

Summer 2021

The Implementation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy And Socratic Seminar: The Effect on African American Students' Reading and Their Critical Thinking

Amy Christina Waddell

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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY AND
SOCRATIC SEMINAR: THE EFFECT ON AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS'
READING AND THEIR CRITICAL THINKING

by

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For the Degree of Doctor of Education in

Curriculum and Instruction

Department of Instruction and Teacher Education

University of South Carolina

2021

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this final degree to my grandmother, Octavia Gertrude Jones Hill, who always encouraged me to further my education. To my mother, Elizabeth Ann Waddell, who stayed up with me on countless holidays, gave up her kitchen table, and helped tote my many articles and schoolbooks to every conference we had to attend, I thank you. For making me take breaks, purchasing my pens and additional office material, and other countless things, I thank you. For ultimately believing in me and having faith in my abilities, even when I did not, I say thank you. To my godmother, Janice Gail Brewer, who pushed me to finish my educational journey and wanted me to be a better me, I say thank you. To my sixth-grade teacher, Mrs. Barnette, a woman I greatly admire, one who came to every graduation and led me in my aspiration to become a teacher, I say thank you. Finally, to Marcel “Jack” Mincey, my sweet angel who left this world too soon. I love you 3000.

The scripture that has sustained me through this journey has been Philippians 4:6 – 7. I will not worry and be anxious for anything and have faith in God.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take the time to acknowledge my students from the class of 2019 – 2020 of Room 204. These students kept me sane and protected me when obstacles came my way. Without them, I believe I would have given up. They were my reason for coming to work every day. My family and friends: Cynthia Jeffers, Cohort M, Pam Mitchell, Ron Miller, Farrah Samuel, Latorsha Peake, Taffetta Green, Dr. MarcheLe Garrett, Jessica Allen, Dr. Cedric Miller, Robert Brewer, Morae Cross, Ed Waddell, Dr. Anissa Johnson, Kenn Wiggins, Dr. Luther McDaniel, and Latifee Land for sitting with me as I worked and being my encouragers and cheerleaders, I say thank you. To my minis: Mara Woods, Kerrington Garrett, Makenna Mincey, Camryn Long, Isis and Jordyn Hutchens, Kayla Walker, and Collin McIntosh who entertained me and made me step away from the computer for breaks during my writing process, I say thank you. To my coworkers, for continuing to encourage me and picking my students up for lunch during my writing moments: Terry Sims, Marc Woods, Kira Graves, Jill Powell, Joseph Ravenell, Krista Crumpton, Valerie Joyce, Pam Garcia, Kristen Kulik, and Clark Pattman, I say thank you. To my church bible study group of Chestnut Grove Baptist Church who always understood when I had to miss some Monday evenings to write and who consistently checked on me over these years, I say thank you.

Finally, I say thank you goes to Dr. Yasha Becton. Without her, I would not have made it this far. When I believed I would not be able to do my study due to factors beyond my control, she gave me the solution. When I believed that my study had no

purpose, she gave me the needed answers. Thank you Dr. Becton for answering and helping me with my endless questions, for answering my late night emails, and for being a listening ear. Thank you for believing in me and not blocking those random calls that went beyond your work hours. You have been the best person to have come into my life when I decided to pursue this degree. There were nights when I cried and told myself I could not go any further. Then I thought, “What would Dr. Becton say?” You were my anchor, and I cannot thank you enough. I thank you 3000!

ABSTRACT

Achievement gaps have been an ongoing issue among African American students for years. The continuation of low achievement scores has been the downfall of African American student success throughout their educational history (Royle & Brown, 2014). So much time has been spent helping students achieve grade-level mastery, while little was being done to ensure continuous academic growth for students that were already reading on-grade level. Over time, these on-grade level students remained stagnant or tended to regress. This research study presented two instructional intervention strategies that demonstrated how critical thinking could improve the growth in reading, among rising sixth-grade on-grade level African American students. The instructional intervention strategies implemented in the current research study were the Socratic Seminar with Costa's Level of Thinking (CLT) and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). The instructional intervention strategies incorporated critical thinking with higher-order thinking skills that helped students develop stronger discussion and metacognition skills while analyzing reading skills (Burder et al., 2014).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	vi
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xii
List of Abbreviations	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Statement of Problem	4
1.3 Research Questions	5
1.4 Theoretical Framework of the Study	5
1.5 Purpose of the Study	7
1.6 Overview of Methodology	7
1.7 Significance of the Study	9
1.8 Limitations of the Study	11
1.9 Dissertation Overview	11
1.10 Definition of Terms	12
Chapter 2: Literature Review	18
2.1 Introduction	18
2.2 Purpose of the Study	18

2.3 Organization of Literature Review	19
2.4 Theoretical Framework	19
2.5 Historical Perspectives	29
2.6 Reading Obstacles and Delays for African Americans	31
2.7 Equity	38
2.8 Related Research	41
2.9 Summary	48
Chapter 3: Methodology	49
3.1 Introduction	49
3.2 Research Questions	49
3.3 Purpose of the Study	50
3.4 Rationale for Triangulation Mixed-Methods Action Research Design	50
3.5 Intervention Description	51
3.6 Research Context and Setting of Study	55
3.7 Role of the Teacher-Researcher	57
3.8 Student Participants	58
3.9 Research Methods	64
3.10 Data Collection Instruments	64
3.11 Reading Survey	65
3.12 Observations by Teacher-Researcher	67
3.13 Interview	67
3.14 Summative Assessment	68
3.15 Formative Assessment	69

3.16 Procedure	70
3.17 Data Analysis	85
3.18 Reflection	88
3.19 Summary	89
Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data: Findings	90
4.1 Overview of the Study	90
4.2 Findings of the Study	90
4.3 Interventions Used	91
4.4 Zoom Summer Reading Program	91
4.5 Interpretation of Results of the Study	93
4.6 Research Question 1: Socratic Seminar with CLT	94
4.7 Research Question 2: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	105
4.8 Summary	120
Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations	122
5.1 Introduction	122
5.2 Problem of Practice	122
5.3 Research Questions	123
5.4 Purpose of the Study	124
5.5 Overview of Methodology	124
5.6 Results and Findings	125
5.7 Action Plan	127
5.8 Recommendations for Practice	128
5.9 Implications for Future Research	131

5.10 Summary	132
References	134
Appendix A: Parent Permission Form	148
Appendix B: Parent Survey	149
Appendix C: Student Survey	154
Appendix D: Observation Notes	160
Appendix E: Costa’s Level of Thinking Flipbook.....	162
Appendix F: Level One Question Stems	172
Appendix G: Level Two Question Stems	173
Appendix H: Level Three Question Stems	174
Appendix I: Summative Assessment (Pre/Posttest).....	175
Appendix J: Author Slideshow	181
Appendix K: Class Schedule	185
Appendix L: Zoom Meeting Norms	186
Appendix M: Formative Assessment (Quick Check Level One) Tentative Questions ...	189
Appendix N: Formative Assessment (Quick Check Level Two) Tentative Questions ...	191
Appendix O: Formative Assessment (Quick Check Level Three) Tentative Questions.	193
Appendix P: Transcript of Observation Notes.....	195

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Identifying Key Survey for Student Participant Parent Analysis	66
Table 3.2 Identifying Key Survey for Student Participant Analysis	66
Table 3.3 Questions Found on the Pages	75
Table 3.4 Interview Questions	76
Table 3.5 Questions Found Between the Lines	78
Table 3.6 Questions Off the Page	81
Table 3.7 Summarization of Weekly Procedures	81
Table 3.8 Summarization of Data Collection	86
Table 4.1 Research Questions and Data Tool	93
Table 4.2 Level Quick Check Progression Growth	95
Table 4.3 Statistical Measures of CLT Level Quick Checks	97
Table 4.4 Statistical Measures of Summative Assessment	99
Table 4.5 In-Depth Critical Thinking Explanation Comparisons	100
Table 4.6 Examples of Socratic Seminar Discussion	113
Table 4.7 Interview Transcript on African American Literature	115
Table 4.8 Transcript of Interview on Race and Visibility in the Classroom	118

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 The Theoretical Framework Foundation	20
Figure 3.1 Costa’s Level of Thinking	52
Figure 3.2 Parent Summer Reading Program Letter	59
Figure 3.3 Interview Questions.....	68
Figure 4.1 Pre- and Post- Score Analysis	98
Figure 4.2 Pre- and Post- CLT Question Stem Progression	101
Figure 4.3 Student Participant Survey Results	107
Figure 4.4 Themes Emerging from Qualitative Data.....	110
Figure 4.5 Analysis of Parental Survey in Codes	111

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BLM.....	Black Lives Matter
CLT.....	Costa’s Level of Thinking
CRP.....	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
CRT.....	Critical Race Theory
EIP.....	Early Intervention Program
ESOL.....	English to Speakers of Other Languages
IES.....	Ivy Elementary School
MAP.....	Measures of Academic Progress
STN.....	Say Their Name

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) once insinuated:

The South believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous Negro. And the South was not wholly wrong; for education among all kinds of men always has had, and always will have, an element of danger and revolution, of dissatisfaction and discontent. Nevertheless, men strive to know. (Du Bois, pg. 8)

In America, during the early 19th Century prior to the Civil War, reading was illegal and was considered a weapon for African Americans (Butchart, 2016; “Literacy as Freedom,” 2014; Valant & Newark, 2016). Reading was not accessible to slaves and it was seen as a threat that would upset the social order and role of slavery (“Literacy as Freedom,” 2014). It was a belief that if slaves could read, they would then organize and rebel against their slave owners due to their current conditions and oppression (Valant & Newark, 2016). Consequently, by not conforming to the rules, anti-literacy laws were ratified to prevent slaves from attempting to read (Valant & Newark, 2016). As a result of the anti-literacy laws, established norms were enforced. If anyone helped slaves to read or if slaves were caught reading; punishments included whippings, fines, or imprisonment (“Literacy as Freedom,” 2014; Valant & Newark, 2016). It was not until the Reconstruction Era- when the Freedmen’s Bureau was created- did the government

meet the demand of African Americans that allowed them to not only receive a basic education, but to embark upon a continuation of higher learning by attending colleges and universities (Butchart, 2016). Reading has been an essential key and foundation of learning amongst African Americans which unlocked limitless opportunities in education and beyond (Lynch, 2016). When African Americans learned to read, the chains of enforced slavery were broken (Hyland, 2015). It was detrimental when African American students could not read because it resulted in a problematic journey through school (Hawkins, 2016). Stemming from anti-literacy laws to the present, there have been numerous challenges that African American students have encountered when learning to read. Unfortunately, those challenges resulted in an achievement gap which has been ongoing from the 19th through the 21st Centuries. This gap was exacerbated by segregation as highlighted in the legal case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and continuing with *Brown v. The Board of Education* (1954) (Newman – Brown, 2016). The ruling of *Brown v. The Board of Education* (1954) ordered the integration of schools although it did not stop the systemic racism among the African American community in many of the public school systems. After the ending of segregation in public schools, White parents began to transfer their children to schools with better funding and higher test scores (Ravitch, 2014).

With the integration of the public school system, systemic racism became more apparent, and the causes of academic failings of African American students became an inevitable problem thus creating the achievement gap (Ravitch, 2014). The achievement

gap began to group students by race and/or gender to determine which ethnic group would underperform or outperform each other through various forms of data (“Achievement Gaps,” 2018). Studies have shown that African American students were delayed compared to students who were White (Royle & Brown, 2014; Vega et al., 2015). Due to the lack of resources at some schools, the African American population continued to underperform within the achievement gap (Kotok, 2017). For instance, the data showed that the reading achievement gap between White and African American students lessened 26 points on the average reading scale in grade 4 (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). However, from grade 4 to grade 12, the average reading score became stagnant (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). It was reported, in 2014, that without reading skills, African American students had a greater chance of not completing high school and becoming unemployed (Musu-Gillette, et al., 2017). The representation of African American students’ data exposed the need for change in American public schools (Royle & Brown, 2014). “The gap in educational achievement between African Americans and other groups is substantial. African American children, on average, score lower on tests and are given lower grades than Asian, White, and Latino students” (Bowman et al., 2018, para. 1). The need for a change has been of paramount concern for parents as well as educators.

There have been school programs to help support students reading on a lower academic level. Nonetheless, when encouragement or high expectations were not set for African American students reading on-grade level, the challenge to excel decreased and those students were left to navigate reading skills betwixt themselves. On the other hand,

when teachers encouraged or challenged students, with high expectations to succeed, the achievement gap began to close (Ravitch, 2014).

1.2 Statement of Problem

Everyday classrooms are becoming more diverse with students of “language, ethnicity, cultural and religious backgrounds” (Hansen-Thomas & Chennapragada, 2018, p. 82). Subsequently, the achievement gap has moved beyond the school level and seeped into society and has existed for as long as there has been racial inequality (Bowman et al., 2018; Newman-Brown, 2016; Ravitch, 2014). It was reported that African American students “receive less challenging instruction and schoolwork than do their White and more affluent classmates... often leaving them unprepared” (Cantor, 2018, para.1).

At Ivy Elementary School (IES)¹, the 2018 state summative assessment was the Georgia Milestones and it indicated that 41.09% of the current African American fifth-grade students achieved the distinction of being on-grade level (developing) for reading out of a 100% participation rate (“2018 College and Career Ready Performance Index,” 2018). Further analysis of the data revealed that 50.4% of the African American students did not make any reading progress nor did they meet the improvement standards (“2018 College and Career Ready Performance Index,” 2018). This indicated that African American students who read on-grade level were not challenged to transcend to achieve or attain a proficient or advanced reading level.

¹ Ivy Elementary School was a pseudonym for the actual school used in the research study.

How do we teach African American students reading on-grade level to reach their full potential? Researchers posited that within the classroom, the teacher's encouragement of learning tended to lead towards higher student expectations and academics and/or pedagogy that were catered to their needs (Kotok, 2017; Royle & Brown, 2014). As a result, African American students became motivated to excel, and subsequently realized how their higher academics and work ethics promoted them to higher levels (Kotok, 2017). The belief in knowing that African American students could achieve and experience substantial support from their teachers was vital for their success (Vega et al., 2015).

1.3 Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to better understand and examine how reading strategies could ensure reading achievement among rising sixth-grade on-grade level African American students. This action research study was guided by two challenging research questions:

Research Question 1: Does the use of Socratic Seminar combined with Costa's Level of Thinking (as an instructional intervention strategy) aid in ensuring reading achievement of rising sixth-grade African American students reading on-grade level?

Research Question 2: Does the use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) encourage African American students to engage more in reading?

1.4 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The theoretical framework of the study consisted of three main components, namely, Derrick Bell's Critical Race Theory (CRT), CRP, and the Socratic Seminar

Pedagogy. These theories helped to shape this action research study centered on advancing the reading achievement of African American students deemed on-grade level.

CRT endorsed the narrative that African American students, through experiences, could be challenged to excel academically (Miller & Harris, 2018). It, then, became a mirror to understand the racism that shaped the American society, identity, and behavior (Johnston – Guerrero, 2016). CRT further provided an insight into the background of the significance of the problem and the purpose of the study.

Advocating for equity and equality, CRT changed how educators perceived African American students (Barlow, 2016). In a related research study, using CRT, the teacher-researcher studied a group of students who had been underrepresented and somewhat dismissed within the elementary setting (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). By underutilizing African American students' potential for growth and higher achievement, CRT inspected the bigger issues of how race and racism affected the school's culture and climate (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015).

The second theory within the theoretical framework involved CRP. CRP constructed a way for all educators and students to learn each other's cultures and languages by creating a balance (Bryk, 2015; Delano – Oriaran & Parks, 2015). CRP was founded by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1992) in which the ideology focuses on teaching students as individuals with regards to their identities, culture, and personal experiences (Escudero, 2019). CRP not only works to ensure students' cultural aspect in the classroom, but the role it plays in students' academic achievement (Escudero, 2019). More information regarding CRP will be explained in more detail within the Chapter Two literature review.

Thirdly, the Socratic Seminar Pedagogy was examined as the third component of the theoretical framework. The Socratic Seminar incorporated controlled discussions through a construction of dialogue and questioning (Griswold et al., 2017). When students practiced the Socratic Seminar, their abilities of analyzation increased as their reasoning developed (Griswold et al., 2017). The Socratic Seminar validated reading growth by reinforcing critical thinking (Koss & Williams, 2018). Additional information will also be provided in Chapter Two regarding the Socratic Seminar Pedagogy.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

Achievement gaps have been an ongoing issue among African American students. The continuation of low achievement scores has been the downfall of African Americans' student success throughout their educational history (Royle & Brown, 2014). So much time has been spent helping students achieve grade-level standards, but little was being done to ensure continuous academic growth for students that were reading on-grade level. Over time, these on-grade level students remained stagnant or tended to regress. This research study presented two instructional intervention strategies that demonstrated how both CRP and critical thinking could improve the growth in reading among rising sixth-grade on-grade level African American students. The goal was to show other teachers, instructional coaches, and the district English Language Arts coordinators how the use of Socratic Seminar with CLT and CRP could be utilized as reading instructional intervention strategies to ensure reading growth.

1.6 Overview of Methodology

Action research was viable for this particular research study because the overall purpose was to label a specific problem within the classroom by applying new strategies

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Mertler, 2017). The teacher-researcher who began as the participants' reading teacher (Mills, 2018) conducted the action research. This type of research was credible due to both the teacher-researcher and participants working to improve their critical thinking reading skills with new instructional intervention strategies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Developing an action research study allowed the teacher-researcher to delve deeper into educational practices and instructional strategies that would later help students. The idea of a triangulation mixed-methods design was chosen based on the teacher-researcher's examination of collecting data from both qualitative and quantitative designs within one study (Creswell & Plano - Clark, 2018; Mertler, 2017; Mills, 2018). Data from formative and summative assessment scores were collected quantitatively, while "qualitative data provided opportunities for individuals to express their own opinions and perspective on the topic of interest" (Mertler, 2017, p. 105). By using both, the study had better reliability and validity with both types of data. The advantages of using mixed-methods research allowed the participants to be involved. The teacher-researcher, then, had room to use all types of data equally with fewer limitations (Creswell & Plano - Clark, 2018).

With the research, and how it related to the problem of practice, the teacher-researcher conducted the study as the participants' teacher. As the teacher-researcher, it helped ensure the validity and reliability through the researcher's position. The position helped the integrity of the study by expounding on the research study's biases and limitations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The teacher-researcher's positionality of the study confronted assumptions and biases, and the quality of the trustworthiness of this research

was that the researcher's positionality was maintained throughout the study (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

The research study implemented data tools such as a pre- and posttest summative assessment, weekly quick check critical thinking formative assessments, parent and participant surveys about culturally relevant literature and critical thinking using Socratic Seminar, and observations conducted by the teacher-researcher. Using instructional intervention strategies to measure the students reading growth, the teacher-researcher collected quantitative data from both summative and formative assessments. The instructional strategies that were adopted for this research study were Socratic Seminar with CLT and CRP. These strategies embodied the use of a cultural aspect, critical thinking, and analysis with the use of inquiry-based questions; that stemmed from material read with the student participants through distance learning.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research study bears significance because the intelligence of African American students is sometimes underestimated. Yet, when African Americans were subjected to Eurocentric ideologies and used their personal experiences, they achieved academic success (Adams & Glass, 2018). Piper (2019) stated a thorough investigation within the educational system was responsible for the bias towards students of color. "Research suggest[ed] that Black children suffer[ed] most in schools due to power structures in which school staff...[were] ill-prepared to affirm students who [were] racially and culturally different from themselves" (Piper, 2019, p. 1).

Additionally, there is a need for more training around CRP. Diversity is everywhere and there has been a growing demand for educators who understand and

accept cultural differences (Adams & Glass, 2018). When educators merged CRP with classroom lessons, it guaranteed quality instruction for African American students (Adams & Glass, 2018).

Finally, this research study bears significance as reading achievement and academic achievement in general have influenced progression into college. As the academic achievement gap continued to widen among African American and White students, it shaped the undermining of African American students' future (Henry et al., 2020). Other attributes of the achievement gap- among African American students- consisted of family socioeconomic status and environmental influence (Henry et al., 2020).

As a fifth-grade teacher, the teacher-researcher has observed many on-grade level African American students who struggled with gaining higher academic placements and eventually conformed to mediocracy. History has shown and dismissed African Americans' intelligence by limiting resources that could further their academic career (Miller & Harris, 2018). When educators chose not to utilize African American student's experiences in the classroom, it aided to the limiting of their academic career (Byrd, 2016).

This action research study also has significance in regard to helping elementary practitioners identify potential ways to foster the academic achievement of African American students. The possibility in training educators, in CRP, will expand educators' views on other cultures and create a cultural competence in a school setting (Byrd, 2016).

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The research study limitations were inherent due to the sample size of the African American reading on-grade level student participants. Due to COVID-19, the sample size was limited to those students with whom the teacher-researcher had worked with in the teacher-researcher's self-contained reading classroom. Additionally, there was a time constraint of four-weeks totaling eighteen hours. The time could have been extended, but the student participants' level of focus was limited due to the reading instructional intervention strategies given via computer for distance learning. Again, this was the result of COVID-19 limitations and students learning virtually.

The distance learning summer reading program, via Zoom, was given for four to five days for four-weeks with the instructional intervention strategies taught for one hour and thirty minutes each of those days. There were days, where student participants had interruptions from outside factors, and the teacher-researcher could not always guarantee a quiet setting for each participant. Also, a student participant did some of the assigned work asynchronously from the rest of the summer reading program student participants since all of the resources and links were attached in their Google Classroom for availability. In addition, with using Zoom as a classroom, there were times that the students' school computer would not let them access videos with the preset firewalls; thereby students had to view the author study video by other means. Due to the sample size and setting the results were not generalizable.

1.9 Dissertation Overview

The overview of the subsequent chapters of the dissertation were divided into five chapters. Chapter One provided an overview of the study, which included the theoretical

framework. The theoretical framework incorporated the CRT, Socratic Seminar Pedagogy, and CRP. It further expounded upon the research study's methodology. Chapter Two, provides a review of the literature. Chapter Two includes an overview and deeper history of CRT, the critical analysis of the Socratic Seminar with CLT, and CRP. In addition, Chapter Two provides a historical perspective on reading delays and obstacles facing African American students. Chapter Three delivers the methodology used for this action research study. Chapter Three will further provide the data tools used for the research study, a description of the student participants and the setting, and the role of the teacher-researcher. In Chapter Four, the data collection and analysis of the research study is presented. Additionally, the chapter will provide a discussion of the findings and results. Finally, Chapter Five specified an action plan and implications for future research and practices.

1.10 Definitions of Terms

The terms, in this section, are directly related to the research that were used throughout the study:

Achievement Gap – Transpires when a set of students, who are grouped by race or gender, underperforms or outperforms another group, and the data shows the statistical differences with score averages (“Achievement Gaps,” 2018).

Action Research – A type of research that uses organized inquiry that has been performed by teachers and other stakeholders in the school setting that collects information on students on how they learn (Mills, 2018).

African American – A descendant from an enslaved African who survived the slave ships and trade from Africa who was brought over to America (Forson, 2018).

Anti-literacy Laws – Laws, in the South, that prevented slaves from reading and writing and criminalizing those that tried to teach them for “fear” in upsetting the structural class (Valant & Newark, 2016).

Asynchronously – When a student learns during their own time schedule and does not need a teacher because their work is obtainable on an online platform provided by the teacher (The Best Schools, 2020).

Bar Graphs – A visual way to indicate and organize frequencies, in adjacent bar heights, with the given data (Mertler, 2017)

Black Lives Matter (BLM) – An organization that creates safe spaces, combats systematic racism, and celebrates African American excellence (“Black Lives Matter,” 2020).

Brown v. The Board of Education (1954) – A Supreme Court law that overturned Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) by allowing integration and equal educational rights among races in public schools (Newman – Brown, 2016).

Coding – A system to collect and organize qualitative data to find a similar theme with the given information (Mertler, 2017).

Costa’s Level of Thinking (CLT) - A way for students to think critically and make connections by using “levels of questioning” (“Costa’s Level of Thinking,” n.d.).

COVID-19 – An upper respiratory disease that affected the entire world where quarantining helped slow the virus due to the spread in the air or touching by those that were infected (“What is Covid-19?,” n.d.).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) – The theory that helps to understand the racism that shaped the American society, identity, and behavior (Johnston – Guerrero, 2016).

Credibility – A way of referring to qualitative data or research as being trustworthy or believable from the participant point-of-view (Mertler, 2017).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) - Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is a style of teaching that practices theories and differentiated instruction used on a diverse population (Guido, 2017; Warren, 2017).

Distance Learning – Relies on the usage of digital learning and there is no physical interaction between teacher and student and all instruction occurs online (Stauffer, 2020).

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (Dibels) – An assessment that measures foundational reading literacy and skills based off a one-minute fluency assessment; when given, the assessment can indicate a student’s projected reading level and present the teacher with valuable instructional feedback (“UO Dibels Data System,” 2020).

Formative Assessments – Assessments that are given throughout instruction to evaluate if students have a grasp of the lesson or if areas need to be retaught (Mertler, 2017).

Generalizability – When the findings of the research study can be reconstructed and prolonged (Mertler, 2017).

Google Classroom – A digital source or “digital organizer” where the teacher can place and share classroom materials, to students (McGinnis, 2020).

Growth Mindset – A term used to depict the idea or knowledge that people have about learning and success (Mindset Works, 2017).

Inductive Analysis – An organized system that analyzes quantitative data that recognizes themes to display the results of an action research study (Mertler, 2017).

Instructional Intervention Strategy – Academic strategies that are intentional, progress is monitored, lasts a few weeks, and evaluated at throughout the time for adjustments to see if the strategy works (Lee, 2014).

Interviews – A dialogue in which the researcher directs given questions to the student participants in the action research study (Mertler, 2017).

Likert Scale – A question given on a survey where people have to answer on a scale range (Mertler, 2017).

Median - A given score, within the data, that balances the set of scores distribution (Mertler, 2017).

Mean – The average of a given set of numbers (Mertler, 2017).

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) – A personalized summative assessment that measure the student’s performance in given subjects (“MAP Growth,” 2019).

Measures of Central Tendency – A use of statistics that indicates the change among a set of scores (Mertler, 2017).

Mixed-Methods – A type of research design that uses both qualitative and quantitative data (Mertler, 2017; Mills, 2018).

Mode – The most repeated score in a given data set (Mertler, 2017).

Observation – When the researcher uses observational techniques, in the study setting, to gather data (Mertler, 2017).

On – Grade Level – When a student test, on a summative assessment, with an average score (Kosturko, 2014).

Pie Charts – A way to visually show given data in an organized fashion (Mertler, 2017).

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) - A Supreme Court law stating “separate but equal” among races in public places (Newman – Brown, 2018).

Purposeful Sampling – When the researcher purposefully and intentionally selects the participants where the greatest amount of data can be collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Qualitative Data – A way of collecting “experience-based” data through methods like observations and surveys (Mills, 2018).

Quantitative Data - A way of collecting “number-based” data through methods like surveys and assessments (Mills, 2018).

ReadWorks – A series of articles that promotes accelerated reading instruction (“ReadWorks Solutions,” 2020).

Say Their Name – A form of protest that involves chanting and speaking African American names of those who were killed by systematic racism (“#SayTheirNames,” n.d.).

Socratic Seminar – An organized intervention strategy where a discussion is centered on given source or reading text, in which students evaluate and formulate questions that aid the strategy. A strategy that arranges students to organize their reading and critical thinking skills before they engage in “inquiry-based dialogue” (Bendall et al., 2015).

Stagnant – A time of little growth (Kenton, 2018).

Summative Assessments – An assessment that given before or after an instructional unit for evaluation purposes (Mertler, 2017).

Survey – A collection of qualitative or quantitative data using a series of questions (Mertler, 2017).

Triangulation Mixed-Methods– A research design using mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative data) data equally (Mertler, 2017).

Vertical Scaling or Growth – A term used to show an increase in growth over a time period with given assessments (Dunbar & Welch, n.d.).

Validity – A term used on how the tools that data is collected and measured is reliable (Mills, 2018).

Zoom - A digital source that applies video conferencing to communicate online (Khalili, 2020).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The problem of practice for this research study centers around African American students, who were reading on-grade level, but who were not excelling academically as well as their peers. As they progressed through school, these students continued to remain stagnant or decline academically. There were limited instructional intervention strategies that promoted African Americans' reading development which moved them past their current reading level. Conversely, there were programs and interventions that supported students who were below-grade level, but no identifiable programs or instructional strategies that continued to help increase their reading level once they met the desired academic goal of reading on-grade level (Ritchey et al., 2017).

2.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study's simple literature review was to state a position that showed documentation and analysis (Machi & McEvoy, 2016) about the built-in systematic racism, a level of racism that continued to suppress the reading achievement of African American students reading on-grade level as compared to their White peers. The literature review began by the continuation of reinforcing credible evidence that aided in sustaining the research study's purpose of study (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). It also provided the prospect of connecting the teacher-researcher's work to other published authors and researchers and assisted in a thorough exploration

(Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; McVee, 2014) of African Americans' reading delays and inequity in schools. The materials that were chosen for the literature review were peer-reviewed articles, books related to the topic, and published dissertations.

The strategies that were used for the literature review went through various processes. The strategic process of finding credible literature involved using primary (new research studies) and secondary sources (textbooks) (Mertler, 2017). The primary sources were located within the database of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) search engine, the University of South Carolina's online academic network, Google Scholar, and other credible articles. The ERIC search engine gave full access to peer reviewed papers on similar key concepts associated with the research study.

2.3 Organization of Literature Review

The sections of the Literature Review include: theoretical framework, historical perspectives, reading obstacles and delays for African American students, equity, related research, and summary. The theoretical framework offset the historical perspectives which included the research study's background on the history of reading and education among African Americans. The literature review revealed studies that pertained to reading obstacles and delays on reading achievement among African Americans, and highlighted issues of social justice and equity among African American students. Finally, the last two sections of the literature review were the related research and the summary.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework was a necessary and vital aspect of this action research study and the overall process (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The framework was the

substance for this study, and it assisted as support for the purpose, the problem statement, and the research questions (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The research study's theoretical framework revolved around the CRT of Derrick Bell (1970s). CRT served as the foundational aspect of the research study. It further incorporated CRP and Socratic Seminar Pedagogy with critical thinking. These pedagogies served as the research study's instructional intervention strategies. Figure 2.1 denotes the theoretical framework of the research study.

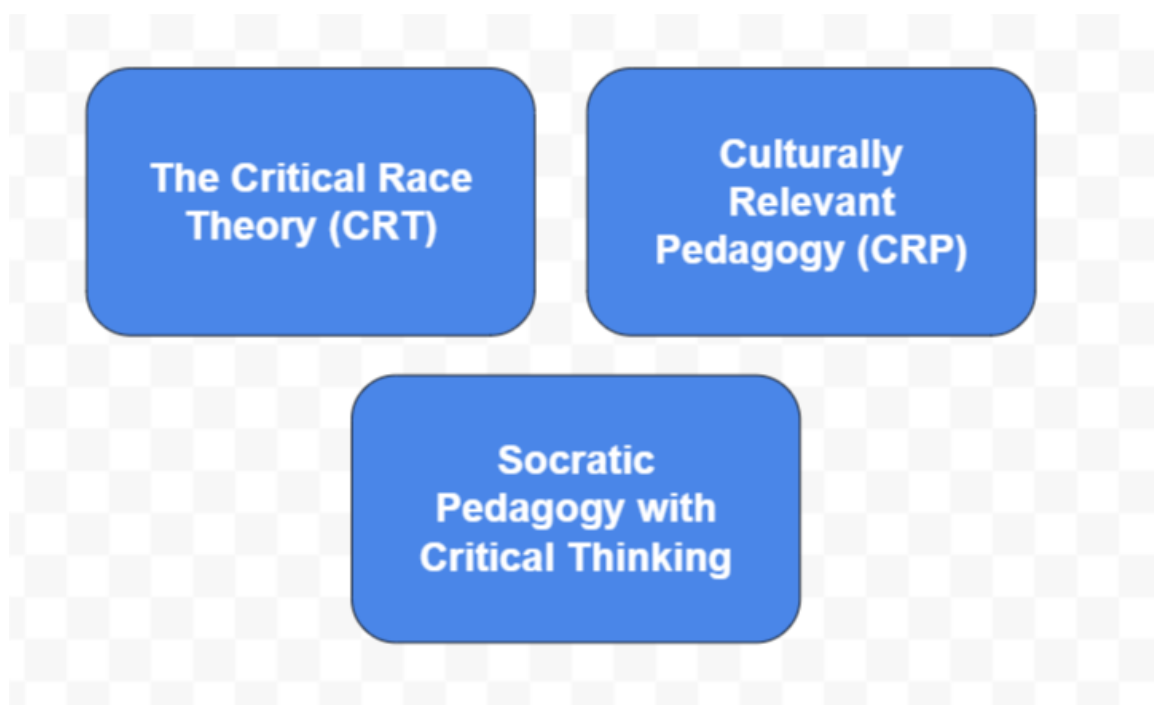


Figure 2.1 *The Theoretical Framework Foundation*

Critical Race Theory. The CRT delved into the development and understanding of racial identity and racism in the classroom (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016). CRT provided an avenue for African Americans to see first-hand the unstated dominated White culture in the classroom and society (Miller & Harris, 2018; Piper, 2019). The theory also paved the avenue for educators to provide CRP and teaching within the schools.

The history of CRT began after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and in the 1970s through various activists (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Though there were other sources and inspirations, Derrick Bell became the father figure of the theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Miller & Harris, 2018). The foundation of CRT started as a collection of studies that connected race and power with its beginnings based on the theories like: equality, constitutional law, and legal reasoning (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Throughout the years, CRT not only included the rights of African Americans, but the rights of other races and groups that included: Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans, a Muslim and Arab caucus, and a lesbian gay bisexual transsexual (LGBT) group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Though African Americans' civil rights were at the theory's forefront, other races and groups focused on matters that pertained to immigration policies, language, discrimination, legacy, health, historical "trauma", and land claims (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Theorists, such as Alan Freeman, Richard Delgado, Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida, debated whether racism was embedded in many past educational theories and the continued teaching of White pedagogy to a diverse population (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The overall goal, of CRT, was for educators to recognize and appreciate any minorities' culture and to value them as people (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Derrick Bell may be credited for being a founder (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Miller & Harris, 2018), but Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate were the first educational researchers that employed CRT to education and observed how it affected the achievement gap and the lack of CRP in the classroom (Miller & Harris, 2018; Piper,

2019). CRT was an ideology developed by Dr. Ladson-Billings and Tate, who first utilized it in the field of education (Piper, 2019). When CRT was applied in educational practices, educational practitioners saw a clear view of racial bias and the racial achievement gap within the academic policies and environment (Piper, 2019). CRT unveiled the systemic racism and oppression with students of colors academic failures when educational policies were constructed to safeguard White privilege ideals (Piper, 2019).

CRT acknowledged and identified the historical perspectives of oppression against African Americans, and it challenged the unfairness of inequality (Bidwell & Stinson, 2016). In that, CRT repelled the justifications behind the claims of colorblindness and stereotypes and showed the understanding of the dynamics of many teachers' occurrences in the classroom and in society with African Americans (Bidwell & Stinson, 2018; Miller & Harris, 2018). CRT was embedded in all aspects of life and through teaching and understanding culture; one could slowly begin to break the mind frame of inequality among African Americans and Whites (Miller & Harris, 2018). In order for teachers to relate to their African American students, it was essential for them to work with the student, confront their own biases, and understand the culture (Gallagher, 2016).

CRT addressed the need to have conversations that included addressing cultural stereotypes and racial biases. Koss and Williams (2018) signified the idea to further claim that African Americans are not shown the same equality of rights as other races. Though segregation had long passed, issues of inequality and equity still existed for African Americans (D'Amico, 2016). The verdict of *Brown v. The Board of Education*

(1954) promised equality for all students, yet school systems did not accomplish that promise (D'Amico, 2016) and African American students endured low representation in higher classes and low academic achievement. Dr. Ladson-Billings reflected that when educators understand the students' culture and community, it then benefited the teacher not to be quick to disapprove and complain about the nature of African American students (McVee, 2014).

The idea of CRT pushed the discussion of what was not happening in the present day classroom. CRT reflected on the “why” circumstances on the issues regarding African American students that are performing below their White peers in schools. The mentality of low expectations and the history surrounding African Americans has transcended into the classroom. CRT was a theory that helped in “seeking to develop advocacy competence with African American[s]” (Moon & Singh, 2015, p. 5) that will help educators address biases and stereotypes. CRT helped with the detraction of the usage of implementing the White pedagogy and narrative in classroom because it affected African American students.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. What is missing among African American students in the classroom? Koss and Williams (2018) stated the following regarding the needed implementation of CRP in the classroom:

Students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds find that images of themselves are missing in their classrooms and in the materials they are taught. When images are present, they represent a stereotypical view of their culture and position their ways of knowing and communicating as a deficit or obstacle to their success. (p. 5)

CRP was defined as a style of teaching that practices theories and differentiated instruction used on a diverse population (Guido, 2017; Warren, 2017). It was used as a bridge to connect diverse cultures by recognizing each student's "ancestral and contemporary cultures" (Guido, 2017, para. 2). The history behind both CRP and teaching were from the theorists Dr. Ladson-Billings and Dr. Geneva Gay (1992/2000; Cullen, 2014). Cullen (2014) determined that Dr. Ladson-Billings' 1992 perspective of CRP was the teachers' determination of the students' overall academic success and the examination of the inequities within the school system. When educators used their knowledge of diversity of cultures, students used their cultural identity and applied it to their learning (Borrero et al., 2018; Cholewa et al., 2014; Garcia & Garcia, 2016).

Dr. Gay's viewpoint (2000/2010) was that of culturally responsive teaching. Culturally relevant teaching was founded on the notion that teachers' built relationships with their students to improve "a better understanding of themselves, others and society" (Cullen, 2014, p. 25). Cullen (2014) referenced the following from Dr. Gay:

Culturally responsive teaching means using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly.

(Gay, 2002, p. 106, as cited in Cullen, 2014, p. 25)

After the nineties and early 21st Century, CRP continued to influence education. When Dr. Ladson-Billings and Dr. Gay theories became older, their theories progressed

and Zaretta Hammond then took the mantle. Zaretta Hammond began using her platform on CRP to continue to expose the inequity in education and had educators work to make changes to those inequities in their respective classrooms (Hammond, 2017).

CRP benefited African Americans and their endeavors to close the achievement gap and succeeded in academic success (Hansen-Thomas & Chennapragada, 2018). By the creation of a foundation of CRP, educators were contributing to not only helping African American students succeed academically but also understanding their culture for growth mindset (Cholewa et al., 2014; Hansen-Thomas & Chennapragada, 2018).

“Consequently, some students of color... [were] forced to disavow parts of themselves and instead adopt Eurocentric norms of behavior in order to meet their teacher’s expectations” (Cholewa et al., 2014, p. 5). African American students had the justifiable right to persevere their culture and language (their heritage) and not eradicate it to fit the Eurocentric ideology in the classroom (Koss & Williams, 2018).

When educators provided support for African American students through CRP, that support eventually came forth as a tool for academic success (Hansen-Thomas & Chennapragada, 2018). Immersing oneself in CRP, educators would appreciate other cultures that could lead African American students to academic success (Adams & Glass, 2018; Hansen-Thomas & Chennapragada, 2018). Using CRP would “create bridges from students’ knowledge to the classroom content as a way to affirm student identities and values” (Byrd, 2016, p. 2). Including the active instruction of growth mindset into the classroom dynamic would ensure academic success, and African American students would have equal opportunities as their White peers (Hansen-Thomas & Chennapragada, 2018).

The impact of the CRP delivery lent the educator to extricate the color blindness of teaching (Hansen-Thomas & Chennapragada, 2018). This was a type of approach where educators chose not see their students' color and used this approach to treat everyone on an equal basis (Hansen-Thomas & Chennapragada, 2018). Equality in schools were a given with the integration of public schools; nonetheless, equality does not equate to equity. The equality approach of being colorblind did not demonstrate the equity of education for African American students.

Socratic Seminar Pedagogy with Critical Thinking. Socratic pedagogy was derived from the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates (Friesen & Stephens, 2016; Unlu, 2018) during the 6th Century (Unlu, 2018). The Greek philosopher used critical analysis as a way of judging and inquiring (Unlu, 2018). The instructional method focused on the student with learner-based instruction using critical thinking and analysis from discussions (Friesen & Stephens, 2016; Unlu, 2018). The promotion of the Socratic Seminar identified skills that students would develop and master. The identified skills were inquiring analytical questions, recognizing and adhering to group roles, and being an active participant in group discussions (Friesen & Stephens, 2016).

Every-day people relied on the process of critical thinking and analysis (Unlu, 2018). The critical analysis has been nothing short of decision making, using inquiry from observations, and asking precise and accurate questions (Unlu, 2018). “This inquiry process, on which critical thinking was based, has led to the intense interest of experts from different disciplines, especially psychology, philosophy and education, as well as an interest in creating it as a field of study” (Unlu, 2018).

Unlu's (2018) research indicated that when students established better critical thinking and analysis skills, achievement grew (Unlu, 2018). Educators played a role in the development of the students' critical analysis and thinking because it aided in the students' growth mindset (Becirovic et al., 2019). "Teachers' preparation of well-structured, interactive, stimulative critical thinking based activities help[ed] students to correctly understand the learning process and improve[d] their communicative competence" (Becirovic et al., 2019, p. 471).

Skills were identified; nevertheless, the overall goal was to improve the critical analysis and discussion by students and advance their questioning when prompted with discussions (Friesen & Stephens, 2016). Within the Socratic pedagogy, Socratic Seminars and/or circles were a form to implement the teaching. The Socratic Seminar was comprised of instructional strategies of critical thinking and a controlled environment that allowed students to participate in prompted discussions and dialogue (Friesen & Stephens, 2016; Griswold et al., 2017; Koss & Williams, 2018). Friesen and Stephens (2016) stated the following of Socratic Seminars and/or circles:

Socratic Circles provide[d] a platform for students to engage in meaningful discussions with peers encouraging the development of leadership competencies in areas of communication, self-awareness, [and] interpersonal interactions... Students are challenged to think deeply about a topic of discussion through questioning and the sharing of differing perspectives. The purpose of Socratic Circles is not to identify definitive answers to leadership issues, but discuss topics engaging multiple points of view and experiences. Feedback sessions allow students to work

together identifying strategies to be better participants of discussions. It is the feeling of discomfort that creates an environment supportive for student engagement in discussion and community building with peers. (p. 76 - 77)

Just like CRT, the usage of critical analysis and thinking showed how educators only applied basic levels of learning to teach African American students. Critical analysis and thinking helped students think beyond the basic knowledge to the application of problems in a real-world context. The engagement of practicing Socratic Seminar gave students the opportunity to reflect on the given discussion and permitted educators the room to support students (Koss & Williams, 2018).

The research study had one initial primary theory, but the use of critical analysis was a foremost concept within the research study. Critical thinking was “considered to be essential skills” (Burder et al., 2014, p. 2) for higher order learning in the practice for discussions, used as reflection, and refining knowledge (Erdogan, 2019). Most of the higher order learning strategies practiced were from Bloom’s Taxonomy; however, CLT was used in this study. Socratic Seminar with CLT will be further explained in Chapter Three in the discussion around Instructional Intervention Strategies. The usage of critical analysis and thinking moved from practicing higher order questioning levels to its evolvement into discussions that combined and applied the critical thinking skills with literature and real-life applications questions.

Costa’s Level of Thinking. As mentioned beforehand, critical thinking indicated academic success among students (Unlu, 2018). The teacher-researcher incorporated CLT with the Socratic Seminar as an instructional intervention strategy in the research

study. CLT is an abridged version of Bloom's Taxonomy (Maas, 2016). Critical thinking had led to academic success when educators taught critical thinking intentionally in their instruction (Costa & Kallick, 2015). When educators used Costa's questioning level, they built a "gateway into students' thinking" (Costa & Kallick, 2015, p. 66). "Good questioning not only help[ed] students succeed in the specific assigned cognitive task, but also help[ed] them learn how to cultivate the dispositions they [would] need to persist and succeed" (Costa & Kallick, 2015, p. 67). Effective critical thinking combined with Costa's level of questioning aided students in merging their ideas of prior knowledge to deeper understandings (Costa, 2015).

2.5 Historical Perspectives

Racism was rooted in America's history (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014). No one was born racist, but the ideology was learned over the course of time (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014). The oppression of African Americans made the way for the rise of the White dominant group that created safe and comfortable places for themselves and provided more avenues of inequality and inequity (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014). With the promotion of White ideology and the lack of resources afforded to African American students, some White educators viewed African American students as inferior.

Integrated schools were now present-day realities and diversity was a continued constant in schools (Hansen-Thomas & Chennapragada, 2018). With that continued consistency, there were still battles that African Americans faced within the school setting (Dotts, 2015). Battles that included the idea of erasing African Americans' history from the curriculum and the continued teaching of White ideology (Dotts, 2015). With the continuation of teaching White ideology, the perpetuation of weakening the

cultural aspect of the curriculum by not confronting biases was still a problem in many schools (Dotts, 2015). Looking back through various American events from slavery, Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement of 1960, people viewed others of different races as different. “After the Brown decision of 1954, the federal government and many states adopted policies to redress past inequities, but those policies were insufficient to overcome generations of racism, which limited access to jobs and education” (Ravitch, 2014, p. 58). Here laid the widening gap of racial inequality. Though this literature review began as historical perspectives, these were the same perspectives that continued to plague the present.

The lack of educational opportunities for African Americans did not originate overnight, and this lack of opportunities was initiated for political purposes (Tyler et al., 2016): political purposes that incorporated the segregation of neighborhoods and communities between White and African Americans (D’Amico, 2016; Tyler et al., 2016). African Americans lived in low-income homes and attended schools that were nestled in poverty-stricken neighborhoods (Tyler et al., 2016). Because of the lack of resources, teachers considered teaching in African American schools a low point in their own profession (D’Amico, 2016). Teachers’ biased behaviors and attitudes changed negatively when African Americans migrated into White neighborhoods (Tyler et al., 2016).

The lack of opportunities combined with the history of African Americans foreshadowed their journey through education. The African American educational journey has seen a long road where many students prevailed and overcame to institutions of higher degrees and workplaces that provided decent jobs. Regrettably, other African

American students became a statistic within the educational system that failed to recognize their needs. African American students may have had more opportunities if more educators provided equity in schools, and obstacles and delays did not deter African Americans from academic growth and success. It was a necessity for educators to allow the presence of African American culture, in the classroom, so that students could see representation of their race and have a positive space in which to speak (Koss & Williams, 2018).

2.6 Reading Obstacles and Delays for African Americans

In regards to African Americans, throughout history they were either accustomed to not seeking higher opportunities in education or had little to no education (Novakowski, 2018; Ravitch, 2014). Continued oppression of African Americans meant the loss of their voice and prospect to future endeavors (Novakowski, 2018). “If teachers were required by law to have high expectations for all students, the theory went, then all students would learn and meet high standards” (Ravitch, 2014, p. 57). These obstacles and lower demands resulted in African Americans’ reading obstacles and delays in education in the form of the following: academic obstacles such as an increasing achievement gap among African Americans and other races (Kotok, 2017; Scammacca et al., 2020), underrepresentation and disparities in higher classes and/or gifted programs (Grissom & Redding, 2016), the African American students’ growth mindset regarding how they learn (Hanson et al., 2016), and the lack of CRP in schools and the classroom (Cholewa et al., 2014; Mellom et al., 2018).

Academic Obstacles and Delays. *Brown v. The Board of Education* (1954) gave African Americans access to all public schools and equality (Mahari de Silva et al.,

2018). However, the obstacle of reading growth and achievement came with the inequity of resources, facilities, teachers, and lack of opportunities compared to their White peers (Clarke, 2016; Ford, 2015). Though African Americans were given equality of education, there were still delays and inequity with reading achievement. Mahari de Silva et al. (2018) stated:

Lacking prior education at the same level as Whites, African Americans were too often unable to compete, or to even take advantage of this new opportunity. This further pushed Whites to declare that Blacks were unmotivated and that they failed to take advantage of [any equality given to them]. (Mahari de Silva et al., 2018, p. 23)

Over the years, African American students were known not to exceed in reading or math. This delay was not due to their lack of reading, but more the lack of motivation and accountability (Camera, 2015). The delay in reading achievement only expanded the achievement gap among African Americans and their White peers (Camera, 2015).

Flinders and Thornton (2017) established that during the 1980s, the educational system considered many policies due to the push from conservative voices that found multiculturalism and bilingual curriculums were damaging. This shift in educational policies set the stage for the promotion of White pedagogy, the spread of colonialism as “reason, ideas, and liberty” (Flinders & Thornton, 2017, p. 287), and the marginalization of cultures (Flinders & Thornton, 2017). The nation was at fault as well as its educators (Clarke, 2016). The curriculum deprived African American culture and forced them to see marginalized versions of themselves (Flinders & Thornton, 2017). It further pushed

White pedagogy and its accommodation of “White racial attitudes” (Flinders & Thornton, 2017, p. 220).

The academic delay in reading also showed how the achievement gap continued to increase when students from a lower economic status scored lower in reading as they continued through school once they passed third-grade compared to students from a higher-economic status (Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Indrisano & Chall, 1995). Researchers declared this the “fourth-grade slump,” in which these students began to struggle with reading more abstract concepts, an increase in vocabulary, and comprehension (Chall & Jacobs, 2003). The “fourth-grade slump” began at Stage 3. “At Stage 3 (grades 4 to 8), the students use reading as a tool for learning, and texts begin to contain new words and new ideas beyond the scope of the readers’ language and knowledge of the world” (Indrisano & Chall, 1995, p. 67). When students of higher economic statuses had access to more world knowledge and resources it showed within their reading. Their reading became more complex, their vocabulary expanded, and their critical thinking increased (Indrisano & Chall, 1995). The “fourth-grade slump” only confirmed how the lack of culture and resources within the school curriculum aided in the delay of African American students.

The lack of culture in the school curriculum had been a battle for years. Not only was culture lacking, but the curriculum models that were formed were based on “imitation, recitation, memorization, and demonstration” (Flinders & Thornton, 2017, p. 221). This form of learning recognized slavery, but not the African American culture itself (Flinders & Thornton, 2017). While African American culture was deemed divisive, in reality, divisiveness occurred with the teaching of the White pedagogy “when

it ignore[d] the contributions others [made] to society” (Flinders & Thornton, 2017, p. 240). When schools and administration continued to marginalize and oppress African Americans, it led to not only an achievement gap, but an inequity in higher classes (Clarke, 2016). The oppression of African Americans led to reading delays and underrepresentation in gifted programs (Grissom & Redding, 2016).

Many African American students fail in education due to the lack of opportunities to show their knowledge when stereotypical views have been allowed to perpetuate regarding their culture and identity (Davis & Martin, 2018; Piper, 2019). The educational system and policies did not reflect the African American culture, which in turn the students could not grow academically (Flinders & Thornton, 2017). This stereotypical focus and lack of educational training of how to teach African American students led to more obstacles and delays in their reading, which resulted in African American students being underrepresented in advanced classes and gifted programs (Kotok, 2017).

Underrepresentation in Gifted Programs. Low representation in gifted programs (higher achieving classes) was a norm for many African American students compared to their White peers (Ford, 2015; Grissom, 2016; Grissom & Redding, 2016). The United States Department of Education 2016 statistics verified that merely 26% of the minority population (African American and Hispanic) was in the gifted programs (Grissom, 2016) and of that percentage 9.8% of those students were African American (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Over time the percentage, from the Office of Civil Rights surveys, showed an increase of African Americans in gifted programs, however that percentage was disproportionate compared to their White peers (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Data from Gillard’s research showed not only were there low representation of

African American students in gifted programs (Gillard, 2017; Grissom & Redding, 2016), but the teacher referrals in the programs dwindled (Gillard, 2017).

When the classes were predominantly composed of White students, African Americans habitually felt estranged from their own racial class and schools began academically tracking students (Kotok, 2018). This then led to inequity within the program (Gillard, 2017). The lack of training, in educators, proved a disservice to higher achievement and success for African American students (Gillard, 2017; Grissom & Redding, 2016). Additionally, “disparities in gifted identification may [have] contribute[d] to within-school segregation of students on the basis of race and ethnicity” (Grissom & Redding, 2016, p. 1). Schools began displaying a separation of races between African American and White students in terms of academics.

Many factors kept African American students underrepresented in gifted programs. Such factors included lack of resources for African Americans in schools without gifted programs (Grissom & Redding, 2016) and a lack of referrals and identification at lesser frequencies than their White peers (Ford, 2015; Grissom & Redding, 2016). Fortunately, students of color (African American and Hispanic) were better represented in gifted programs and identified when they had a minority teacher (Grissom, 2016; Grissom & Redding, 2016).

When African American students had a minority teacher, their chances of getting in gifted programs were at a higher percentage (Grissom & Redding, 2016) which presented students with a better chance of closing the achievement gap (Egalite et al., 2015). Research collected from Egalite et al. (2015) found that reading achievement increased with a teacher from their own race and that the percentage increased by .001

standard deviations. African American students had a greater chance of academic success when they were paired with a teacher of their own race (Egalite et al., 2015; Koss & Williams, 2018).

Regrettably, not all African American students can have a minority teacher. The demand of supporting African American culture, in the classroom, has been a perplexing issue (Gardner et al., 2019). As a result, the education policies became crucial in its requirements that made needed changes to teachers' professional training and development for higher expectations of African American students (Ford, 2015). "Educators must be prepared in gifted education and culturally responsive education to be equity minded and advocates for their [African American] students" (Ford, 2015, p. 190). When African American students were not culturally represented, they continued to be oppressed (Gardner et al., 2019). When African American students have equal representation to the gifted programs, the achievement gap began to close (Ford, 2015). Their access to academic success led to achievement and motivation of African American students, who had support and encouragement (Ford, 2015), increasing their growth mindset (Hanson et al., 2016).

Growth Mindset. The literature review has revealed many obstacles in reading that led to little or no success in academic growth and achievement concerning African American students. Growth mindset was one of those obstacles. Growth mindset was redefined and established in education by Carol Dweck. She gave people the concept about learning and thinking interchangeably as when you believe you can, then you are more likely motivated to make it happen (Mindset Works, 2017). This mindset would later be coined growth mindset, in which "when students believe[d] they can get smarter,

they [understood] that effort [made] them stronger. Therefore, they put in extra time and effort, and that [led] to higher achievement” (Mindset Works, 2017). When a student started to believe in him or herself, their growth mindset began to expand. The result was higher academic achievement.

Due to the convention of educators and their beliefs in African American students’ growth and academic success, it provided the needed support for students’ reading growth mindset (Hanson et al., 2016). With educators encouraging and nurturing growth mindset ideals, students began overcoming obstacles that could hinder their success (Bennett et al., 2016; Ford, 2015). “Educators know that curricular and instructional rigor, grounded in high and positive expectations, can work wonders in raising and improving achievement, test performance, student engagement, behaviors, and overall school outcomes” (Ford, 2015, p. 187). When the growth mindset accelerated and flourished in the classroom, the cultural environment was restructured with the student in mind.

In addition to the nurture and caring, a research study that utilized the warm demander pedagogy showed how when the growth mindset of teachers on African American students promoted a caring environment, it aided in effective educational equity in the classroom (Sandilos et al., 2017). The many issues of underrepresentation, biases, and stereotypes compelled African Americans’ growth mindset of wanting more with higher expectations. Sandilos et al. (2017) further suggested that the growth mindset of African American students could exhibit better relationships to help their academic growth.

The growth mindset for African American students was different from their White peers. In many cases, while White students were being taught real-life applications and analyzing lessons, African American students were being taught skills geared to the state assessment with no real value and graded lower compared to other races (Bowman et al., 2018). Additionally, many gifted programs or higher classes had disparities among African American students due to their socio-economic status and lack of academic knowledge (Bowman et al., 2018). Many educators' mentality was that they only teach African Americans the basics and not excel them for higher achievement (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Bowman et al. (2018) stated, “[African American students were] often viewed as developmentally delayed or having limited potential to learn” (para. 23). This mentality was the central approach to teaching African American students (Davis & Martin, 2018).

2.7 Equity

Inequality and the marginalizing of African American students within classrooms was an ever-present issue since the late 1960s (D’Amico, 2016). The idea that White ideology was still being taught in classrooms, despite the increase of diversity showed educational inequity (Matias & Mackey, 2016). Novakowski (2018) mentioned there were little “opportunities presented to African Americans in education” (p. 54). As educators, one had to get comfortable with being uncomfortable about their cultural biases in how they continued the perpetuation of inequity in the classroom (McVee, 2014). “Teachers need[ed] to consider not just how to teach students to live side-by-side and be inclusive, but to also disrupt the systems of oppression that [did] not allow for the

growth and progress of historically disenfranchised populations of people” (Novakowski, 2018, p. 57).

Equity was meant to offer all opportunities and possible prospects in all educational programs to African American students and other minorities regardless of their race (Ford, 2015). Even with the underrepresentation of African Americans in the gifted programs, teacher referral was lacking compared to making sure the equality of offering gifted services still applied (Ford, 2015). In addition, equality of the gifted services that African Americans are tested was still a reality, but the equity of achievement proved that African Americans underwent more testing compared to their White counterparts (Ford, 2015).

Regardless of how academically superior African American students were compared to their White peers, they were consistently falling behind in the achievement gap (Kotok, 2017; Ravitch, 2014; Royle & Brown, 2014). There had been gains by both African American as well as White students; however, the gap continued to widen when the educational system had inequality (Ravitch, 2014). This achievement gap reflected the little progress schools were making in regards to African American students (Royle & Brown, 2014). The inequity that caused the achievement gap also resulted with the lack of resources and the growth mindset of African American students (Royle & Brown, 2014).

Musu-Gillette et al. (2017) created an educational report that researched the racial and ethnic groups through educational activities. In addition, the report also showed if there was any improvement of academic success to closing the achievement gap (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). According to the 2017 United States Department of Education

statistics, the average scores for White students were higher than those of African Americans (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). Despite the higher growth and gap of White students versus African American students, the achievement gap had steadily reduced since the 1990s (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017).

It has been thought that poverty aided in the widening of the achievement gap among African American students and their White peers (Royle & Brown, 2014; Vega et al., 2015). African Americans faced many challenges in education and poverty was one that is included (McKenzie, 2019). Poverty was one of many challenges, along with emotional and social wellness (McKenzie, 2019), that deterred African American students.

Poverty may have been a factor of oppression and one of a challenge (McKenzie, 2019), it however did not detract African Americans with their academics (Royle & Brown, 2014; Vega et al., 2015). Research has proven that poverty may be an obstacle; yet, it served as more of a challenge to succeed (Royle & Brown, 2014). When African American students were living in poverty, not only is it a challenge but it correlates to behavior patterns (McKenzie, 2019). This is a challenge and could damage their academic success (McKenzie, 2019), however this challenge was not a determining factor on equity in the classroom. This was another learning moment for educators. Not only should they have been mindful of their students' culture and growth mindset, but when they were aware of their students' poverty issues, it relieved the stress in the classroom (McKenzie, 2019).

Though poverty may not have been a factor in the achievement gap, schools and educators played an immense role (Kotok, 2018). Schools decided on the curriculum and

could “promote or constrain educational opportunity through teacher attitudes” (Kotok, 2018, p. 186). This attitude was called the growth mindset for students. When educators intervened with ideals of success, studies revealed higher student engagement and academic performance (Kotok, 2018).

Through all of these factors and challenges, equity and students’ academic achievement went hand-in-hand. When equity was leveled and African Americans had the same opportunity as their White peers, there was an increase in student achievement. By establishing motivating and encouraging growth mindset, equity contributed with the level of questioning and dialogue with CRP. It allowed African American students a representation of themselves in the classroom and the curriculum. Finally, with the practice of Socratic Seminar with CLT, with the implication of equity in mind, the goal of reading achievement growth lessened the achievement gap between African American students and their White peers.

2.8 Related Research

The action research study utilized the instructional intervention strategies of the Socratic Seminar with CLT and CRP. In addition, recent research showed the use of growth mindset and academic achievement among African Americans. Many of the studies were conducted from 2014 through 2018, and the findings and limitations were satisfactory. On that regard, these were not the only studies conducted on the previous topics.

Burder et al. (2014) conducted a study where they used the Socratic Seminar or discussion to help English as a Second Language (ESL) students. The overall goal of the study, unlike the current study, was “to achieve better learning and teaching outcomes”

(Burder et al., 2014, p. 1) and not working to achieve higher development in reading analysis. The purpose of the study was to investigate participants “that used a ‘Socratic’ small-group discussion in addition to content based instruction, to enhance [their] critical thinking skills in ESL Biomedical Science students” (Burder et al., 2014, p. 1).

Researchers wanted to investigate to see if the usage of the Socratic discussion improved ESL participants’ critical thinking (Burder et al., 2014). The results of the study showed that the quick writes and final analysis of the scores improved. The participants level one answers decreased and level three answers increased. “At an individual level, the improvements were even greater, with 32% of students showing an improvement by one or two levels” (Burder et al., 2014, p. 5). The study used students, who volunteered and attended a tutorial class at a university. The study was conducted on 59 undergraduates who had joined a tutoring class to help with their language comprehension. The participants participated in a survey that “would not affect their final grade” (Burder et al., 2014, p. 3). Afterwards, the participants had to read a given research paper and take annotations and notes prior to participating in a Socratic discussion. During this time, a facilitator “initiated the discussions” (did not lead), and the participants were prompted into open discussion from the paper they read (Burder et al., 2014). The participants also engaged in quick writes and questionnaires. The limitations of the research study were that the researchers did not use a control group that did not read the paper or engage in the Socratic discussion. Also, the critical thinking levels, provided by Bloom’s Taxonomy, may have had a different result if another measure was used for the study. Finally, the research was limited to “general findings” (Burder et al., 2014, p. 5). The overall findings of the research did show improvement for the ESL students who used

critical higher order thinking skills. Burder et al. (2014) stated, “Importantly, ESL students believed that the discussion made them feel positive about their ability to read...literature” (p. 1). Burder et al. (2014) used Bloom’s Taxonomy for higher critical thinking. Whereas, the current study applied CLT.

Hanson et al. (2016) research study was to investigate the growth mindset of the faculty’s “openness to change” (Hanson et al., 2016, p. 224). The researchers wanted to see if the teachers’ learning styles collaborated with positive growth mindsets, there may be improvement with students (Hanson et al., 2016). The research showed that the faculty was open to change with more positive growth mindset. The statistics showed small significant correlations, but the willingness for growth among the faculty was significant. The researchers used an exploratory study with a quantitative research design. Analytical software was used to analyze the faculty (teachers and principal) with their openness to take on more positive change and growth mindsets. The data came from both middle and high school and Likert-style surveys were given at faculty meetings for additional reflection. The research happened within a month span and researchers used demographic questionnaires “to explore potential influences of the demographic data” (Hanson et al., 2016, p. 230). The participants in the study were chosen by a convenience sample from middle and high school faculties. The limitations of the study were the convenience sample and the diversity of the participants. The sample narrowed the participants, but the various surveys and data collection helped increase the sample size (Hanson et al., 2016). The diversity among the participants were limited and it “limits the generalizability of the results to diverse populations... and] the

researchers did not validate by observation the individual self-reports of participants on the surveys and this could be a potential future study” (Hanson et al., 2016, p. 235).

Another study by Sandilos et al. (2017) demonstrated the practice of using growth mindset on African American students. The purpose of the research study was to show “the influence of teacher ethnicity on the relation between warm demander practices and African American students’ achievement growth” (Sandilos et al., 2017, p. 1321 – 1322). Also, the study showed the relationship between teacher and student and the students’ achievement growth (Sandilos et al., 2017). The results exhibited that there was achievement growth among the students. When African American students were challenged then there was an increase in achievement growth (Sandilos et al., 2017). Furthermore, the teacher and student relationship resulted in achievement growth when the relationship was positive and the classroom environment was supportive (Sandilos et al., 2017). The research study used an observational study and used data from the Measure of Effective Teaching Project. The participants used were 634 fourth and fifth-grade teachers in various states, and the sample of the students was diverse. The diversity included teachers with various levels of experience in the classroom. Sandilos et al. (2017) had several limitations. One limitation included the data collected from the Measures of Effective Teaching. It was not a “nationally representative sample” (Sandilos et al., 2017, p. 1334). This limited the generalizability. In addition, many of teachers who were sampled were African American and did not fully represent a diverse population of teachers.

Davis and Martin (2018) organized a study on academic achievement. The purpose of the study was to show how African American students were given remediated

math instruction rather than higher-level instruction. In addition, teachers expect and reflect lower expectations for African American students by giving them skills for minimum success (Davis & Martin, 2018). Their study results showed a disinterest in academics from African American students and that the teachers of “mathematics education were disconnected from their culture” (Davis & Martin, 2018, p. 64). The students stated that their math teachers did not challenge them, felt “disrespected” when they were taught math, and gave them remedial learning from foundational skills they already taught (Davis & Martin, 2018). From these findings, the results were clear to the math teachers. The teachers provided a challenging math curriculum and began to know the students and their culture (Davis & Martin, 2018). The methods used for the study was the use of data provided by the National Center for Education Statistics. In addition, the researchers used the Education Longitudinal Study that supplied comparison data between African American and White students. Throughout the research, interviews and observations were collected from African American students on their math teachers teaching techniques. The research was taken from a public school. The limitations of the study were “missing data from independent variables... [and it gave the study] larger sample sizes and statistical power” (Davis & Martin, 2018, p. 65). Much of the limitations were explicit and throughout the reading, it was clear that the interviews were taken from African American students who could voice their math concerns. Instead, the study should have taken a random sampling for the interviews. “Unfortunately, the current study cannot capture this isolation or sense of self to test whether this can explain any of the remaining racial differences in mathematics scores” (Davis & Martin, 2018, p. 65).

Royle & Brown (2014) performed a study where they compared the achievement gap of African American students to their White peers. The researchers explored the culture of growth mindset and CRP that would affect the achievement gap between African American students and White students (Royle & Brown, 2014). The results of the research showed that “forcing a relationship through false intentions was ineffective at building the authenticity necessary for successful relationships with students” (Royle & Brown, 2014, p. 22). The results also showed the students’ academics decreased when their teachers did not help with their academic needs or know the students’ academic needs. The instructional strategies continued to widen the achievement gap (Royle & Brown, 2014). The research study included interview data from school principals. Each principal had a high-level population of African American students. In addition, the study used sampling methods for participation selection. The methods used for sampling included: snowball, criterion, and convenience. Furthermore, the study also had research questions that guided the study along with interviews, field notes, and statistical information to “provide a picture of the achievement gap” (Royle & Brown, 2014, p. 88). No limitations were explicitly stated, but the limitations that were implied were that the principals who were the participants were very open in their interviews. This indicated that the study could be seen as bias. The “responses were heartfelt; principals attempted to provide possible reasons and solutions to the problem of underachieving subpopulations on their campuses” (Royle & Brown, 2014, p. 92).

After researching Royle and Brown, a more in-depth research led to a closer look at CRP. Piper (2019) conducted a study that investigated how the usage of multicultural

literature shaped African American students' identities (Piper, 2019). The research questions that were considered in the study were the following:

How does movement-oriented Civil Rights-themed children's literature influence the racial identity development of Black elementary-aged children? and How are critical pedagogy and multicultural literature used in conjunction to provide students a foundation to make connection, address disconnections, and dialogue about topics with other students their age? (Piper, 2019, p. 2)

The results of the research study showed a need for CRP (multicultural education) in schools (Piper, 2019). It is critical that all children, including children of color, receive equity and equality. "The practice of teaching that openly addresses issues of power structures and racism in schools helps to ensure that all students are receiving an equitable education" (Piper, 2019, p. 9). The methods used for the research study was a case study that used African American elementary students in a suburban school. The students ranged from third through fifth-grade. The limitations of the study were explicitly stated. The limitations of the study ranged from students that were specifically selected for the research. The participants were chosen due to their "attention span, greater ability to articulate their experiences with literature, and more time in traditional schooling... [so] they could make comparisons [to their previous school]" (Piper, 2019, p. 4).

A more recent study guided by Erdogan (2018) strived to show how higher order thinking skills supported students' learning in their math class (Erdogan, 2018). The results of the study showed that "learning supported by reflective thinking activities can

be said to have a positive effect on students' critical thinking skills" (Erdogan, 2018, p. 92). The research design for the study was a quasi-experimental model. During the research study, the participants were given both a pre and posttest. The data collected came from the Cornell Critical Thinking Test and Level X (CCT-X) which was an assessment tool that measured critical thinking (Erdogan, 2018). The participants used in the research group were 70 seventh graders. In addition, the researcher used an experimental and a control group to compare the results and the research study's limitations included only the allowance of the sample of participants to be from one grade level (Erdogan, 2018).

2.9 Summary

Chapter Two gave an insight into the theoretical framework foundations that supported the action research study. As reviewed throughout the literature review, the action research study provided past research studies that implemented the current research study's ideas and beliefs. The literature review theories reinforced the instructional intervention strategies used in the action research study and presented future educators a foundation for their research studies.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This action research study investigated the use of incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy and Socratic Seminar with CLT with rising sixth-grade African American students reading on-grade level. The study was designed to determine if these instructional intervention strategies would foster reading growth and critical thinking. The designated student participants were not experiencing growth in their reading achievement based on their stagnant growth in fifth-grade. The Dibels summative assessment showed that these rising sixth-grade students, from IES, made progress, but their MAP summative assessment indicated there was no growth in their reading. Research has shown that the achievement gap among White and African American students has continued to increase when they live in areas of low-income and attend schools that have a majority of African American and Hispanic students from low-income homes (Carnoy & Garcia, 2017). This description is representative of the neighborhood and the school of the rising sixth-graders.

3.2 Research Questions

This research study was guided by two challenging research questions:

Research Question 1: Does the use of Socratic Seminar combined with Costa's Level of Thinking (as an instructional intervention strategy) aid in ensuring reading achievement of rising sixth-grade African American students reading on-grade level?

Research Question 2: Does the use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) encourage African American students to engage more in reading?

3.3 Purpose of Study

This study aimed to enhance the understanding of critical thinking with dialogue and discussion to improve the growth in reading among rising sixth-grade on-grade level African American students. The teacher-researcher implemented two instructional intervention strategies using CRP and Socratic Seminar with CLT into the research study to gauge any reading achievement. The need stemmed from African American students who became stagnant in their reading achievement once they were designated as reading on-grade level.

3.4 Rationale for Triangulation Mixed-Methods Action Research Design

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated the following:

Having an interest in knowing more about one's practice, and indeed in improving one's practice ... those being studied offers the greatest promise of making a difference in people's lives...choosing a study design that corresponds with your question; you should also consider whether the design is a comfortable match with your worldview, personality, and skills.
(p. 1)

This action research study was composed of a triangulation mixed-methods design. The use of both qualitative and quantitative information provided equal value and each were combined so that the results and analysis were utilized together to understand the problem of the study (Mertler, 2017; Mills, 2018) and for answering the

proposed research questions. The triangulation ensured the increase of credibility, reliability, and validity with both types of data (Mertler, 2017). The use of action research was probable for this research study because the purpose was to classify a specific problem within the classroom that applied new modifications within the teacher-researcher's practice (Mertler, 2017). In addition, the action research's additional purpose was using the findings of the study for professional development on school improvement (Mertler, 2017).

A triangulation mixed-methods research design was selected based on the teacher-researcher's examination of a specific problem in the classroom. There was an understanding of the value of collecting data from both perspectives (Mertler, 2017). The teacher-researcher used narratives and assessment scores while continuously focusing on incorporating and introducing a distinctive reading instructional strategy throughout the research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In addition, the triangulation mixed-methods design allowed the teacher-researcher to conduct interviews, record observations, and gather assessments and surveys. This method further allowed the teacher-researcher to identify if the instructional strategy of Socratic Seminar with CLT along with the strategy of implementing supplementary culturally relevant material had an increase on the student participants' reading growth.

3.5 Intervention Description

The instructional intervention strategies took place during the teacher-researcher's summer reading program. This four-week summer reading program focused on fostering the development of rising sixth-grade on-grade level African American students' critical thinking. The summer reading program helped as a bridge for these students moving

from elementary school to middle school. The summer reading program was designed for this research study and for the teacher-researcher's former students.

In order to answer the study's research questions, the researcher implemented a strategy using the instructional practice of Socratic Seminar with CLT integrated into the reading discussions. The Socratic Seminar consisted of a joint dialogue between peers over a given story that was previously selected by the teacher-researcher which incited a discussion with higher-order questioning (Bennett et al., 2016). By using Socratic Seminar's critical thinking, it served as a foundational structure for developing students' reading skills and in helping them to develop higher-order thinking skills (Burder et al., 2014). Each week, the teacher-researcher prompted student participants to build their critical thinking using CLT in Figure 3.1.

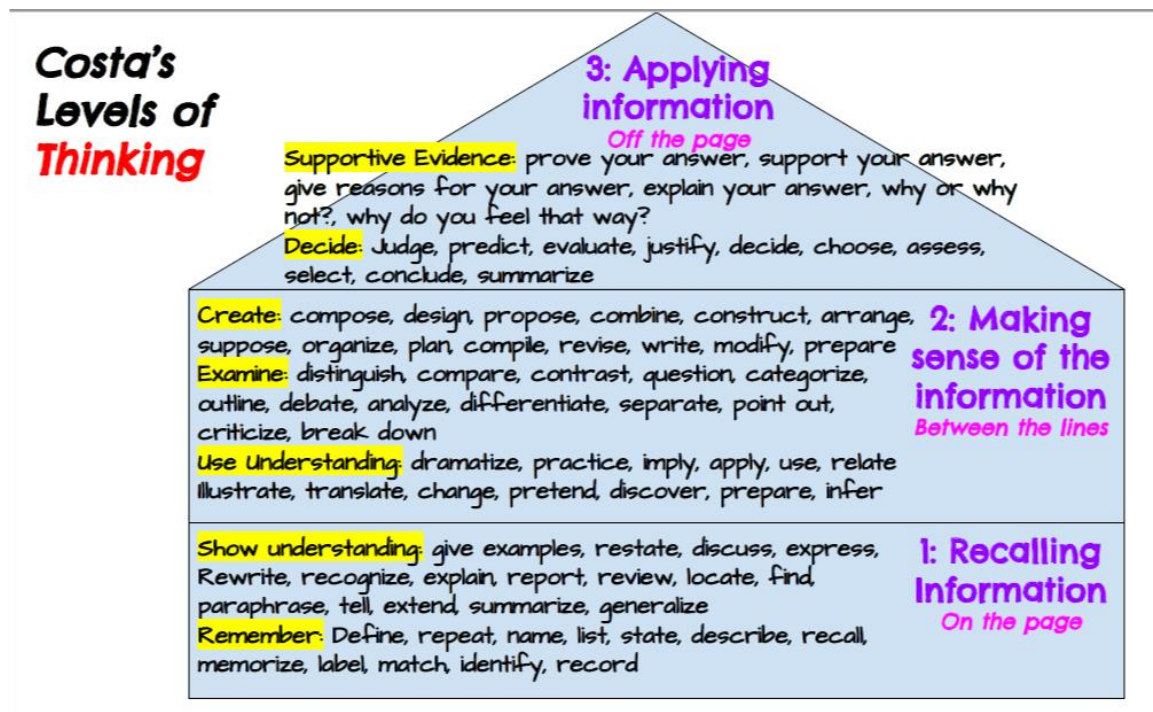


Figure 3.1 *Costa's Levels of Thinking*

Student participants utilized the critical thinking stems, such as remembering, examining, and using supportive evidence, on each level to help in their foundational critical thinking learning. Each day, throughout the study, the teacher-researcher moved through the levels by starting from the bottom level to reach the highest level of the critical thinking question stems. The chart encouraged student participants to take their critical thinking at their own pace and prompted them to see where the Socratic Seminar discussions were headed each day.

The primary objective of the Socratic Seminar was to use CLT with student participants by using the critical thinking stems as they discussed questions that were generated by the researcher or questions they produced on their own.

The Socratic Seminar was also used for student participants to share their views on how racism, entitlement and courage were used throughout the book. Utilizing this format created a safe space (reading intervention) for student participants to share their thoughts and provided a place for healthy debates and future questions on African American culture. Griswold et al. (2017) recommended that student participants sit in a setting close to each other. To make allowances- due to COVID-19- student participants were in a grid formation on Zoom to call on each other during the Socratic Seminar discussions. Though the setting had to be flexible, the student participants and teacher-researcher kept the fundamental Socratic Seminar norms in exemplifying how to be respectful during discussions and dialogue (Griswold, 2017).

In addition to Socratic Seminar with CLT, the summer reading program incorporated CRP by using a female African American author, Jacqueline Woodson, who wrote all levels of books, including books for primary to college ages. Jacqueline

Woodson wrote on African American experiences and the oppression they had to overcome. Through her books, she diligently spread the message about diversity and the theme of courage through racism. Woodson, as an author, has been “revered and widely acclaimed ... four Newbery Honor awards, two Coretta Scott King Awards, a National Book Award, a NAACP award for Outstanding Literary Work, and the Margaret A. Edwards Award for Lifetime Achievement” (Silverman & Kennedy, n.d., p. 2). Dr. Geneva Gay suggested that by accepting the validity of students’ cultural socialization and prior experiences, educators can help to reverse achievement trends. She further noted, “It is incumbent upon teachers, administrators and evaluators to deliberately create cultural continuity in educating ethnically diverse students” (Gay, 2000, p. 25).

Maizon at Blue Hill (Woodson, 1992) was the selected book- during the four-week study- that fused the African American culture and displayed representation within the text. This particular book portrayed the themes such as: friendship, racism, elitism, courage, and colorism. The student participants had the opportunity to read about a main character who represented their race and their culture. The main character was an African American girl (Maizon) who happened to be a new student going to a new school (Woodson, 1992). In the book, Maizon had to deal with suddenly being one of many African American students in a classroom to becoming the one of the few African American students at her new school. At her new school, Maizon was confronted with racism, elitism, colorism, loneliness and had to find the courage to use her voice and express her thoughts and opinions (Woodson, 1992).

Maizon at Blue Hill (Woodson, 1992) was relevant because the student participants were also going to a new school for the upcoming year and would face many

of the themes that were discussed in the book. This provided student-participants with the opportunity to see themselves represented in a book where they could have been the main character. Without CRP, students lack the avenue to view their own cultural representation, and there is a void in the classroom that leaves out the African American voice and participation (Gardner et al., 2019).

3.6 Research Context and Setting of Study

The rising sixth-grade student participants were chosen from an elementary school within the state of Georgia. The elementary school was a diverse public school that served approximately 852 students that were enrolled in grades Prekindergarten through fifth-grade and 84% of those students were minorities (Public School Review, 2020). Of those students, approximately 112 were fifth-grade students. To protect the identity of the student participants and setting, pseudonyms were applied throughout the study.

IES was the elementary school that the rising sixth-grade student participants previously attended in the study and where they were initially chosen due to their assessment scores. IES is one of the 14 public elementary schools in the area where IES was in the top ten percent for diverse schools in Georgia (Public School Review, 2020). In the fifth-grade subdivision of IES, there were five fifth-grade homeroom teachers with no more than 24 students in each classroom. Throughout the day, classes were departmentalized by math, science, and social studies. However, reading was not departmentalized and taught in a self-contained class by individual homeroom fifth-grade teachers. In addition, there were two inclusion classrooms in fifth-grade. One of the inclusion classrooms had support from a special education teacher who pushed-in to

serve the identified special education students. The other classroom served an English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classroom where an ESOL teacher pushed-in to support the homeroom teacher in the classroom for the students who were identified in the ESOL program.

Additionally, the fifth-grade level had two early intervention program (EIP) teachers and three teachers certified in gifted education. The EIP teachers were there to assist students in reading and math. Two of the three gifted certified teachers were homeroom teachers and used their certification and skills in the reading classes. The other remaining gifted certified teacher taught an advanced math class.

Many of the pull-in or push-out groups benefited students who were below level and above grade level. In those groups, students received additional services that would best accommodate their needs. Of those students, there was a high percentage of African American students who were below-grade level and a low percentage of African American students who were two to three years above a fifth-grade level. This left an excessive amount of African American students who continued to remain stagnant with no growth on-grade level for reading. In the teacher-researcher's classroom, the percentage of African American students were 59% (13 students). Of that percentage, the teacher-researcher had a percentage of 77% (10 students) who identified as on-grade level with no growth in reading according to Dibels or the MAP assessment scores. Due to COVID-19, the assessment data collected in February, prior to school closure, was used to select the student participants for the study.

Due to the transition from in-person to virtual learning, the new setting of the research was conducted via online. Student participants met through Zoom with a given

passcode for security measures. As a result of safety concerns (student participants were not allowed to be around each other due to teacher-researcher and parental concerns), the Socratic Seminar seat grouping was altered and student participants navigated with scheduled meetings through Zoom with the teacher-researcher sharing screening materials through her screen or in Google Classroom.

3.7 Role of the Teacher-Researcher

The teacher-researcher, who conducted the study, has worked at IES for the past twelve years and served as a fifth-grade teacher for nine of those years. Moreover, the teacher-researcher attended several workshops for the last three years on how to implement the instructional strategy of Socratic Seminar with CLT with students where the traditional setting could be altered and flexible.

The teacher-researcher's role involved consistent interaction with the student participants. The teacher-researcher continued to be a reading teacher by teaching the student participants reading lessons using the implemented instructional intervention strategies. The teacher-researcher modified instruction when needed for the student participants. In addition to the aforementioned, the teacher-researcher was an active participant in the student participants' community. Throughout the quarantine period and previous to that period, the active participation included the following: delivering schoolwork to students' homes during the quarantine period, visiting students' respective churches, conducting drop-ins at their homes to say hello, and personal one-on-one tutoring when needed.

3.8 Student Participants

The student participants of the study were originally from the teacher-researcher's fifth-grade classroom. They were African American on-grade level reading student participants who were chosen from the last summative assessments given before school closure due to COVID-19. The student participants' were 11 years old during the time of the study.

The teacher-researcher used purposeful sampling to collect data on the student participants. The considered purposeful sampling was a network purposeful sampling. By uncovering students who met the criteria, those students formed the study's student participants and supported the data collection methods and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The student participants were chosen based on the reading fluency and comprehension assessments (MAP and Dibels) before school closure in March of 2020. When the assessments were completed, the data showed what reading level was suggested for the student participants. To ensure credibility, the teacher-researcher used the latest summative assessment scores. Student participants were not chosen for the upcoming school year because no clear date of the school reopening or how classes would be conducted with new safety measures. In addition, the teacher-researcher had an established connection with the current sample of student participants.

Thirteen student participants were given invitations to attend the summer reading program. Each student participant received a summer package that included: a water bottle, the flipbook, the summer schedule, the Zoom norms, and some summer treats. Due to COVID-19 safety procedures, the summer package was left on the student participant's doorstep. Every student participant had parental consent prior to the

beginning date of the research study, but as the beginning date of the summer reading program approached, many events occurred and some of the original sampling of the student participants were unable to attend. The events that took six of the original student participants from attending were the following: one male student participant passed away three weeks prior to the summer reading program's commencement; two male student participants chose not to attend because they were heartbroken of the student participant's passing; two female student participants were residing in various homes and the parents were inactive in communicating with the teacher-researcher; and one female student participant had Wi-Fi connection issues.

Of the final student participants, there were two African American males and five African American females. Prior to conducting the study, a parental consent form (see Appendix A) was provided to the participants' parents prior to COVID-19 to conduct the study. However, another form was created to inform the student participants' parents how the study was reformed into a summer reading program in Figure 3.2.



Figure 3.2 *Parent Summer Reading Program Letter*

Student Participant One. Student Participant One (P1) was an 11 year-old African American male and was chosen due to his Dibels assessment indicating he progressed from below-grade level to achieving on-grade level. P1 is a middle child with an older brother and younger sister and lives with both parents. Both parents have obtained degrees from universities and wanted to find ways for him to increase his reading growth. P1's mother had previously been devastated that P1 was labeled a below-grade level reader from previous teachers during his academic career. However, throughout his fifth-grade year the teacher-researcher indicated that he only needed time to process his answers and the encouragement to know that he was allowed time to think before he spoke. P1 was reluctant to begin the summer reading program because he was frightened that participants would laugh when he read aloud or gave an answer. His mother helped encourage him that he would be fine and the researcher added that the program would be fun and he had nothing to fear. Prior to the research study, P1 rarely would volunteer to read aloud, but would rather answer questions in a written format.

Student Participant Two. Student Participant Two (P2) was a 10 year-old African American female and was an on-grade level participant in the study. P2 was an African American female and was chosen due to her Dibels assessment indicating she had very little growth during her previous academic year in fourth grade. P2 is an older sibling with a younger sister. She is a typical older sibling and loves to be in charge and is very outspoken. P2 lives with both parents with one parent having a degree from a university. P2 was excited to begin the summer reading program (to read more African American literature) once she found out the program was featuring her favorite author.

Prior to the research study, P2 would follow and not lead in the classroom. Additionally, P2 did not mind reading aloud, but would not volunteer to read first.

Student Participant Three. Student Participant Three (P3) was an 11 year-old African American female and an on-grade level participant in the study. P3 was chosen due to her Dibels and MAP assessment indicating she had some growth during her fifth-grade year, but continued to struggle and could not reach beyond on-grade level reading. P3 has many siblings from both parents. She lives with her mother and two older brothers, and sees her father when time allows or when it is necessary due to behavior. P3 lives in a stricter environment with her mother, but enjoys a carefree environment when she visits her father. P3 is spoiled by her father, due to the fact she is his only girl. P3 was excited to begin the summer reading program, but reluctant to read at home but not reluctant to read at school. During the day, P3 was left at home with one of her older brothers while her mother worked a shift job. Prior to the research study, P3 was always excited to read with others or by herself. Additionally, P3 worked with the teacher-researcher on ways to help with her reading fluency.

Student Participant Four. Student Participant Four (P4) was an on-grade level participant in the study. P4 was an 11 year-old African American female and was chosen due to her Dibels assessment indicating she had no growth during her previous and current academic year and could not answer any of the critical thinking questions. P4 is an only child and lives with both parents. Her parents are para-professional teachers at IES and her father is a pastor. P4 was excited to begin the summer reading program and to reconnect with her peers because she did not live in the school district but lived in a neighboring rural town. P4 was quiet, but observant. Prior to the research study, P4 only

read if she was called on to perform that task. P4 always completed her assigned work, but she did it reluctantly.

Student Participant Five. Student Participant Five (P5) was an on-grade level participant in the study. P5 was a 10 year-old African American female and was chosen due to her Dibels and MAP assessment indicating she had no growth during the current academic year and could not answer any of the critical thinking questions. P5 is the youngest sibling with four older siblings. She has one older sister and three older brothers. Two siblings are enrolled in college while the other two live at home with her and both parents. Both parents work within the education field and have college degrees. P5 is social and would rather be involved in activities outside the home. P5 was reluctant to begin the summer reading program, but excited to reconnect with her peers and the teacher-researcher. Prior to the research study, P5 would request additional help with reading because she wanted her reading to grow and desired not to be behind the rest of her peers.

Student Participant Six. Student Participant Six (P6) was an on-grade level participant in the study. P6 was an 11 year-old African American female and was chosen due to her Dibels and MAP assessment indicating she had no growth during the previous and current academic year and could not answer any of the critical thinking questions. P6 has siblings from her father's side. P6 lives at her grandmother's house with both parents. At the home, P6 is the only child and is very sheltered. P6's parents worked shift jobs and her mother helped take care of the grandmother. Both parents were very involved and wanted the best for their daughter. In the classroom, P6 displayed happiness, was well-adjusted, and always wanted to do well. P6 was excited to begin the

summer reading program and to reconnect with the teacher-researcher and her peers. Prior to the research, P6 did not like to read aloud and struggled with fluency and comprehension.

Student Participant Seven. Student Participant Seven (P7) was an on-grade level participant in the study. P7 was an 11 year-old African American male and was chosen due to his prior school's reading assessment indicating he had no growth during his current academic year, and he struggled answering critical thinking questions. P7 was a student that the teacher-researcher tutored, and his mother expressed concern and sought additional help because he was previously bullied and tended to withdraw throughout the current year. P7 is an only child and was adopted by a single parent. He lives with his mother and she obtained a college degree and works from home. P7's mother considered homeschooling due to P7's lack of interest in school and was looking for ways to help his reading and growth mindset. P7 was not excited to begin the summer reading program because he was new to the group and did not know any of the student participants. Prior to the research, P7 would talk to the teacher-researcher and only talk in quiet tones. P7 had been bullied his current school year, and it effected his growth mindset. He became a target because he was an African American male at his school with pronounced African American features like his hair, facial structure, and culture. His former peers made fun of him. Due to these factors, the teacher-researcher felt that P7 would benefit from the summer reading program not only for the reading, but the additional implementation of the CRP aspect of the study.

3.9 Research Methods

The research study had an environment in which the information collected was composed of little pieces of which researchers called data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This research study was a mixed-methods design focusing on both qualitative and quantitative methods where both methods would link together and contribute to the teacher-researcher's research theory (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Due to the posed research study's questions, one data source within only one type of method would deem the research to be insufficient.

In addition to using a mixed-methods methodology, the researcher incorporated this methodology within an action research study. The teacher-researcher chose an action research due to the nature of the study. "The goal of action research is to address a specific problem in a practice-based setting, such as a classroom" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 4). By instituting the study as an action research, the teacher-researcher unfolded the best solutions to the given research problem and questions.

3.10 Data Collection Instruments

The research study was guided by the following research questions:

Research Question #1: Does the use of Socratic Seminar combined with Costa's Level of Thinking (as an instructional intervention strategy) aid in ensuring reading achievement of rising sixth-grade African American students reading on-grade level?

Research Question #2: Does the use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) encourage African American students to engage more in reading?

The data collected from the research questions used quantitative methods in the form of student participants' summative and formative assessments and a survey given to

the student participants. The qualitative methods came in the form of the teacher-researcher's observations, interview, and the parent survey.

The assessments given were teacher-researcher-made assessments with the aid of a credible reading source called *ReadWorks* for the summative assessment's reading passage. The assessments were given each week (a combined total of both summative and formative assessment five times)- during the four-week timeframe- to gain insight on how the Socratic Seminar with CLT and CRP helped with any of the student participants' reading growth. These assessments helped to see if there needed to be any adjustments within the study. The data collection provided was appropriate, because it aided in the research's data analysis. By using these data collection tools, the teacher-researcher perceived if the planned instructional intervention strategies were effective or if anything needed to be adjusted in the study.

3.11 Reading Survey

Surveys were given to the student participants and to the parents of the student participants (see Appendices B and C) about how they felt in regards to reading, the use of Socratic Seminar with CLT, the implementation of CRP, and if they believed if any possible reading growth could be achieved using the Socratic Seminar intervention strategy. There were two surveys given throughout the study. One survey was given prior to the study for the student participants' parents and during the first day for the student participants. The final survey was given during the last day for the student participants' parents.

The surveys were used to establish both student participants' and parents' views regarding the use of critical thinking, Socratic Seminar dialogue, and CRP. The surveys

were given on-line and without verbal cues. This allowed the teacher-researcher to capture information in a short amount of time (Mertler, 2017). Table 3.1 and 3.2 provides the key questions given by both student participants' parents and student participant that aligned their personal views and beliefs regarding Socratic Seminar with CLT and CRP.

Table 3.1 *Identifying Key Survey Questions for Student Participants' Parent Analysis*

<i>Survey Questions for Parents</i>
Question 1: How does your child feel about reading?
Question 2: Do you think that using critical thinking strategies will help your child's reading growth?
Question 3: Do you have an in-depth discussion about any book your child reads?
Question 4: It is important for my child to read books that represent them.
Question 5: I would like my child to have more literature that includes their culture and representation in class.

Table 3.2 *Identifying Key Survey Questions for Student Participant Analysis*

<i>Survey Questions for Student Participants</i>
Question 1: I am encouraged to talk about my life in class.
Question 2: I can connect my reading to my life experiences.
Question 3: We are encouraged to talk about social justice (fairness, suffering of others, rights of others) in class.
Question 4: My teacher uses materials (books, videos, handouts, music, etc...) that are connected to my interests.
Question 5: Do you think Socratic Seminar will help your reading growth?
Question 6: Can you think beyond the book to answer any reading questions?

3.12 Observations by Teacher-Researcher

Observations were utilized to help guide the teacher-researcher to see if any adjustments of the study needed to be applied or adjusted. The student participants conducted three Socratic Seminars and the teacher-researcher took observation notes (see Appendix D) on how well they used critical thinking question stems to conduct discussions about the given stories. During the observations, the researcher noted the following: their level of questioning, the student participants' environment, the student participants' interactions with their summer reading program peers, their behavior throughout the four-week study, and reactions to the book used during the summer reading program. The teacher-researcher examined student participants individually and each had their own set of observational notes throughout the research study.

3.13 Interview

An interview was conducted with the student participants to see if they could explain how or if CRP impacted their reading growth in the past, present, and future. During the interview, the teacher-researcher engaged the student participants in a range of a highly structured or standardized format to a semi-structured format, and an unstructured or informal format. Figure 3.3 indicates a look at the questions that the teacher-researcher used during the interview with the student participants.

Interview Questions



<i>Questions</i>
<i>How many Black teachers have you had?</i>
<i>Do you like having a teacher that looks like you?</i>
<i>Do you think you can express yourself more or does it matter?</i>
<i>How do you read a book when you can't relate to it?</i>
<i>How do you feel about teachers of other races teaching you your history?</i>
<i>Would you speak up if a teacher does not teach your history or says something incorrectly?</i>
<i>Do you think schools read a lot of Black literature?</i>
<i>How do you feel when a teacher calls you and fusses at you for not paying attention?</i>
<i>What are your thoughts when Black issues are discussed or Black books read in the classroom?</i>
<i>Would you want to read more books like this?</i>
<i>Sometimes people think that you are too young to engage in racial issues and discussions. Do you agree?</i>
<i>How do you feel about teachers of other races copying your culture?</i>

Figure 3.3 *Interview Questions*

3.14 Summative Assessment

The summative assessments that the student participants were given were a teacher-researcher-made pretest and posttest baseline assessment with the reading passage provided by *ReadWorks*. Student participants, individually, took the summative assessment twice during the research study timeframe. The first summative assessment (pretest) was given during the first week of the study to determine the initial reading

baseline of critical thinking for each participant. The second summative assessment (posttest) was given at the culmination of the study that determined the reading baseline of critical thinking and if any growth had taken place during the four-week timeframe. The summative assessment was used to see if the student participants had any reading growth from the start of the research to the end.

3.15 Formative Assessment

The formative assessments were given three times during the four-week timeframe. The assessments were designed to evaluate overall reading growth. In conjunction with the pre- and posttest assessments, the teacher-researcher additionally gave the student participants a formal assessment quick check throughout the weeks to help assess their critical thinking, reading comprehension, consult with them on their progress individually, and make adjustments in instruction if needed. These formative assessments helped with any adjustments for documentation and data collection for the study (Mills, 2018). Using the data from the formative assessments supplied the teacher-researcher immediate information (Mills, 2018) regarding the study's instructional strategy.

As with the summative assessment, the formative assessments were examined to assess the CLT within their reading for any reading growth. By ensuring this method, the teacher-researcher compared each student participants' critical level performance with their own performance from the beginning of the summer reading program to the end of the program.

3.16 Procedure

During the first week of the action research study, the teacher-researcher (who was the student participants reading teacher) inaugurated the instruction of how to execute the Socratic Seminar with CLT with Level One. Throughout each day, during the first two weeks, student participants learned how to apply their assigned reading with discussion and dialogue with given CLT stem questions flipbook (see Appendix E). The student participants acquired their own copies of the prompts and questions that assisted them with the Socratic Seminar. The student participants were given an hour and thirty minutes each day of the study in order to grasp the critical thinking concepts.

As the student participants became more familiar with Socratic Seminar, the Levels of questioning altered during Weeks Two through Four (see Appendices F - H). For instance, during days one and two, the teacher-researcher utilized the critical thinking stems from Level One (see Figure 3.1). In Level One, the teacher-researcher started from the bottom and worked up through the critical thinking question stems. This allowed the student participants to develop Socratic Seminar with CLT on the given chapters in the book. Keep in mind, the Socratic Seminar was used as an instructional strategy and not a replacement for the reading texts. The instructional strategy coincided with the reading the student participants used during the allotted timeframe.

Day One. During the first day of the first week, the student participants were given their pretest (see Appendix J) to gauge their critical thinking skills and were given a survey (see Appendix C) on how they felt about reading culturally relevant books, critical thinking, and using the Socratic Seminar. Student participants' parents were given a survey prior to the student participants first day of the research (see Appendix B).

Day Two. On the second day, the student participants were shown a Google Slideshow (see Appendix J) on the author and book that was used for the summer reading program. As a group, the student participants had the opportunity to read the outside summary of the book, which coincided with the praise of the author's contribution to African American representation in literature.

Day Three. On the third day, student participants reviewed their personal flipbook copy (see Appendix E) with the teacher-researcher. Each student participant was given a flipbook that included questioning stems and pointers on how to begin a dialogue when discussing the given story that would be read throughout the summer reading program.

This day included how to navigate through the Zoom classroom, class schedule, and navigation of the summer reading program's Google Classroom (see Appendices K - L). Student participants were given the complete handout due to COVID-19 and being quarantined at home. This day was given to practicing the rules and norms, answering any needed questions, and instruction on where to find additional resources if their personal flipbook copy was not at hand. In addition, it allowed the student participants to begin feeling more comfortable with their peers in the summer reading program.

Day Four. On the final day of the first week, student participants began practicing how to conduct a Socratic Seminar through Zoom (see Appendix L). Student participants were introduced to the Socratic Seminar with CLT Level One critical thinking questioning stems (see Appendix F). The student participants used the Level One question stems to practice and applied those with those of the Zoom class rules and norms. This allowed the student participants to make the transition from a face-to-face

classroom to a virtual classroom an easier process. Prior to this day of the final first week, the teacher-researcher took observational notes (see Appendix D) on student participants to gather evidence of reading growth, to determine if adjustments needed to be made, and to observe their behaviors and actions.

Summarization of Week One (Getting to Appreciate the Group). During the first-week student participants became reacquainted with each other and had the opportunity to meet the new student participant in the summer reading program. Doing this allowed the teacher-researcher to make sure student participants' parents filled out their surveys and sent the surveys back in a timely manner. Also, in week one, the student participants took the pretest. This later aided the teacher-researcher in evaluating their reading progress.

On the first day of the first week, the teacher-researcher gave the student participants a pretest. The teacher-researcher assumed the student participants would take no more than 10 to 15 minutes to complete the pretest, but they took their time and completed the pretest in approximately 30 to 45 minutes. During the time of the pretest, one student participant's Wi-Fi did not connect. The teacher-researcher gave the student participant the pretest that afternoon. This ensured that the student participant would not fall behind the others in the summer reading program.

Following the pretest, the student participants explored the author study of Jacqueline Woodson. This was the author of *Maizon at Blue Hill*, the book being read during the summer reading program. The student participants were sent their own copy of the author study slides in Google Classroom as a resource. All work was sent to the student participants via Google Classroom where everything was organized and easily

found. For the duration of the week, the student participants explored how to conduct a Socratic Seminar with the CLT question stems, what to do when you have to ask questions in the Zoom class, using the Zoom chat and other Zoom features, and discussing the summer reading program's weekly schedule and time frames. The teacher-researcher worked on recording the behaviors and actions of the student participants through observations. These were small things, but it was beneficial to the progression of the research study.

Day Five. On day five, student participants began reading the book of the summer reading program. Student participants read the first chapter and used the Socratic Seminar with CLT Level One critical thinking questioning stems (see Appendix F) to begin the critical thinking discussion.

Day Six. On day six, student participants continued to read. They read chapters two through three and continued to use the flipbook and Level One critical thinking questioning stems with student participants progressing from Level 1.1 to Level 1.2 (see Figure. 3.1).

Day Seven. On day seven, student participants continued to read. They read chapters four through six of the assigned book for the Socratic Seminar and continued to use the flipbook and Level One critical thinking questioning stems with student participants working on a combination of both Level 1.1 to Level 1.2.

Day Eight. On day eight, student participants continued reading. Student participants read chapters seven through eight. Additionally, student participants were given their first quick check to assess their critical reading skills on Level One (see Appendix M). The teacher-researcher discussed the questions after all the student

participants were finished. At this point, the teacher-researcher continued to help student participants with starting the dialogue in Socratic Seminar. The teacher-researcher began the student participants' interview that aided in their ability to discuss with peers. Prior to this day of the final second week, the teacher-researcher continued taking observational notes (see Appendix D) on the participants.

Summarization of Week Two (We Have Something to Say): Week Two came and the student participants officially began reading *Maizon at Blue Hill* by Jacqueline Woodson. They understood that they would be reading a story from an African American author's perspective. The main character was African American and discussing racism was one of the themes of the story.

Additionally, Week Two led to a slow start as the teacher-researcher began the readings. Over this week, the teacher-researcher called on student participants to read. During the readings and discussions, the focused goals were working on CLT Level One questioning (see Appendix F). On the first day of questioning and reading, student participants were prompted with the page number to help answer the CLT Level One questions. As the student participants ended the first day of reading and questioning, they were asked a Level Two question so they could see the difference in questions and how they would progress to reach that level.

The teacher-researcher added extensions in the research study based on the student participants' feedback and needs. The student participants requested homework to read chapters on their own. Doing this allowed the group to begin the next class with discussions. Also, the teacher-researcher added motivation incentives to prompt student participants to take the lead in discussions.

By the end of Week Two, the student participants developed a game with the Level One questions that would resonate throughout following weeks. In order for student participants to develop an idea of how to question, the teacher-researcher would put a Level One question in the Zoom chat and they would respond with an answer. Afterwards, each student participant developed their own set of questions within Level One for everyone in the group to answer. Table 3.3 shows examples of the Level One questions that were asked during Week Two.

Table 3.3 *Questions Found On the Pages*

<i>Level One Questions</i>	<i>Examples of Questions</i>
<i>Week 2</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why didn't Maizon want to leave Margaret? • Why did Maizon yell for Margaret at the beginning? • Why did Maizon think she was alone? • Who is Margaret's little brother? • What song did everyone keep singing throughout the chapter? • What kind of special powers did Maizon say Ms. Dell had?

By the end of the second week, student participants were given their first reading assessment (see Appendix M); they participated in their first Socratic Seminar dialogue with the teacher-researcher's assistance and the teacher-researcher continued the study's observations on the student participants' behaviors and actions. In addition, the student participants participated in an interview (see Figure 3.3).

Initially, the interview was going to be conducted in the Zoom breakout rooms as individual student participant interviews. The breakout rooms were available for each student participant to have a separate space within the Zoom classroom if anyone needed his or her personal safe space. Throughout the two-week observations, the student participants began to establish a friendship, and the teacher-researcher gave the student participants an option on how to conduct the interview. The teacher-researcher stated that the interview could occur individually or as a group. The student participants expressed that they preferred to do it together as a group. The interview was composed of some of the outlined structured questions seen in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 *Interview Questions*

<i>Interview</i>	<i>A Few Select Questions</i>
<i>Week 2</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you like having a teacher that looks like you? • Do you think you can express yourself more when you have a teacher that looks like you? • Do you talk about Black culture in your classroom? • Do you think a teacher should get to know you before they pass judgement or make assumptions? • How do you read a book when you can't relate to it? • How do you feel when you read books about people that look like you?

Day Nine. On day nine, student participants read chapters nine through eleven of the assigned book for the Socratic Seminar. Student participants continued with the Socratic Seminar with CLT Level Two critical thinking questioning stems (see Appendix G).

Day Ten. On day ten, student participants read chapters twelve through fourteen of the assigned book. Student participants continued practicing the Socratic Seminar with CLT Level Two critical thinking questioning stems.

Day Eleven. On day eleven, student participants read chapters fifteen through seventeen. Student participants continued practicing the Socratic Seminar with CLT Level Two critical thinking questioning stems with student participants progressing from Level 2.1 to Level 2.3 (see Figure 3.1).

Day Twelve. On day twelve, student participants continued reading and read chapter eighteen. Student participants were given their second quick check to assess their critical reading skills on Level Two (see Appendix N), and the teacher-researcher discussed the questions after all the student participants were finished. At this point, the teacher-researcher had slowly started to wean the student participants from her question prompting, so that they could start their own critical thinking dialogue in Socratic Seminar. The teacher-researcher continued taking observational notes (see Appendix D) on student participants.

Day Thirteen. On day thirteen, student participants viewed a CRP movie of their choice. The movie was shared through the teacher-researcher's Zoom share screen application. Some student participants viewed the movie on their end through this method or they played the movie on their personal device. Throughout the movie, the

teacher-researcher opened the chat and had student participants unmute if they needed to converse on the topics shown for any open discussions.

Summarization of Week Three (We Know More Than We Think). During Week Three, the teacher-researcher worked on expanding the student participants' critical thinking to Level Two CLT questions (see Appendix G), continued working on the observations taken during the study, and intervened when needed on reading comprehension questions that related to the phrasing of the critical thinking questions. Week Three was a pivotal week because an extension time was added to the summer reading program to incorporate a CRP movie at the end of each week.

Like Week Two, Week Three began with working on student participants CLT levels and revisiting Level One assessment's critical thinking questions given during Week Two. This week the student participants progressed to the Level Two CLT question stems, and they were asked a Level Two and Level Three question that demonstrated how they would progress as they worked to reach their final end goal. Table 3.5 indicates some of the questions that were asked throughout the Week Three.

Table 3.5 *Questions Found Between the Lines*

<i>Level Two Questions</i>	<i>Examples of Questions</i>
<p>Week 3 <i>Stem starters student participants used</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on what you know about Maizon, do you think she'll get along with her roommate? How does the use of figurative language enrich the writing? There are many uses of figurative language throughout the story. Use an example and translate its meaning.

-
- How do you feel about this author/book so far? Explain.
 - If...then...
 - Describe in your own words...
 - Would you have done...? What information supports your claim or evidence?
 - Give an example of...
 - What other ways?
-

When the student participants requested homework to read chapters on their own, it allowed time for more discussions with the Socratic Seminar dialogue. In Week Three, student participants continued to move through the book at a steady pace. Because of the student-participants' work ethic, program times was extended on the last day of Week Three to view a movie that showed African American representation. The student participants voted on watching a special on Netflix, so they could still view from the teacher-researcher's screen and chat about the special at the same time. The student participants decided on viewing *Kevin Hart's Guide to Black History* (2019).

Week Three went much like the previous week. Student participants continued working on progressing through Level Two. They read the assigned chapters as a whole or individually, participated in another Socratic Seminar with CLT with little aid from the teacher-researcher, conquered another Level quick check (see Appendix N), and were continually observed by the teacher-researcher to monitor their behaviors and actions in the summer reading program.

Day Fourteen. Student participants continued reading the given story with reading chapters nineteen through twenty. Reading the story continued to add to the dialogue and discussion of Socratic Seminar, and student participants progressed to the

final level of CLT (see Figure 3.1). The teacher-researcher, at this point, weened from the student participants' dialogue and only helped with the introduction parts of the Level Three critical thinking question stems (see Appendix H).

Day Fifteen. Student participants finished the summer reading program book with the final chapter and the final section of Level Three critical thinking question stems.

Day Sixteen. During this last week, student participants conducted their final Socratic Seminar with all CLT levels by using the entire book as a resource. Finally, student participants were given their final formative assessment quick check (see Appendix O) that gauged how they progressed through the CLT levels.

Day Seventeen. Student participants were given their posttest assessment (see Appendix J) that the teacher-researcher used prior to see if there had been any reading growth for achievement. Afterwards, student participants viewed their second movie of choice. Additionally, student participants' parents were given their final survey (see Appendix B) to see how they viewed their child's reading through the four-week timeframe.

Summarization of Week Four (Our Representation). Week Four was the final week which ended the summer reading program. This week the student participants went over their previous week's assessment on Level Two questioning and moved into the final level of CLT (see Appendix H) with the final chapters of the book. Level Three afforded them space to apply the reading knowledge to real-life applications. Table 3.6 exemplifies some of the questions that were asked during Week Four with the student participants.

Table 3.6 *Questions Off the Page*

<i>Level Three Questions</i>	<i>Examples of Questions</i>
<i>Week 4</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Predict how Maizon will overcome hardships that she faced at Blue Hill. How do you overcome hardships in your life?• If you were to judge or critique this book, what recommendation would you tell someone who has not read it?• What would the world be like if you had more Maizons?• What would it be like to live and not know any of your Black history in school? How does it affect you now?

Along with working on Level Three CLT, this was the week the student participants completed their Level Three quick check (see Appendix O), gave their final survey, took the posttest summative assessment (see Appendix I), participated in their final Socratic Seminar with CLT dialogue, and were observed for the final observation notes taken by the teacher-researcher. On the last day of the summer reading program, the participants voted to watch the Netflix special *Becoming* (2020) as their ending.

Table 3.7 summarized each procedure of the study.

Table 3.7 *Summarization of Weekly Procedures*

<i>Week on Implementation</i>	<i>Summarization</i>
<i>Week 1</i> Day 1 (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pretest for reading growth• Student participants were given survey and student participants'

	parents were given the survey prior to the study
Day 2 (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showcased the author and book that was used for the study
Day 3 (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Went over the norms for Zoom Meetings • Went over the new Google Classroom code and where everything will be posted for extra handouts and links to surveys and assessments
Day 4 (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Went over the Costa's Level of Thinking and Socratic Seminar flipbook • Went over the CLT question stems and Socratic Seminar rules
Week 2	
Day 5 (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both teacher-researcher and student participants read chapter 1 • Student participants practiced Socratic Seminar with Level 1 question stems (Level 1.1)
Day 6 (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both teacher-researcher and student participants read chapters 2 - 3 • Student participants practiced Socratic Seminar with Level 1 question stems (Level 1.1 and moving to Level 1.2)
Day 7 (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both teacher-researcher and student participants read chapters 4 - 6 • Student participants practiced Socratic Seminar with Level 1 question stems (a combination of Level 1.1 and Level 1.2)

Day Eight (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both teacher-researcher and student participants read chapters 7 – 8 • Student participants practiced first Socratic Seminar with all Level 1 question stems • Student participants were given a formative assessment (quick check) on their reading comprehension using Level 1 question stems and their first interview
Week 3	
Day 9 (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both teacher-researcher and student participants read chapters 9 – 11 • Teacher-researcher aided in Socratic Seminar with Level 2 question stems (Level 2.1) with student participants • Teacher-researcher continued to aid with Socratic Seminar
Day 10 (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both teacher-researcher and student participants read chapters 12 - 14 • Teacher-researcher aided in Socratic Seminar with Level 2 question stems (Level 2.2) with student participants • Teacher-researcher continued to aid with Socratic Seminar
Day 11 (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both teacher-researcher and student participants read chapters 15 - 17 • Teacher-researcher aided in Socratic Seminar with Level 2 question stems (Level 2.3) with student participants • Teacher-researcher continued to aid, if needed, with Socratic Seminar

Day 12 (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both teacher-researcher and student participants read chapter 18 • Student participants were given a formative assessment (quick check) on their reading comprehension using Level 2 question stems • Teacher-researcher went over the formative assessment • Student participants conducted their second Socratic Seminar with minimal assistance from the researcher • Student participants practiced Socratic Seminar with Level 2 question stems (teacher-researcher began to let the student participants lead the discussions)
Day 13 (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student participants viewed a CPR movie of their choice
<i>Week 4</i>	
Day 14 (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both teacher-researcher and student participants read chapters 19 - 20 • Teacher-researcher aided in Socratic Seminar with Level 3 question stems (Level 3.1) with student participants
Day 15(1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both teacher-researcher and student participants read the final chapter • Teacher-researcher aided in Socratic Seminar with Level 3 question stems (Level 3.2) with student participants
Day 16 (1 hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student participants conducted their final Socratic Seminar with no assistance from the teacher-researcher

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student participants were given their final formative assessment (quick check) on their reading comprehension using Level 3 question stems
Day 17 (1hour and 30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posttest for reading growth • Teacher-researcher sent out parent survey for follow-up on reading behavior during the final week • Student participants viewed a second CPR movie of their choice
Weeks 1 – 4 (Days 1 – 16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher conducted ongoing observations on a daily basis

3.17 Data Analysis

To provide validity and reliability, the teacher-researcher ensured the four-week timeframe. Conducting the research for this amount of time gave the teacher-researcher time and avoided unneeded biases. As well as providing an extended timeframe, the teacher-researcher had continuous observations, peer debriefing, a collection of qualitative and quantitative data, audit trails, and various member checks.

Qualitative Analysis. To analyze the qualitative data (interview, observations, and surveys), the teacher-researcher utilized coding to determine recurring themes (i.e. problems, growth, or motivation). Coding was a valid source because it offered countless information during the short length of the study (Mills, 2018). The teacher-researcher looked into using reliable qualitative data analysis computer software and recommended books that furthered assisted with the narrative analysis of the research study. The potential methods- that analyzed the research data- showed the teacher-researcher if the instructional intervention strategies of the implementation of CRP and Socratic Seminar with CLT needed to be profited regularly to achieve possible higher reading gains among

African American students. With all of the qualitative data taken, the teacher-researcher used a coding system that used pre-coding to establish final codes for overall themes. The themes- established by the coding- came from the theoretical framework of the research study, and the teacher-researcher finding similarities and frequencies for coding patterns. “Virtually all methodologists recommend initial and thorough readings of your data while writing analytic memos or jotting in the margins tentative ideas for codes, topics, and noticeable patterns or themes” (Saldana, 2015, p. 18). The interview portion of the qualitative method was helpful because it helped determine if implementing CRP in the reading literature and the growth mindset of the student participant was important and a relevant factor. The observations that were witnessed assisted the teacher-researcher in determining the importance of implementing CRP and Socratic Seminar with CLT with the participants. The surveys aided the teacher-researcher in determining whether CRP and Socratic Seminar were useful instructional intervention strategies.

Quantitative Analysis. To analyze quantitative measures the teacher-researcher used teacher-researcher – made assessments and a Likert scale for the student survey. “Gathering data [from these assessments will] ... provide [the teacher-researcher] ... with accessible information about how well ... [the participants] are responding to a particular teaching ... innovation” (Mills, 2018, p. 133). The data collection analysis timeline presented in Table 3.8 was used in the study.

Table 3.8 *Summarization of Data Collection*

<i>Data Collection</i>	<i>Day and Week of Data Collection</i>
Parent Survey	Prior to the first day of the study
Formative Assessment: Pretest (Baseline for reading growth)	Day 1 (Week 1)

Student Participants Survey (1 st one)	Day 1 (Week 1)
Formal Assessment: Quick Check on CLT Level 1	Day 8 (Week 2)
Full Socratic Seminar (1 st Attempt used CLT Level 1)	Day 8 (Week 2)
Interview with the group	Day 8 (Week 2)
Formal Assessment: Quick Check on CLT Level 2	Day 12 (Week 3)
Full Socratic Seminar (2 nd Attempt used CLT Level 2)	Day 12 (Week 3)
Formal Assessment: Quick Check on CLT Level 3	Day 15 (Week 4)
Full Socratic Seminar (3 rd Attempt used CLT Levels 1 – 3)	Day 15 (Week 4)
Formal Assessments: Posttest (Baseline for reading growth)	Day 16 (Week 4)
Parent Survey	During Week 4 of the study
Observations from Teacher-researcher	Ongoing from Days 1 – 16 (Weeks 1 – 4)

Quantitative Survey Analysis. After gathering the student participants' survey results, the teacher-researcher utilized statistical measures for outcomes that displayed any change (positive, negative, or neutral) in the student participants' reading growth.

Formative and Summative Analysis. The teacher-researcher analyzed each question to see if there were problem areas that needed reinforcement or if the student participants required acceleration to the next outlined level. The teacher-researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the data collected from the assessments. The descriptive statistics that the teacher-researcher used were median, mode, and mean. Using these

allowed the teacher-researcher to gauge the student participants' assessment scores for reading growth.

3.18 Reflection

The plan for reflecting with student participants happened daily. Every day student participants went through the Socratic Seminar using questions from various levels (see Appendices F - H). The teacher-researcher slowly began to ween from the questions and allowed the student participants to handle the dialogue and discussions on their own. By conducting the interviews, observations, and surveys, the teacher-researcher assessed student participants' feelings regarding the instructional intervention strategies. Any reading developments concerning the student participants were accumulated throughout the research study.

Prior to the study, student participants learned about their individual reading levels by the Dibels scores taken during their fifth-grade year prior to them being released from school and COVID-19. Moreover, they took a pretest and the teacher-researcher gave them the results of the test during the first week of the summer reading program. The teacher-researcher outlined how Socratic Seminar with CLT would work in progressing their reading growth. Once student participants took their final posttest assessment, during the last week of the study, the teacher-researcher discussed any reading growth individually. Afterwards, the teacher-researcher decided whether Socratic Seminar with CLT was a needed instructional strategy for reading achievement. Moreover, the teacher-researcher determined if incorporating CRP made a difference in student participants' growth mindset and prompted student participants to use critical

thinking. The student participant reflections gave the teacher-researcher needed feedback for an ongoing action plan and instructional needs (Mills, 2018).

3.19 Summary

This dissertation in practice was developed based on an action research study composed of a triangulation mixed-methods design. The teacher-researcher implemented two instructional intervention strategies that incorporated CRP and Socratic Seminar with CLT to gauge the student participants' reading growth. The action research study was a four-week Zoom virtual summer reading program that involved rising sixth-grade on-grade level African American students. The teacher-researcher took numerous steps to guarantee the protection of the setting and student participants of the study. Furthermore, the credibility and validity of the action research study was ensured by preserving the essence and ethical conduct of the study.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA: FINDINGS

4.1 Overview of the Study

The achievement gap among African American students versus students of other ethnicities continues to increase and represents the disproportionality and inequity of how students of color have been underrepresented in gifted programs and/or higher academic programs (Grissom & Redding, 2016). When African American students were not expected to use critical thinking and lacked CRP in daily lessons, these factors became an issue in their future academic success (Cholewa & Goodman, 2014). This action research study examined rising sixth-grade on-grade level African American students' reading growth when two instructional intervention strategies that incorporated CRP and Socratic Seminar with CLT were implemented into their reading lessons.

The research study was guided by two research questions.

Research Question 1: Does the use of Socratic Seminar combined with Costa's Level of Thinking (as an instructional intervention strategy) aid in ensuring reading achievement of rising sixth-grade African American students reading on-grade level?

Research Question 2: Does the use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) encourage African American students to engage more in reading?

4.2 Findings of the Study

This section will detail the findings of the action research study and the effects on the student participants. It was divided into areas that related to the findings of the study.

An inductive analysis was taken to decrease the data collected by consolidating the information by arranging it into themes that will solidify the major findings of the research study (Mertler, 2017). The findings of this research study suggested that the two instructional intervention strategies attained a connection to the given study's research questions. The results that emerged indicated a demonstration of reading progress with three of the four student participants who completed the summer reading program with their reading achievement. Additionally, three themes emerged from the research study: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy's Influence on Student Engagement, Student Awareness of Cultural/Racial Disparities with a Desire for Cultural Knowledge, and Issues of Race and Visibility in the Curriculum. Moreover, this section will include tables and figures to analyze the study's findings, which supported those key themes and research questions.

4.3 Interventions Used

The importance of the instructional interventions used played a part on the study's results. The implementation of both Socratic Seminar with CLT and CRP indicated the need for both interventions to be implemented within the classroom. The primary goal of the research was to examine whether when used would the prescribed interventions result in an increase in the reading achievement of the African American student participants.

4.4 Zoom Summer Reading Program

The summer of 2020 presented student participants with daily televised protests revolving around systematic racism. Students were inevitably provided an introduction into the Black Lives Matter (BLM) and the Say Their Name (STN) Movements. Due to their location in Georgia, many social media platforms like Tik Tok, Instagram, and Facebook first introduced the student participants to BLM and STN with the murder case

concerning Ahmaud Arbery. Ahmaud Arbery, an African American male, was shot and chased by two White men while jogging in a neighborhood (Mahbubani, 2020). As well as seeing images displayed on the news and social media, the student participants then had to hear, see, and read about other African American citizens' deaths. BLM and STN advocates protested the death of African American citizens like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless others during the summer of 2020. Every-day, the student participants witnessed on-going protests of people demanding justice and fighting systematic racism of those African Americans who were murdered (Gupta, 2020). The teacher-researcher voiced to the summer program student participants that the Zoom summer reading classroom was a safe space where students could discuss the protests and the events surrounding those protests, vent their frustrations, or stop class to talk about racial issues.

Student participants attended the summer reading program sessions four days of the week for one and a half hours during the four-week period. The summer reading program initially began with a class of seven African American student participants. Throughout the duration of the study, one student participant had prior summer obligations and did not complete the summer program, and two student participants would check-in sporadically throughout the course of the study without completing full weeks. Of those two student participants, one student participant contributed to the summer program more consistently and did asynchronous work for a three-week period. In total, although the teacher-researcher started with seven African American student participants, the program ended with five student participants.

As stated in Chapter Three, the typical classroom setting was overtly changed due to COVID-19 this past summer. With all the changes, the summer student participants each had their own individual setting. With some of the student participants, their settings ranged from their bedroom where a desk was present, their living room, or their kitchen table. The setting utilized by the teacher-researcher was a premade classroom setting set up in the living room of her home. At every setting, each student participant had their CLT flipbook, their computer, and the assigned book. The teacher-researcher used the share screen Zoom option to share the flipbook with student participants when they were preparing to have open discussions.

4.5 Interpretation of Results of the Study

To analyze the qualitative data (interviews, observations, and surveys), the teacher-researcher used manual coding methods to decipher any recurring themes evolving from the study. The teacher-researcher first controlled the qualitative data by transcribing the notes into codes and later into themes that would allow the research study's teacher-researcher control and rights (Saldana, 2015). In addition, the teacher-researcher examined the quantitative data from the student participant survey and all types of assessments. The teacher-researcher analyzed the quantitative data by using descriptive statistics of mean, median, and mode. Table 4.1 shows the type of data tool that was used to deliberate each research question.

Table 4.1 *Research Questions and Data Tool*

Research Question	Data Tool
Research Question 1: Does the use of Socratic Seminar combined with Costa's Level of Thinking (as an instructional intervention strategy) aid in ensuring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summative Assessment (pre- and posttest)

reading achievement of rising sixth-grade African American students reading on-grade level?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formative Assessments (CLT Level Quick Checks)
Research Question 2: Does the use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy encourage African American students to ask critical thinking questions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Interview • Parent Survey • Student Participant Survey

4.6 Research Question 1: Socratic Seminar with CLT

Does the use of Socratic Seminar combined with Costa's Level of Thinking (as an instructional intervention strategy) aid in ensuring reading achievement of rising sixth-grade African American students reading on-grade level?

Assessments. The assessments (see Appendices I and M – O) that were given during the study- were the summative assessment of the pre and posttests, and three formative quick checks after each CLT level was completed. Each assessment was teacher-researcher made specifically for the given research study. The goal of the summative assessments was not to compare the student participants, but to compare their reading growth by the pre and posttests. Using the summative assessments would garner insight that would assist the teacher-researcher with determining the progress of the student participants in regards to the CLT levels and their overall reading growth through the summer reading program. The purpose of each formative CLT quick check was to show if the student participants were progressing within each CLT level, and if the teacher-researcher needed to reestablish meaning and offer additional help for student participants to progress to the next CLT level. The CLT level quick checks were not

meant to compare the student participants or to see which student participant was excelling at a specific CLT level.

Formative Assessments. The CLT level quick checks (see Appendices M – O) indicated if there were any progression growth of critical level understanding with the student participants in the different CLT levels. Each CLT levels required the student participant to learn given critical thinking skills, with questioning stems, which would aid in reading growth (Maas, 2016). Moreover, using the questioning stems assisted the student participants with the Socratic Seminar discussions (Griswold et al., 2017).

Table 4.2 *Level Quick Check Progression Growth*

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Level 1 Formative Quick Check Day 8</i>	<i>Level 2 Formative Quick Check Day 12</i>	<i>Level 3 Formative Quick Check Day 16</i>
<i>P1</i>	85%	90%	100%
<i>P2</i>	100%	100%	100%
<i>P3</i>	100%	80%	70%
<i>P4</i>	80%	100%	100%
<i>P5</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>P6</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>P7</i>	60%	80%	100%

Table 4.2 indicates the assessment score each participant received on the Level One quick check. The table shows that two of the student participants had exceeded the understanding of Level One CLT questions with a score of 100%; two student participants met the needed goal with a score in the 80% range; one student participant struggled with the Level One question stems with a score of 60%; and two student

participants did not take the Level One assessment to garner a non-applicable score. To the teacher-researcher, this was an indication to go over needed Level One understandings with the student participants that did not exceed the critical level goal. The mean total was an 85% average, the mode was a score of 100%, and the median score was 85%.

Table 4.2 also indicates the scores the student participants received on the Level Two quick check. The table shows that two of the student participants exceeded the goal of understanding Level Two with a score of 100%; three student participants met the goal with the scores ranging from 90% to 80%, and two student participants did not take the assessment for a non-applicable score. The mean total was a 90% average; the mode was a score of 100% and 80%, and the median score was 90%. The scores showed that the student participants had a better understanding of Level Two and progressed within CLT Level Two.

Finally, the table specifies the scores the student participants received on the Level Three quick check. The Table 4.2 shows that four of the student participants exceeded the goal with 100% and suggested that they had a concrete understanding of CLT Level Three. However, one student participant was progressing with Level Three questioning with a score of 70%; and two participants did not take the assessment to make their score non-applicable. The mean total was a 94% average; the mode was a score of 100%, and the median score was 100%.

In Table 4.2, the teacher-researcher analyzed the student participants' individual CLT Level progression growth to further determine what level areas needed to be readdressed. The formative assessment percentages indicated that P1 had marginal

growth within the levels and as the CLT levels advanced, it became easier for P1 to discuss the questions. Additionally, it showed that P2 continued to excel on the CRT Level quick checks. However, it should be noted that P3 digressed as each CLT Level advanced. P3 was the student participant that took each quick check asynchronously without benefitting from Socratic Seminar with CLT portion of the summer reading program. Along with P1, P4 had marginal growth and began to excel in the CLT Levels. Finally, P7 exhibited growth as each level increased. As with P1, as each level advanced P7 added more to the Socratic Seminar discussions that benefited him during his quick checks.

Although the CLT level quick checks were not used as a comparison tool, each quick check differed. It should be noted that as the student participants increased within the CLT level, the statistical values increased to higher percentages. Table 4.3 highlights the statistical measures of all CLT level quick checks. As the student participants progressed from Level One to Level Three, critical thinking became effortless for them to apply. Student participants used the questioning stems- from the instructional intervention strategy of Socratic Seminar with CLT- to the given reading questions on the quick level assessments.

Table 4.3 *Statistical Measures of CLT Level Quick Checks*

	Mean Average	Mode	Median
Level One Quick Check	85%	100%	85%
Level Two Quick Check	90%	100%	80%
Level Three Quick Check	94%	100%	100%

Summative Assessments. The summative assessments gave access for the teacher-researcher to use the data as a comparison of reading growth with each student participant. In addition, the summative assessments were used as a comparison for CLT progression throughout the study. The pretest was given on day one and the posttest was given on day seventeen. The mean score of the pretest was 66%, the mode was both 80% and 60%, and the median was 70%. The posttest mean score was 85%, there was not a given mode, and the median was 85%.

A Comparison: Pretest Scores & Posttest Scores

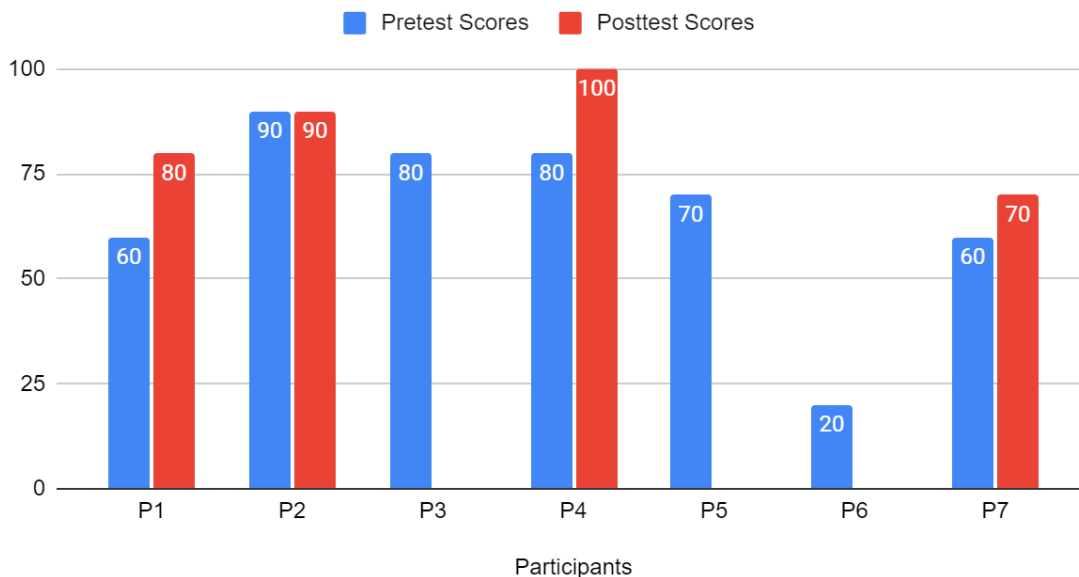


Figure 4.1 *Pre- and Post- Score Analysis*

Of the four students with pre- and posttest data available, three of the four student participants increased their score and the fourth score remained the same. The one student participant that maintained the same average missed the same question in both assessments. The question missed was on Level Two, and it asked the student participant how to define a given word within the text. For the teacher-researcher, this implied that

for future studies a longer period of time for Level One advancing to Level Two needed to reinforced.

Table 4.4 depicts the comparison of the statistical measures of the summative assessments given to the student participants. The pretest summative assessment indicated a below average score among the student participants' critical thinking. Though the average was low, the mode showed that most of the student participants had a moderate level of critical thinking, whereas the other half were still below average. The posttest summative assessment displayed a much higher average among the student participants. Along with the formative assessment data, the summative assessment data revealed that the instructional intervention strategy of Socratic Seminar with CLT was beneficial for reading growth.

Table 4.4 *Statistical Measures of Summative Assessments*

	Mean Average	Mode	Median
Pretest Assessment	66%	80% and 60%	70%
Posttest Assessment	85%	No mode given	85%

By using the instructional intervention strategy of Socratic Seminar with CLT, each student participant added more explanation using CLT stems and applied CRP references in their posttest assessment. Compared to the pretest, the student participants gave more in-depth answers and showed or exemplified a better grasp of responses as the levels increased. Table 4.5 displays examples of how the student participants added more explanation to the critical thinking questions posttest than the pretest critical thinking questions.

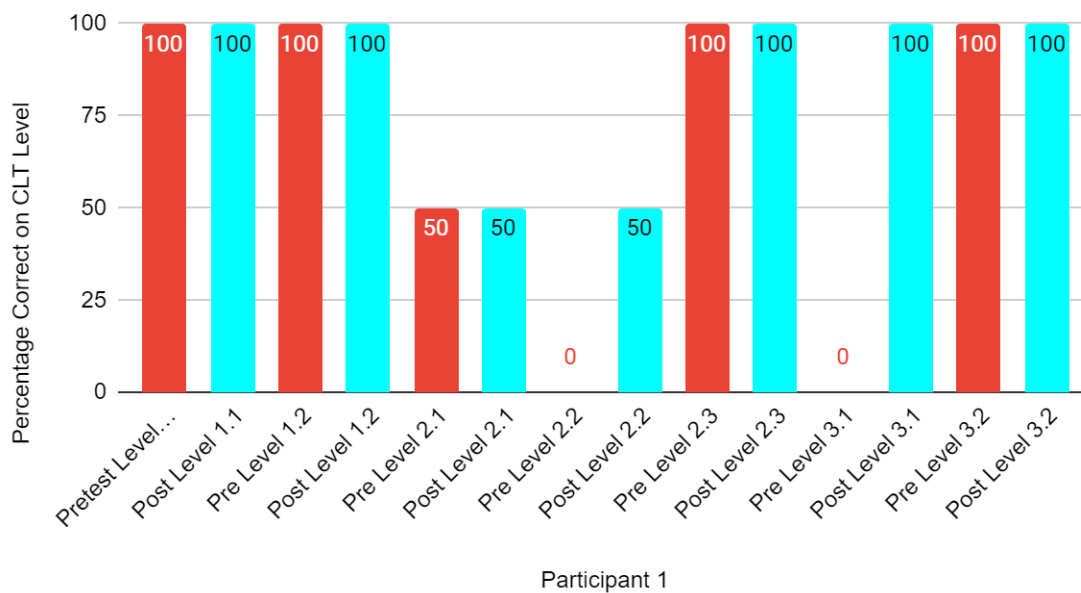
Table 4.5 *In-Depth Critical Thinking Explanation Comparisons*

	<i>Pretest Explanations</i>	<i>Posttest Explanations</i>
<i>How does Billie Holiday's life compare to Martin Luther King, Jr.?</i>	"Her life compared to his because both of them weren't treated fairly." – P1	"Billie Holiday's life is similar to Martin Luther King because she had to face many challenges just like he did and to get where they wanted to be." – P1
<i>What do you think the author's purpose was in writing about Billie Holiday?</i>	"Don't be racist." – P4	"The Authors purpose of writing this book was for people to know how black figures back then were treated and compare it to now." – P4
<i>After reading the article, about Billie Holiday, come up with a new title for the article.</i>	"The Singing Lady" – P1	"The Billie Blues" – P1
<i>If Billie Holiday were still living today, make a prediction on what Billie Holiday would do or say about the injustices done to African Americans.</i>	"I think she would probably stand up for whats right..." – P2	"I would tell her that she was helpful to the black community to stand up for was right. I'd thank her." – P2
<i>Billie Holiday is not in our school history books or discussed a lot in the classroom? Should Billie Holiday be more present in a classroom's history discussion? (Yes or No) Why do you feel this way?</i>	"No because, really, all she did was sing. And singing does not really play a big part in anything." – P7	"Yes, I think she should be talked about in school. Also I think they should talk about more black figures. Not just Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks. Because there are way more important historic moments they could talk about as well." – P7

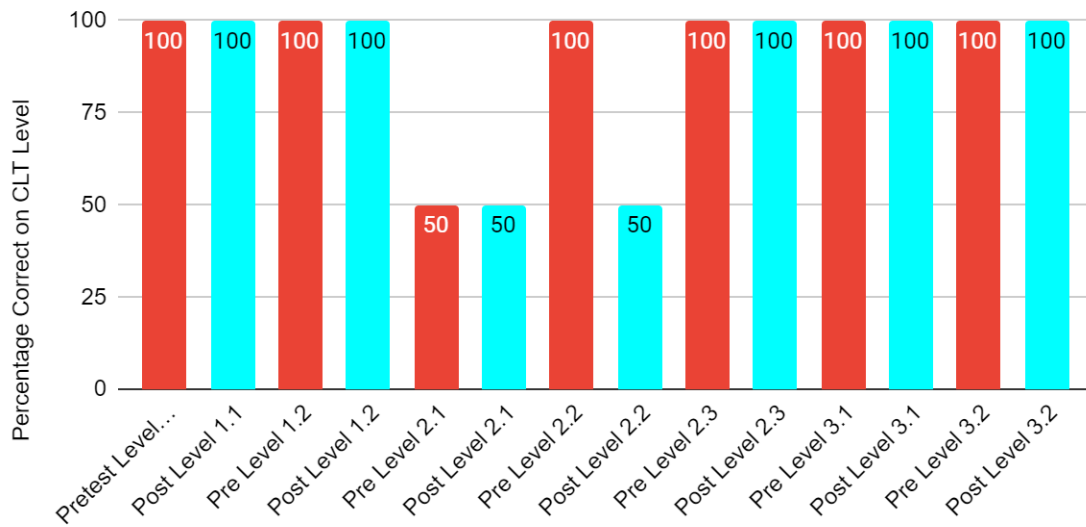
The teacher-researcher showed the student participants' growth with each CLT question stem in another comparison chart. When the teacher-researcher deciphered each question by the CLT levels, it indicated where student participants excelled or had problem areas. Figure 4.2 indicates the growth of each student participant with each CLT

question stem on the pre and posttest. The charts suggest that the student participants were proficient within some critical levels like Level Three but tended to miss details and comprehension understanding when answers were directly from the book. The chart progression showed the teacher-researcher that student participants needed more time to understand and practice for components in Level One and Two.

Pre- and Post- CLT Growth Progression

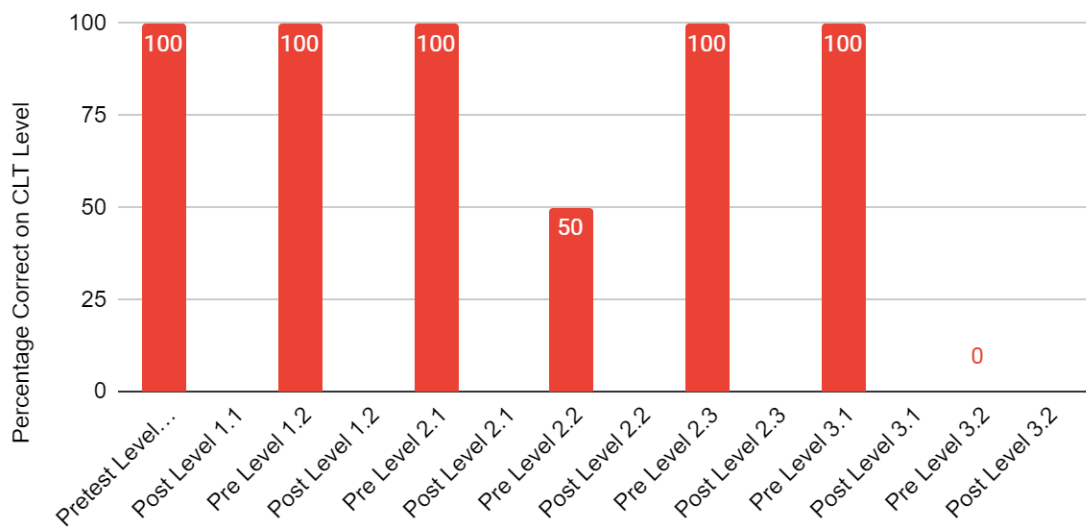


Pre- and Post- CLT Growth Progression



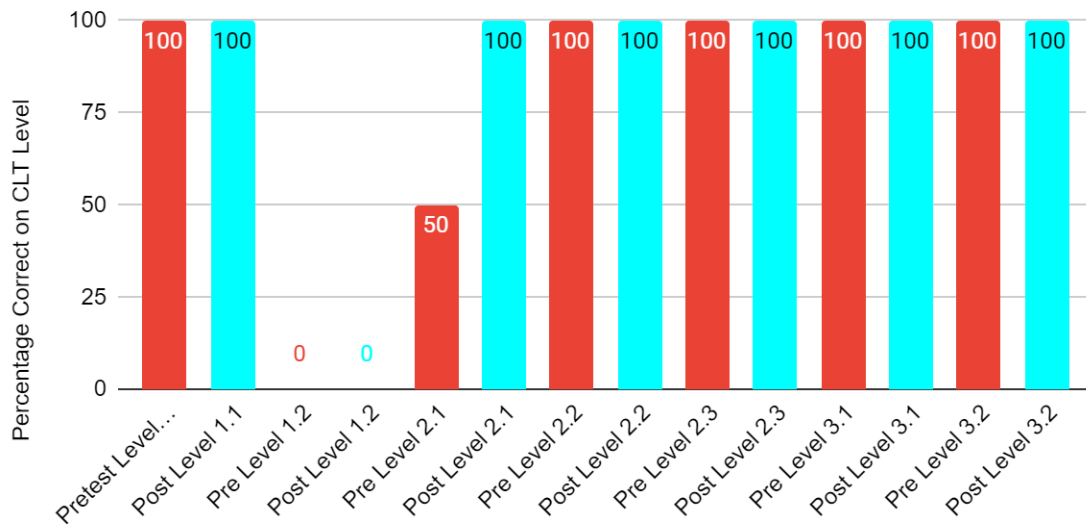
Participant 2

Pre- and Post- CLT Growth Progression



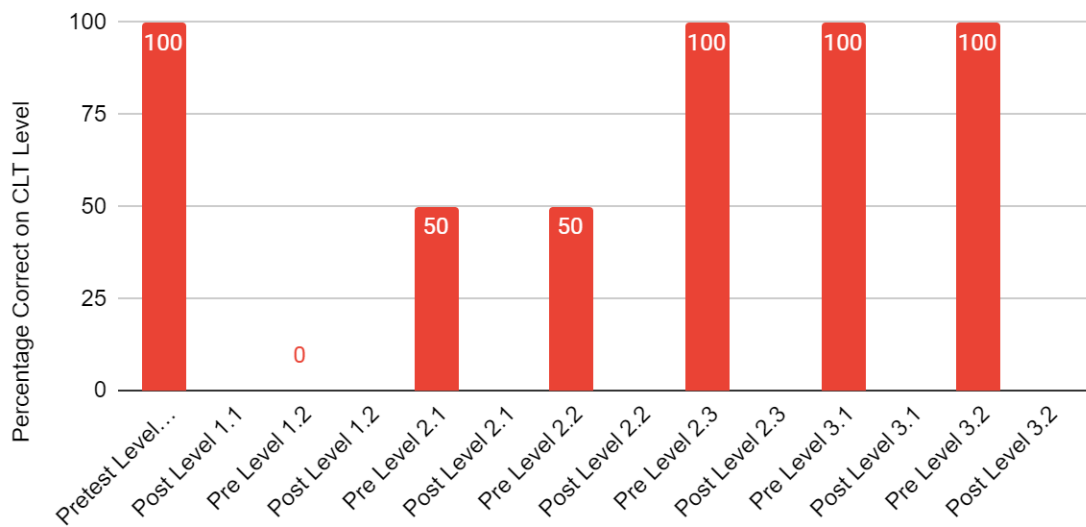
Participant 3

Pre- and Post- CLT Growth Progression



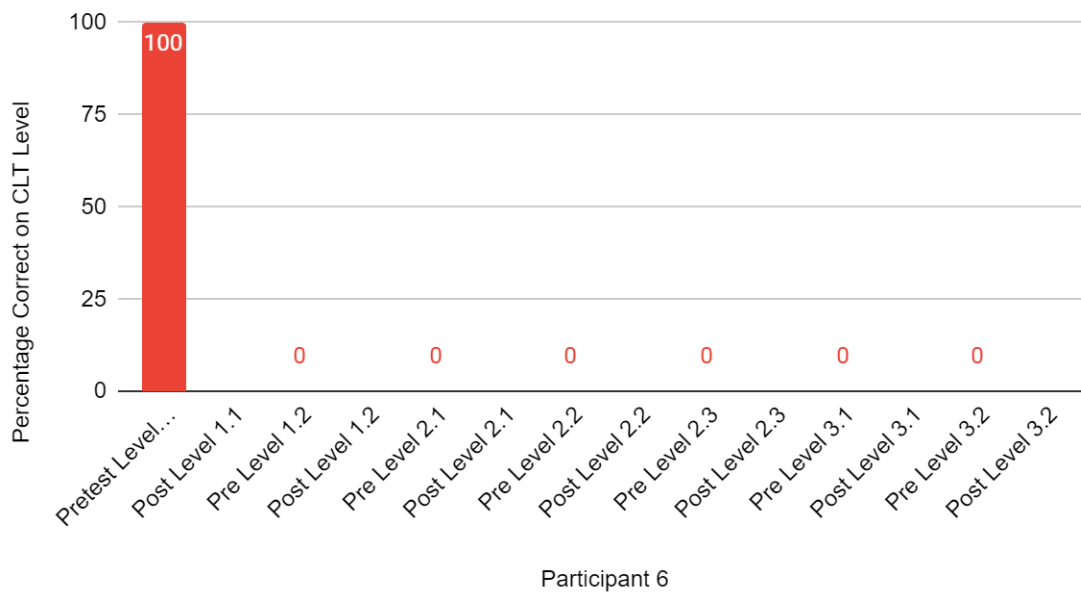
Participant 4

Pre- and Post- CLT Growth Progression



Participant 5

Pre- and Post- CLT Growth Progression



Pre- and Post- CLT Growth Progression

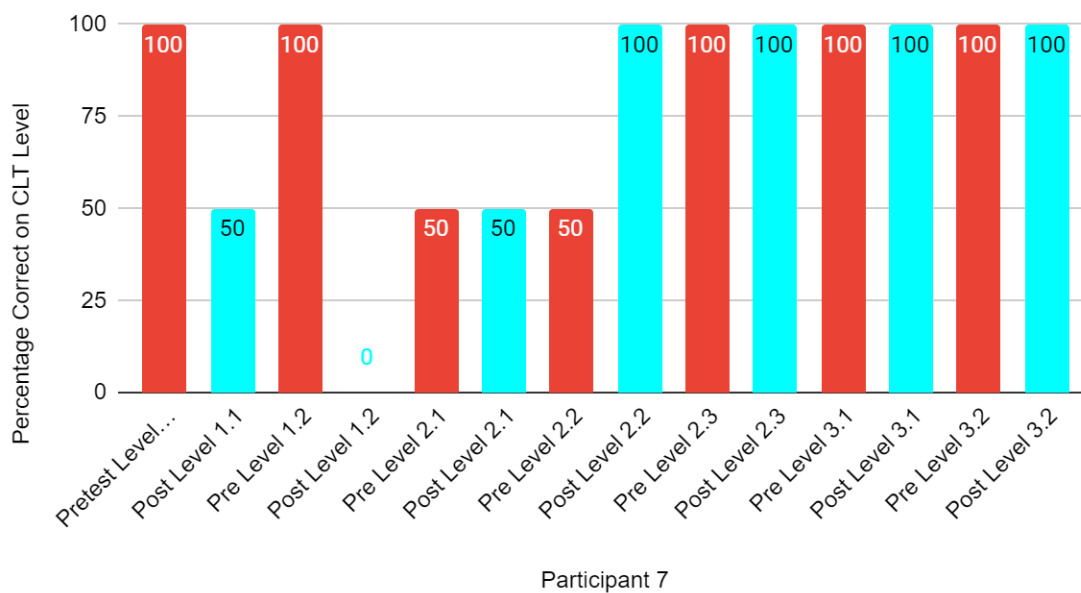


Figure 4.2 Pre- and Post- CLT Question Stem Progression

The posttest CLT question stem progression showed growth among the student participants. There were still areas that some of the student participants needed more

instruction with critical thinking, but their answers in the posttest became more in-depth as seen in Table 4.5.

Research question one asked whether the use of Socratic Seminar combined with CLT would promote reading growth with the rising sixth-grade African American students who read on-grade level. The data collection depicted the results and indicated that when asked to apply critical thinking questions extended from the book, student participants could perform at higher levels. When using Socratic Seminar, it permitted student participants to work on their critical thinking reasoning through discussion in a group, all while allowing the teacher-researcher to be aware of any misconceptions and reading comprehension (Griswold, 2017).

4.7 Research Question 2: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Does the use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) encourage African American students to engage more in reading?

Surveys. The quantitative portion of the study was a survey given to the student participants. Within the survey were Likert scales that had a numerical range or a phrase range. The scales asked student participants questions based on their individual reading that included CRP and Socratic Seminar with CLT questions. The survey, in Figure 4.3, shows that student participants answered either “sometimes” or “yes” depending on the type of question. With the questions asked and the answers given, the indication of the results specified that student participants had a wish for more incorporation of CRP in their lessons. In addition, the survey gave a view of how student participants used higher levels of thinking with their reading.

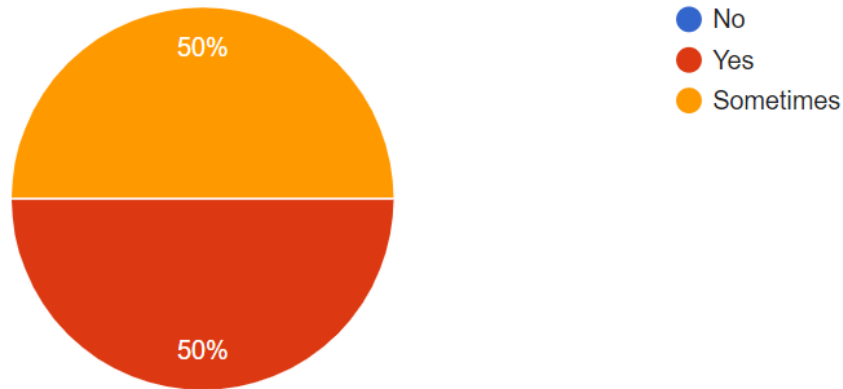
The findings showed that many of the student participants have been encouraged to apply CRP in discussions and teachers have implemented it within their classroom. Finally, the Socratic Seminar was a new type of question. Many of the student participants had a positive view on how Socratic Seminar with CLT could potentially work with their reading growth. Nevertheless, there was one student participant that seemed to be pessimistic on how Socratic Seminar with CLT would aid in reading growth. Two of the student participants did not complete their survey after the pretest because they apparently thought it was an optional choice. The teacher-researcher had the student participants complete the survey after the pretest and dismissed the student participants when they completed all of their assigned work for that day. The teacher-researcher did not get the opportunity to have the two student participants submit their surveys, since they did not return to the summer reading program.

The results indicated that the student participants would be willing to speak about their life experiences in the classroom if they were given the chance. The data showed that student participants were split 50 – 50 in showing encouragement to speak about life experiences in the classroom. In addition, 83.3% of student participants could apply their life experiences to their readings. Unfortunately, 16.7% could not apply those higher-order thinking skills with literature given to them. The data further showed that none of the student participants wanted to think beyond any literature given to them. For the teacher-researcher, this was an indication that there was no higher-order critical thinking exposure given to the student participants. The student participants were subjected to minimal basic reading comprehension questions that did not involve higher-order thinking skills.

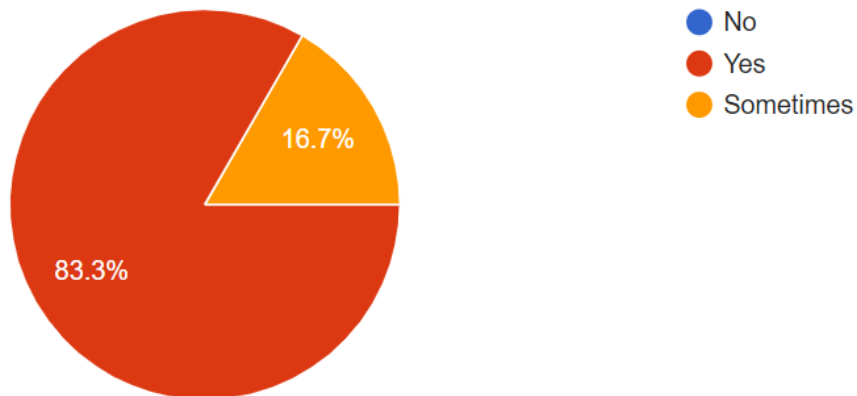
Some Survey Questions and Results

CRP

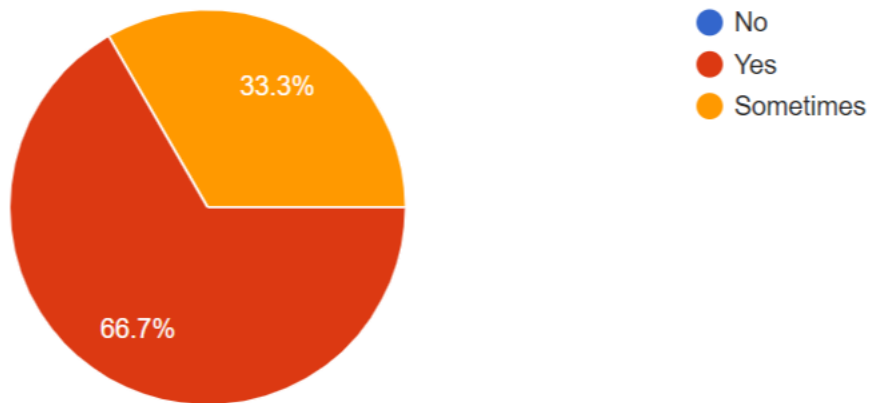
Question 1: I am encouraged to talk about my life in class.



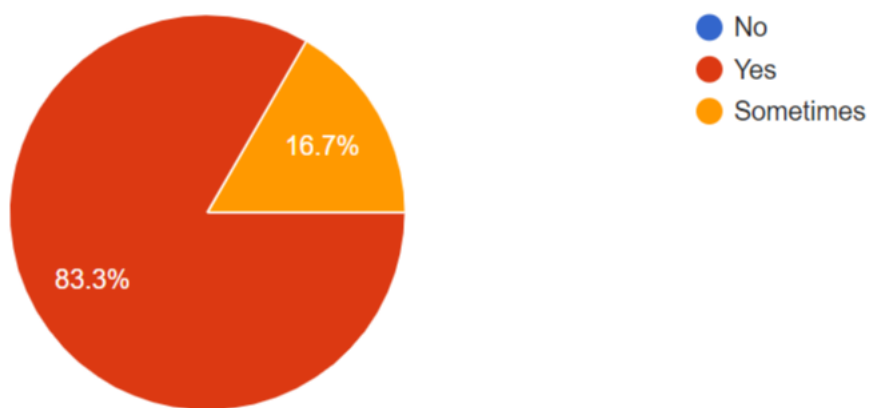
Question 2: I can connect my reading to my life experiences.



Question 3: We are encouraged to talk about social justice (fairness, suffering of others, rights of others) in class.

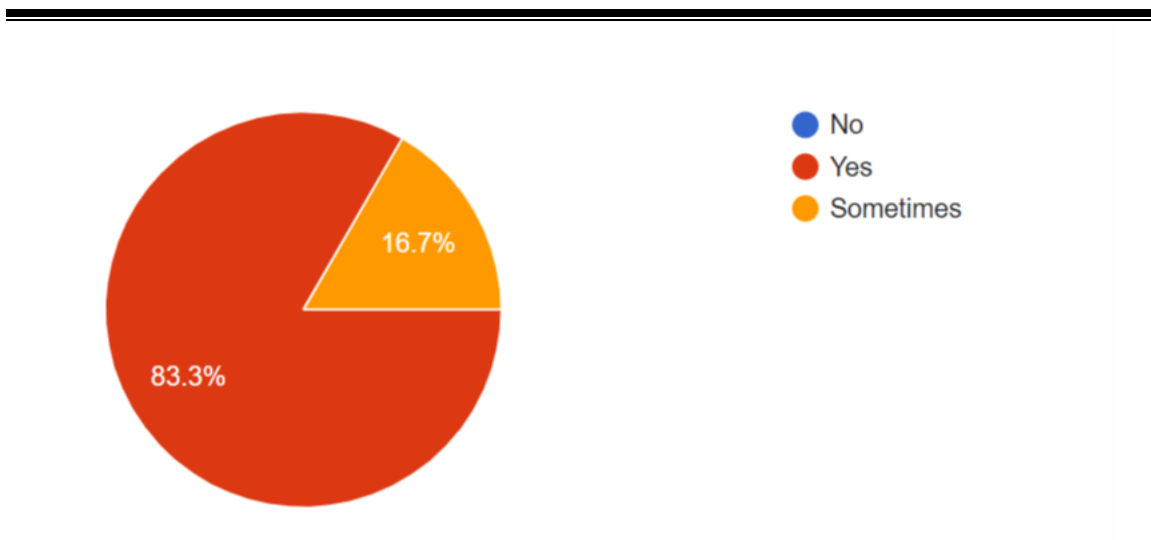


Question 4: My teacher uses materials (books, videos, handouts, music, etc...) that are connected to my interests.



Socratic Seminar with CLT

Question 5: Do you think Socratic Seminar will help your reading growth?



Question 6: Can you think beyond the book to answer any reading questions?
Likert Scale: 1 – I just like answering questions that come directly from the story. 3 – I like to answer questions that make me think beyond what I read.

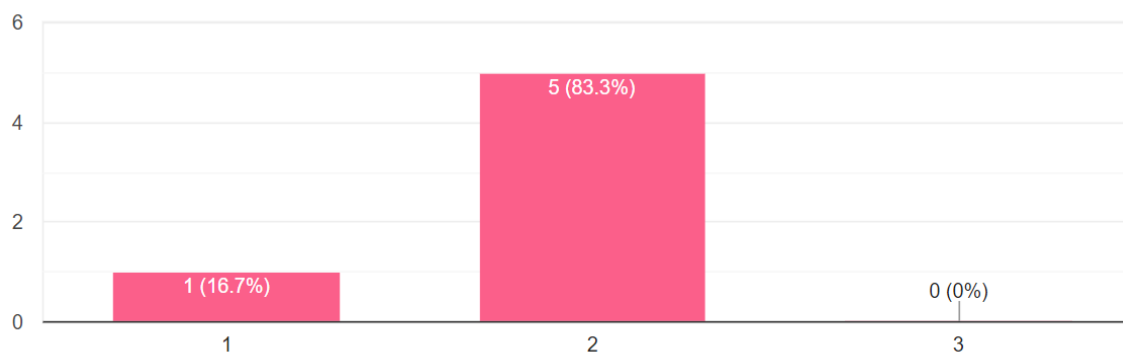


Figure 4.3 *Student Participant Survey Results*

To further answer the second question, Does the use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) encourage African American students to engage more in reading, the teacher-researcher also examined qualitative data from the study. In examining the qualitative data from the study, namely, the surveys, observations, and interviews, three themes emerged. The three themes included the following: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy's Influence on Student Engagement, Student Awareness of Cultural/Racial Disparities with a Desire for Cultural Knowledge, and Issues of Race and Visibility in the

Curriculum. Figure 4.4 displays the emerging themes that resulted from the qualitative data.

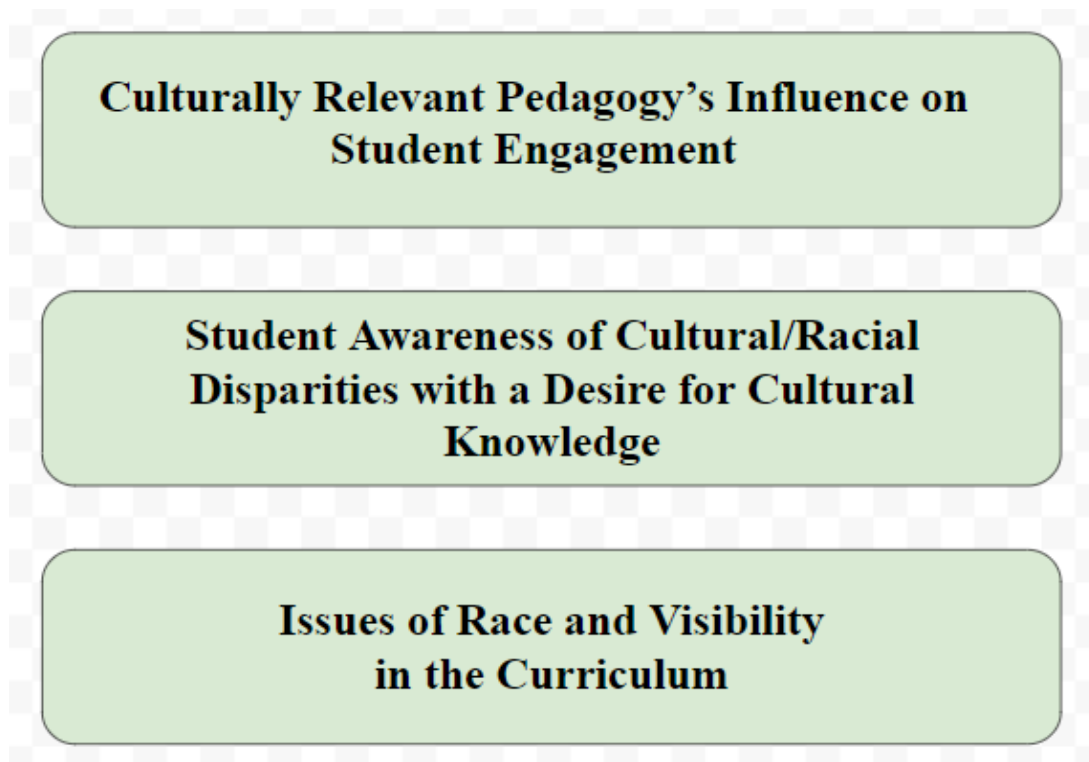


Figure 4.4 *Themes Emerging from Qualitative Data*

Theme 1. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy's Influence on Student Engagement.

The student participants' parents expressed their thoughts that CRP was an essential factor for their child's reading. The teacher-researcher gave the parent survey during the first week and final week of the research study. Both surveys indicated to the teacher-researcher that CRP was a needed factor with student learning. Parents wished for more critical thinking lessons to be applied and a CRP implementation. In the first parent survey, the student participant parents indicated that they believed that CRP was an essential factor for the child's reading. They also expressed that the exposure to African American literature supported the student participants' reading engagement. In the parent survey, a parent stated that after reading the summer book, "he

was eager to read and found it entertaining." A definite change in reading behavior was shown when the same student participant's parent indicated, in the first survey, that the student participant "didn't love to read and had to be told to do so." Other parents indicated that CRP helped their child's reading engagement by affirming that their child "tries to find books that look like her on the cover and tries to read more." Finally, another parent acknowledged that their child "always loved to read, but enjoys it more now with a Black author." Figure 4.5 specifies the analysis of the parental survey, in codes, that further helped solidify the major themes.

Analysis of Parental Survey in Codes

Question #1 and #2: How does your child feel about reading? Do you have an in-depth discussion about any book your child reads?

	<i>Responses/Reactions</i>	<i>Initial Coding</i>	<i>Focused Coding</i>
<i>First Survey</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loves to read without being told • Sometimes reading without being told 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured reading • Face-to-Face (in the classroom) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interests and CRP influence
<i>Final Survey</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loves to read without being told • Not quite loves, but higher than sometimes reading without being told 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured reading • On their own time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interests and CRP influence

Question #3: Do you ask critical questions, about your child's book, that are beyond Costa's Level of Thinking?

	<i>Responses/Reactions</i>	<i>Initial Coding</i>	<i>Focused Coding</i>
<i>First Survey</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. We focus on foundational reading comprehension. • Yes. We work on thinking beyond the story. • Sometimes we work on thinking beyond the story. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher expectations
<i>Final Survey</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes. We work on thinking beyond the story. • Sometimes we work on thinking beyond the story. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher expectations

CRP Questions #4 - #5: It is important for my child to read books that represent them. I would like my child to have more literature that includes their culture and representation in class.

	<i>Responses/Reactions</i>	<i>Initial Coding</i>	<i>Focused Coding</i>
<i>First Survey</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 97 % responses were yes • 3% responses were sometimes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent expectations • Curriculum involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRP implementation
<i>Final Survey</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 % responses were yes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent expectations • Curriculum involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRP implementation

Figure 4.5 *Analysis of Parental Survey in Codes*

The teacher-researcher observations further supported the theme of increased reading engagement through the use of CRP ultimately adding to the Socratic Seminar experience. For instance, the student participants increased their level of Socratic Seminar discussions and gave feedback concerning the book's main character by applying real-life experiences. The student participants treated the main character like a real

person because she represented them. During the Socratic Seminar, P2 and P4 often expressed their disgust of the main character's decisions when confronted with racial comments and actions. One discussion of the main character's allowance of her White roommate's touching her hair opened up a dialogue that revolved around African American hair. The discussion spurred the other two student participants to discuss how being male was no different from females. Meaning, their hair was also subjected to people wanting to touch it or comment on it negatively. One participant spoke out that more books should include "Blackness," and they would then listen more in class. Overall, the student participants became more comfortable with each other and were satisfied with having controlled discussions that voiced their views with the assigned book. In addition, another discussion took on the lack of culture exposure in schools. When the participants were reading, a racial slur of "Oreo" was spoken about one of the characters. The teacher-researcher was shocked that the student participants knew many racial slurs. P7 explained the reason people spoke racial slurs was due to "not having Black history in school" and the lack of knowledge on one's culture. The "N" word was mentioned and the student participants all expressed that though they do not use that word nor like it, but accepted the use of it coming from someone that was African American. Table 4.6 describes examples of the Socratic Seminar with CLT discussions that induced CRP dialogue among the student participants.

Table 4.6 *Examples of CRP Socratic Seminar Discussions*

<i>Socratic Seminar Discussion Topics</i>
1. Some of the characters use racial slurs concerning someone's ethnicity. How do you feel about those names?

2. Do you have friends that are other races?
3. If you were Maizon, would you allow your roommate to touch your hair or comment on how you should take care of it?
4. What would it be like to live and not know any of your Black history in school?
5. If you were to judge or critique this book, what recommendation would you tell someone who has not read it?

Theme 2: Student Awareness of Cultural/Racial Disparities with a Desire for Cultural Knowledge. The overall goal of the student interview was to discuss CRP and understand how the student participants felt about the implementation of CRP in their school curriculum, racial issues, and social justice. As stated beforehand, the teacher-researcher's primary thought was to do the interview separately. Nevertheless, the student participants did not object when they stated that they felt more comfortable interviewing in a group rather than individually. As a group, the student participants added to each other's conversation and expressed themselves more than what the teacher-researcher imagined them doing if they were separate from one another.

The interview was emotional and became heated with expressions of racial injustice. These student participants felt slighted and wanted to learn more about their race and were tired of the lack of representation. The student participants expressed their lack of representation and diversity throughout the school's curriculum.

Throughout the interview, the student participants indicated their personal preference for implementing CRP into their daily lessons. Student participants expressed

that concept by stating that there needed to be more “Black” people in school literature. When the teacher-researcher conducted the interview, the given questions did anger the majority of the student participants. With the exposure of summer 2020, the student participants understood the lack of diversity and representation within their school curriculum. This was after one participant expressed that the only African American people they read about in class were minor characters and the only time schools mention African American books were during Black History Month. Though CRP was not evident in the student participants’ prior classroom experiences, it was evident that CRP was positively implemented during the summer reading program. One example of CRP evidence was the student participants’ eagerness to share and reveal their true feelings concerning diversity. Table 4.7 illustrates parts of the interview with the student participants. Their comments were used to further exemplify the need for CRP implementation in the classroom.

Table 4.7 *Interview Transcript on African American Literature*

Teacher-Researcher Questions	Student Participant Responses
Would you want to read more books like this in school?	<p>P1: Yes</p> <p>P2: I just want to read it. At school we don’t talk about Black main characters.</p> <p>P4: Of course!</p> <p>P7: I would, but not at my school it won’t happen.</p>
Do you think the schools read a lot of African American books?	<p>P1: Agrees with head nods and shaking finger in the air.</p>

	<p>P2: It's a public school and may offend some White people.</p> <p>P4: No. People act like Blacks, but don't want to read about us.</p> <p>P7: Nope! It's not going to happen.</p>
<p>When you read books about people that look like you, how does that make you feel?</p>	<p>P1: Happy, too.</p> <p>P2: Love it, too.</p> <p>P4: I love it. I can actually pay attention in class. No offense.</p> <p>P7: Happy</p>
<p>What books have you read, in your classroom, that have African Americans in it?</p>	<p>P1: We did read a Black book in 5th grade – <i>Bud, Not Buddy</i>. So that is one book.</p> <p>P2: All books we read are about White people.</p> <p>P4: What books? We really don't have Black people in the books we read.</p> <p>Teachers don't want to talk about us.</p> <p>P7: I only read Black books during Black History Month in my classroom.</p>

Based on the interview's discussion, it was evident that the student participants were aware that many of their former teachers did not teach a curriculum that represented their African American culture. The student participants formed their opinions around

the disrespect towards African Americans, which was why there was a lack of diversity within their literature. Overall, the student participants felt their voices were heard and expected some change. One student participant asked to extend the summer reading program to read another book in Jacqueline Woodson's series. The teacher-researcher offered additional extra resources after the summer reading program was completed. During the interview, a student participant asked to extend the lesson time at the end of the remaining weeks to watch African American movies. All in all, the interview showed the teacher-researcher that the student participants wanted more representation and respect about their culture when they are in a classroom setting.

Theme 3. Issues of Race and Visibility in the Curriculum. The interview continued and ventured from African American literature to express their voice in the classroom. The teacher-researcher began by asking how they felt about starting a new school with new teachers. The student participants were okay with starting a new grade and a new setting but were hesitant about the new teachers during the upcoming school year. The hesitation came because the student participants liked having a teacher who resembled them and understood their culture. The teacher-researcher then asked how many African American teachers they had during their school year. The answers ranged from zero to two African American teachers (from the student participants' years in school from PreK to fifth-grade). The teacher-researcher asked this question to perceive how they viewed social justice and race relations in a school setting. Table 4.8 shows the student participants' responses when the interview veered towards questions related to race and visibility in the curriculum.

Table 4.8 *Transcript of Interview on Race and Visibility in the Classroom*

Teacher-Researcher Questions	Student Participant Responses
Sometimes people think that you are too young to engage in racial issues and discussions. Do you agree with this statement?	<p>P1: No</p> <p>P2: No. I have a voice and can help.</p> <p>P4: No. I wish I could just go to an all-Black school and learn more about my history.</p> <p>P7: No.</p>
You won't always have Black teachers. How do you feel about White teachers teaching you Civil Rights or your history?	<p>P1: It would be okay.</p> <p>P2: They will just teach about MLK and Rosa Parks. The same people.</p> <p>P4: You were my first Black teacher and my other teachers at my last school wouldn't even talk about slavery. So, I don't see any White teacher teaching me about my history.</p> <p>P7: During Black History Month? That is the only time they will teach me my history.</p>
Will you speak up if someone (another teacher) does not teach your history correctly?	<p>P1: No.</p> <p>P2: No, but I may slip a note or just tell my mom.</p>

	<p>P4: Yes. I am tired of people not getting it right.</p> <p>P7: It depends on the teacher or I will just tell my mom.</p>
<p>When you go back to school, do you think your teachers will discuss this summer's protest and/or BLM?</p>	<p>P1: Nope.</p> <p>P2: Really. No. We will probably be sent to the guidance counselor.</p> <p>P4: You probably can't say BLM because it may offend some people.</p> <p>P7: Maybe, but I doubt it. They will just mention lockdown and move on.</p>

The interview started slowly but increased as the student participants' conversation became more animated as the teacher-researcher continued asking CRP questions. The student participants shared stories and experiences. The interview indicated a need for more CRP and a deeper review in asking students critical thinking questions in the curriculum. The interview stated to the teacher-researcher that the student participants were aware of the current environment surrounding systematic racism and a deeper delve into representation and social justice in their classroom and the literature provided to them. These rising sixth-grade student participants were eager to discuss social justice and African American culture. For them, this was a new experience. One student participant (P2) mentioned how she wished that the teacher-researcher could teach CRP in her classroom without closing the door in fear that there

would be consequences for teaching literature that was not the same as the other fifth-grade teachers.

Research question two sought to discover if CRP encouraged African Americans to ask critical thinking questions. The data collected from the student participant survey, interview, and observations portrayed their strong feelings and thoughts regarding a needed representation in their classroom literature. When the teacher-researcher actively engaged student participants in rich CRP discussions, they became actively involved in the book and began to apply given literature questions to real-life applications. The teacher-researcher evoked higher-order critical thinking from the student participants by using CRP.

4.8 Summary

In summary, Chapter Four presents the findings of the action research study. A study that used two instructional intervention strategies to see if the implementation of both influenced on-grade level African American students reading growth. Overall, the research study did show areas of the assessment that were influenced by CRP and where the student participants displayed a want from more CRP within their school curriculum. Moreover, the student participants did have some reading growth within the CLT Levels. Unfortunately, not enough data was collected to show enough progression regarding the Socratic Seminar with CLT. Future research can determine if Socratic Seminar with CLT is a beneficial instructional intervention strategy if more time is given. From the research study, the results of the findings were given on an unbiased response (Mertler, 2017). As the teacher-researcher, the given results of the research study are representative of an accurate and unbiased accounting (Mertler, 2017). Chapter Four used a triangulation

mixed-methods analysis that involved both quantitative and qualitative data. The use of the variety of data methods ensured the validity and credibility of the research study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The teacher-researcher organized a summer reading program to conduct an action research study designed with a triangulation mixed-methods design. In the summer reading program, the selected sample of participants were provided an opportunity to participate in a four-week instructional reading program. The program utilized two instructional intervention strategies, the Socratic Seminar with CLT and CRP. This chapter will include the conclusions, recommendations for future research, and an action plan.

5.2 Problem of Practice

The achievement gap and inequities among students of color was a problem that has remained unfixed in education (Ngounou & Gutierrez, 2017; Ravitch, 2014). “On average, Black children enter[ed] school with more poorly developed literacy ... skills” (Henry et al., 2020, p. 1473). The academic achievement gap juxtaposition continued to baffle educators on how it widened among African American students amid other races (Scammacca et al., 2020). “The Black-White achievement gap undermine[d] the future welfare of Black children in the United States” (Henry et al., 2020, p. 1471). Henry et al. (2020) suggested that there was a repetition of inequity among African American students that resulted in low academic achievement. When African American students

were not given equal academic opportunities, the racial inequity was the primary factor in damaging future academic opportunities (Henry et al., 2020).

The problem of practice involved rising sixth-grade African American students reading on-grade level yet not demonstrating growth or excelling (beyond grade level) on given class assessments. “By fifth grade, racial gaps ... in reading ... stay stable through eighth grade” (Henry et al., 2020, p. 1473). Furthermore, the African American students reading on-grade level were not expressing much interest or motivation to excel higher because there were no reading or academic programs that enriched their learning or interests. Scammacca et al. (2020) stated, “Students with high initial achievement grew more slowly in reading” (p. 719). The lack of achievement growth among potentially high-achieving students was based on reading motivation, exposure, and reading skill levels (Scammacca et al., 2020). Research further indicated that after third-grade, students’ in upper grades’ reading growth worsened (Scammacca et al., 2020). Due to a lack of resources and programs, the teacher-researcher provided an intervention incorporating two instructional strategies, Socratic Seminar with CLT and CRP, which targeted the student participants’ reading growth for reading achievement.

5.3 Research Questions

The research questions that steered this mixed-methods action research study were the following:

Research Question 1: Does the use of Socratic Seminar combined with Costa’s Level of Thinking (as an instructional intervention strategy) aid in ensuring reading achievement of rising sixth-grade African American students on-grade level?

Research Question 2: Does the use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) encourage African American students to engage more in reading?

5.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the action research study was to improve the reading growth among rising sixth-grade on-grade level African American students' critical thinking. The goal was to utilize two instructional intervention strategies implementing CRP and Socratic Seminar with CLT. Moreover, research indicated that students' cultural needs influenced reading achievement, and students were prone to find reading lessons more engaging with CRP (Deoksoon, 2018). When shown critical thinking skills, potentially high-achieving students were more encouraged and profited more in reading engagement (Scammacca et al., 2020).

Through the implementation of both instructional intervention strategies of CRP and Socratic Seminar with CLT, the goal was for the research study's student participants to show improvement in their reading progress. Along with improvement in the student participants' reading progress, with the usage of implementing CRP, the student participants needed to understand that although African American students experience barriers, it was up to them to reclaim their personal education (Constantin, 2019).

5.5 Overview of Methodology

The teacher-researcher implemented an action research study that was combined with a triangulation mixed-methods design. Within the research study, the teacher-researcher acknowledged the advantages of the two instructional intervention strategies of CRP and Socratic Seminar with CLT. These two strategies were utilized to determine if their use would yield an increase in achievement for the student participants.

5.6 Results and Findings

The research study findings suggest that the two instructional intervention strategies did help to foster reading growth among the student participants. The observational notes and student participant interviews demonstrated the student participants' need for CRP. The use of the book, which provided African American representation, afforded student participants a type of diverse literature with themes applicable to real-life situations.

Though five of the seven student participants experienced reading growth, the teacher-researcher understood that more work was needed for some student participants to fully learn the CLT levels to better themselves in their Socratic Seminar discussion. The research study used quick checks and the comparison of the pretest and posttest to indicate reading progress within each CLT level. Some student participants did struggle with some of the levels, but when the teacher-researcher began the Socratic Seminars with CLT discussions, each student participant's dialogue improved, and student participants showed a deeper understanding of the book and the associated themes.

Results Related to Existing Literature. Classrooms have experienced a shift in diversity and culture. As a result, educators must acknowledge cultures at every school and address unneeded biases. From summer 2020, educators can no longer teach a Eurocentric ideology. It is 2021, and the need to implement CRP and critical thinking is a priority.

Major Findings 1: CRP in Literature. What is wrong with African American students reading about themselves? When all students are allowed to engage in CRP, it gives voice to the voiceless. Allowing diverse literature requires others to glimpse into

the life of someone different than themselves. It also provides a way for students to share the same struggles and assurances (Koss & Williams, 2018). “Literacy has been described as a means of empowering people to question and change the status quo” (Koss & Williams, 2018, p. 13). Not only is literature a relevant piece in attaining student academic achievement, but literature can play a positive role in helping develop African American students’ identity (Piper, 2019). Indrisano and Chall (1995) emphasized that literature perpetually affects students. “If ... literature [is only used] to teach reading skills or strategies, we will prevent children from growing in their understanding and appreciation of literature” (Indrisano & Chall, 1995, p. 79).

Teachers have a tough role and have to remain unbiased without forcing their personal beliefs on students. Literacy is way for teachers to hear students’ voices and a way to address social injustice or justice (Koss & Williams, 2018). When African American students are given tools of success, they form critical thinking questions around the literature (Piper, 2018).

When CRP is afforded to African American students, teachers have to confront the idea of racial inequity and find solutions to resolve it. The concept of the achievement gap and socioeconomic status will be in the forefront; however, using the given findings are solutions that will decrease the gap and expunge future racial disparities. Garcia and Garcia (2016) stated, “Literacy education has reflected the creation of a sense of ownership on one’s cultural resources and pride in ... cultural identity” (p. 190).

Major Findings 2. Socratic Seminar with Critical Thinking. The use of critical thinking aids students in academic achievement. Research shows that when

students use higher-order thinking skill strategies, their overall critical thinking improves (Burder et al., 2014). The use of critical thinking with Socratic Seminar not only shows an improvement in academic growth, but it allows students a safe and structured place to have open dialogue and discussions about real-life situations (Koss & Williams, 2018). When critical thinking is combined with the Socratic Seminar, it “affords students the ability to uncover themes of social justice and injustice” (Koss & Williams, 2018, p. 5). Though Socratic Seminar is one entity by itself, the implementation of CRP aids in the strength of academic achievement for students. When CRP has been integrated with effective reading instruction strategies, critical thinking improves in reading comprehension skills (Deoksoon, 2018; Tous et al., 2015).

5.7 Action Plan

The teacher-researcher's action plan consisted of three components. First, the teacher-researcher distributed the research study findings among various administrators, principals, teachers, and other educational leaders throughout three elementary school districts in South Carolina, one school district in the District of Columbia; one school district in Texas; and two school districts in Georgia. Due to the lack of feedback and interest- from the teacher-researcher's place of employment, the action study's research findings were shared with these school districts interested in other avenues of reading progress.

Secondly, the study results indicate the importance of African American students being able to see themselves within the curriculum. As a Curriculum Leader within the school and the school district, the teacher-researcher plans to lead future professional

development sessions on strategies to successfully implement CRP within the given curriculum for staff development.

In addition to the actions outlined above, the teacher-researcher communicated with the Equity and Diverse Coordinator at her district and shared her thoughts about the lack of CRP within the curriculum and classroom. In the future, the teacher-researcher plans to fully implement the instructional intervention strategies when her current class returns face-to-face for the rest of the school year. The teacher-researcher will continue to build and work on the student's foundational learning of Socratic Seminar with CLT.

Therefore, the teacher-researcher advocated these instructional intervention strategies and planned to conduct mini-professional development workshops with her colleagues to share the study and its findings. Afterward, the teacher-researcher worked with the school's guidance counselors to create effective growth mindsets among the African American student population. The teacher-researcher and the school's guidance counselor created effective growth mindsets for African American students regarding the summer of 2020 and how COVID-19 disproportionately affected African Americans. The school district did not want teachers to mention BLM and allowed those discussions to only occur within the guidance counselors' space. Other suggestions are listed in the recommendations for practice regarding the next steps.

5.8 Recommendations for Practice

The teacher-researcher recommended the instructional intervention strategies, based on the findings of the study, for usage in the classroom for reading achievement. Though the sample size was small, the results indicated that there is a need to incorporate critical thinking discussions and diversity into students' reading instruction. The data

suggests that when students lack interest, they also lack the motivation to grow and progress to the next level.

Recommendation 1: Cultural Acceptance. African American students spend more time in the classroom than they normally do at their home. Therefore, the first recommendation is to invest in programs that hold interest to African American students. In order to know which programs hold interest, teachers must take the first step in knowing their students. Building personal relationships with students is a necessity for attaining a connection to building the student's academic growth (Bidwell & Stinson, 2016).

Recommendation 2: Cultural Relevant Pedagogy Training. To successfully implement CRP in the classrooms, teachers must go through training. When a new curriculum is given to the teachers in the school district, they have to go through countless hours of workshops and activities. Teachers need to know how to implement CRP fully. The second recommendation is to make teachers aware of their unsaid biases, and to confront any stereotypes and racial inequities that they may harbor towards African Americans or other students of color (Ngounou & Gutierrez, 2017). Confronting unsaid biases and stereotypes will aid students' growth mindset and academic achievement. Allowing teachers to engage themselves and step out of their comfort zone is needed training. CRP training may not be an easy process, but it is a training that is long overdue. Due to BLM and STN, teachers need to be socially conscious and have an understanding of how their African American students feel. As teachers, we have to set the standard for students and provide a safe space environment (Cholewa et al., 2014). When a CRP environment has not been successfully implemented, African American

students will not succeed in that given environment (Cholewa et al., 2014). “Teachers using [CRP] are not only positively impacting students’ academics, but [they are also impacting] students’ psychological well-being” (Cholewa et al., 2014). The successful training of teachers can lead to the guidance of future teachers. Combining all efforts will link African American students’ academic growth by implementing cultural aspects and a diverse curriculum (Cholewa et al., 2014).

Recommendation 3: Using Socratic Seminar Techniques. The final recommendation is the active teaching of the Socratic Seminar with CLT. Socratic Seminar is an instructional intervention strategy that benefits students’ critical thinking (Burder et al., 2014; Koss & Williams, 2018). Burder et al. (2014) claimed critical thinking was a vital component of academic skills. Indrisano and Chall (1995) further indicated that when students reading expanded, their ability to use critical thinking broadened. Use of the Socratic Seminar aided in the management of higher-order learning through interactive discussions, which allowed students to actively collaborate with peers on given topics (Burder et al., 2014). The active engagement of all students has been the teachers’ priority. Teachers looking for interactive and engaging strategies that involve active participation should be made aware of this strategy. Using the Socratic Seminar does increase academic achievement (Burder et al., 2014). When students used the Socratic Seminar, teachers saw a more significant improvement in their critical thinking skills (Burder et al., 2014). Additionally, using the Socratic Seminar is seen as a “strategy that is effective and powerful in the classroom” (Koss & Williams, 2018, p. 3). This strategy enriches the teacher’s instruction by incorporating critical

thinking skills and allowing students to engage in dialogue about real-life experiences (Koss & Williams, 2018).

5.9 Implications for Future Research

The research study had its fair share of limitations, but the study can be recreated with larger sample sizes. Because of summer lockdown and limitations of implementing non-scripted material in the teacher-researcher's school setting, the student participant sample was convenient. The teacher-researcher chose to continue with the students from her former classroom and one that she tutored, since a relationship had already been established. For future purposes, it would help to expand the original sample size, expand the study's timeframe, and include students of other minority races.

The research study implies that additional research into Socratic Seminar with CLT demands a longer time period, but proves that with discussion and dialogue students become vested and motivated in their learning. Also, there is a vested interest in African American students in regards to how they will respond to the implementation of CRP. As stated beforehand, representation does matter. African American students appreciate seeing themselves within the curriculum. Another area of importance is that school districts and administrators must have a vested interest in their African American students' achievement. In addition, this is a sign for educators to see the potential in African American students and not disregard their intelligence and potential. The teacher-researcher focused on Socratic Seminar with CLT and CRP. Future researchers should incorporate how the growth mindset of academic motivation is effected when students are taught with a CRP curriculum. Future research studies could possibly use these interventions within a small or large group setting for longer periods of time.

This action research study verified how the implementation of Socratic Seminar with CLT and CRP effected the reading growth among sixth-grade on-grade level African American students. During the research, the teacher-researcher ensured credibility and validity for all data tools that impacted the action research. The data proved that the instructional interventions had an importance among the student participants in the study. The data disclosed that though there was reading progress, the study could have been extended using a variety of CRP literature.

The teacher-researcher shared the finding with colleagues and within other districts. Subsequently, the teacher-researcher has plans to present the findings in mini-professional development workshops and will continue to study more on CRP by attending conferences and workshops conducted by Zaretta Hammond.

5.10 Summary

This action research study concluded that the impact of the two instructional intervention strategies were beneficial to the student participants' reading growth. The teacher-researcher understood that the achievement gap- among African American students and other races- will not automatically disappear with one study. However, it was important to reflect that the instructional intervention strategies illustrated the need for future research in reading growth. The student participants were leaders in the making, and they addressed what was already known by every educator - that representation does matter in the curriculum. Exposing students to critical thinking questions evoked their thinking process to read beyond the text, and students of various races would not progress academically when they did not see themselves represented within the school curriculum.

We are living in a new normal. As educators, by not acknowledging every color and culture, we are only perpetuating the past struggles that African Americans faced when they were not permitted to get an education. As an educator, it is time to be an advocator for our students and shape their education toward academic success.

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APPENDIX A

PARENT PERMISSION FORM

Permission To Conduct Instructional Strategies in Reading Study

August 12, 2019

Ms. Amy C. Waddell

5th Grade Teacher, [REDACTED]

Dear Parents of Room 204:

I am writing to request permission to conduct my research study with your child. I am currently enrolled in the Curriculum and Instruction program at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, SC, and am in the process of writing and conducting my dissertation. The study will focus on the use of instructional strategies (Socratic Seminar and Costa's Level of Thinking) to promote reading achievement.

I will be observing, providing surveys on their thoughts about Socratic Seminar and reading, and using data to track their growth (names will not be used to protect their identities). Please keep in mind, all data will remain absolutely confidential and anonymous. Should this study be published, only the results will be documented.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at any time during the study. You may contact me at my email address: amycw98@gmail.com or waddella@clarke.k12.ga.us. If you agree, please sign below and return the signed form. Alternatively, kindly email me a note of permission acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this study with your child.

Sincerely,

Amy C. Waddell

APPENDIX B

PARENT SURVEY



Parent Survey

A survey to let me know how you feel about your child's reading. All responses will remain confidential.

* Required

1. What is your name? *

Your answer

2. How does your child feel about reading? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Does not like to read	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Loves to read without being told

3. Do you have an in-depth discussion about any book your child reads? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
No. I just make sure the book is finished.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Yes. We have discussions about the book that relates to real-life situations.

4. Do you ask critical questions, about your child's book, that are beyond Costa's Level of Thinking? *

1 2 3 4 5

No. We focus on foundational
reading comprehension.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Yes. We work on thinking
beyond the story

5. Do you think that using critical thinking strategies will help your child's reading growth? *

1 2 3 4 5

No. You should focus on
comprehension skills

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Yes. Critical thinking will help
them think between and
beyond the text as well as
understanding comprehension
skills.

6. Do you ask questions about the book while your child reads? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

7. Do you make sure your child reads throughout the week? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

8. What are your child's strengths in reading? *

Your answer

9. What are your child's difficulties in reading? *

Your answer

10. What is your reading goal for your child? *

Your answer

11. It is important for my child to read books that represent them. *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

12. I do not mind when my child applies real life applications to their reading. *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

13. I talk about social justice (fairness, suffering of others, rights of others) at home. *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

14. I feel comfortable about my child sharing their thoughts, opinions, or experiences in class. *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

15. I would like my child to have more literature that includes their culture and representation in class. *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

Submit

Page 1 of 1

APPENDIX C

STUDENT SURVEY



Student Reading Survey

Please read the questions carefully and truthfully answer them the best you can. Thank you!

* Required

1. I am encouraged to talk about my life in class. *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes

2. I can connect my reading to my life experiences. *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes

3. When reading a new story, we are encouraged to think about how different people think. *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes

4. We have rules for how to speak and debate respectfully in our classroom. *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes

5. We are encouraged to talk about social justice (fairness, suffering of others, rights of others) in class. *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes

6. My teacher uses materials (books, videos, handouts, music, etc.) that are connected to my interests. *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes

7. My teacher learns from my classmates and me. *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes

8. I have the opportunity to learn about topics I am interested in or concerned about. *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes

9. My teacher has high expectations for my behavior and my peers. *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes

10. If students do not follow a rule, my teacher tells them in a respectful way. *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes

11. My teacher keeps me on task in order to help me achieve my goals. *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes

12. I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts, opinions, or experiences in class. *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes

13. Do you think Socratic Seminar will help with your reading growth? *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes

14. How do you think you will like applying Socratic Seminar with your reading? *

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| I will not like it. I just want to read the book. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | I will love it. I cannot wait to have discussions about what I am reading. |

15. Can you think beyond the book to answer any reading questions? For example, after you read a story could you discuss how you would change the story or choose another title. *

	1	2	3	
I just like answering questions that come directly from the story.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I like to answer questions that make me think beyond what I read.

16. Do you discuss what you read with anyone? Meaning, do you share your thoughts about what you think? *

	1	2	3	
I just read the book.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I like to share my opinion about the book or books I read.

17. How much do you like to read? *

	1	2	3	
I only read when I am told.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I love to read and read without being told.

Submit

APPENDIX D
OBSERVATION NOTES

<p style="text-align: center;">Taking the Discussion from the Teacher...Leading to the Student</p> <p>Instructions: This tool can be used for the teacher to help observe the students use critical thinking skills.</p> <p>Student Name: _____</p>
<p>Asking Questions: The student asked appropriate stem questions for the level being observed.</p> <p>Evidence and Examples:</p>
<p>Relied on Self: The student took the lead to ask stem questions for the level being observed.</p> <p>Evidence and Examples:</p>
<p>Relied on Teacher or Peers: The student relied more on teacher or peers to ask stem questions for the level being observed.</p> <p>Evidence and Examples:</p>

<p>Moving Beyond: The student attempted to move beyond the observed level to ask higher level critical questions:</p> <p>Evidence and Examples:</p>
<p>Distractions: The student had distractions during the program.</p> <p>Evidence and Examples:</p>
<p>Culturally Relevant Teaching: The decision to use an African American author and a book dealing with racism and showing representation made a difference or did not make a difference.</p> <p>Evidence and Examples:</p>
<p>Additional Notes:</p> <p>Evidence and Examples:</p>

APPENDIX E
COSTA'S LEVEL OF THINKING FLIPBOOK

Costa's Level of Thinking Flipbook



This book is designed to increase your reading comprehension and questioning. Use the key/vocabulary words and question stems, in each level, as we progress throughout the weeks.

Name: _____

Level 1: Gathering

This is the first and lowest level. We will begin at this level to help gather information.

Key and Vocabulary Words

Complete
Define
Describe
Identify
List
Observe

Recite
Repeat
Name
State
Recall
Label

Record
Summarize
Express
Report
Generalize
Tell

Question Stems

What information is given?

Locate...

List the...

When did?..

Give me an example of...

Why did...

Where did...

Illustrate how...

What events led to?..

Describe in your own words...

Who/what were the main...

What does ____ mean?

What is the definition of?..

What is?..



Level 2: Processing

This is the middle level. We will incorporate Level 1 with Level 2 to process our reading information.

Key Words

Compare
Contrast
Classify
Explain (why?)
Distinguish
Sort

Infer
Analyze
Dramatize
Use
Question
Compose

Plan
Revise
Outline
Separate
Discriminate

Question Stems

What additional information is needed?..
Compare and contrast...
What are you being asked to find?
If...then...
Would you have done?..
What information supports your claim?
What is important?..

Describe in your own words...
How else could you?..
What is the main idea?
Does it make sense to?..
What occurs when?..
Give an example of?..
What evidence?..
What other ways?..
Explain the concept of...



Explain it!

Level 3: Applying

This is the highest level. We will apply what we learned from levels 1 and 2 for our information.

Key Words

Evaluate
Imagine
Predict
Speculate
Hypothesize
If/Then

Judge
Forecast
Value
Assess
Rate
Justify

Choose
Decide
why or why not?
Prepare

Question Stems

Design a... to show...
what would happen to...if...?
Predict what will happen if...
Pretend you are...
Design a scenario...
what is the most compelling part?..
If you were there, would you?..
Describe what might occur...
what significance does this hold for?..
what would the world be like?..
what would it be like to live?..

what significance does this hold?..
what do you think will happen?
what type of evidence?..
Could this have really?..



Level 1 - You can point to the correct answer in the text. You are usually recalling information.

Example 1: Name the main characters in the Harry Potter series.



Example 2: What costume does Black Panther wear?



Level 2 - You can infer answers from what the text is trying to tell you by finding answers in different places. You are using Level 1 to help process more information.

Example 1: Compare and contrast the Sun and Earth's moon.



Example 2: How does Elsa's understanding of herself change throughout the movie?



Level 3 - You have to think beyond what the text is trying to tell you. You will need to use your prior knowledge and experience.

Example 1: Use what you know about the Sun to analyze why it is uninhabitable.



Example 2: How might a young Black boy see Black Panther as a hero?



More Question Stems:

Level 1:

Describe what happens
when...
How is (are)...?
How would you define...?
How would you
recognize...?

what do you remember
about...?
what would you choose...?
when did...?
why did...?
what information is given?

Locate in the story
where...
when did the event take
place?
Illustrate the part of the
story that...
what events led to...

Level 2:

Elaborate on...
How can you describe...?
How would you
compare/contrast...?
How would you
differentiate
between...and...?
How would you express...?
How would you identify...?
what can you infer from...?

what can you say about...?
what is the main idea of...?
what would happen if...?
will you restate...?
would you have done the
same thing as...?
what information supports
your explanation?
what was the message in
this text?

Give me an example of...
Describe in your own
words what...means.
what does...suggest about
...’s character?
what is the author trying
to prove?
what lines of the poem
express the poet’s
feelings about...

Level 3:

How could you verify...?
How would you determine which facts...?
Rank the importance of...
what choice would you have made...?
Explain your reasoning.
what criteria would you use to assess...?
what is the most important...?
Tell why.

what is your favorite...?
why?
what would you suggest...?
what is your opinion of...?
Support your response.
Design a... to show...
Predict what will happen to... as... is changed.
write a new ending to the story or event...
Add something new on your own that was not in the story...

Pretend you are a character in the story.
Rewrite the episode from your point-of-view.
Could this story have really happened? why or why not? If you were there, would you...?
How would you solve this problem in your life?

Socratic Seminar Questions

Opening Question	
Example	Sample
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the story Directs you into the story Ask your question to get more than a one-word answer <p>These are more concrete questions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the theme of the story? What can you conclude from the story? Could the main character(s) have switched places? Why or why not? What might be another good title? Today, what famous person is like the main character? Why?
Core Question	
Example	Sample
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the story Explain a passage from the story using "how" or "why" <p>These questions are moving from Level 1 to Levels 2 and 3.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why does the main character think...? How do you support your answer from the story?
Closing Question	
Example	Sample
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This question establishes importance Applying to the real-world Personalize the discussion to your life <p>These questions are Level 3.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would you change the ending? How does...connect to...? Predict how the story will eventually end. Justify your answer.

APPENDIX F

LEVEL ONE QUESTION STEMS

Maizon at Blue Hill

Tentative Critical Thinking Question Stems Chapters 1 - 8

Level 1.1 (Remember):

1. Describe what Blue Hill is working on or lacking at the school?
2. Why can Grandma not make the whole trip?
3. List all the people Maizon said would not be at Blue Hill?

Level 1.2 (Show Understanding):

1. Explain why you think Maizon's vision was blurred.
2. Rewrite how Maizon said goodbye to Grandma.
3. Give examples of how Charli is different from Maizon.
4. Discuss why some people would not consider Morehouse, Spelman, or Howard as Ivy League schools.

APPENDIX G

LEVEL TWO QUESTION STEMS

Maizon at Blue Hill

Tentative Critical Thinking Question Stems Chapters 9 - 18

Level 2.1 (Use Understanding):

1. There are many uses of figurative language throughout the story. Use an example and translate its meaning.
2. How does the use of figurative language enrich the writing?
3. Practice using figurative language throughout the day in your vocabulary and conversations.

Level 2.2 (Examine):

1. How does Ms. Woodson use "home" as one example of theme in the story?
2. What evidence do you see that supports this?

Level 2.3 (Create):

1. Create an expression of what "home" means to Maizon.
2. How do you define "home"?

APPENDIX H

LEVEL THREE QUESTION STEMS

Maizon at Blue Hill

Tentative Critical Thinking Question Stems Chapters 19 - 21

Level 3.1 (Decide):

1. Write a summary of the Maizon at Blue Hill and write a recommendation of the book to someone who has not read it.
2. Predict how Maizon will overcome hardships that she faced at Blue Hill?

How do you overcome hardships in your life?

Level 3.2 (Supportive Evidence):

1. Analyze how Ms. Woodson conveys how people can find the courage to overcome obstacles. Why do you think this?
2. How did Maizon overcome obstacles in her life? Support your answer with evidence from the story.
3. Analyze how each writer conveys how people can find the courage inside themselves to overcome. How does this statement apply to current situations in the nation?

APPENDIX I

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT (PRE/POSTTEST)

The text and images are from "America's Story from America's Library" by the Library of Congress.

This lady could sing the blues! Jazz singer Billie Holiday, later nicknamed "Lady Day," was born on April 7, 1915, in Baltimore, Maryland. In her autobiography, *Lady Sings the Blues*, Holiday says, "Mom and Pop were just a couple of kids when they got married; he was 18, she was 16, and I was three." Despite a challenging childhood and no formal musical training, Billie Holiday made her professional singing debut in Harlem nightclubs in 1931. By 1933, she had made her first recordings. . . .



Holiday sang her heart out about the inhumanity she experienced as an African American.

Born Eleanora Fagan, she gave herself the stage name Billie after Billie Dove, an early movie star. While becoming a star, Holiday faced racism. Some laws created separate facilities, public spaces, and seats on buses for blacks, and some restaurants would serve only white people. As a result, Holiday sometimes found herself singing in clubs that refused service to blacks. Her 1939 version of "Strange Fruit," a song about lynching, was described as the most haunting and sad "expression of protest against man's inhumanity to man that has ever been made in the form of vocal jazz."



Lady Day sings her life: Billie Holiday in 1947.

Billie Holiday worked with many jazz greats including Count Basie and Benny Goodman. She sang in small clubs, large concert halls, and the film *New Orleans*. She even arranged and composed her own songs such as "I Love My Man" and "God Bless the Child." Many people mourned the loss of "Lady Day" when she died in New York at the age of 44. . . .

This article from the Library of Congress has no known copyright restrictions.

Readworks, 2020 Retrieved from

<https://www.readworks.org/article/Billie-Holiday/d064cdf0-32c6-469e-9009-5f9c4b399e3c#!articleTab:content/>



Billie Holiday Assessment

Do your best and go back to the article if you need help with any of the questions.

* Required

What is your name? *

Your answer _____

1. In the text, what nickname does Billie Holiday later go by in her life? (Level 1.1) *

- ☐ A. She went by Lady Day.
- ☐ B. She went by Eleanor Fage.
- ☐ C. She went by Strange Fruit.
- ☐ D. She had no nickname.

2. When was Eleanora Fagan born? (Level 1.1) *

Short answer text

.....

3. Give two examples of how African Americans had to deal with racist laws.
(Level 1.2) *

- ☐ A. African Americans were told to stay at home.
- ☐ B. They were not allowed to ever call the police for any help.
- ☐ C. Buses made special seats, in the back, for African Americans.
- ☐ D. There were restaurants that would not serve African Americans.

4. Read this sentence from the text: "Despite a challenging childhood and no formal musical training, Billie Holiday made her professional singing debut in Harlem nightclubs in 1931." Based on the information in the text, what might the phrase "no formal musical training" mean here? (Level 2.1) *

- ☐ A. An accepted rule
- ☐ B. An evening gown
- ☐ C. A type of dance or social event
- ☐ D. A manner that is official or proper

5. Based on the information in the text, how did people feel about Billie Holiday?
(Level 2.1) *

- ☐ A. She was very loved.
- ☐ B. She was not well-known.
- ☐ C. She was a selfish person.
- ☐ D. She was a controversial woman.

6. How does Billie Holiday's life compare to Martin Luther King, Jr.? (Level 2.2) *

Your answer _____

7. What do you think the author's purpose was in writing about Billie Holiday?
(Level 2.2) *

Your answer _____

8. After reading the article, about Billie Holiday, come up with a new title for the article. (Level 2.3) *

Your answer _____

9. If Billie Holiday were still living today, make a prediction on what Billie Holiday would do or say about the injustices done to African Americans. (Level 3.1) *

Your answer _____

10. Billie Holiday is not in our school history books or discussed a lot in the classroom? Should Billie Holiday be more present in a classroom's history discussion? (Yes or No) Why do you feel this way? (Level 3.2) *

Your answer _____

APPENDIX J
AUTHOR SLIDESHOW

JACQUELINE WOODSON

The featured author in our Book Club

THE AUTHOR





MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR...

Alicia Keyes
To the readers

BACKGROUND OF JACQUELINE WOODSON

"In the more than two decades since she published her first children's book, Jacqueline Woodson has written some two dozen works and has left an indelible mark on the picture book, middle grade, and young adult landscape. She has won three Newbery Honors, a Coretta Scott King Award and three Coretta Scott King Honors, has three National Book Award nominations, and was won the 2006 Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement" (Lodge, 2012).



Reference:

Lodge, S. (2012). Q & A with Jacqueline Woodson. Retrieved from

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-book-news/article/50241-q-a-with-jacqueline-woodson.html>

MAIZON AT BLUE HILL



A PREVIEW...

"Maizon, 12, wins a scholarship to Blue Hill, an exclusive, girls-only academy in Connecticut. She reluctantly leaves her Brooklyn home for unfamiliar surroundings, apprehensive about being one of only five African American students at the school... Maizon neatly avoids predictability while offering a perspective on racism and elitism" (Publishers Weekly, n.d.).

Reference:

Publishers Weekly. (n.d.). *Maizon at Blue Hill*. Retrieved from <https://www.publishersweekly.com/9780385307963>

THEME

Ms. Woodson uses the "I Shall Overcome" theme throughout this story. Think about how you can find courage within yourself.

APPENDIX K

CLASS SCHEDULE

Book Club Reading Schedule

Zoom Meeting ID: 810 6355 3805

Password: Amy15

Each student will receive a personal copy of the Book Club's required reading.

We will be reading Maizon at Blue Hill by Jacqueline Woodson.

Date and Time	Reading	Activities Planned
June 22, 2020 10 AM – 11:30 AM	Introduction of Book Club's recommended reading and Slideshow about the author	Go over Flipbook Go over Zoom Meeting Rules Pretest Student Survey
June 23, 2020 10 AM – 11:30 AM	Reading assignment with <u>Maizon at Blue Hill</u> (Chapters 1 – 3)	Practice critical thinking with Level 1.1 question stems (Recalling Information)
June 24, 2020 10 AM – 11:30 AM	Reading assignment with <u>Maizon at Blue Hill</u> (Chapters 4 - 6)	Practice critical thinking with Level 1.2 question stems (Recalling Information)
June 25, 2020 10 AM – 1:30 AM	Reading assignment with <u>Maizon at Blue Hill</u> (Chapters 7 - 8)	Quick Check with Level 1 How to conduct a Socratic Seminar with Level 1
June 29, 2020 10 AM – 11:30 AM	Reading assignment with <u>Maizon at Blue Hill</u> (Chapters 9 - 11)	Practice critical thinking with Level 2.1 question stems (Making Sense of the Information)
June 30, 2020 10 AM – 11:30 AM	Reading assignment with <u>Maizon at Blue Hill</u> (Chapters 12 - 14)	Practice critical thinking with Level 2.2 question stems (Making Sense of the Information)
July 1, 2020 10 AM – 11:30 AM	Reading assignment with <u>Maizon at Blue Hill</u> (Chapters 15 - 17)	Practice critical thinking with Level 2.3 question stems (Making Sense of the Information)

July 2, 2020 10 AM – 11:30 AM	Reading assignment with <u>Maizon at Blue Hill</u> (Chapters 18)	Practice critical thinking with Level 2.3 question stems (Making Sense of the Information)
July 6, 2020 10 AM – 11:30 AM	Reading assignment with <u>Maizon at Blue Hill</u> (Chapters 19 - 20)	Practice critical thinking with Level 3.1 question stems (Applying Information)
July 7, 2020 10 AM – 11:30 AM	Reading assignment with <u>Maizon at Blue Hill</u> (Chapters 21)	Practice critical thinking with Level 3.2 question stems (Applying Information) Quick Check with Level 3
July 8, 2020 10 AM – 11:30 AM	Socratic Seminar with question stems (Flipbook)	Final Socratic Seminar with Levels 1 - 3
July 9, 2020 10 AM – 11:30 AM	Final thoughts about book, author, and Socratic Seminar	Posttest Final Student Survey

APPENDIX L

ZOOM MEETING NORMS



ZOOM Meeting Rules

1

Mute your microphone until it is your turn to speak.

2

Raise your hand or use the "Raise your hand tool" when you have something to say. We will be conducting group discussion with dialogue and some debates. It is best we do not talk over each other.

3

Listen while other classmates are talking.

4

Be respectful and kind. Everyone has their right to their own opinion (agree to disagree during debates).



Choose a workspace that helps you focus.



Be on time, because we are excited to get started.



Stay focused and participate without being distracted.




Always have your camera on during the meet. we need to see your face.

Socratic Seminar Guide to Conducting a Dialogue Discussion

Follow these rules to have a successful
discussion.

1. Speak so that everyone can hear you.
2. Refer to the story.
3. Talk to each other respectfully.
4. Ask for clarification. Do not stay confused throughout our discussion.
5. Invite others to speak.
6. Be open to other's opinion and be respectful. It is okay to agree to disagree.
7. Be courageous! You don't have to wait for others to lead the discussion. We will have a judgement free zone!

APPENDIX M
FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT (QUICK CHECK LEVEL ONE)
TENTATIVE QUESTIONS



Chapters 1 - 8 Quick Check (Level One)

A quick check to assess your critical thinking. You can look back at the story if you need to reread any section.

*** Required**

What is your name? *

Your answer _____

1. What does the word inclusive mean? (Level 1.2) *

- ☐ A. Including every race
- ☐ B. Including some races
- ☐ C. A collection of minorities
- ☐ D. A collection of personal thoughts.

2. State in your own words what "minority" means. (Level 1.1) *

Your answer _____

3. Give two examples of a minority student. (Level 1.2) *

Your answer _____

4. Based on what you read, discuss why it was hard for Maizon to leave home. (Level 1.2) *

Your answer _____

Submit

APPENDIX N
FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT (QUICK CHECK LEVEL TWO)
TENTATIVE QUESTIONS



Chapters 9 – 18 Quick Check (Level Two)

A quick check to assess your critical thinking. You can look back at the story if you need to reread any section.

* Required

What is your name? *

Your answer _____

1. Pretend you are Maizon, what would you say about Cadman's Winter Dance? (Level 2.1) *

Your answer

2. How do you think Maizon feels when about being the new girl? How do you know? (Level. 2.1) *

Your answer

3. Compare Charli and Maizon's personalities. How are they different? (Level 2.2) *

Your answer

Submit

APPENDIX O
FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT (QUICK CHECK LEVEL THREE)
TENTATIVE QUESTIONS



Chapters 19 – 21 Quick Check (Level Three)

A quick check to assess your critical thinking. You can look back at the story if you need to reread any section.

*** Required**

What is your name? *

Your answer _____

1. Why do Sandy and Maizon pretend they live somewhere else? How do you know this (support your answer with evidence from the text)? (Level 3.1 and 3.2) *

Your answer

2. Give at least two reasons why you can relate to one of the characters in the story. Explain your reasoning. (Level 3.1 and 3.2) *

Your answer

3. How does this story relate to what we are currently seeing in the news? Give reasons or examples. (Level 3.1 and 3.2) *

Your answer

Submit

APPENDIX P

TRANSCRIPT OF OBSERVATION NOTES

Analysis of Observations

Observation Notes

	<i>Reactions</i>	<i>Focused Coding</i>
<i>Week One</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants were nervous and unsure of what to expect • Participants were ready to work and do the best possible • Did not seem too interested in the reading program • Perked up during the author study • Were not phased with Zoom meeting and quickly understood rules and expectations • Participants were very quiet and had to get to know the new participant • Bounced back when technical issues happened on their end; called in the meeting with personal phone • Some were shy and hesitant to turn on camera; keep camera off until class began 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open for new experiences and ideas
<i>Week Two</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shyness continued for a few days • Open upped when expressing their thoughts • One wanted to read, but shy in leading the conversation or reading to the group • Had to find ways for the leader of the group to not always take the lead; began helping others and giving them time to answer • Motivated by incentives • Two read very softly; still hesitant and unsure • After a few days - all participants became more vocal and the shyness seemed to evaporate • Participants began laughing with and at each other when asked questions; no bullying but silliness • Asked for more "Blackness" • Began to argue with the book's main character • Level One work was slow but found ways to ensure every participant could work on their foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relating and applying real life application from the book to their life • Engagement is increasing • Dialogue is increasing with relation to the book • CLT progress is slow with relation to Socratic Seminar

<i>Week Three</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued argument with main character of the book Watched a movie with African American representation; participants discussed throughout with their thoughts Expressed views about differences and racism Level Two seems to be easier to navigate with participants; L2 offered more room for participants to discuss and share their views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement continues to increase CRP impacts their actions Socratic Seminar with CLT flows smoother
<i>Week Four</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did not wait for me to begin class before the argument of the main character began All participants are comfortable with each other At times, the girl participants would give the boy participants looks when they voiced their thoughts that the girls in the book were dramatic Level Three dialogue is higher and Level One still had some struggles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement continues to increase CRP impacts their actions Socratic Seminar with CLT flows with me as a facilitator at times