to use the strategies without being prompted and how to use them to their full effectiveness. For the purpose of the study, critical thinking is defined as the process of analyzing and evaluating an author's use of language and structure to relay their purpose in writing. One advantageous method for teaching students to think critically is found in teaching them to do so through the analysis of poetry. This is a beneficial genre because poetry offers a variety of opportunities for linguistic and structural scrutiny. The length of poetry, often times much shorter than a short story or a novel, allows teachers to create opportunities for students to have repeated practice of similar concepts through a variety of texts. Poetry also employs "complex treatments of language...[and a] focus on 'how it is said' as [much as] 'what is said'" (as cited in Weaven & Clark, 2013, p. 198). This richness and multifaceted use of language leads to a depth of analysis that is intellectually rewarding.

Many articles have been written about poetry at the elementary and middle school levels, but articles about teaching poetry at the high school level are scarce (Sigvarrdson, 2017). Strategies for teaching poetry often involve students writing it, and there is little discussion of empowering students with the tools to analyze poetry, which is beneficial to their critical thinking skills (Eva-Wood, 2004; Peskin, 2007; Weaven & Clark, 2013). One valuable strategy for improving critical thinking skills and poetry analysis is the use of annotation. Annotation is a strategy that allows students to write their thoughts on paper. This aids the teacher, and the student, in identifying where the student's critical thinking has occurred by paying particular attention to author's craft (Feito & Donahue, 2008; Liu, 2006; Shang, 2017).

Using annotation is beneficial because the active engagement allows students to mark their comprehension, interpret an author's intentions, and read with purpose (Feito & Donahue, 2008; Morris, 2012; Nist, 1987; Shang, 2017). This method for teaching critical thinking provides opportunities for students to ask thoughtful questions, such as why an author chose to use a specific color to describe an object, why a line ends with a specific punctuation mark, or why the word "talons" is used instead of "claws." Since understanding students' thought processes can assist teachers in helping students to master a skill, teaching students how to effectively use annotation to read and analyze poetry has the capability of teaching them how to think critically (Feito & Donahue, 2008; Morris, 2012).

The significance of annotation as a strategy to analyze poetry is an untapped avenue. Poetry is the genre chosen for this study to use in conjunction with annotation because of its value in promoting critical thinking in a short text. Even though poetry has numerous benefits when it comes to enhancing critical thinking skills, many teachers choose not to include poetry units in their instruction because they are intimidated by either teaching it (often because they do not even know where to start) or because they feel that poetry instruction means that they must also include a poetry writing component in the unit; they know of no other way to teach poetry (Weaven & Clark, 2013).

Similar to poetry, annotation has immense value in the curriculum. Since learning is a process, students must have useful strategies in order to navigate through interactions with difficult texts (Liu, 2006). Teaching students to use annotation "[aims] to help [them] improve their ability to learn...[and] to control and direct their cognitive processes" (Liu, 2006, p. 195).

Statement of the Problem of Practice

After twelve years of teaching in a small school district just outside of the state's capital, the teacher-researcher has noticed a reoccurring trend within her English III and IV classes. Regardless of their academic levels, students are motivated to engage with texts in meaningful ways, but there are few students who can deeply analyze texts, meaning that they have little experience with what questions to ask in order to think critically about an author's intentions. Moreover, most students struggle with where to even begin their analysis without specific teacher guidance through teacher-led questions.

For example, on first day of class in the teacher-researcher's classroom, students receive a copy of Carl Sandburg's poem, *Mag*. Students are asked to analyze the poem and write a response with their conclusions. During that activity, the majority of the class can be broken into three groups: the students who read the poem and write a summary of it, the students who look up definitions of a few terms they do not know and write a summary of the poem, and the students who completely shut down at the thought of analyzing a poem and do not complete any of the assignment.

In the teacher-researcher's classroom, students fear thinking critically in an environment where it is on display; they simply do not know where to begin and are fearful of being wrong (Wright et al., 2010). The teacher-researcher has had some success teaching annotation as a critical thinking strategy. After exposure to annotation, many students use the strategy to define terms they do not know and mark their comprehension as they move through a poem by the end of the semester. However, only a small number of students exhibit annotations that show they are thinking critically about the poems.

It is through these observations that the teacher-researcher has noticed that even though students readily accept using annotation as a reading strategy, the correlation between using annotations to strengthen critical thinking skills is underdeveloped. Students focus on summarizing or simplifying and asking questions regarding textual content. Often times, the questions are at the cusp of a strong analysis, but a student's fear of being wrong hinders them from turning that question into an annotation that exhibits critical thinking (Wright et al., 2010).

A research study was appropriate because the teacher-researcher sought to determine a strategy that would enable students' metacognition to drive their annotations and thus increase their critical thinking skills. Considering also that the teacher-researcher desired to implement a new strategy in her classroom, this study on the impact of poetry annotations on critical thinking skills is well suited for action research (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Mertler, 2015).

In order to help teachers and students overcome their apprehensions and embrace the effectiveness of poetry analysis, this study sought to identify the methods and interventions that would demonstrate the successfulness and usefulness of annotating in the analysis of poetry. This study sought to identify ways to strengthen the correlation between using annotations and critical thinking skills.

The participants in this study were from a senior level English honors class. Since honors English students exhibit a mastery of basic reading comprehension, using them as participants for this study presented more opportunities to evaluate annotation as a strategy for increasing critical thinking skills. Even though this study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of annotation for analyzing poetry, annotation can be applied to a

variety of disciplines, thus acquiring the skill can benefit students in multiple areas (Simpson & Nist, 1990).

In order to assist students in developing their critical thinking skills, this study used annotations, a constructivist strategy, as well as reciprocal teaching to guide students' annotations. By teaching students how to use prior knowledge while creating new knowledge as they read and analyze poems, students can strengthen their critical thinking. This study also used reciprocal teaching to support the critical thinking process as students engaged in using poetry annotations. Reciprocal teaching is a strategy where students slowly take on more ownership of their learning. The teacher gradually becomes less of a facilitator and more of an observer as students work together to understand a text (Alfassi, 2004). The use of reciprocal teaching can help guide students' metacognition and annotations when they are unsure of what direction to take when analyzing a poem.

Research Question

How does a focus on poetry annotation as a learning objective impact the critical thinking skills of eight students enrolled in an English IV-Honors class at Meadow Valley High School?

For the purposes of this study, *annotation* is defined as brief notes or markings written during the reading process. Additionally, for the purposes of this study, *critical thinking* is defined as the process of analyzing and evaluating author's craft.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact poetry annotations would have on the critical thinking skills of eight students enrolled in an English IV-Honors class at Meadow Valley High School.

Brief Overview of Methodology

The teacher-researcher's roles through the duration of this study were that of an insider and outsider (Herr & Anderson, 2015). As a teacher seeking to address a problem in my classroom, this study meets the requirements of action research (Efron & Ravid, 2013). The scaffolding and various interventions used throughout the course of the study may suggest the study's generalizability and transferability to other classrooms and schools; however, as an action research study, generalizability may not be apparent based on this instance alone (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

The teacher-researcher developed a mixed methods approach, with the dominant method being qualitative. In order to conduct the research, the following data collection instruments were utilized: observation notes, Likert surveys, open-ended interviews, participant artifacts, and rubrics. While the study was heavily qualitative in nature, the Likert surveys and rubrics were more indicative of a quantitative approach (Efron & Ravid, 2013). The research took place during a six-week period.

At the beginning of the research, participants in an English IV-Honors class responded to open-ended interview questions, marked annotations, and constructed responses to poetry analysis questions. The Likert survey and open-ended interview asked participants about the types of learning strategies they used in the past to tackle difficult texts. It also asked participants about their analytical process when reading, their understanding and definitions of critical thinking and annotations, and their interactions with and general feelings towards poetry inside and outside of the classroom.

After participants completed the survey, the first week was devoted to introducing participants to the strategy of annotation and its usefulness in analyzing poetry.

Participants analyzed an author's purpose by annotating a poem individually in order to determine a baseline for their critical thinking abilities. The teacher-researcher used a poem to model for participants the critical thinking process in conjunction with the annotation strategy. In addition to annotation, interactions with these texts were done through various methods such as teacher modeling, individual and group work, and journal responses.

In the second and third weeks of the study, participants continued the annotation of canonical poems. The process was similar to the previous week, with the teacher-researcher modeling as needed and an inclusion of both individual and group work. Journal entries were used to facilitate reflections about participants' previous strengths and areas of weakness in relation to poetry annotations.

During the fourth and fifth weeks of the study, participants had a shortened amount of time to engage with the poems individually before moving to groups of four to share and discuss their annotations. The sixth week of the study served as a posttest with participants working individually through the final poem.

The effectiveness of annotation as a reading strategy to think critically about poetry was measured during the study through interviews, observations, participant artifacts, and rubrics. More specifically, participants engaged in open-ended interviews, and the teacher-researcher noted observations about participants' interactions and behaviors as they worked individually and in groups to think critically about poems using annotations. Samples of artifacts, both participants' annotations of poems and responses to poetry analysis questions, were collected and analyzed. Rubrics were used, with the

assistance of a co-teacher, to determine participants' progress with using annotation to analyze poetry.

Significance of the Study

Scholarly literature supports the importance of poetry and annotation in the classroom, albeit separately. There has been considerable research conducted on the impact of poetry in increasing reader fluency, often by writing poetry. Additionally, much of the research previously conducted was done so at the elementary level. While some teachers are open to using poetry in the classroom in ways that go beyond writing it, they do not know where to begin; many choose to not use it in the curriculum at all (Weaven & Clark, 2013). Teachers tend to share the same fears about poetry that their students do: the fear of being wrong about their interpretation and the fear of expressing personal feelings (Stickling, Prasun, & Olsen, 2011). Teachers must embrace those fears to show students that risk-taking is a part of learning. It is only by attempting to make sense of things that people become better at wading through and overcoming challenges. This study addressed an area where there is additional research needed: using poetry annotations to increase the critical thinking skills of high school students.

Students who grow in confidence and in the analysis of poetry can then apply those critical thinking skills to other types of literature and other learning experiences (Stickling, Prasun, & Olsen, 2011). In other words, the awareness gained of the learning process by students goes well beyond the scope of this study and beyond English literature. The self-awareness that this study addressed (through appropriate and strong questioning as students analyzed poems) applies to many areas that involve decision-making. Student ownership over learning is a key component of student success, and

teachers foster that by helping students understand how they think and what strategies to use when they meet obstacles.

The mastery of annotation also increases awareness for both the teacher and student. Through the use of annotation, teachers are able to concretely see the thought processes of their students, allowing them to validate or assist students as needed (Liu, 2006). It also allows students to strengthen their critical thinking because through annotation, they can see the variations of, or limits, in their thinking (Liu, 2006). The American education system must look at ways to challenge its students beyond comprehension and memorization. This study hopes to yield one method the American education system can use as it looks to improve for future generations.

Limitations of the Study

With any study, there are possible limitations. My positionality as researcher and teacher may create unintentional bias during the treatment. This may appear in the form of my strong belief that annotations are beneficial and the value of using poetry as a medium to teach. Additional limitations with the participants result from the participant group size, a total of eight students, as well as the sampling coming from an honors class. Since the sampling is smaller and from an accelerated class, it is difficult to make generalizations (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Dissertation Overview

Chapter One introduces reasons behind the study, as well as the research question. Chapter Two discusses a review of the scholarly literature related to the research question on topics such as constructivism, critical thinking, metacognition, and strategies for teaching poetry. Chapter Three provides descriptions of the setting, explanations of the

methods and approaches used for teaching the analysis of poetry through annotations and critical thinking, and a brief biography, by pseudonym, of each student-participant. Chapter Four interprets the findings of the research. Finally, Chapter Five addresses implications of the study and possible avenues for further research.

Researcher Positionality

I grew up in a military family and was a first generation college student. As I tried to meet the expectations of my college courses, I quickly realized that I was behind in my abilities to read complex texts and analyze them comprehensively. These struggles are what led me to recognize the value of annotations as an effective reading strategy.

As a teacher, my own experiences have influenced my curriculum choices. I quickly realized the untapped value of using poetry annotations to strengthen students' reading and critical thinking skills, exacerbated in part due to my own past struggles. Therefore, it was difficult not to prioritize my own interests and desires in regards to the value of poetry annotations over those of my participants' interests. While I understood that my support of using poetry annotations could affect my study, I sought to find a balance between my participants' desires and my own by creating interest in the study's poems so the participants felt intrinsically rewarded from using annotation (Foote & Bartell, 2011).

Definition of Terms

Annotation: Brief notes and markings that are written during the reading process. This may include: highlighting, underlining, circling, questioning (to include isolated question marks to mark confusion), reader's attitude towards or understanding of the text, analysis of literary devices or author's stylistic techniques (syntax, diction, etc.) (Liu, 2006).

Analysis: A skill used during the critical thinking process in order to dissect the text.

Author's Craft: The various writing techniques an author intentionally uses to develop theme or purpose. These techniques include: figurative language, diction, structure of writing, development, tone, and syntax.

Critical Thinking: The process of analyzing and evaluating author's craft to relay their purpose in writing (Kovalik & Kovalik, 2007; The Foundation for Critical Thinking, n.d.).

Diction: An author's choice of words or short phrases in writing that are significant due to multiple meanings or interpretations related to the text's content or purpose.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

When it comes to analyzing and thinking critically about literature in an English classroom, students are often reluctant to rise to the challenge (Eva-Wood, 2008; Wright et al., 2010). Ask students to analyze a particular line of a poem, and the classroom is suddenly filled with blank faces (Patel & Laud, 2015). Ask students to summarize the line of a poem, and the classroom is suddenly filled with the scratching of pens and pencils. Many English classrooms are filled with numerous students in the latter example. So, how do teachers ensure that their classrooms are filled with students who are just as confident to analyze the line of a poem as they are to summarize it? The answer not only involves teaching critical thinking strategies, but also using short texts with large pay outs.

In addition to critical thinking skills being underrepresented in the English classroom, so is the use of poetry as a genre to read and analyze (Sigvardsson, 2017; Stickling, Prasad, & Olsen, 2011; Weaven & Clark, 2013). Hand students a poem and ask them to analyze it, and many will look up unfamiliar words, others will summarize the parts they do understand, and the third group will just sit and stare at the poem. Reading poetry, especially poetry that is heavily symbolic in nature, is like a soufflé, and likely will not be easy to accomplish the first time (Wright et al., 2010). It's messy. Students will be stumped by words, entire lines, and symbols. Many students will not even be able to identify any symbols. Teachers can lecture on what a poem says but may struggle with the precise strategies a student should use to wade through a Shakespearean

sonnet. The teacher's and the students' struggles end in a limited use of poetry in the classroom (Peskin, 2007; Shapiro, 1985; Sigvardsson, 2017).

Poetry has the ability to be an incredibly useful tool in the classroom for the teacher and the student (Eva-Wood, 2004; Stickling, Prasun, & Olsen, 2011; Weaven & Clark, 2013; Wilfong, 2008). Teachers can use poems to teach a variety of aspects in regards to the English language (Eva-Wood, 2004; Stickling, Prasun, & Olsen, 2011; Weaven & Clark, 2013; Wilfong, 2008). Additionally, poems are valuable as challenging texts due to their coded nature and ability for students to engage with them in the curriculum in a short time period (Eva-Wood, 2004). A teacher can cover two to three poems in a week and provide students with repeated practice of specific skills through a variety of examples, while a short story or novel may take weeks to cover in class and only allow for a few examples of particular skills. This type of delayed exposure and practice does little for student retention (Saville, 2011; Son & Simon, 2012).

Poetry also offers numerous opportunities for the teaching of critical thinking skills (Abednia & Izadinia, 2013; Wang, 2017). Students can use annotation in order to decipher poetry (Nist, 1987). However, because annotation involves critical thinking and not simply looking up unknown words or summarizing easily comprehended sections, various interventions must be included with the instruction of annotation for it to be beneficial and become an acquired skill. Additionally, this skill can be applied to other academic disciplines and promote citizens who are more aware of the world around them.

Similar to the various applications of poetry in the classroom, annotation is not a successful strategy if it is taught without any guidance, purpose, or interventions (Nist, 1987). In order to identify current teaching and intervention strategies for annotation, the

teacher-researcher used a variety of educational databases (Academic Search Complete, Education Source, ERIC, and PsycInfo) available through the Thomas Cooper Library at the University of South Carolina.

Knowledge about the various aspects and uses of annotation helped the teacher-researcher present the strategy to students so they could find the benefits of and success in using it. This literature review includes information on annotations and poetry (such as teacher/student perspectives and its connection to theory), its significance in the curriculum, and formative assessments.

The Importance of Poetry Analysis

Poetry has been a crucial facilitator of humankind's spoken language. *Beowulf*, the oldest text in the English language, is written in the poetic form. Through this well-known text, poetry has a solidified place in the English language, but the use of poetry in the classroom depends on the whims of the teacher (Sigvardsson, 2017; Weaven & Clark, 2013).

Poetry is a genre that is underrepresented in the English classroom for a variety of reasons (Weaven & Clark, 2013). While it may not take center stage in the curriculum, there are significant benefits to using it as students who engage with poetry are more fluent readers and stronger analytical writers (Eva-Wood, 2004; Stickling, Prasun, & Olsen, 2011; Weaven & Clark, 2013; Wilfong, 2008).

As students age and move into upper grade levels, the texts they interact with become lengthier and more syntactically complex, but a benefit of poetry is that it exposes students to a variety of language skills in a condensed format (Eva-Wood, 2004). Since poetry is a genre intended to be read aloud, this is often the first interaction that

students have with it. As students actively read poetry in class, they find improvement in their phonetic awareness and fluency (Stickling, Prasun, & Olsen, 2011; Wilfong, 2008). The length and tempo characteristics of many poems allow for students to practice fluency in short bursts.

It is not simply the reading aloud of poetry that justifies its use in education, as any text can be read aloud, but it is the conciseness of poetry and how it allows repeated practice either within the same piece or within a variety of pieces in a short period of time (Wilfong, 2008). Additionally, poetry is typically taught apart from other texts, and the benefits that students reap from interacting with poetry are specific to the genre because reading it aloud allows students to practice sound associations through alliteration and rhyme (Stickling, Prasun, & Olsen, 2011). Wilfong (2008) reports that struggling readers improve their reading fluency after explicitly interacting with poetry in its oral form. The impact that reading poetry has on reading fluency warrants its increased use in the classroom.

In the same way that poetry is beneficial to students' reading fluency, it also assists students in their ability to understand universal themes and their connection to the world. Weaven and Clark (2013) state that poetry is a "complex paradigm of artistic treatments of language, such that its 'form' is as important as its 'content'" (p. 198). Themes found in poems tend to transcend time. In fact, many poems with universal themes are some of the most taught poems centuries after their creations, and it is those universal themes that create a connection between the student, being the reader, and the author. This connection leads to students realizing their place in the world. The "transformative power of poetry" (Wright et al., 2010, p. 107) relates to students'

exposure to the themes and ideas found in poetry that can help to develop citizens who are more aware of their roles in society and the world around them.

By using students' awareness of their place in society through their interactions with poetry, they can "stretch their awareness, adapt their perspectives, and construct new knowledge in a way that many expository texts cannot" (Eva-Wood, 2004, p. 174).

Longer texts, such as novels or plays, may provide students with universal themes, but those themes are developed over many pages of writing and weeks of reading. In poetry, the development of a theme can occur in as little as twelve lines. This shorter development allows for a theme that can be used to produce empathetic reactions within students (Eva-Wood, 2004).

The Symbolic Nature of Poetry

Because of poetry's length, another significant advantage to using it in the classroom is its symbolic nature. Authors often rely on symbols to embed their message in the confines of the poetic structure, and this can lead to opportunities for the development of critical thinking skills (Peskin, 2007; Wright et al., 2010).

In the same manner that poetry connects to readers through universal themes, symbols in poetry can "evoke strong emotions that, while not necessarily pleasurable, are deeply embodied and can be life-altering in their intensity" (Wright et al., 2010, p. 105). Since poetry tends to "compress ideas, [it] pushes the reader to look for more meaning than may be apparent in the mere lexical definitions of the words" (Peskin, 2007, p. 22). It is through these emotional connections that the experiences readers have with poetry go beyond the boundaries of the classroom and transform students into adults who are citizens more aware of the world around them (Wright et al., 2010). Because readers

have to decode symbols and read past what is literally stated, they engage with the poem on a level that creates critical readers and thinkers who can participate in critical discussions (Wright et al., 2010).

The skills that readers of poetry acquire as a result of interacting with its symbolic nature also translate into molding citizens who are able to be critical evaluators of the world in which they live. Students today live in a world that is saturated with digital texts and visual representations on every wall and around every corner (Bowmer & Curwood, 2016). Engaging with literature, especially poetry, gives students opportunities to interact with “semiotic tools” that are used to “make meaning” (Bowmer & Curwood, 2016, p. 141). These engagements help to prepare students for the interactions that they will have in a “digital, visual, and auditory” (Bowmer & Curwood, 2016, p. 142) world as adults.

Poetry and Analytical Writing

As students interact with poetry and its symbolic nature, they slowly build critical thinking skills, perhaps without even realizing it (Peskin, 2010; Vallicelli, 2012). They begin to see the world differently; they begin to question what is not directly stated and what is implied by the poem; and they develop the ability to convey those thoughts in writing (Afacan, 2016; Bowmer & Curwood, 2016).

Successfully reading poetry builds skills and confidence within students that is not only apparent in the verbalizations about a poem’s content, but also in a student’s written stance (Moyer, 1982; Weaven & Clark, 2013). Leading to their study on the use of poetry in a classroom, Weaven and Clark (2013) found that students who responded to poetry on a standardized test had some of the highest scores. This is because analytical

writing on poetry allows for the reader to thoroughly analyze. Since the reader must read between the lines to understand and analyze poetry, he is forced to critically think in order to comprehend (Peskin, 2007). Therefore, as students share their interpretations about a poem, their writing benefits since it is the way they must convey their beliefs (Kovalik & Kovalik, 2007).

And so, in the same way that poetry allows for students to expand their thinking beyond what is stated on the paper, writing about poetry provides students with opportunities to develop substantial arguments about a claim.

Teachers' Struggle with Poetry

Sigvardsson's (2017) literature review of poetry in the curriculum found that there is little pedagogy available to teachers for teaching poetry. There is even less pedagogical research available to secondary teachers as most of the pedagogy studies for poetry focus on primary grade or college level students (Sigvardsson, 2017). Additionally, many of the pedagogical practices involving poetry center on think-alouds (Sigvardsson, 2017).

Perhaps there is little pedagogical research about poetry because many teachers are too intimidated by it to teach it (Stickling, Prasun, & Olsen, 2011; Weaven & Clark, 2013). Teachers are intimidated by students coming up with their own responses to poems; there are not necessarily correct answers, and teachers are intimidated by being vulnerable when they discuss their own interpretative responses to poetry (Stickling, Prasun, & Olsen, 2011; Weaven & Clark, 2013).

Even though there are many positive intellectual outcomes to students engaging with and analyzing poetry, many researchers find that it is a genre not well represented in curricula. Why would teachers shy away from using a genre with so many positive

benefits? The answer is not a simple one, but it does begin with the lack of resources available to teachers which leaves them feeling lost about how to meaningfully use poetry in the classroom (Peskin, 2007; Shapiro, 1985; Sigvardsson, 2017; Weaven & Clark, 2013).

Many researchers have attempted to address the absence of worthy poetry instructional resources. For example, Sigvardsson (2017) found, in a systematic literature review of studies about poetry pedagogy, that there are few resources and “poetry teaching in secondary education is especially understudied” (p. 584). This fact is also highlighted by the number of research studies centered on university-age students versus secondary students (Peskin, 2007). In addition to the research absence of poetry pedagogy, textbooks, which typically offer learning objectives and instructional methods, also provide little direction in teaching poetry (Shapiro, 1985). To that end, teachers need guidance in how to teach poetry to students in meaningful and transformative ways (Sigvardsson, 2017).

Weaven and Clark (2013) highlight this deficit and the impact it has on teachers in their qualitative study on poetry instruction. In interviewing secondary teachers who “for whatever reason-had not taught poetry in the last two years” (p. 201), they discovered a variety of reasons as to why teachers were reluctant to teach the genre. While teachers “demonstrated a willingness to try” (p. 205), they were hesitant because they were unsure of how to correctly teach poetry analysis, they believed that writing original poetry must be taught with poetry analysis, or they feared being wrong in teaching the meaning of poems. Yet, teachers are where the heart of poetry instruction must meaningfully start. Students who grow into adult lovers of poetry and value its

influence often times credit a teacher with having been the catalyst for their appreciation and understanding of the genre (Wright et al., 2010).

Teachers feel apprehension about poetry instruction because they also feel apprehension about reading and analyzing poetry itself (Benton, 1990; Weaven & Clark, 2013). Weaven and Clark (2013) address these apprehensions in their study, which particularly deals with the challenges of reading poetry. Teachers feel that some students will not be able to analyze poetry and therefore do not include it in their curriculum, some feel there will be a “decrease in discretionary space” (Comber & Kamler, 2009, p. 227), and some feel that English as a second language learners will struggle to understand the genre (Weaven & Clark, 2013). In fact, the lackluster desire to teach poetry stems from the history, or lack thereof, that teachers had when they were students. Sarac (2006) provided pre-service teachers with a questionnaire about their feelings towards poetry and found the majority did not see value or plan to teach poetry because they had no love for it. Since many students, some of whom become teachers, are not exposed to an appreciation for poetry, the challenges of understanding is multifaceted nature leads to the hesitation of many teachers to expose their students to poetry (Stickling, Prasun, & Olsen, 2011; Weaven & Clark, 2013).

Students’ Struggle with Poetry

Many students struggle to engage with poetry in a positive manner, often due to limited or adverse experiences with it, in the same way that many of their teachers struggle with how to incorporate it into the curriculum. One challenge that students identify in regards to poetry is the over analysis of it (Eva-Wood, 2008; Wright et al., 2010). While the “elusiveness of poetry can make it one of the most challenging and

captivating” (Patel & Laud, 2015, p. 24) genres, students get bogged down as they move through a poem and they begin to feel disconnected from the experience. The interaction then becomes one of dread, not one that enlightens students to their place in the world or shared experiences. As these negative experiences lead to disconnect or feelings of being overwhelmed, students focus on “prose translations of the literal meanings [instead of] imaginative evocations” (Peskin, 2007, p. 21). Teachers, therefore, must find ways to lead students through poetry that allow for positive interactions.

In addition to the over analysis of poetry, teachers make another fatal flaw when they cause students to believe that there is only one correct answer in the interpretation of a poem. This “emphasis on only one correct interpretation” (Wright et al., 2010, p. 111) frustrates students to the point where they would rather not read poetry at all. In positive poetry interactions, one of the main reasons for students’ positivity was the freedom of their interpretations through affective responses. Students who are given opportunities to make personal connections to poetry have more meaningful interactions with it (Eva-Wood, 2004; Sarac, 2006).

Metacognition and the Cognitive Domain

At the very foundation of reading is metacognition and the cognitive domain. In order for students to build their analytical skills through their interactions with poetry, they must be aware of their reading processes. This awareness is known as metacognition, which is crucial to the students’ interactions with poetry (Harris & Hodges, 1995). Students demonstrate this awareness as they monitor and evaluate their understanding of what they are reading and their reading experience (Dabarera, Renandya, & Zhang, 2014). This awareness is vital to students successfully navigating

any literary text in order to develop a deeper interpretation of it. Poetry is especially useful in promoting purposeful reading comprehension on the cognitive level (Eva-Wood, 2008). As a student interacts with poetry and identifies areas where there is a “gap between his understanding and the demands of the text” (Daberera et al., 2014, p. 463), he will use reading strategies, such as annotation, to work to fill those gaps. This awareness also translates to students’ adult lives where they apply their “greater knowledge of thinking skills...to future career skills such as task analysis, independent thinking, and problem solving” (Eva-Wood, 2008, p. 585). Using poetry to build metacognitive awareness develops skills within students that are applicable beyond the confines of school.

The metacognitive process directly relates to the cognitive domain. Since typical engagements with poetry require a technical analysis of structure and content, students use the cognitive domain in order to make sense of what they are reading (Rumbold & Simercek, 2016). When teachers instruct students on how to use learning strategies to increase comprehension, they are simultaneously training students to use both metacognition and the cognitive domain (Allen & Hancock, 2008; Daerera et al., 2014). Studies show a correlation between reading strategies, successful comprehension, and its relation to the cognitive domain (Allen & Hancock, 2008).

Since metacognition refers to a reader’s awareness of his or her process, it is important that students understand how to engage in the process of reflection (Van Velzen, 2017). In order to be able to balance the two, students need “explicit instruction and practice of reflection” (Van Velzen, 2017, p. 494). Furthermore, students need to understand that when they reach roadblocks or do not end with the desired result, they

need to go back and “evaluate the performance not the student” (Van Velzen, 2017, p. 494). These understandings are important to a student’s success in analyzing poetry.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is another component of the cognitive domain. Since critical thinking is a skill that John Dewey describes as reflexive thinking, metacognition occurs during the critical thinking process (Wang, 2017). As students read poetry, they assess and scrutinize what they are reading in order to draw conclusions and develop a deeper meaning of the text (Wang, 2017).

In the same way that metacognition is a skill that must be taught through explicit processes, the same is true for critical thinking (Wang, 2017). Teachers must find instructional strategies for students to engage with in order to develop the ability to think critically as it is an active process leading to comprehension as a result of self-regulation (Alfassi, 2004; Kovalik & Kovalik, 2007). As students practice critical thinking skills through their interactions with poetry, they begin to question what is not obviously stated or understood (Abednia & Izadina, 2013). In Abednia and Izadina’s (2013) qualitative study on the influence of student created questions on critical thinking skills, they found five common themes among critical thinking questions: contextualizing issues, problem posing, defining and redefining key concepts, drawing on experiences, and offering solutions and suggestions. These themes demonstrate topics or areas students may want to focus on as they build their critical thinking skills.

While the questions that Abenia and Izadina (2013) address are related to critical thinking, they are but one part of the process according to Kovalik and Kovalik (2007) who describe two additional activities students must engage in while demonstrating

critical thinking: sharing their views with others and ending with an argument stronger than their initial one. In that light, therefore, analytical writing is one technique teachers can use in order to promote critical thinking within students (Kovalik & Kovalik, 2007).

Peskin's (2007) study demonstrates the value of incorporating poetry into the curriculum. She found that students were more willing to engage with poetry and call upon critical thinking skills than they were when they were reading prose. As students were presented with writing in poetic structure, Peskin (2007) noticed their responses called attention to specific parts of the texts. When students were presented with prose writing, their responses were less engaging and more surface level. In other words, the very nature of the poetic structure causes students to believe critical thinking skills are necessary. If students analytically engage with enough poems, those critical thinking skills can then be easily transferred to other aspects of their lives.

Providing students with ample opportunities to build their critical thinking skills is necessary to the development of them. Another method teachers can use is reciprocal teaching. In regards to critical thinking, Alfassi (2004) identifies two models of instruction: the Direct Explanation Model and the Reciprocal Teaching Model. The direct explanation model involves a basic teacher think-aloud while the reciprocal model provides students with opportunities to experience critical thinking through four scaffolded areas: generating questions, summarizing, attempting to clarify word meanings, and making predictions (Alfassi, 2004). Alfassi's (2004) study involved an experimental group, receiving the reciprocal teaching method, and a control group, receiving the direct explanation method. Alfassi (2004) found that students who had

scaffolding opportunities to engage with texts had more improvement in comprehension gains than students who received instruction through direct explanation.

Annotation as the Foundation

The use of poetry in the classroom and the idea of using annotation to guide learning both support the constructivist theory, which sees the teacher as a facilitator of learning and holds the student responsible for his or her learning (Oliva & Gordon, 2013; Schiro, 2013). In this research study, the teacher was the facilitator of poetry analysis by guiding students' analysis of poetry through annotation in order to see the impact of it on critical thinking. Since annotation requires students to be actively participating in the dissection of a poem, students partook in the active learning theory of constructivism (Oliva & Gordon, 2013).

In its most basic form, annotation is a strategy readers use to comprehend or remember what they have comprehended while reading (Nist, 1987). The von Restorff effect “suggests that if information is isolated from a background, it has a higher probability” of being influential to the reader (Nist, 1987, p. 3). However, many college students are unfamiliar with the useful strategy. Simpson and Nist (1990) found that many college freshmen rely on “memorizing, rereading, and ‘looking over’” (p. 126) assigned readings to study prior to a test. Simpson and Nist (1990) discovered that students who were taught how to use annotations and used them as a study technique did better on unit tests than their counterparts who depended solely on memorization.

However, the basic use of annotation is only one way it is beneficial to the cognitive domain. Annotation is also a strategy that teachers can employ in order to increase reading comprehension and scaffold students to improve their metacognition and

critical thinking skills (Feito & Donahue, 2008; Shang, 2017). It can be described as listing words, phrases, and their meanings “outside of a learner’s current competence” (as cited in Shang, 2017, p. 612). Teaching students to annotate allows them to actively engage with the text in a variety of ways (Feito & Donahue, 2008). For example, students may develop an additional study strategy for recalling information, learn to read more purposefully, and control the text versus surrendering to it. Moreover, students can use annotations to develop meaningful and supported interpretations of the text that can be referenced during class discussions (Feito & Donahue, 2008; Morris, 2012; Nist, 1987). In the end, using annotation allows students to increase their metacognition and provides teachers with important written representations of students’ cognitive insight (Liu, 2006; Simpson & Nist, 1990).

In literature, specifically in poetry, teachers can use annotation for more than asking students to recall facts about their readings (Nist, 1987). Since knowledge is an “elaborate system of processes rather than just a body of information” (Liu, 2006, p. 192-193), teachers can use annotation to successfully empower their students to think critically. Annotation is the first step of the planning process and leads to a more fluid writing process (Liu, 2006). Therefore, by teaching students to use annotation as they read, it places emphasis “on unlocking minds as much as unlocking texts” (Morris, 2012, p. 378). It creates an “inquiring relationship to learning that [students] can transfer to other situations” (Morris, 2012, p. 378).

Teaching Annotation

In order for students to meaningfully engage with the texts through annotation, they must know how to annotate so that their marginalia demonstrates an interactive

process versus a “one-dimensional” (Morris, 2012, p. 378) exchange. It is that interactive process that leads to the most meaningful annotations (Nist, 1987). Morris (2012) identifies an effective strategy for teaching annotation as one that is a “shared class experience, harnessing notations to target specific interpretative practices” (p. 378). Since annotations relate back to a cognitive process, there are many specific marks that may arise during the course of annotating and “good text marking leads to deeper levels of processing” (Nist, 1985, p. 5). Therefore, it is important that students’ first meaningful interactions with annotations occur as a whole class in order to expose them to as many types of marginalia as possible. Students need to be selective in where they annotate, and they need to understand the “patience, time, and practice” (Nist, 1987, p. 7) involved in mastering the strategy; this is why both explicit and implicit instruction is important (Liu, 2006). Teachers need to emphasize to students that their marks should relate back to a variety of areas of analysis, such as “lexical, syntactic, or [marks that provide] extra information about the topic to clarify understanding” (Shang, 2017, p. 612). Students should also be exposed to “circling words, registering reactions, and highlighting phrases” (Fieto & Donahue, 2008, p. 296). It is only through these interactions that students can decide what annotations work best for them.

After students have experienced a teacher-led lesson or lessons on how to annotate, they should have opportunities to share new annotations with a peer. Of course, because annotations are highly individualized in nature, scaffolding the instruction is crucial to the process and students should have time to practice (Nist, 1987). Students need to be placed in pairs after having time to annotate an unfamiliar text. In their pairs, students can compare their annotations, perhaps noting similarly themed annotations or

using a checklist (Morris, 2012; Simpson & Nist, 1990). Students can also evaluate their annotations after they have had opportunities to use them in class discussions (Fieto & Donahue, 2008, p. 298). This feedback and reflection is important to the learning process as it provides students with information on appropriate and inappropriate markings (Nist, 1987). Teachers build students' metacognitive awareness of their annotations by embedding these reflective opportunities into their lessons.

While some studies discuss adding a coding aspect for students to track their annotations, this seems to force a more systematic approach on the process of annotation versus allowing a student's struggles and understandings with a text to guide their annotations (Fieto & Donahue, 2008). Teachers should also be aware of the time spent on scaffolding the annotation process. Even though it takes time for students to grasp the strategy and all its components, numerous weeks spent on instructing how to use the strategy is not effective (Nist, 1987). This means that students need instruction and then opportunities to see how they can tailor annotation to work from them.

There are several types of annotation strategies that a teacher can share with her students. It is important to present annotating as a tool to help all readers when they are faced with a challenging text, and readers use a variety of annotations. However, in the end, it is important that students move beyond the highlighter and use a pen or pencil when annotating, or they are simply coding the text, which is only one aspect of annotation (Morris, 2012; Nist, 1987). Feito and Donahue (2008) identify four areas that annotations typically fall into: trackings, identification of gaps, individual repertoire, and literary repertoire. Trackings refer to the reader's attempts to understand the text as they progress through it (Feito & Donahue, 2008). Students should pay attention to

“significant intratextual connections” (Morris, 2012, p. 380) and other important ideas in order to understand the purpose of a text and how the various elements contribute to the meaning of it (Nist, 1987).

A student displays identification of gaps when trying to make sense of his reading through questioning and interpretive responses (Feito & Donahue, 2008; Nist, 1987). As the student tries to answer the questions he has constructed to fill the gaps in comprehension, he is either considering the information he already knows from the text or making predictions about what he thinks will happen next (Feito & Donahue, 2008). Annotations that fall into the individual repertoire group identify areas that the student is drawn to due to significant personal connections (Feito & Donahue, 2008). As students identify where they are struggling while understanding a text, they make annotations, perhaps calling on their past interactions with other texts or life experiences, to help them to clarify and work through areas where they feel uncertain (Morris, 2012). Literary repertoire annotations exhibit areas where the student identifies noteworthy language. This language may be in the form of word choice or literary devices (Feito & Donahue, 2008). Regardless of the type of annotation, it is essential that they are meaningful and important (Nist, 1987).

Meaningful and important annotations lead to meaningful and important discussions (Morris, 2012). This is key to building critical thinking skills. When students fail to actively engage with a text, classroom discussions are sluggish and surface level (Morris, 2012). Since annotating allows students to interact with a text purposefully and in a dialogic way, the strategy aids in producing stronger class discussions (Morris, 2012).

Building on Annotation with Affective Responses

As participants engaged with and analyzed poetry during this study, they used both the cognitive and affective domains (Oliva & Gordon, 2013; Schiro, 2013). While participants used the cognitive domain to analyze the technical aspects of poetry, they used the affective domain as they connected their emotions to key ideas within the poems (Schiro, 2013). Furthermore, participants demonstrated characteristics of the constructivist theory as they actively participated in poetry instruction by using formative assessments that guided their learning and applied the skills of annotation and close reading to other areas of their academic and personal lives (Schiro, 2013; Shapiro, 1985).

As mentioned, there are many components that contribute to successful and significant annotations (Fieto & Donahue, 2008; Morris, 2012; Nist, 1987). One component of meaningful annotations lies in the students' abilities to make personal connections, or affective responses, with the text because it allows them to bring their own "values, impressions, experiences, and emotions to the interpretation of [it]" (Sarac, 2006, p. 97). Teachers should aim not only to teach students to analyze an author's craft but also to engage empathetically with texts as "knowing" is more important than "reporting" (Brett, 2016; Shapiro, 1985, p. 372). Since the "overall objective of education is the holistic development of [a] human" (Afacan, 2016, p. 1651), English teachers can use annotations to promote affective responses in students and make them aware of human nature in the world (Levine, 2014). Annotations, therefore, need to not only focus on the cognitive domain but also the affective domain (Rumbold & Simecek, 2016).

It is in this combination of the two domains that poetry can be a beneficial tool in teaching students to analyze (Rumbold & Simecek, 2016). Even though exposure to the

two domains plays a significant role in building a student's analytical skills, much of what is taught in the secondary English classroom focuses only on the cognitive domain; this is heavily related to the focus of high-stakes testing, and therefore, students have not been able to build their interpretative abilities that connect to the affective domain (Rumbold & Simecek, 2016). Students often get frustrated when they focus on stylistic devices and run into examples that they are unfamiliar with (Eva-Wood, 2008). In order to navigate these roadblocks and fully understand how "poetry works in terms of the experience the poem affords the reader" (Rumbold & Simecek, 2016, p. 338), annotation and affective responses can be used conjunctively in order to guide students through the analytical process. Affective responses can allow students to benefit from "open, active, and multifaceted [approaches] to reading" (Eva-Wood, 2004, p. 174). However, a teacher must first understand how affective responses and poetry can be integrated into instruction.

One way to teach students to have stronger affective responses, that is "connections supported by feeling" (Rumbold & Simecek, 2016, p. 338), to poems is to have them focus on the structure of the poem and how the words come together to create meaning. This "active engagement [allows students to be] sensitized to the textures and flavors of life experiences that might have otherwise remained inexplicable" (Eva-Wood, 2004, p. 173). Students can do this by thinking about three things: making connections between their daily feelings and language in texts that exhibit those feelings, identifying language as positive or negative (ascribing valence), and "explain[ing] or justify[ing] their ascriptions" (Levine, 2014, p. 2).

Levine (2014) conducted an experimental study using the three focus areas in order to determine whether or not students could develop more affective responses to shorter texts, such as poetry. Students were given a pre and post writing test in response to a poem, as well as the researcher noting observations during student think-alouds (Levine, 2014). Levine (2014) found that after students were exposed to the three focus areas, there was a 63% increase in affective responses within the intervention group and no increase with the affective responses of the control group. Levine (2014) recommends these strategies for all readers, but especially for novice readers who are still attempting to interact and interpret texts on a deeper level.

In a similar study, Rumbold and Simecek (2016) tested strategies that would assist students in making affective responses to poetry in order to strengthen their cognitive responses. By identifying and connecting with the connotative meanings of words found in poetry, students would be less intimidated and confused by a poem and experience it in a positive and influential manner. This would be because the pressure to analyze it in a technical manner was not the focus at the time, but rather the focus was on the reader's responses to the poem (Eva-Wood, 2004; Sarac, 2006). Students who participated in this study were exposed to a cold-poem, one without an identified publication date, title, or author, and then shared their affective responses to it (Rumbold & Simecek, 2016).

As students participated in a researcher-led discussion, referred to as shared-reading, about the poem, the researchers noted that students "returned to the words of the poem, repeating key phrases to re-experience the sounds of these words as they explored possible interpretations" (Rumbold & Simecek, 2016, p. 342). Since the "correct reading

or interpretation of the poem” (Sarac, 2006, p. 97) was not the main focus, students responded positively to the shared-reading activity (Rumbold & Simecek, 2016). While it did promote affective responses and a deeper engagement and analysis of the intricacies of the poem, they indicated that they would not use the same casual conversation language in a formal written discussion (Rumbold & Simecek, 2016). Therefore, Rumbold and Simecek (2016) concluded that the shared-reading activity with poetry was beneficial to building affective and cognitive responses in an informal format.

Eva-Wood (2008) also researched the benefits of building students’ affective responses with poetry through shared-reading and teacher-led think-alouds. Since many students experience only cognitive think-alouds, Eva-Wood’s (2008) incorporation of emotional responses allowed students to witness and engage in a process that is usually “invisible to readers” (p. 566). Eleventh-grade students participated in a “museum style poetry activity [where they selected] poetic language [from American] poems that appealed to them” (Eva-Woods, 2008, p. 566). This experience gave way to the main focus of the poetry unit: reader responses to textual elements because “a poignant phrase can illuminate a reader’s understanding as it gives voice to previously unarticulated thoughts or feelings” (Eva-Wood, 2004, p. 173; Eva-Wood, 2008).

As a teaching strategy, students used guided questions to facilitate their responses and worked in pairs with one sharing their responses and the other recording those responses. Pairs analyzed their notes and paid particular attention to emotions, words, and phrases. This activity allowed students to analyze their responses and identify meaningful areas of analysis as they made connections between their responses and the poem (Eva-Wood, 2008). Eva-Wood (2008) found that students enjoyed poetry more after

participating in think-alouds because they realized that their own interactions with the poem allowed for a deeper “construction of meaning” (Sarac, 2006, p. 103). Students were also able to write “longer responses to poetry” and had an ability to ask more “sophisticated text-based questions” during class discussions about poetry as a result of the think-aloud strategy (Eva-Wood, 2008, p.574).

Close Reading

Close reading, which annotation is a strategy for, enables students to engage with “complex texts in a meaningful way” (Workman, 2014, p. 5) through repeated interactions and readings (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Nathan & Minnis, 2016; Papola-Ellis, 2014). As students use the text to support their thinking, they make connections with the text through analysis and synthesis (Nathan & Minnis, 2016). Close reading is an important strategy for both expert and struggling readers because it helps them “make explicit what they have already begun to notice from their reading” (Pytash & Morgan, 2013, p. 48; Workman, 2014).

Close reading enables students to engage with nonfiction texts and poetry through “several short encounters” (Nathan & Minnis, 2016, p. 7). This allows students to experience the level of complexity within college texts without the stamina required by longer and difficult texts (Nathan & Minnis, 2016). Teachers actively avoid providing students with background knowledge and, instead, attempt to make predictions about where the text may be especially challenging for them (Nathan & Minnis, 2016). Even though teachers are not providing background knowledge, they are providing support through text-dependent questions, class discussions, and repeated readings (Nathan & Minnis, 2016).

Because of the resurgence of close reading with the creation of Common Core State Standards, Fisher and Frey (2014) studied the perceptions that teachers and students have towards close reading through teacher interviews and student focus groups. Both students and teachers noted the increased accountability factor for students when using close reading strategies (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Students positively commented on the texts that accompany close reading by saying that the texts were “complex yet worth their effort” (Fisher & Frey, 2014, p 35). Teachers noted that close reading was beneficial towards helping students “build stamina and habits for reading complex texts” (Fisher & Frey, 2014, p 42; Nathan & Minnis, 2016).

Teachers can also support close reading in their classrooms by asking students to read purposefully through text-dependent questions (Papola-Ellis, 2014; Workman, 2014). Text-dependent questions are questions that “draw the students back to the text to discover what it says” (Workman, 2014, p. 6), and allow students to “make inferences based on evidence beyond what is explicitly stated” (Workman, 2014, p. 5). Students use these questions to make meaning by paying attention to text structures (Workman, 2014).

When formulating these types of questions, teachers should consider questions that “stretch the skills that [students] currently have” (Workman, 2014, p. 6). Basic recall and comprehension questions are not the types that facilitate close reading (Workman, 2014). Instead, text-dependent questions “help students to identify key ideas in complex texts, make logical inferences, [and] draw conclusions” (Workman, 2014, p. 6). They also “build a strong foundation for text-explicit knowledge” (Fisher & Frey, 2014, p. 29). Workman (2014) identifies seven steps that teachers can use in order to help them develop text-dependent questions: identifying key ideas and concepts of the text, order

text-dependent questions so that they “start small” (p. 6) and increase in difficulty in order to build a student’s confidence, focus on vocabulary and the structure of a text, draw attention to tough sections, make sure the questions are in a logical sequence, indicate standards, and end with a culminating assessment.

The intent of text-dependent questions is not for students to simply answer them; as students search the text for an answer, they can highlight, underline, or write on sticky notes when they identify evidence that they feel addresses the question (Nathan & Minnis, 2016; Papola-Ellis, 2014). Poetry is an ideal genre to use with text-dependent questions because of the typically shorter lengths of poems (Papola-Ellis, 2014). Papola-Ellis (2014) discovered that teachers were frustrated by text-dependent questions with longer texts because of the necessary re-reading that accompanies these types of questions. Students became bored and disengaged with longer texts and teachers felt that it took a lot of time to complete the lessons (Papola-Ellis, 2014). This disengagement may have also occurred if the text-dependent questions were weak and did not create “purpose and motivation for engaging in repeated readings” (Fisher & Frey, 2014, p. 29). If students were simply handed questions to answer versus participating in a discussion with their classmates and teacher, they became bored and disengaged as well (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Since text-dependent questions draw attention to a variety of areas within the content and structure of a text, they are ideal for helping students participate in discussions and develop arguments about what the text is saying (Workman, 2014).

Formative Assessments

Teachers use formative assessments to gather information on what students have learned and use that information to modify instruction (Cauley & McMillan, 2010). The

information gathered from formative assessments creates meaningful and supportive learning environments for students because they are provided with feedback about misunderstandings as well as validations of their grasp of learning objectives (Cauley & McMillian, 2010).

Formative assessments provide students with clear learning objectives in the form of performance and mastery goals (Cauley & McMillian, 2010). Performance goals are just that, goals in which the performance of the student is made public to the other students in the class (Cauley & McMillan, 2010). Using performance goals can have adverse effects on students' progress as students who are assigned performance goals often display negative actions: procrastination, the use of superficial strategies, and sometimes cheating (Cauley & McMillan, 2010). Since performance goals support extrinsic motivation, students often show "great concern with how their abilities are judged by others" (Cauley & McMillan, 2010, p. 3).

Mastery goals, on the other hand, promote intrinsic motivation and thus create more positive learning experiences (Cauley & McMillan, 2010). Students who exhibit intrinsic motivation tend to use "deeper cognitive strategies, relate new learning to prior knowledge...and are more persistent when facing challenging tasks" (Cauley & McMillian, 2010, p. 3). Teachers increase a student's intrinsic motivation when they use mastery goals, individual student goals that take into account participation, to evaluate a student's progress and provide the student with opportunities to improve (Cauley & McMillan, 2010). Mistakes are not placed on display for the class to see, but rather are treated as simply being a "part of the learning process" (Cauley & McMillan, 2010, p. 3).

In order to increase student motivation through formative assessments, teachers can provide clear learning targets, offer feedback towards those targets, credit success as a result of effort, encourage students to assess their work, and help students set attainable future goals (Cauley & McMillan, 2010). Additionally, when teachers share weak and exemplary examples of student work, they provide students with visuals that demonstrate their learning targets (Cauley & McMillan, 2010). It is important that teachers “treat mistakes as opportunities to learn” (Cauley & McMillan, 2010, p. 3) versus highlighting them as simply being incorrect, because when they treat mistakes as learning opportunities, they are providing students with valuable feedback as they work towards their mastery goals. When teachers provide feedback on a student’s success, they are solidifying the relationship between effort and the end product (Cauley & McMillan, 2010). When teachers give students opportunities to self-assess their work by asking them questions about their learning, students develop skills to “control their learning” (Cauley & McMillan, 2010, p. 5). Finally, according to Shunk and Swartz (1993) when students have goals that work towards standards, they have a clearer visual of “their progress toward the goal” (as cited in Cauley & McMillan, 2010, p. 5).

Patel and Laud (2015) studied how mastery goals and formative assessments could be used in order to increase a student’s understanding of poetry. They specifically chose poetry since its “elusiveness...can make it one of the most challenging yet captivating units for students to explore” (Patel & Laud, 2015, p. 24). In one class, students were provided with five guided questions to respond to while engaging with poems during the unit (Patel & Laud, 2015). The questions centered on the following topics: the general content of the poem, the mood or atmosphere of the poem, the

identification and discussion of the effect of at least one poetic device, an interpretation of the message or theme of the poem, and the reader's opinion of the poem (Patel & Laud, 2015). At the end of the unit, students were assessed on a numeric scale about their responses to a poem (Patel & Laud, 2015).

Since the students in the study were anxious about interacting with poetry, they were given "more decision-making control over the skills they would work on during [the] unit" (Patel & Laud, 2015, p. 25). Because students were being given more control, they were also asked to fill out surveys that would demonstrate whether or not that control created positive associations with poetry by the end of the research (Patel & Laud, 2015).

Through the course of the research, students participated in four-formative assessments where they analyzed a poem (Patel & Laud, 2015). Students scored their own formative assessments and set goals for the next formative assessment based on their progress, demonstrating mastery goals (Cauley & McMillan, 2010; Patel & Laud, 2015). For the summative assessment at the end of the unit, over "half of the class received A's...and no student failed" (Patel & Laud, 2015, p. 29). Post-survey results demonstrated a positive increase in students' interactions with poetry as well, and some cited seeing how poetry connected to their lives (Patel & Laud, 2015). This study demonstrates how formative assessments can help students build skills and successfully use mastery goals (Cauley & McMillan, 2010; Patel & Laud, 2015).

Conclusion

Poetry can be significant to the curriculum and to a student's learning because it lends to the building of analytical skills. The typical shortness of poems and the

complexities of structures and meanings allow students to practice similar concepts in a brief time frame and in a repetitive manner. However, there are few studies that share specific pedagogical approaches to teaching poetry in the classroom. Many studies rely on the affective domain and general student responses to poetry. These boundary-less interpretations typically intimidate teachers because they are used to black and white responses and have a fear of being seen by the students as a novice versus an expert.

However, by taking the constructivist approach to poetry, teachers have an opportunity to not only build on the students' ability to read and interpret poetry, but also on students' abilities to strengthen their close reading strategies. The 21st century learner needs to be able to navigate complex texts without the aid of a technological device. The only way to prepare students for the future and to be lifelong learners and valued members of society is to equip them with the skills needed to guide their learning and guide them through struggles that they may encounter.

In order to empower students, teachers must first be empowered. Teaching students how to successfully and meaningfully annotate is the first step in empowering them for complex texts, such as poetry. As students interact with poems through annotations, teachers need to incorporate interventions to guide the students' annotations and critical thinking. It is important that students know they are working towards a mastery goal, and that the teacher provides feedback that guides students on that path. As students work towards their mastery goals through the annotation of poetry, text-dependent questions are an important tool to scaffold the annotations, provide students with areas to further analyze, and overall give them a purpose for reading and analysis.

It is also important that students' interactions with texts give them opportunities to make personal connections with the text. Since poetry reiterates themes and messages that are common to all humans, the teacher needs to promote reader response interactions through journals and small-group and class discussions. When students make personal connections to poetry, they are able to fully analyze the connotative meanings of words and phrases, thus promoting their critical thinking skills.

CHAPTER THREE: ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Problem of Practice

When students are faced with thinking critically about a text, they rely heavily on comprehension skills such as looking up unknown words or summarizing their reading. They do this because they have little to no experience with how to critically engage with a text. This action research study sought to address students' dependency on teacher-led discussions and their difficulty in making judgments about textual components beyond comprehension. The primary treatment method for this study was annotation, but in order to teach students the types of questions that they should ask themselves when they think critically about a text and what they should look for as they annotate, reciprocal teaching was used as a support to the annotation treatment.

Since annotating is highly metacognitive in nature, qualitative data collection instruments were most dominant in this mixed methods study. Qualitative data collection instruments were student-participant interviews, student-participant artifacts, and thick teacher-researcher observations to determine the effectiveness of the treatment; these data collection instruments were used in addition to supplemental quantitative measures in the form of student-participant Likert surveys and rubrics for annotation and poetry analysis questions (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

Analyzing poetry assists students in creating inferences and drawing conclusions (Wang, 2017). Additionally, students strengthen their grasp on and understanding of the use of many language components as poetry incorporates a variety of language

techniques in a condensed format (Eva-Wood, 2004). This is validated in international studies where students took standardized tests and used poetry for their writing analysis component. In these assessments, they demonstrated stronger critical thinking skills than students who opted to not analyze poetry (Weaven & Clark, 2013). The critical thinking skills that students build through scrutinizing poetry can be applied to a variety of situations, either in regards to other types of literature, other educational experiences, or real-world experiences.

After being introduced to annotation as a reading strategy, and using it while engaging with poetry, many students are still unsure of how to use annotation to support critical thinking. Without teacher guidance, many students find self-regulation and questioning as they work through poetry to be challenging. Since students exhibit an affinity for using annotation to engage with poetry but still need more exposure in using poetry annotations to develop critical thinking, this study sought to identify ways to strengthen the correlation between using annotations and strengthening critical thinking skills. By teaching students how to use prior knowledge while creating new knowledge as they read and analyze poems, students are more likely to strengthen their critical thinking. The use of reciprocal teaching was used in order to guide students' metacognition and annotations when they were unsure of what direction to take during the analysis of a poem.

Research Question

How does a focus on poetry annotation as a learning objective impact the critical thinking skills of eight students enrolled in an English IV-Honors class at Meadow Valley High School?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact poetry annotations would have on the critical thinking skills of eight students enrolled in an English IV-Honors class at Meadow Valley High School.

Action Research Design

Action research involves a teacher “conducting investigations in [her classroom and school]” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 2) in order to solve a problem. The strongest desire for teachers conducting action research is to “improve *their* practice and foster *their* professional growth by understanding *their* students, solving problems, or developing new skills” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 4).

In order to address the research question, the treatment used in the study was derived from constructivism. Annotation is linked to constructivism because when annotating texts, students use an “active process” (Bada, 2015, p. 67) as they rely on prior knowledge to construct new meanings and understandings. While annotation was the primary treatment used to enhance participants’ critical thinking skills, participants needed to first have a firm grasp of what quality annotations look like. They also needed to be exposed to the idea of reciprocal teaching in order to understand how to question a text and its various components as a means to create quality annotations.

Reciprocal teaching, a learning strategy that is initially teacher facilitated, allows for students to practice asking questions about texts by focusing on four areas: generating questions, summarizing, attempting to clarify word meanings, and making predictions (Alfassi, 2004). In this study, reciprocal teaching eventually transitioned from being teacher-researcher facilitated toward completely participant-led, allowing participants to

gain experience and confidence while laying the foundation for what types of questions lead to quality annotations. Participants' annotations and metacognitive awareness were analyzed using an annotation rubric, and written responses via a formative assessment guided by poetry analysis questions were also assessed using a rubric.

This is a qualitatively-dominant mixed methods study because it “relies on a qualitative... view of the research process while concurrently recognizing that the addition of quantitative data are likely to benefit” (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007, p. 124) the study. There are several ways that this mixed methods action research study addressed quality criteria. The qualitative nature of the study emphasized the need for rich rigor and sincerity, and rich rigor requires that the researcher have sufficient and quality data (Tracy, 2010). In the case of this study, triangulation was thoughtfully incorporated in order to validate as much of the data as possible (Efron & Ravid, 2013). In order to validate the quantitative nature of this study, a co-teacher assessed participant work alongside the teacher-researcher in order to evaluate the data collected. They consistently used the same rubric to evaluate the progress of participants, thus validating the rubric's reliability (Efron & Ravid, 2013). The following instruments were used to collect data throughout the study: participant surveys and interviews administered at the beginning and end of the study, copious observation notes taken during each lesson, and participant artifacts (poetry annotations and poetry analysis questions responses).

Participant surveys and interviews allowed the teacher-researcher to “gather a variety of information regarding [participants'] opinions, perceptions, and attitudes” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 107) about poetry and annotation as an intervention in order to help the critical thinking process. These surveys consisted of Likert scale questions and

interviews consisted of open-ended questions that asked participants to expand on whether or not they were taught to read and analyze poetry. The survey administered to participants at the beginning of data collection was the same Likert survey administered at the end of data collection. This allowed the teacher-researcher to compare the two data sets and note any changes in opinions, perceptions, and attitudes about poetry and annotation.

The qualitative aspect for this study was chosen because the study relies on a “thick description” (Mertler, 2014, p. 8) of how annotation impacts the participants critical thinking skills. For this study, the metacognitive awareness component was individualized to each participant; therefore, written responses and participant artifacts were the most appropriate choices for data collection in order to get authentic and thorough insight into each participant’s process during the annotation treatment. Since a Likert survey and rubrics were also used as data collection instruments, there was also a quantitative aspect to this study (Mertler, 2014).

For this study, eight students from the teacher-researcher’s English IV-Honors class were purposively selected from responses they supplied on the pre-treatment survey. Qualitative research validates the use of a purposive sampling when “participants’ experiences regarding the topic of study...contribute to the understanding of the issue under investigation” (as cited in Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 62). To protect the identity of the participants and the setting, pseudonyms were used throughout the study (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Due to the over-arching qualitative nature of the study, it was crucial that the teacher-researcher took detailed observation notes during the data collection period. The

focus of the observation notes “[emerged] from the research question” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 87). The teacher-researcher focused on using a semi-structured observation method by paying particular attention to how participants interacted with poetry before and after exposure to the treatment (Efron & Ravid, 2013). This included not only observing participants’ discussions during collaborative work, but also observing their behaviors as they interacted with poems.

Setting and Time Frame of the Study

This action research study was conducted at a high school near South Carolina’s capital. The high school is one of two in its district and serves approximately 1400 students. The student body is roughly 50% white and 50% minority. The role of the researcher in this study was that of an insider as the teacher who led the treatment that the participants received (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

The time frame for the study was over a six-week period during the 2019 spring semester in an English IV-Honors class. The data gathering process occurred within the framework of a regular 90-minute class block, and each session occurred in the morning on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays between 9:55 a.m. to 11:20 a.m.

Participants in the Study

Participants were students at the high school where the study was conducted. Since the nature of the study was to investigate whether or not poetry annotations strengthen critical thinking skills, participants for this study were chosen using a purposive sampling method based on pre-treatment survey data; additionally, participants were selected prior to the administration of any treatment.

Participants indicated on the pre-treatment survey that, when analyzing poetry, they had little confidence, had little to no experience with it or instruction from previous teachers, felt their peers were better prepared, and had a desire to enhance their analytical skills. By selecting participants who exhibited a motivation for analyzing poetry, catalytic validity was used as a quality criteria for the study's sampling (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

The study's eight participants are profiled below using pseudonyms in order to maintain their anonymity.

Alice is an 18-year-old Black female. She is a senior and is very soft-spoken and shy. She avidly reads for pleasure, making frequent trips to the school's Media Center.

Bethany is a 17-year-old White female. Though she is a senior, she is an early graduate. This means that she has fulfilled her high school credit requirements after three years of high school. She completed her junior and senior years of high school in one school year. Bethany's 9th grade year was completed in a neighboring district. She is a voracious reader.

Danielle is an 18-year-old White female. She is well-read and participates in orchestra.

Hannah is a 17-year-old White female. She is a junior who had reservations about taking this class with the teacher-researcher due to the rigor. She is an active member in the school's Student Government.

Lindsey is a 17-year-old Hispanic female. She is a senior. She is an extravert, well read, and participates in orchestra.

Michael is a 17-year-old White male. He is a junior and participates in the school's early college program where students apply to the local community college and

take two college courses on the high school's campus each semester. He is also a member of the school's varsity baseball team.

Mya is a 17-year-old Black female. She is a junior and participates with the school's Special Education students in Special Olympics as a unified partner.

Ryan is a 16-year-old White male. He is a junior and is soft-spoken.

Ethical Considerations

Above all, it is important that during an action research study “ethical standards [are the] primary responsibility of the practitioner” (Mertler, 2014, p. 106). In order to ensure all ethical considerations were addressed, participants and their guardians provided written consent for the participants to partake in the study (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Also important was the “anonymity and confidentiality of participants and [the] data” (Mertler, 2014, p. 151) they provided. Since the protection of sensitive information and the participants was vital to the ethics of the study, the teacher-researcher maintained control of all data during and after the study by keeping it in a secure location. Additionally, none of the participant work reviewed during the study was discussed beyond the teacher-researcher, co-teacher and participants.

Research Methods

During the treatment stage of this action research study, the teacher-researcher collected various types of data. The majority of data collected, qualitative data, was collected in the form of pre and post open-ended interviews, student-participant artifacts, and observation notes. Quantitative data was also collected in the form of pre and post Likert surveys, and rubrics for both annotations and poetry analysis questions. While a Likert survey was used, the teacher-researcher used the responses as a catalyst for

participant interviews and did not use the numbered data for anything more than coding trends.

Likert Scale Survey

For student-participants, a Likert scale survey, ranging from 1-4, was created by the teacher-researcher and included statements that were specifically related to reading and analyzing poetry (see Appendix A). The survey was a revised version of one used previously by the teacher-researcher. Past experiences using the survey in class led the teacher-researcher to identify statements of overgeneralization, and these experiences influenced survey revisions. The survey was initially administered to all students in order to help select participants for the study. Using a Likert survey allowed the teacher-researcher to “learn about a general trend in [possible participants’] opinions [and] experiences” (Driskoll, 2011, p. 163) regarding poetry and identified participants who were appropriate for the study. The survey responses also helped to guide the pre and post-treatment interviews.

Pre/Post Open-Ended Interview Questions

Due to the cognitive aspect of the study, participants responded to open-ended interview questions (see Appendix B and Appendix C) prior to and after the study’s treatments. Interviews were semi-structured in nature as the open-ended questions allowed participants to “pursue additional issues related to the study” (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

Various British Literature Poems

Due to scheduling constraints, the study took place in an English IV (British Literature) class, and therefore the curriculum limited the poetry used in this study.

During the six-week treatment period, participants annotated and responded to questions about six British Literature poems: “Sonnet 30” by Edmund Spenser (pretest) (see Appendix D), “Sonnet 75” by Edmund Spenser (see Appendix E), “The Shepherd to His Love” by Christopher Marlowe (see Appendix F), “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” by Sir Walter Raleigh (see Appendix G), “The Poison Tree” by William Blake (see Appendix H), and “La Belle Dame Sans Merci: A Ballad” by John Keats (posttest) (see Appendix I). The poems were presented in chronological order to the participants and were selected for their increasing complexity. They also created opportunities for participants to use a variety of annotations in the following areas: comprehension, figurative language, tone, theme, diction, connections, and commentary.

Annotation Rubric

The teacher-researcher and co-teacher used an annotation rubric (see Appendix J) in order to evaluate the variety and quality of the participants’ annotations. Rubrics were beneficial to this study because they help to “assess complex assignments...that are often hard to evaluate objectively” (Efron & Ravid, 2013 p. 156); this is the case with assessing the depth of annotations. Rubrics are also a helpful assessment tool because they help participants “systematically...understand the characteristics of excellent work for more complex tasks” (Green & Johnson, 2010, p. 364), and it was a necessity for participants to effectively reflect on their metacognitive growth through the duration of the study. A graded rubric, one each for the annotations and responses to the poetry analysis questions, was returned to each participant prior to working with the next poem, and participants evaluated the graded rubrics through journal entries that asked participants to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses.

Poetry Analysis Questions

Using questions from Patel and Laud's (2015) study as inspiration, the teacher-researcher created five poetry analysis questions (see Appendix K) as a formative assessment following the annotation of each assigned poem, and it is important to note that the rubric for the questions remained constant during the study. The responses to these questions were assessed by the teacher-researcher and co-teacher using a rubric (see Appendix L) that was shared with participants prior to engaging with the next poem. The poetry analysis questions focused on areas that the teacher-researcher deemed as areas to evaluate, partially because they corresponded with the annotation rubric categories, and supported critical thinking. Those areas were: summary, tone, theme, figurative language, and diction.

Poetry Analysis Questions Rubric

The teacher-researcher and co-teacher used a rubric for the poetry analysis questions (see Appendix L) in order to evaluate participants' responses in regards to their critical thinking about assigned poems. Rubrics helped participants "get in the habit of thinking about and evaluating their own work" (Green & Johnson, 2010, p. 364), thus increasing their metacognition and the questioning that guided their poetry annotations. Prior to starting a new poem, rubrics were returned to each participant, and through journal entries, participants then reflected on their strengths and weaknesses according to the returned rubrics.

Journal Entries

As the treatment period progressed, it was crucial for participants to reflect on their annotations and responses to questions in order to strengthen their critical thinking

as they annotated subsequent poems. Therefore, participants were asked to respond, through journal entries, to the following statement at the beginning of each week prior to engaging with the next poem: “Discuss your strengths and weaknesses in annotations and responses following “poem title here.” Participants were also asked to respond to the following question: “What do you need to specifically consider about the author’s craft to improve your annotations and critical thinking?” This reflection allowed participants to tune into their metacognition as they considered their thought processes.

Participant Artifacts

Participant annotations and responses to poetry analysis questions were collected in order for the teacher-researcher and co-teacher to complete rubrics and provide feedback to participants during the course of the treatment. These “physical documents...[allowed the teacher-researcher] to construct a layered and contextual understanding” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 123) of the interactions between the participants and treatments.

Observation Notes

The teacher-researcher recorded observations, a “written account of what [she heard, saw, experienced, and thought]” (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015, p. 510), during and after each treatment period. The observation notes included participants’ dialogue and behavior during annotations and as they composed responses to the poetry analysis questions.

Research Procedure

Data were collected during the 90-minute class on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays over a six-week period. Each week started with a new poem, and participants

moved from annotating the poem to responding to the poetry analysis questions. Since reciprocal teaching, the method being used to help participants develop their annotations, requires that participants use questions to guide their thinking, the teacher-researcher's involvement moved from guided think-alouds to that of an observer as the study progressed. The schedule of data collection and treatment implementation was as follows:

Prior to Treatment

Prior to any treatment, a purposive sampling was selected from students' survey responses. After the sampling was selected, participants engaged in open-ended interviews regarding past experiences with and feelings toward poetry and analysis.

Week One:

Monday- Participants were administered a pretest using "Sonnet 30" by Edmund Spenser (see Appendix D). During the pretest, participants were given minimal instructions. They were asked to work individually to understand the poem and its theme in whatever manner they desired. Each participant had access to a dictionary and tone handout. Any annotations were evaluated by the teacher-researcher and co-teacher using the annotation rubric.

Tuesday- Individually participants responded to "Sonnet 30" via the poetry analysis questions. Their annotations and responses were evaluated by the teacher-researcher and co-teacher using the rubric for the poetry analysis questions.

Thursday- After the administration of the pretest, during which participants annotated and subsequently responded to poetry analysis questions about the poem, the teacher-researcher used reciprocal teaching by using a think-aloud for annotations (that included guiding questions) to model for participants what metacognitive awareness looks and

sounds like. After the teacher-led review on annotations for “Sonnet 30,” participants’ rubrics were returned, allowing them to identify and reflect on their areas of strengths and weaknesses and constructing journal entries to include their feedback.

Week Two:

Monday- Participants worked with “Sonnet 75” by Edmund Spenser (see Appendix E).

The teacher-researcher asked for two volunteers to read the poem aloud and then instructed participants to take some time to work on their comprehension annotations.

Individually, participants were to define unknown terms and summarize areas that needed simplification. Next, the teacher-researcher used reciprocal teaching to demonstrate, through guiding questions, annotating tone and figurative language.

Tuesday-As a class, participants continued to work through “Sonnet 75” with the teacher-researcher using guided questions to focus on diction and theme. Individually, participants then responded to the poetry analysis questions on summary and tone for “Sonnet 75.”

Thursday-Individually, participants responded to poetry analysis questions for theme, figurative language, and diction for “Sonnet 75.”

Week Three:

Monday- Participants’ “Sonnet 75” rubrics were returned so they could identify their areas of strengths and weaknesses and respond to their feedback via a journal entry.

Participants worked with “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” by Christopher Marlowe (see Appendix F). The teacher-researcher asked for three volunteers to read the poem aloud, each reading two stanzas. Participants were then given the rest of class to annotate the poem individually.

Tuesday- After having time to annotate the poem individually, participants were placed in groups of four. In their groups, participants were asked to share their annotations, including any areas where they still needed clarity. Individually, participants then responded to the poetry analysis questions on summary, tone, and theme for “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love.”

Thursday-Individually, participants responded to poetry analysis questions for figurative language and diction for “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love.”

Week Four:

Monday- The teacher-researcher used reciprocal teaching and led participants through guiding questions to review and annotate further examples of figurative language and diction in “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,” as well as how to locate the theme. Participants’ rubrics for the poem were returned so they could identify their areas of strengths and weaknesses and share their reflections via a journal entry. Next, participants started to work with “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” by Sir Walter Raleigh (see Appendix G). The teacher-researcher asked for three volunteers to read the poem aloud, each reading two stanzas. Individually, participants spent the next fifteen minutes making initial annotations, and then they were instructed to return to their groups from the previous week. In these groups, they worked together, reciprocal teaching style, to build their comprehension, tone, and figurative language annotations. Groups were asked to define unknown words and summarize areas that needed simplification, mark words that indicated tone, mark and identify types of figurative language (similes, metaphors, personification, symbols, hyperboles, etc.), and briefly indicate how the figurative language contributed to the poem.

Tuesday- Participants needed additional time to complete their annotations in their groups. After having time to finish their annotations, participants individually responded to the poetry analysis questions on summary, tone, and figurative language for “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd.”

Thursday-Individually, participants responded to poetry analysis questions for diction and theme for “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd.”

Week Five:

Monday- Participants’ rubrics for “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” were returned so they could identify their areas of strengths and weaknesses and share their reflections via a journal entry. Participants worked with “A Poison Tree” by William Blake (see Appendix H). The teacher-researcher asked for two volunteers to read the poem aloud, each reading two stanzas. Participants spent the next ten minutes individually working on annotations in preparation for continuing to work with the poem in groups. Participants then moved into the same groups from previous weeks to continue annotation by collaborating with one another.

Tuesday- Individually, participants responded to poetry analysis questions for summary and tone for “The Poison Tree.”

Thursday-Individually, participants responded to poetry analysis questions for figurative language, diction, and theme for “The Poison Tree.”

Week Six:

Monday- Participants’ rubrics were returned so they could identify their areas of strengths and weaknesses and share their reflections via a journal entry. After participants reviewed and reflected on their rubrics, there were two areas the teacher-researcher

needed to address with participants: the meaning of “underneath” in the final line of “The Poison Tree” and the use of an apple as a symbol. After the teacher-researcher used a think-aloud to guide participants in the re-addressed lines, they started work with the last poem, “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” (see Appendix I). Since this poem served as the posttest, participants annotated the poem individually and were not given any additional instructions.

Tuesday- Participants finished annotating “La Belle Dame Sans Merci,” and then started to work individually on the poetry analysis questions.

Thursday- Individually, participants finished working on the poetry analysis questions. They completed a post-Likert survey.

Data Analysis

The study used a mixed methods approach, with qualitative data being the dominant design, and began with a Likert survey from which participants were purposively selected if they exhibited a desire to enhance their ability to read and analyze poetry (as indicated on the survey by a number 3 or 4) and specified that they had not been taught how to read and analyze poetry (as indicated on the survey by a number 1 or 2) (see Appendix A). Following the administration of the pre-treatment survey, participants answered open-ended questions in an interview. These responses were coded, using emergent coding, based on the types of previous poetry instruction participants received (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Qualitative data often produces copious amounts of data, and therefore it is important to develop a “system of categorization, or coding scheme” (Mertler, 2014). For some of the data, predetermined coding was used in order to answer the research

question: How does a focus on poetry annotation as a learning objective impact the critical thinking skills of eight students enrolled in an English IV-Honors class at Meadow Valley High School? Coding was necessary because participants' annotations and written responses to the poetry analysis questions were scored using rubrics. The scores on the rubrics also helped to answer the research question. Additionally, the post-surveys and interviews with the open-ended questions about the study's treatment were emergently coded.

In addition to the surveys, interviews, and participant artifacts, extensive observation notes were taken during the treatment period. Emergent coding was used to code participant artifacts, surveys, interviews, as well as the behaviors and discussions of participants during the annotation of poems as represented in the teacher-researcher observation notes.

The analysis of the data collected met quality criteria and supported outcome validity because while all participants improved in the critical thinking skills by using poetry annotations, "a new set of questions" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 68) arose about the ability to retain the skill of annotation and using it without being prompted. Additionally, since the participants were honors students, the question still remains about to which extent the treatment will work with other students of varying levels.

Plan for Reflecting with Participants on Data

At the conclusion of the study, the teacher-researcher and student-participants took part in a discussion of the research process. Mertler (2014) says that it is "essential to...professional growth and development [that researchers] seize each and every opportunity...to engage in the reflective process" (p. 258). This discussion gave

participants an opportunity to share experiences that may not have been addressed in the Likert survey or open-ended questions, while expanding on statements previously withheld due to a lack of opportunity to share them.

Plan for Devising an Action Plan

Based on the results of this study, the teacher-researcher developed an action plan that included ways teachers within the teacher-researcher's school could use annotation and the poetry analysis questions to support annotation depth in order to strengthen critical thinking skills. Since many of the poetry analysis questions can be applied to fiction and nonfiction texts with modifications, recommendations were made with possible revisions to the questions, based on the genre, in order to help students develop their annotations. The plan was presented at a department meeting.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS FROM THE DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This study examined the impact of poetry annotations on critical thinking in a high school classroom. A small group of eight junior and senior students participated in this study over the course of six weeks with their teacher as the researcher. The problem of practice for this study focused on students' dependency on teacher-led discussions and their difficulty in making judgments about textual components beyond comprehension.

The primary treatment method for this study was annotation, but in order to teach participants the types of questions that they should ask themselves when they think critically about a text and what they should look for as they annotate, reciprocal teaching was used to supplement the annotation treatment. The teacher-researcher sought to address the problem of practice and build participants' critical thinking skills by exposing and empowering them to use annotations while reading and analyzing poetry.

During the six-week period of data collection, student-participants responded to pre and post-Likert surveys, participated in pre and post-interviews, analyzed six poems of varying difficulty via annotations, responded to poetry analysis questions, and reflected on their progress in weekly journal entries. The teacher-researcher also noted observations during individual and group work in relation to participants' behaviors, interactions, and discussions as they engaged with each poem. Rubrics were used, with the assistance of a co-teacher, to evaluate participants' development. After the data

collection period, the teacher-researcher coded the data during which three broad themes emerged.

Research Question

How does a focus on poetry annotation as a learning objective impact the critical thinking skills of eight students enrolled in an English IV-Honors class at Meadow Valley High School?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact annotations have on the critical thinking skills of eight students enrolled in an English IV-Honors class at Meadow Valley High School.

Findings of the Study

During the six-week study period, the teacher-researcher collected data using various instruments: pre and post-Likert surveys, pre and post-interviews, teacher-researcher observations, student-participant journal entries, student-participant artifacts (which included poetry annotations and responses to poetry analysis questions), and rubrics for both the poetry annotations and responses to the poetry analysis questions. After reviewing the collected data, three dominant themes emerged: 1) Growth in Self-Efficacy and Confidence, 2) Increased Application of Poetry Annotations, and 3) An Emergence of Critical Thinking Skills.

Theme One: Growth in Self-Efficacy and Confidence

Prior to the study, student-participants completed a poetry survey (see Appendix A). After the survey and interview data was collected and coded, a clear theme emerged from three statements on the pre-survey: 1) I identify the theme or purpose in a poem

easily, 2) I would like to learn how to comprehend poetry, and 3) I would like to learn to analyze poetry. These statements, supported by discussions during pre-interviews, revealed that self-efficacy, the participants' belief that they could think critically about poetry, and overall confidence were key factors in participants' perceptions about their abilities to analyze poetry (Bandura, 1994).

All participants indicated on the survey that they could not identify the theme or purpose of a poem easily. (Participants interpreted "easily" to mean they could quickly understand a poem by simply reading it.) One participant, Hannah, indicated that she felt very strongly that she could not identify the theme or purpose in a poem easily. After the six-week study, six of the eight participants increased in their confidence, feeling that they could identify the theme or purpose of a poem easily. Hannah, who originally indicated a strong lack of confidence in finding the theme or purpose of a poem easily, gained some confidence following the end of treatment, though she indicated she still "disagreed" with the statement. Hannah stated that she still feels slightly unconfident because she overthinks the theme and tries to "assume there's more to what there actually is."

Two participants, Bethany and Alice, indicated no change in their confidence after the study's treatment. Bethany cited her difficulty with connecting her annotations to only one theme as why she still felt unconfident. Alice also disagreed because she felt that being able to identify the theme easily depended on the poem. Although Alice was confident about identifying the poem's theme, her student work demonstrated that for some poems she had no difficulty finding the theme, while she struggled with others.

Prior to the study's treatment, seven of the eight participants indicated that they agreed with the statement, "I would like to learn to comprehend poetry." One participant, Michael, strongly disagreed with the statement. Michael's inexperience with how to read and analyze poetry was the primary reason he felt this way. This choice implied that Michael had little motivation in learning to comprehend poetry, but that was not indicative of his sentiments. He explained that he originally misread the statement believing it said that he "liked to comprehend poetry" and since he did not know how to comprehend poetry, he selected "strongly disagree."

Following the study's treatment, there was no change with participants' desires to learn to comprehend poetry. Hannah indicated no change in her desire to comprehend poetry saying, "I have improved greatly from our unit, but I want to continue to improve." Similarly, in post-interviews, participants indicated that, like Hannah, they selected "strongly disagree" because their increased confidence in using annotations to critically think about poetry created a desire to interact with poetry further.

When participants were asked to share their feelings about the statement "I would like to learn how to analyze poetry" prior to the treatment, seven of eight indicated that they agreed with this statement. Pre-treatment interviews supported these findings. Michael was the only participant to indicate little to no desire to learn how to analyze poetry for the same reason he indicated a limited desire to comprehend poetry: he did not know how to do either and misread the statement as being something he liked to do.

Data from the post-treatment survey indicated that three participants still agreed with the statement because they had learned quite a bit during the study and wanted to continue to improve. Michael's response went from "strongly disagree" to "agree"

following exposure to annotation. He said, “You taught me how to do it, and now it is easier and more fun.” Danielle agreed with the statement about learning to analyze poetry before treatment, but after the treatment, she disagreed with the statement because she now feels she can understand and analyze poetry as a result of learning to annotate it; therefore, she believes she knows which strategies to use to enhance her critical thinking ability.

Pre and post-treatment interviews supported the student-participant survey findings. Sub-themes that directly related to participants’ confidence and desire to learn to comprehend and analyze poetry were largely indicative of their past experiences with poetry in the classroom. Participants cited a lack of exposure to poetry as one reason they did not feel confident about comprehending or analyzing it which increased their desire to know how to do so.

Some participants (Alice, Michael, and Mya) had a teacher the year before who included poetry in the curriculum, but they felt the class discussions and heavy teacher-led interpretations of the poems did not give them opportunities to build their own skills. Bethany also was exposed to poetry the year before at a different school. Her previous teacher had invited an “expert” poetry teacher to come into the classroom and teach their unit on poetry, and while Bethany found this useful, she also felt that the expert teacher focused more heavily on comprehension in class discussions than analysis. Bethany believed that previous class assignments where she was required to write poetry gave her more insight into author’s choices that contribute to analysis. Other participants (Hannah, Lindsey, and Ryan) could not recall the last time they worked with poetry in an English classroom, mainly citing middle school as their last recollection of poetry exposure. And,

like the study's other participants, their interactions with poetry were centered around class discussions about the overall meaning of poems.

All participants expressed positive growth in their annotations during their post-interviews. While Danielle and Ryan still had negative feelings towards poetry after the treatment, they felt positively about the growth of their annotations as well as their understanding of how and when to use annotations when thinking critically about poetry. All but one participant, Alice, were able to articulate a difference between comprehension and analysis post-treatment.

Hannah and Lindsey enjoyed the annotation strategy so much that, over the course of the treatment, they started using it with other texts, in other classes, and outside of school. They annotated other texts in English class during the treatment, of which the annotations were neither required nor encouraged so as not to interfere with the study. Hannah annotated material for her U.S. History class to help her prepare for reading quizzes, and Lindsey caught herself using mental annotations to think critically about a show she was watching on the television.

Interpretation of Results of Theme One: Growth in Self-Efficacy and Confidence

Based on their interviews prior to the study, it was evident that the majority of participants were unconfident when it came to understanding and analyzing poetry. Part of their lowered confidence came from insufficient and limited exposure to poetry as Danielle, Hannah, and Ryan had difficulty recalling the last time they interacted with poetry in a classroom. The research validates dearth in exposure because there is a shortage of resources available for teachers in regards to poetry pedagogy (Peskin, 2007; Shapiro, 1985; Sigvardsson, 2017; Weaven & Clark, 2013). Participants also felt

unconfident because if they had recent interactions with poetry in the classroom, such as Michael and Mya, their previous teachers had largely depended on a discussion format; this left Michael and Mya feeling at a deficit because they did not have the time to prepare to discuss it, inadvertently making poetry all the more intimidating to them (Patel & Laud, 2015).

Inadequate preparation was also a large reason why participants felt their peers were better at understanding and analyzing poetry than they were. The tools that participants used for understanding poetry led them to re-read the poem, or a line of poetry, until they understood it, which takes time, and therefore, when their classmates were ready to discuss the poem and they were not, participants assumed that they were unable to read and analyze poetry, when in fact, they were simply unfamiliar with better strategies to help them critically think about poetry (Wang, 2017).

These feelings of inadequacy were supported by the participants' interviews and survey results. Most of them, with the exception of Michael, did not shy away from working with poetry because it was difficult for them. In fact, most participants wanted to learn how to understand and analyze poetry. This motivation was important as participants moved into the next phase of the study, implementing annotations.

Theme Two: Increased Application of Annotations

Prior to the treatment, participants were provided foundational knowledge by the teacher-researcher, that knowledge being how a theme should be written and a handout on tone words. This foundational information provided participants with a starting point for their annotations; they were always to work towards understanding the theme and determining tone. Annotations were used as the strategy of choice in the study as a way

for participants to be metacognitively aware of their thought processes and as a way to demonstrate their identification of author's craft and their own comprehension.

Annotations were used only with poetry in this study, but after exposure, participants could use them elsewhere to aid in thinking critically about a variety of texts.

As previously mentioned, participants shared that past experiences with poetry typically centered on class discussions. Also in their pre-treatment interviews, all participants said that they worked towards understanding a poem when they were faced with one. In their pre-treatment interviews, a sub-theme that emerged was participants working towards the primary goal of comprehending a poem. For instance, Alice, Hannah, Lindsey, and Ryan would read a line or lines repeatedly until they understood it. None of the participants expressed a goal of analyzing poetry prior to treatment.

During the first week of treatment, participants' past experiences with primarily comprehending poetry were reflected by their use of comprehension annotations. For "Sonnet 30" (see Appendix D), 100% of the participants wrote annotations for comprehension. The large frequency of comprehension annotations were also mirrored by the participants' behaviors during their work with the poem. Lindsey, Michael, and Mya immediately went for a dictionary as they started to work with "Sonnet 30." Bethany chunked, or sectioned off, large parts of the poem and was finished working with it within fifteen minutes of starting. Danielle only annotated the areas that she understood.

For "Sonnet 30," the teacher-researcher gave participants instructions to identify the poem's theme, and 63% of them did, in fact, annotate for that. After annotations for theme, the next most frequent annotation revolved around the structure, which 13% of the

participants annotated. There were no other types of annotations made by participants for this poem.

After participating in a teacher-led review of annotations for “Sonnet 30,” participants exhibited growth in the variety of annotations that appeared within “Sonnet 75” (see Appendix E). All participants included comprehension and figurative language annotations; 86% engaged with the poem by annotating areas with questions; 63% of the participants had annotations regarding the poem’s structure; 38% annotated for the theme; 13% had annotations for diction and for connections; there were no commentary annotations. Bethany, Lindsey, and Mya (who were working in a group together) used their “Sonnet 30” annotations to help guide the types of annotations they included on their copies of “Sonnet 75,” which also helped them annotate the structure. All of the participants spent more time annotating “Sonnet 75” than they did when they annotated “Sonnet 30.”

After working with annotations for “Sonnet 30” and “Sonnet 75,” participants were reminded, via review and modeling of annotations that they could have included, by the teacher-researcher to focus on the following types of annotations: comprehension, theme, tone, diction, figurative language, and structure. When participants worked with “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” (see Appendix F), they used a variety of techniques to annotate the poem, and it was through these actions that one sub-theme emerged: participants using tools that were readily available to them. Alice and Lindsey immediately used a dictionary. Mya referred to her past two annotation rubrics, while Hannah used her past two poems as models for her annotations. After some time, Alice also referred to her tone handout and previous poems. This week 100% of participants

had comprehension and structure annotations; 75% had annotations for figurative language and questions; 63% annotated for tone; 50% annotated for the theme; there were no diction or commentary annotations.

While participants still did not include any commentary annotations within “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” (see Appendix G), there was an increase in the variety of annotations made. Keeping the trend of previous weeks, 100% of the participants included comprehension annotations, however this week, 100% of participants also included figurative language annotations; 88% annotated for theme; 75% annotated the structure (namely the repetition of lines) and diction; 63% also included annotations for tone; there were fewer annotations that were questions this week with 38% of the participants including them as they worked through the poem. Connections, appearing in 13% of the participants’ annotations, and commentary, which no one included in their annotations, were the least occurring types.

“The Poison Tree” (see Appendix H) was the poem in which participants used the largest variety of annotations. All participants included the following types of annotations: comprehension, figurative language, theme, tone, and questions. Diction was also heavily annotated this week, with 88% of participants including it in their annotations. “The Poison Tree” seemed to provide participants with a strong opportunity for commentary, with 75% including annotations for it within the poem. Annotations for structure and connections occurred the least at 13%. However, one participant included all types of annotations this week.

The last poem, “La Belle Dame sans Merci” (see Appendix I), was the longest poem that participants were asked to annotate during the course of the study. Each

participant included annotations for comprehension, figurative language, and questions. Diction, structure, theme, and tone were the next most frequently occurring annotations with 88% of the participants marking them. Fifty percent of the participants had annotations that made connections to outside sources or events, and 38% of participants included annotations that were commentary on events in the poem. This week, 38% of the participants included all types of annotations within their poem, an improvement over 13% for “The Poison Tree.”

As a second measure of participant growth, annotations were also evaluated on quality using a five point scale (see Appendix J). The scale evaluated not only the amount of annotations but also the depth of annotations. This was an important tool in evaluating the emergence of critical thinking because the depth of annotations highlighted conclusions made by participants. During each week of the study, the participants’ average score on the quality of their annotations increased. Participants began the study with an average score of 2.38 on the annotation rubric and ended with an average score of 3.63. The one exception was with “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” in which a small decrease in the average occurred from “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,” a 3 to a 2.91 average.

Interpretation of Results of Theme Two: The Increased Application of Annotations

The annotations for “Sonnet 30” mirrored participants’ past experiences with poetry. In interviews, participants largely cited classroom discussions as how they had engaged with poetry in the past. The majority of the participants also said their end goal when given a poem was to understand it. For this reason, the annotations for “Sonnet 30” were largely comprehension. This was exhibited by their behaviors of immediately

reaching for a dictionary or summarizing large chunks of the poem. Participants' previous experiences with poetry were largely comprehension based, so their interpretations of how they should interact with poetry were limited to comprehension (Wright et al., 2010).

Annotations for "Sonnet 30" were completed individually. Participants did not share them with each other, and they used the teacher-researcher led guided annotations to evaluate their own after they had time to work with the poem. Since no one was asked to share their annotations, participants could focus only on their work and not be concerned with the successes or failures of their peers.

There were two reasons for an increase in the variety of annotations from "Sonnet 30" to "Sonnet 75." Following "Sonnet 30," the teacher-researcher led participants in a think-aloud and review of the annotations that were representative of variety and depth, thus giving participants repeated practice on how to apply annotations (Morris, 2012; Simpson & Nist, 1990). Additionally, the teacher-researcher made the decision to provide participants with another Spenserian sonnet, "Sonnet 75," which is similar in structure to "Sonnet 30." Participants were more confident because it was similarly structured and by the same poet as the previous poem. This similarity provided participants with a comparable model to practice their annotations in which they identified tone, theme development, and the significance of structure.

During their work with "Sonnet 75," some participants (Lindsey, Mya, and Hannah) used their "Sonnet 30" annotations as a guide because they noticed the similarities between the sonnets, and all participants spent more time on their annotations for "Sonnet 75" because they had focused goals for their interactions and felt empowered

in their ability to analyze the poem (Liu, 2006; Nist, 1987). For “Sonnet 75,” participants shared their annotations with their group members, and because participants had ample time to work through the poem and annotate it accordingly, they readily shared their markings and thoughts while learning from their peers where they possibly overlooked areas worth annotating. This group work and the similarities in the two poems resulted in an increase in the variety of annotations for “Sonnet 75.”

There were similar behaviors among participants’ engagement with “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love.” Alice and Lindsey continued to work through comprehension first, and since it was important that participants understood the poem before they analyzed it, their desire to prioritize comprehension made sense (Fiato & Donahue, 2008; Nist, 1987). Participants, like Mya and Hannah, continued to use previous poems as models for their work. After Alice finished using the dictionary, she then referred to past poems, as well as her handout of tone words. As participants worked with “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,” they continued to show their confidence in using accessible materials. Participants spent 15 minutes making annotations before moving to their groups to continue their analysis of the poem. This 15 minute preparation time gave them an opportunity to confidently discuss and analyze the poem with an emerging foundation (Nist, 1987).

The annotations for “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” continued to exhibit growth in variety. At least one participant addressed nearly each annotation that the rubric scored, with the exception of diction and commentary annotations. The absence of diction annotations demonstrated participants’ unfamiliarity with the concept, highlighting a need for the teacher-researcher to address it in the next guided annotation

review. The commentary annotations, or annotations that showed participants' interactions with the poem's content beyond what was written (such as opinions or reactions to the content), was arguably the most difficult annotation for participants to include. This type of annotation asked participants to engage with the poem on a level beyond technical analysis. This balance, a balance between technical analysis and interjecting the participant's thoughts about what they were reading, was something participants had to develop over the course of the study (Fieto & Donahue, 2008; Nist, 1987).

"The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" was a companion poem for "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." Therefore, similar to "Sonnet 30" and "Sonnet 75," participants had two similarly structured poems. For "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," 75% of participants included questions in their annotations where for "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," only 38% of participants included questions. One reason for this was due to the content of "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd." The poem's speaker repeated similar ideas and the author used similar elements that participants had already engaged with in "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." These similarities and familiarity with the content explain the decrease in the number of questions participants included in their annotations (Morris, 2012). This indicated that some participants had a firm grasp of comprehending the poem, since questions more often than not indicate a roadblock in comprehension. Similar to "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," participants spent 10 minutes working individually with "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" before moving to their groups to continue their annotations.

Group members helped each other with the variety of annotations more so than in the previous week because they were becoming more comfortable working with one another. Hannah insisted to her group (Group 1) that “flocks from field to fold” meant something since alliteration was apparent, and her group members worked with her to analyze that line. Group 1 exhibited more confidence in their abilities than Group 2 and readily worked together, laughed, and guided each other through roadblocks.

Group 2 was a much quieter group. Group members Alice and Ryan consistently scored low on their annotation and poetry analysis questions rubrics, and those scores reflected their lower confidence which was validated by their reluctance to participate in the group discussion of the annotations (Morris, 2012). However, Bethany and Danielle, two of the groups more outspoken members, discussed many of their annotations and challenged one another. In reviewing the annotations for Group 2, Alice and Ryan were missing some annotations that Bethany and Danielle shared with them. This is either because they disagreed with their peers’ conclusions or because they were too engrossed in trying to understand the poem on their own to be active members in the group discussion. Each possibility demonstrates lower confidence within Alice and Ryan in regards to poetry analysis.

“The Poison Tree” marked some of the highest occurrences in the variety of annotations used by participants. Participants were exposed to the poem initially through a class read-aloud and then asked to work through the poem in their assigned groups. There was no time to engage with the poem and mark annotations individually. The increase in variety of annotations demonstrated that participants were working

collaboratively and using their peers as another tool in building their annotations (Morris, 2012; Simpson & Nist, 1990).

Since it was a posttest for the study, participants worked individually to analyze “La Bell Dame sans Merci.” The variety of annotations made by participants indicated substantial growth from the start of the study. This increase shows that exposure, practice, and confidence have positive effects on how participants use annotations to analyze (Nist, 1987).

With each new poem, participants became more comfortable with making a variety of annotations, and the quality of their annotations demonstrated the development of their critical thinking. The only poem to have a decrease in the quality of annotations, based on the annotation rubric, was “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd.” The possible reason for this is because the poem was a companion to “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,” and therefore a large portion of “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” mirrored “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd.” As such, participants did not re-annotate portions of the text that they had annotated in the previous week, which led to a decrease in the quality of annotations.

Theme Three: An Emergence of Critical Thinking

Annotations indicated participants’ ability to comprehend, identify author’s craft, and the emergence of analysis. Therefore, the teacher-researcher developed a rubric that was used to evaluate participants’ critical thinking skills during the study (see Appendix K). The rubric for the poetry analysis questions evaluated participants on their ability to think critically using their annotations by asking questions in five categories: summary, tone, theme, figurative language, and diction.

Summary. In order to demonstrate that annotations assisted participants in understanding the poem's content, they were asked to summarize the entire poem. These responses were evaluated using the poetry analysis questions rubric. For "Sonnet 30," participants' average score in the summary category was 2.81. Michael scored the highest at 3.5, and Danielle and Hannah scored the lowest at 2. Largely, participants did not summarize the entire poem, but either summarized one stanza or referenced one main idea. If participants cited textual evidence in their responses, it was often written as its own sentence. Only Michael and Mya included two pieces of textual evidence, the most used for "Sonnet 30."

For "Sonnet 75," there was a slight decrease in the average score for participants' ability to fully summarize the poem, with an average score of a 2.69. While their journal entries indicated an understanding that participants needed to include more evidence in their responses, Michael was the only one who specifically noted that he now understood that his summary needed to encompass the events in the entire poem. He was the participant who scored the highest in the summary category for "Sonnet 75" with a 4. The lowest scoring participants scored a 2, as Lindsey misunderstood part of the poem, and Hannah only provided a general reference to one part, rather than summarizing the poem.

During the third week of the study, participants moved away from sonnets and worked with "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." The participants' ability to summarize the poem from beginning to end increased over previous weeks to an average score of 3.13. Michael addressed all stanzas in his summary, earning a score of 5. Danielle received the next highest score of a 4.5.

Participants analyzed “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd,” a companion poem to “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,” during the fourth week of the study.

Participants’ ability to thoroughly summarize the poem continued to improve with an average score of a 4.5. Bethany and Mya scored the highest with a 5. Hannah and Lindsey did not summarize at least two stanzas, earning them the lowest scores of a 3.

While the average for summary scores dropped slightly as participants worked with “The Poison Tree” (from a 4.5 to a 4.38), four of the eight participants scored a 5, with only two participants being awarded 5’s for summaries in previous weeks. In order to earn a 5, participants had to successfully summarize the entire poem.

While the summary scores for “La Belle Dame sans Merci” exhibited a slight decline over the previous three weeks, dropping from a 4.38 to a 4.25, there was still an increase from the initial week of the study (“Sonnet 30”) in which participants’ summary score was an average of 2.81. Danielle and Lindsey scored the highest with a 5 by summarizing the entire poem. Hannah received the lowest score (3) by only partially summarizing the poem.

Tone. For tone, participants scored an average of 2.56 for “Sonnet 30” with Michael scoring the highest at 4.5 and Danielle and Ryan each scoring the lowest a 2. Most participants referenced two tones used in the poem, a criteria of the highest possible score on the rubric. Michael included more than two tones and discussed the progression of the speaker’s tone from the beginning to the end of the poem. Mya and Ryan only addressed one tone, and while Hannah attempted to identify at least two tones, she misidentified one. Most participants included textual evidence in their analyses, except for Hannah.

For “Sonnet 75,” participants continued to improve upon the previous week’s scores, with the average score being a 2.63. Alice and Hannah scored the lowest with a 2. Alice did identify at least two tones, but her identification and explanations were unconvincing because her responses were not developed enough. Hannah did not meet the requirements of a 4 or 5 on the rubric because she only identified one tone and was unable to convincingly explain how the tone was created in the poem.

Participants also increased their tone scores (scoring 3) after annotating “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love.” All participants identified at least two tones, with Mya going beyond the rubric descriptors to discuss the progression of three tones throughout the poem. Michael scored the highest with a 4, as he successfully discussed the development of persuasive and optimistic tones in the poem. Even though Lindsey and Danielle scored the lowest in the summary category, they scored the highest for “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” in the tone category, earning a 5. Danielle, in particular, discussed four tones and how they manifested over the course of the poem.

While the average score for tone decreased slightly for “The Poison Tree,” dropping from a 4 to a 3.94, only two participants, Hannah and Ryan, scored below a 4, scoring a 3. Most participants identified and analyzed the development of three or more tones throughout the poem. Hannah and Lindsey were the only two participants to limit their responses to two.

The scores for tone recovered from “The Poison Tree” and continued to show an overall increase for “La Belle Dame sans Merci,” with participants scoring an average of 4.06. Participants who earned a 4 or higher successfully analyzed the progression of

multiple tones throughout the poem, and three participants noted how two tones bookended the poem.

Theme. Before the study started, participants were given one directive regarding theme: identify it in the form of a statement versus one or two words. This required participants to focus on one theme and how various elements of author's craft contribute to the development of it, thus participants focused their emerging critical thinking skills on one goal. Participants scored an average of 2.62 on the poetry analysis questions rubric for analyzing the theme of "Sonnet 30." Michael scored the highest with a 4, and Danielle, Hannah, Lindsey, and Ryan scored the lowest with a 2. The most frequently occurring deficiency with participants meeting the rubric requirement for theme was the ability to discuss the development of it over the course of the poem.

There was also growth in discussing the development of the theme for "Sonnet 75," with participants scoring an average of 2.69. Hannah and Lindsey scored the lowest because they did not discuss the development of the theme over the course of the poem. Mya's discussion of the development of the theme earned her a 4, the highest score for "Sonnet 75."

Participants focused more on the development of the theme in their responses for "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," scoring an average of 3.06 on the rubric, an improvement over previous weeks. While participants still needed to work on the development of the theme throughout the poem, there was emerging analysis of how the theme developed. Danielle and Michael scored the highest with a 4.

For "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," participants increased their ability to not only identify the theme but to discuss how the author develops it over the poem,

scoring an average of 3.69. Bethany, Michael, and Mya scored the highest with a 4. Each of their responses successfully discussed some development of the theme throughout the poem. Alice, Hannah, and Ryan did not analyze how the theme developed over the course of the poem, thus earning them a 3 on the rubric.

The average score for theme also slightly declined for “The Poison Tree” with the average score being a 3.56, down from the highest average from the previous week of a 3.69. Two participants, Alice and Ryan, earned a 3 or lower for theme due to limited analysis of its development over the course of the poem.

The average score for theme for “La Belle Dame sans Merci” was unchanged with the average score from the previous week of a 3.56. While half of the participants discussed the development of the theme in the poem, the other half had difficulty explaining how the theme emerged from the beginning to the end of the poem.

Figurative Language. Part of understanding how an author develops theme in a poem is supported by the author’s use of figurative language. For “Sonnet 30,” participants scored the highest initial score in the figurative language category with an average of 3.44. Mya scored the highest of all participants with a 4.5, and she mentioned in her interview that figurative language was something she looked for when working to understand a poem. Hannah received the second highest score at a 4. While Lindsey misidentified the use of an allusion, participants successfully identified the author’s use of a metaphor. However, all but Mya missed the simile in the first line.

While the overall average for figurative language for “Sonnet 75” decreased from the previous week to a 2.88, it was still the highest scoring category for participants on

the poetry analysis question rubric. Mya again scored high, earning a 3.5, but Michael scored the highest this week with a 4.

Though the average for figurative language in “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” was still below the average earned for “Sonnet 30,” participants did show an increase over their “Sonnet 75” scores with an average of 2.94. Bethany and Michael scored the highest with 3.5, successfully analyzing the author’s intent by referring to the use of alliteration. Bethany, in particular, successfully connected her analysis of alliteration to the poem’s theme. Lindsey scored the lowest with a 2 as she merely identified the author’s use of alliteration but made no attempt to analyze his intent in using it in the poem.

“The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” offered a variety of figurative language to support the theme, and participants’ scores increased to the highest figurative language average during the treatment at a 3.47. Michael scored the highest with a 4.5 by analyzing how the author’s use of personification supported the theme. Hannah scored the lowest with a 2 because she mistakenly identified repetition of words and structure as figurative language. She did not include any other figurative language examples in her response.

There was a minor drop in the average score for figurative language (from a 3.47 to 3.38) with “The Poison Tree.” Alice and Hannah earned the lowest scores, a 2.5 and 3, by misidentifying types of figurative language and having underdeveloped analyses of them. Lindsey scored the highest with a 4 by successfully identifying symbolism and explaining its connection to the theme.

While the average score for figurative language in “La Belle Dame sans Merci” increased over the average for “The Poison Tree” (from a 3.38 to a 3.44), it did not

increase over the average of a 3.47 for “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd.”

Participants struggled to correctly identify figurative language examples. Half the participants misidentified figurative language, and when the other half of participants correctly identified it, they struggled to analyze the author’s intent in using it in the poem.

Diction. While figurative language was the category that participants were most successful in identifying and analyzing in “Sonnet 30,” diction, similar to the score for tone, was the category participants struggled with the most, scoring an average of 2.56. Michael scored the highest in the diction category for “Sonnet 30” with a 4 by discussing two word choices and their correlation to the poem’s theme.

Because diction was a category where participants received the lowest score during the first week of the study, the teacher-researcher provided participants with a mini-lesson on diction prior to working with “Sonnet 75.” As a result, the average score for diction increased to a 2.69 during the second week of the treatment.

In order to enhance participants’ understanding of diction, they responded to a journal entry prior to working with “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love.” This journal entry prompt provided them with three examples of how diction can change the meaning of a sentence. For “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,” participants’ average score with diction continued to increase, with participants scoring an average of 2.94 in their ability to analyze an author’s use of diction. Danielle and Michael both scored the highest with a 4, and Lindsey and Ryan scored the lowest with a 2.

There was also an increase in participants’ abilities to successfully analyze the author’s use of diction in “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” with the average score

being a 3.38. Danielle, Michael, and Mya received the highest scores for diction, with Michael earning the highest at a 4.5.

There was a minor drop in the average score, a 3.13, for diction in “The Poison Tree.” This was a decrease from the highest average for “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” of a 3.38. Hannah scored the lowest with a 2 by only identifying one example of diction as having a negative connotation. Bethany scored the highest with a 4 by analyzing the use of “wrath” instead of “anger” and connecting it to the theme of the poem.

For “La Belle Dame sans Merci,” the average score for diction, a 3.38, mirrored the highest score for “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd.” Lindsey and Michael scored the highest by convincingly analyzing the author’s intent in using diction. Alice and Ryan scored the lowest with a 2 by unconvincingly analyzing the author’s intent in using diction.

Interpretation of Results of Theme Three: An Emergence of Critical Thinking

Over the course of the study, there was a direct correlation between the increase in annotations and the thoroughness of participants’ responses to the poetry analysis questions. Participants’ annotations for “Sonnet 30” were mainly comprehension, and their responses were short, underdeveloped, and demonstrated a minimal understanding of the poem. This was because during pre-interviews, participants indicated their previous interactions with poetry were only on a comprehension level.

As participants spent each week practicing and using annotations in poetry, their responses became more developed (Nist, 1987; Workman, 2014). While repeated practice played a part in the development of participants’ responses, metacognitive awareness of

their progress, as prompted by weekly journal entries, gave participants opportunities to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and areas of focus before annotating the next poem. The teacher-researcher also provided mini-lessons for topics participants were unfamiliar with, such as multiple journal prompts focused on diction, and reminded participants that repetition was not figurative language but was more related to structure. Finally, the rubrics and annotations (in addition to teacher-researcher annotations) from the previous week provided participants with exemplars and goals to refer to as they worked with each new poem. All of these combined techniques resulted in participant growth (Cauley & McMillian, 2010; Papola-Ellis, 2014; Patel & Laud, 2015; Workman, 2014).

One interesting event occurred as participants worked with “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd.” As mentioned previously, the average score earned by participants for the quality of their annotations decreased with this poem most likely because it was a companion poem to “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love.” Even though the amount of annotations decreased, participants’ poetry analysis question responses rose the most with “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd,” a .67 increase. While participants did not annotate the poem to the extent that they annotated other poems during the study, the decrease in annotations was a reflection of the comparative nature of the poem and not their critical thinking. The increase in critical thinking skills via responses to the poetry analysis questions and participants’ engaging behavior with one another during the group discussion shows that participants recalled the annotations for “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” and applied them to their analysis of the companion poem (Daerera et al., 2014).

Conclusion

Poetry can be a challenging but valuable tool for teachers (Eva-Wood, 2004; Sigvardsson, 2017; Stickling, Prasun, & Olsen, 2011; Weaven & Clark, 2013; Wilfong, 2008). Using poetry in the classroom has numerous benefits, and one of those benefits is its usefulness in teaching students to think critically (Peskin, 2007; Wright et al., 2010). This study examined the impact of poetry annotations on critical thinking skills. The data collected over the course of the study demonstrated that poetry annotations can be used as a strategy to improve students' critical thinking skills. This was supported by the increase in scores on the rubrics for annotation and poetry analysis questions and in the participants' post-interviews and surveys. However, the data collected also demonstrated that confidence is crucial as many participants lacked confidence about analyzing poetry prior to the study. With an increase in confidence came an increase in their critical thinking.

Therefore, annotations require support. It is important that students have a clear idea of the varying types of annotations and how to use them to identify author's craft (Morris, 2012; Nist, 1985). While this study demonstrated the positive outcomes with students using annotations, it also demonstrated that annotations should be followed with a written response or a class discussion that provides students with an opportunity to move their annotations from identification and emerging critical thinking to more developed critical thinking.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

People learn to accomplish tasks through mimicking processes, and some of the earliest experiences of this occur with children imitating their parents. In education this process manifests as teachers instruct students either through sharing factual information or relaying steps that are needed in order to fulfill a goal. This replication of a process or knowledge is often how teachers assess students' mastery of a learning objective. However, not all learning objectives are easily assessed through simple recall. Critical thinking is a skill that can be challenging to teach and evaluate due to its cognitive nature (Wang, 2017). Even though thinking critically is a process that occurs mentally, there are strategies that students can use to show that process in a concrete format.

This study was conducted to observe the impact of poetry annotations on the critical thinking skills of high school juniors and seniors. The problem of practice focused on students' difficulty with thinking critically about the various texts that they encounter in their English classes. The teacher-researcher sought to address the problem of practice through the use of poetry annotations. Over a six-week period, the teacher-researcher collected data from various sources in order to address the research question. As a result of the data collected, three dominant themes emerged: 1) Growth in Self-Efficacy and Confidence, 2) Increased Application of Poetry Annotations, and 3) An Emergence of Critical Thinking Skills. The data demonstrated that there was positive growth among the

critical thinking skills and confidence of the participants in the study, and the findings suggest that poetry annotations assisted in that development.

Research Question

How does a focus on poetry annotation as a learning objective impact the critical thinking skills of eight students enrolled in an English IV-Honors class at Meadow Valley High School?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact that poetry annotations have on the critical thinking skills of eight students enrolled in an English IV-Honors class at Meadow Valley High School.

Overview of the Study

This study, involving eight students, examined the impact that poetry annotations had on their ability to think critically. As an English teacher, the teacher-researcher noticed that students historically had difficulty engaging with various texts on a level beyond comprehension. Students often struggled with how to think critically because they were unsure of what questions to ask themselves as they engaged with the texts. They either disregarded areas that were confusing or were unaware of textual components that held deeper meaning. Therefore, the teacher-researcher designed this study to increase participants' critical thinking skills through the use of poetry annotations.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and participant agreement letters were sent home to parents. Eight participants were selected for the study based on their pre-treatment survey responses. More specifically, participants were selected based on the Likert scale relative to one's interest in poetry.

Of the eight participants, four were seniors and four were juniors. The participants' racial makeup included five White students, two Black students, and one Hispanic student. These demographics are indicative of an English IV-Honors class at Meadow Valley High School, of which the majority of the students are white.

Data for this study was largely qualitative in nature with some aspects that were quantitative. Pre and post-treatment surveys utilized Likert scale questionnaires on which participants indicated their tendencies and past experiences regarding poetry analysis. Responses were then used to further discussion during pre and post-treatment interviews. Additional data collected included participant artifacts (annotations and responses to poetry analysis questions), teacher-researcher observations, and rubrics for annotations and poetry analysis questions. The data collected were used to evaluate the impact that poetry annotations had on critical thinking.

Participants began each week with a teacher-researcher modeled review of annotations for the previous week's poem. This review was followed by interactions with a new poem which included a class read-aloud, individual/group work and discussions revolving around annotations. Participants then individually responded to five poetry analysis questions (these questions were the same five questions for each poem used in the study) (see Appendix K).

Summary of the Study

Data analysis revealed three themes in which participants demonstrated an increase from the beginning of the study. The three dominant themes were: 1) Growth in Self-Efficacy and Confidence, 2) Increased Application of Poetry Annotations, and 3) An Emergence of Critical Thinking Skills.

A comparison of pre and post-Likert surveys, as well as pre and post-interviews, showed positive growth in participants' self-efficacy and confidence. Prior to the treatment, many participants indicated a level of restraint as a result of previous experiences with, or absence of, poetry in the classroom. The limited exposure to poetry in the classroom supported research available; poetry is an underused genre in the curriculum (Sarac, 2006; Sigvardsson, 2017; Weaven & Clark, 2013). For the participants who had encountered poetry in the high school English classroom, class discussions were largely cited as the method for interacting with poetry. This approach, most likely due to the minimal pedagogical methods available, led to many participants feeling insecure about their abilities to understand and think critically about poetry; they felt ill-prepared to discuss it and were constantly comparing their abilities to those of their teachers and classmates who readily shared their conclusions (Shapiro, 1985; Sigvardsson, 2017; Stickling, Prasun, & Olsen, 2011; Weaven & Clark, 2013).

Even though participants began the study with minimal confidence about poetry analysis, participants noted an increase in their self-efficacy and confidence as a result of using poetry annotations throughout the study. The growth in self-efficacy and confidence was not merely a reflection of participants' deft abilities to annotate, but was validated by their capacity to critically think about poetry as demonstrated in the growth of their rubric scores for the poetry analysis questions. This growth affirms research in which students show improvement due to practice and reflection of their performance (Alfassi, 2005; Kovalik & Kovalik, 2007; Van Velzen, 2017).

Participants not only exhibited a positive growth in self-efficacy and confidence, but in their annotations as well. Poetry annotations were evaluated using a rubric and

with the assistance of a co-teacher. The rubric assessed annotations using two criteria: 1) the variety of annotations that appeared on the assigned poem and 2) the quality of the annotations (meaning that the annotations exhibited depth of thought). The quality of annotations were characterized by the quantity of annotations on a poem as well as the thoughtfulness (conclusions that moved beyond the literal meanings to connections, insight, and analysis) of them. With each passing week of the study, participants affirmed the research as they grew accustomed to evaluating their strengths and weaknesses by reviewing past annotation rubrics, previously annotated poems, peers' insights during group discussions, and mini-lessons conducted by the teacher-researcher to hone their annotations (Van Velzen, 2017). This led to an overall increase in the quantity and quality of annotations marked by participants.

The increase in participants' critical thinking skills was supported by the increase in quality and variety of their annotations. Although the annotation rubric evaluated the depth of annotations, poetry analysis questions were used to evaluate the impact those annotations had on participants' ability to think critically about the poem they were reading. The poetry analysis questions were created by the teacher-researcher in order to address comprehension (summary), tone, figurative language, theme, and diction. These categories not only assessed participants understanding of the poem, but their ability to critically think about the author's intent via craft. The poetry analysis questions were evaluated in the same manner as the annotations by using a rubric and the aid of a co-teacher. The positive growth on the rubric scores of the poetry analysis questions over the course of the study demonstrated that as participants marked more annotations of variety and depth, their critical thinking grew. This confirmed research which highlights a

connection between annotation and the improvement of critical thinking skills (Feito & Donahue, 2008; Liu, 2006; Shang, 2017; Simpson & Nist, 1990).

Action Plan: Implications of the Findings of the Study

The teacher-researcher began the study to examine how poetry annotations impact the critical thinking skills of students. Based on what the data revealed, the teacher-researcher has developed an action plan comprised of four specific steps:

1. The need of early exposure to annotation.
2. The significance of wait time.
3. The significance of clear expectations and tools.
4. The dissemination of findings and future opportunities.

Action step one: The need of early exposure to annotation. The poetry annotations were a concrete manifestation of the participants' mental conclusions about the poem's content (Feito & Donahue, 2008; Nist, 1987; Shang, 2017). While the variety and depth of participants' annotations grew five of the six weeks during the study, their growth was dependent on participants reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses from previous weeks.

Additionally, the growth in critical thinking, as validated using the rubric for the poetry analysis questions, pre and post-surveys, and pre and post-interviews, was also a result of repeated practice and reflection. Given this information, the teacher-researcher plans to share with teachers that in order to effectively use annotations as a critical thinking tool, students need to have repeated exposure and practice to the strategy in order to create the metacognitive connection between their annotations and thoughts (Saville, 2011; Son & Simon, 2012).

Therefore, there needs to be an increase in the exposure to annotation in the classroom. A poetry unit at the beginning of the semester, with additional annotation practice throughout the semester, can be a start to annotation exposure and practice. Annotating a variety of genres can provide students with numerous opportunities to refine how they use annotations to guide their critical thinking. Another variation of this study would involve observing students in subsequent years of high school to evaluate if and how they continue to use annotations as a critical thinking strategy without being prompted.

Action step two: The significance of wait time. It is a foundational lesson in education classes: students need wait time when asked to answer a question. But the results of this study show that teachers also need to be aware that the success of using poetry annotations to develop critical thinking is inherently tied to students having opportunities to construct their own conclusions. In pre-treatment interviews, participants indicated that past experiences with poetry did not give them ample time to comprehend the poems they were assigned. During the study, participants were initially given as much time as they needed to use annotations to comprehend and think critically about each poem.

This instructional decision was implemented for two reasons. First, by allowing participants to have sufficient time to annotate a poem, their self-efficacy increased because they entered group discussions with conclusions that they were confident about as a result of having opportunities to individually work through roadblocks. Second, the extended period participants had to work through poems at the beginning of the study

gave them the freedom to become aware of their metacognitive process since they had time to construct cognitive questions.

As time for individual participant engagement with poems decreased, time was extended for engagement with their groups. Although a teacher may realistically never be able to give each student all the individual time they need, it is important to keep in mind that all students need an appropriate amount of individual time to engage with challenging texts (Gilliam, Baker, Rayfield, Ritz, & Cummins, 2018; Tobin, 1987). Therefore, for lessons that involve cognitive processes, teachers need to ensure that students have the opportunities to at least construct foundational conclusions before moving into pair/group work or sharing out with the class.

Action step three: The significance of clear expectations and tools. Over the course of the study, participants had an overarching goal in place: growth by way of using annotations to think critically about poetry. In order to develop metacognitive awareness about their critical thinking, and since “feedback is the key to success” (Saville, 2012, p. 69), participants were prompted to review the previous week’s poetry annotations, annotation rubric, and poetry analysis questions rubric. This review was driven by a journal entry in which participants reflected on their strengths, weaknesses, and areas on which to focus as they began working with the next poem. Because the journal entries encouraged participants to reflect on their progress, their metacognition was supported by their increased willingness to look back at past rubrics and to use dictionaries and teacher provided handouts to guide their interactions with each poem.

Teachers need to be aware that the rubrics for annotation and poetry analysis questions used in this study were especially helpful in guiding participants as they

worked towards their goal. The rubrics provided participants with clear feedback, validating or identifying where growth was needed in relation to the quality and quantity of their annotations and development of their critical thinking. The teacher-researcher noted observations throughout the study where participants referred to their rubrics, both during individual and group work, to guide their engagement with the poems. This suggests that students benefit from repeated use of a rubric and from being prompted to reflect on their strengths and areas that need improvement. The teacher-researcher plans to implement more rubric/reflection style feedback. This can extend beyond annotation assessments to essays or other written response activities where students need to repeat a format, such as using embedded evidence or citations.

Action step four: The dissemination of findings and future opportunities. The final component of the action plan includes sharing the results of the study within the teacher-researcher's English department. The school district implements delayed start Wednesdays which provides teachers with opportunities to participate in professional development. The teacher-researcher plans to present the study's findings and implications as a way to promote the benefits of annotation as a critical thinking strategy. Since poetry annotations were specifically used in this study, the teacher-researcher also plans to use the results of the study to highlight the benefits of poetry in the curriculum.

In conducting the literature review for this study, the teacher-researcher also noted a need for more professional articles on strategies for using poetry in the high school English curriculum. This study presents an opportunity for the teacher-researcher to submit an article to a journal, such as one published by the National Council for Teachers

of English. Additionally, further studies (discussed in this chapter) also offer similar opportunities.

Suggestions for Future Research

Research Suggestion One: More Diverse Participant Demographics

While the nature of action research has a small participant size where generalizations cannot be made, one suggestion for future research is to include a larger participant sampling in order to validate the findings of the study (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

In addition to the limited sampling, participants in this study were enrolled in an English IV-Honors class. Teacher-researcher observations noted that participants had a strong work ethic, were motivated to succeed, and readily focused on the task at hand. They also had the stamina to construct progressively lengthier responses to the poetry analysis questions each week. Therefore, future research is needed on the impact of this study's treatment on students in English classes of various levels. Depending on the characteristics of the sample, modifications may need to be made to the study. These modifications may include more explicit scaffolded instructions and a more specific focus on text-dependent poetry analysis questions.

Research Suggestion Two: Variations in Genres

This study evaluated the impact of poetry annotations on critical thinking. The poetry genre was chosen for this study because of its condensed nature and inclusion of various literary components (Eva-Wood, 2004). The success of the study indicates that further research regarding the impact of annotations (despite the genre) on critical thinking should be conducted.

Research Suggestion Three: Increased focus on Reciprocal Teaching

While the main focus of this study was the use of poetry annotations as a strategy to improve critical thinking, the teacher-researcher also used a modified version of reciprocal teaching to support the process of annotation. Reciprocal teaching is a method in which “the teacher diminishes scaffolded assistance as students” (Alfassi, 2004, p. 172) take more control of their learning in groups. The modified version of reciprocal teaching used in this study balanced the teacher-researcher’s modeled annotations with peer annotations during group work, but it is an aspect of the study that could include more explicit guidance in the future.

Since the study focused on individual growth, participants needed time to engage with each poem, and so group work was a secondary aspect of the study. There was suggested evidence in the teacher-researcher’s observation notes that participants benefited from sharing annotations with their peers. However, the way participants shared their annotations was informal and not reminiscent of the structure that tends to be indicative of reciprocal teaching. Therefore, further research is needed on a more guided approach for reciprocal teaching that supplements the construction of annotations.

Conclusion

Teaching is a unique profession because teachers ultimately have a hand in preparing each student for something greater: their contribution to the world. Individuals have an obligation to be active members in society, and one way this obligation manifests is through thinking critically about decisions they have to make. In order to develop such necessary skills, this study evaluated the impact of poetry annotations on the development of critical thinking.

The constructivist learning theory, where “the student...is an active participant of the learning process and the teacher...facilitates learning” (Fernando & Marikar, 2017, p.110), was the foundation for this study. Annotations are a reflection of the constructivist theory because they require the student to be in control of his/her learning as they are a reflection of the students’ thought process (Feito, & Donahue, 2008; Shang, 2017). For this study, poetry annotations were specifically chosen since the condensed nature of poetry, with its high use of “artistic treatments of language” (Weaven & Clark, 2013, p. 198), offers numerous opportunities for students to use and develop their critical thinking skills.

This study demonstrated that there is usefulness to using annotations as a catalyst for the development of critical thinking. But perhaps the greatest significance in the results of this study was the increase in self-efficacy and confidence that participants experienced as a result of using annotations to think critically about poetry. Annotations are a strategy that can empower students, and when students feel empowered, they succeed.

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APPENDIX A

PRE AND POST-SURVEY

Poetry Survey

Directions: For each statement below, please circle the number that best matches with your feelings on the statement. At the end of the semester, you will retake this survey, and we will compare your feelings on poetry at the beginning of the semester to your feelings on poetry at the end of the semester.

1. I enjoy reading poetry for pleasure.

1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree

2. I have a negative attitude towards poetry.

1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree

3. I read poetry on my free time.

1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree

4. I would like to read more poetry.

1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree

5. I only read poetry in school.

1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree

6. I clearly understand the purpose of poetry.

1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree

7. I would like to learn how to analyze poetry.

1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree

8. Poetry does not connect to my life.

1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree

9. I can improve my comprehension skills by learning poetry.

1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree

10. All poetry is “old” and talks about topics that bore me.

1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree

11. I can improve my writing skills by learning poetry.
1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree
12. Everyone else is better at reading poetry.
1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree
13. Poetry is a foreign language to me.
1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree
14. I write poetry in my free time.
1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree
15. A major element of poetry is rhyming.
1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree
16. I will try to read more poetry.
1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree
17. I know how to understand and interpret poetry.
1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree
18. I have not been taught how to read poetry.
1–strongly disagree, 2–disagree, 3–agree, 4–strongly agree

APPENDIX B

PRE-TREATMENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What have your past experiences with poetry in the classroom been like? In other words, what sort of interactions or activities did you engage in with poetry?
2. If I were to give you a poem, how you would “tackle” it? And what is your goal in reading it?
3. What do you do when there is a part of a poem that you do not understand?
4. You noted that you feel everyone else is better at understanding and analyzing poetry than you. What experiences have led you to that conclusion? (Or if you are strong at it, what experiences have led you to that conclusion?)
5. How do you define comprehension?
6. How do you define analysis?

APPENDIX C

POST-TREATMENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Define comprehension.
2. Define analysis.
3. How did you feel about poetry analysis prior to our unit?
4. How do you feel now?
5. Do you believe the quality of your annotations improved during our unit?
6. How do you feel about annotations has a strategy to help you critically think?

APPENDIX D

WEEK ONE POEM

“Sonnet 30”

By: Edmund Spenser

My love is like to ice, and I to fire:
How comes it then that this her cold so great
Is not dissolved through my so hot desire,
But harder grows the more I her entreat?
Or how comes it that my exceeding heat
Is not allayed by her heart-frozen cold,
But that I burn much more in boiling sweat,
And feel my flames augmented manifold?
What more miraculous thing may be told,
That fire, which all things melts, should harden ice,
And ice, which is congeal's with senseless cold,
Should kindle fire by wonderful device?
Such is the power of love in gentle mind,
That it can alter all the course of kind.

APPENDIX E

WEEK TWO POEM

“Sonnet 75”

By: Edmund Spenser

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washed it away:
Again I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.
Vain man, said she, that doest in vain assay
A mortal thing so to immortalize,
For I myself shall like to this decay,
And eek my name be wiped out likewise.
Not so (quoth I), let baser things devise
To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse your virtues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens write your glorious name.
Where whenas Death shall all the world subdue,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.

APPENDIX F

WEEK THREE POEM

“The Passionate Shepherd to His Love”

By: Christopher Marlowe

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove,
That Valleys, groves, hills, and fields,
Woods, or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the Rocks,
Seeing the Shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow Rivers to whose falls
Melodious birds sing Madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of Roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of Myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty Lambs we pull;
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and Ivy buds,
With Coral clasps and Amber studs:
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me, and be my love.

The Shepherds' Swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May-morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me, and be my love.

APPENDIX G

WEEK FOUR POEM

“The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd”

By: Sir Walter Raleigh

Of all the world and love were young,
And truth in every Shepherd’s tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move,
To live with thee, and be thy love.

Time drives the flocks from field to fold,
When Rivers rage and Rocks grow cold,
And *Philomel* becometh dumb,
The rest complains of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields,
To wayward winter reckoning yields,
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
Is fancy’s spring, but sorrow’s fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of Roses,
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten:
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and Ivy buds,
The Coral clasps and amber studs,
All these in me no means can move
To come to thee and be thy love.

But could youth last, and love still breed,
Had joys no date, nor age no need,
Then these delights my mind might move
To live with thee, and be thy love.

APPENDIX H

WEEK FIVE POEM

“A Poison Tree”

By: William Blake

I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I waterd it in fears,
Night & morning with my tears:
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night.
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veild the pole;
In the morning glad I see;
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

APPENDIX I

WEEK SIX POEM

“La Belle Dame sans Merci: A Ballad”

By: John Keats

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
Alone and palely loitering;
The sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel’s granary is full,
And the harvest’s done.

I see a lilly on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever dew;
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads
Full beautiful, a faery’s child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long;
For sideways would she lean, and sing
A faery’s song.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew;
And sure in language strange she said,
I love thee true.

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she gazed and sighed deep,
And there I shut her wild sad eyes—
So kissed to sleep.

And there we slumbered on the moss,
And there I dreamed, ah woe betide,
The latest dream I ever dreamed
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
Who cried—“La belle Dame sans merci
Hath thee in thrall!”

I saw their starved lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke, and found me here
On the cold hill side.

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

APPENDIX J

ANNOTATION RUBRIC

	Quality of Annotations	Teacher Comments
5	<p>The text is <i>extensively</i> annotated with <i>copious</i> margin notations. The annotations demonstrate <i>comprehensive and thoughtful reading</i>. The margin notes show that the reader has <i>proficiently analyzed</i> the text, made <i>insightful connections</i> and drawn <i>valid conclusions</i>. Notations are <i>balanced</i> and show <i>deep reading</i> and <i>thinking</i>. All of the text is addressed.</p>	<p>Student annotations should reflect comprehension, inference and depth/breadth of interaction with text. Based on the text type, the following types of responses should be evidenced in annotations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions • Reactions and Analysis • Opinions • Locating important passages/key evidence or ideas • Connections including those to other sources/accounts of this topic • Key words or phrases including figurative, connotative, and specific word choices of the writer • Themes or Central Ideas • Summaries • Predictions and Inferences • Challenges of author’s bias and assumptions • Identification of author’s strategies: Development of events or characters OR structure and development of argument • Writer’s Style: Tone, POV, Facts vs. Opinions, Rhetorical/Persuasive Devices • Purpose of Writer’s Choices • Other
4	<p>The text is <i>adequately</i> annotated with margin notations. The annotations demonstrate that the reader understands the text <i>beyond the literal level</i>. The margin notes show that the reader has <i>analyzed</i> the text, made <i>some connections</i> and drawn <i>some conclusions</i>. Notations are <i>balanced</i> and show <i>some deep reading</i> and <i>thinking</i>. Most to all of the text is addressed.</p>	
3	<p>The text is annotated with <i>some</i> margin notations. The annotations are basic and consist mainly of <i>plot driven questions or literal</i> ideas. Annotations indicate a <i>basic understanding</i> of the text. The reader has been able to make <i>one or two connections</i>, but has been unable to use the text to draw valid conclusions. Notations are <i>unbalanced</i> and <i>only half of the text</i> is addressed.</p>	
2	<p>The text is underlined in appropriate placed, but there are <i>very few</i> margin notes making it difficult to evaluate how well the reader understood the reading. Not as <i>illogical and not balanced</i>. <i>Only one quarter of the text</i> has been glossed. <i>Insufficient length and depth</i> in comments.</p>	
1	<p>Significant parts of the text are completely <i>unmarked</i>. There are <i>no margin</i> notes, only underlined text.</p>	
0	<p>The text is completely unmarked.</p>	

APPENDIX K

POETRY ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

1. What is the poem about?
2. What is the speaker's tone in the poem?
3. What is the poem's theme?
4. What are some poetic devices used in the poem and their effect?
5. What are some examples of diction and their effect?

APPENDIX L

POETRY ANALYSIS QUESTIONS RUBRIC

Question 1	The summary includes all stanzas of the poem or the poem's content from beginning to end and correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes. 5	The summary misses at one stanza of the poem and/or mostly correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes. 4	The summary misses at least two stanzas of the poem and little correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes. 3	The summary misses at least three stanzas of the poem and no correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes. 2
Question 2	The response identifies two supported tones and correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes to explain how each tone is present in the poem. 5	The response identifies one supported tone and/or mostly correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes to almost explain how each tone is present in the poem. 4	The response identifies one/two supported tone (s) and little correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes to explain how one tone is present in the poem. 3	The response identifies one/two supported tone (s) and no correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes. 2
Question 3	The response identifies a theme written as a sentence and correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes to explain how the tone develops in the	The response identifies a theme written as a sentence and/or mostly correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes to explain how the tone develops in just a	The response identifies a theme written as a sentence and little correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes and fails to explain how the tone develops in	The response identifies a theme that may/may not be written as a sentence and no correctly incorporated textual evidence and

	entire poem. 5	couple parts of the poem. 4	the poem. 3	embedded quotes. 2
Question 4	The response identifies the figurative language examples and analyzes not only what they mean but speculate the author's intent in using the figurative language. It also correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes.	The response identifies the figurative language examples and attempts to analyze what they mean. There is little to no speculation about the author's intent in using the figurative language. It also mostly correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes.	The response misidentifies the figurative language examples and may or may not attempt to analyze what they mean. There is little to no speculation about the author's intent in using the figurative language. It also mostly correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes.	The response misidentifies the figurative language examples and may or may not attempt to analyze what they mean. There is little to no speculation about the author's intent in using the figurative language, or it may fail to correctly incorporate textual evidence and embedded quotes.
	5	4	3	2
Question 5	The response identifies the diction and analyzes not only what they mean but speculate the author's intent in using it. It also correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes.	The response identifies the diction and attempts to analyze what they mean. There is little to no speculation the author's intent in using it. It also mostly correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded quotes.	The response does not convincingly identify examples of diction and may or may not attempt to analyze what they mean. There is little to no speculation about the author's intent in using it. It also mostly correctly incorporated textual evidence and embedded	The response does not convincingly identify examples of diction and may or may not attempt to analyze what they mean. There is little to no speculation of the author's intent in using it, or it

	5	4	quotes. 3	may fail to correctly incorporate textual evidence and embedded quotes. 2
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