

TRANSACTIONAL READING: PRESERVICE TEACHERS' EVOLUTIONS IN THINKING  
ABOUT THE ROLES OF LITERATURE IN THE CLASSROOM

By

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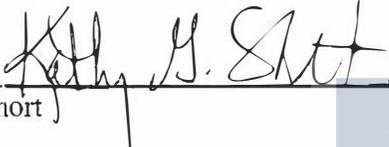
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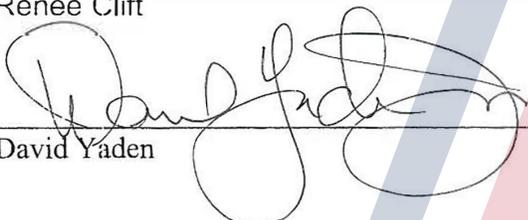
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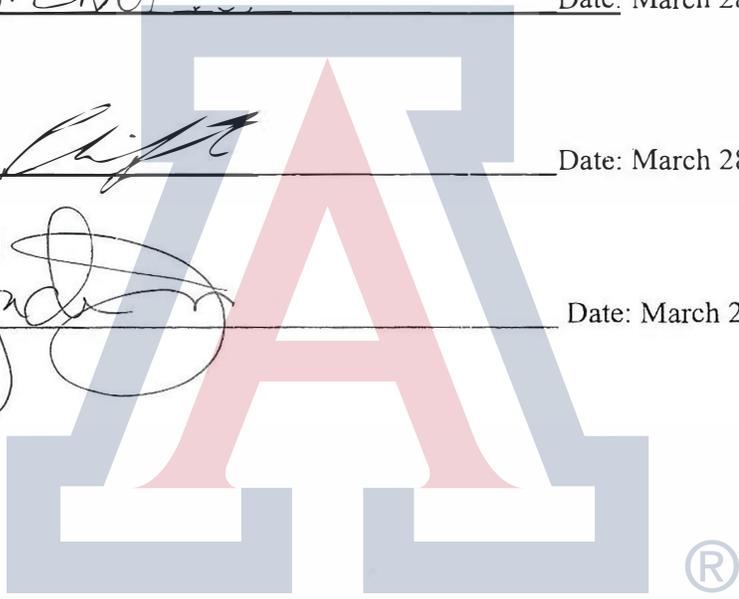
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As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Tammye Gregoire, titled Transactional Reading: Preservice Teachers' Evolutions in Thinking about the Roles of Literature in the Classroom, and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
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Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

  
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### **Dedication**

To my husband, Scott, and my boys, Taran and Trevor. Thank you for giving me the time and encouragement I needed to complete my journey and degree. You never doubted if I could, but always said I would finish. You sacrificed many hot meals and carried extra loads of household chores to ensure my success. Thank you for never doubting me.

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## **Abstract**

This research focuses on the ways in which preservice teachers evolve in their beliefs and understandings of literature while they are enrolled in a semester-long course, TLS 480, Children's Literature in the Classroom. I was the instructor of the course and served as a teacher researcher using qualitative research and Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory as a framework to explore: 1) How do understandings of the roles of children's literature in the lives of readers evolve over the semester? 2) How do preservice teachers' understandings of integrating literature into the curriculum change during the semester?

Primary sources of data included initial conferences with each student, reflections, and discussions. Follow-up individual interviews with four case study preservice teachers representing the diversity of the class were also used. A group interview with the same four preservice teachers additionally served as primary sources of data. Reader response engagements, personal notes, and project reflections served as secondary sources of data. Member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation along with my long-term field immersion of teaching the course for three semesters ensured trustworthiness.

Findings of this study revealed that transactional experiences provide opportunities for new beliefs and understandings regarding the purposes of literature in readers' lives to include aesthetic connections, increases in critical thinking, and richer interpretations. Most preservice teachers found many ways that literature enhances lives with new understandings of ourselves, others, and our world, and they grew to value the social aspects of literature. Understandings of literature's role in curriculum evolved from a view that literature in elementary classrooms is supplemental material to a view that literature offers possibilities to create critical understandings. Many preservice teachers came to see literature as curriculum. Contributing

factors to those changes were: choice, reflection, discussion, appreciation of aesthetic qualities of literature, and reader response engagements with literature.

Implications of these findings include: 1) Transactional methods of instruction and learning provide preservice teachers with new appreciations and understandings of literature's roles in classrooms while also increasing critical thinking. 2) Reflection in literature courses is a valuable means for preservice teachers to understand their personal connections with literature. 3) Implementing literature discussions in children's literature courses is an advantageous way for preservice teachers to expand upon their personal connections and gain new understandings of others and our world. 4) A transactional framework for analysis of data relating to understanding of literature reveals to researchers which aspects of instruction are producing the outcomes from their instruction.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction and Theoretical Framework for This Study

The use of literature is to afford us a platform whence we may command a view of our present life, a purchase by which we may move it... we see literature best from the midst of wild nature, or from the din of affairs, or from a high religion. The field cannot be well seen from within the field. (Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1841, p.130)

I have always enjoyed literature. Story, whether told orally or read silently, enables me to escape, explore, and understand myself and the world around me in ways that extend my thinking and imagination. As a classroom teacher of twenty-two years, literature was the touchstone of my curriculum. Literature created a sense of community, invited discussion, spurred curiosity, and provided opportunities for us to enjoy the aesthetic beauty of our world found in sharing quality literature.

The students and I created stories about our experiences throughout the year, and those stories will be forever a part of our lives to reflect upon and share with others if we choose. Science stories included learning about enamel erosion with hard boiled eggs that smelled up the room and won a first place award in the state science fair, reading *Wump World* by Bill Pete (1970) and collecting pollution with index cards covered in contact paper and tied to trees, recycling and reusing garbage, learning about reduction by buying in bulk, or recycling paper and making Mother's Day cards after reading and exploring a text set on ecology. The *Greedy Triangle* by Marilyn Burns (2011), Leo Lionni's (1995) *Inch by Inch*, Eric Rohmann's (1994) *Time Flies*, and numerous other authors and titles allowed students to engage in mathematical thinking in diverse ways. Poetry provided new ways for us to express ourselves without worrying about the constraints of conventions. We often laughed at Prelutsky's (1990) *I'm*

*Sorry!* and sat not so silently as we read, reread, and pondered *By Myself* by Eloise Greenfield (1978).

After reading the first page of *The Cactus Hotel* by Brenda Guiberson (1991) for a mini-lesson on descriptive language, a first grader, Penny (pseudonym), who struggled to find voice in her writing, wrote a beginning to a story that will forever remain in my memories as a highlight of my teaching career—not for the sheer quality of her writing which was exceptional that day, but also for the look of pride that she wore in her smile as her writing was shared with her peers and adults who visited our classroom. Through the use of a literature-rich curriculum, Penny became a gifted, young, writer. Ideally, my story as an elementary school teacher would have continued in much this same manner. I would remain in a literature rich classroom, and the students I taught would continue to inquire about topics introduced and explored through quality literature. However, my story had an unexpected climax when the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were introduced, and it was mandated that I use a scripted curriculum for my classroom instruction. The adopted curriculum was teacher directed and lacked application of teacher-selected literature into content areas. The students were given instruction on what skills to practice and how to practice them. The school I worked at became a place filled with basic skills. I understood the CCSS, and I knew that it was not intended to be strictly skill-based learning, but rather a means to help ensure students were prepared to enter college and the workforce with the skills and concepts necessary to meet the demands of the real world.

I believe that curriculum lacks relevance to students and their understanding of the world if there are not opportunities to read and explore literature that represents the population and issues that are present in our society. I was working on my doctorate in Language Reading and Culture at this time, and I decided to take a break from teaching elementary learners and instead

attend school full-time and teach a course in children's literature. I knew that I needed to gain a deep understanding of preservice teachers' experiences of the roles of literature in the classroom and how those roles could be incorporated into the CCSS. That understanding would provide venues for me and others to recognize teaching experiences that enhance preservice teachers' knowledge about literature and how literature may be used in classrooms to enhance understanding and awareness of a global society. Barr, Taffe and Yokota (2016) report that "much of what we have learned about how learning occurs in elementary and secondary classrooms is relevant to working with preservice teachers" (p. 465). I worried that the preservice teachers in my Children's Literature in the Classroom (TLS 480) course might not understand the numerous roles children's literature can have in a classroom. I worried that these future teachers might believe that curriculum is not creating stories, but rather memorizing facts and basic skills from texts. I worried that if I did not provide experiences in exploring various genres the preservice teachers enrolled in my course might not understand the benefits of a literature-rich classroom.

I was not alone in my worries. Discussion with other graduate students and professors of children's literature revealed numerous concerns regarding the future of education and the utilization of literature within education. Those apprehensions varied and included but were not limited to: addressing preservice teachers' needs to meet the demands of teaching in a culturally diverse society, how to rekindle or instill enjoyment with literature, how to get learners to actively engage with literature, and more. I learned that those concerns were not unique to us, and other researchers had explored many of those issues. Research from TLS 480 courses of previous decades offered insight into my understandings.

My research uses a theoretical framework and focuses on preservice teachers' experiences with children's literature in a university setting. It is supported by transactional theory and previous research on preservice teachers' experiences in university children's literature courses. I focused my research on those two areas: Transactional theory and preservice teacher education in children's literature. I first review previous research related to preservice teachers' understandings of children's literature from past TLS 480 courses. Then I explain the origins of transactional theory and what influenced the development of Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory. Next, I provide a review of related research which leads to the sociohistorical context informing this research. Throughout the review, I relate transactional theory to its implications for teaching children's literature courses and its relevance to literature instruction. I then provide an overview of the dissertation and conclude this chapter with a summary of its contents.

## **Background of the Study**

### **Previous Dissertations from TLS 480, Children's Literature in the Classroom**

Previous dissertations from Children's Literature in the Classroom (TLS 480) view this course as a chance for preservice teachers to reconnect with and/or rediscover their connection with children's literature while recalling the world of childhood and youth. The course also allows for preservice teachers to reevaluate themselves as readers as they become acquainted with new children's literature, revisit classics, and rediscover old favorites.

Thompson (1993) researched and analyzed her role as a teacher educator and her "theory of content" as related to "philosophical beliefs about learning, teaching and the important areas of content to address" (p. 17). Her findings suggest "one's philosophical views of teaching and learning and the content have implications for the manner in which curriculum is created" (p.18).

Her findings supported my belief that preservice teachers need transactive experiences with literature to gain an understanding and appreciation of the aesthetic qualities in literature. Without such experiences, preservice teachers may not value literature for its potentialities, but instead see literature as a source for content knowledge.

Mathis (1994) studied preservice teacher's perceptions of their learning, reading and teaching in the TLS 480 course. Similar to my research, Mathis used transactional experiences involving reflection and discussion within her classroom. Her findings indicated that when preservice teachers were engaged in positive literary learning experiences, they gained a knowledge base in children's literature and also a deeper understanding of the purpose and implementation of literature in the classroom. These students "discovered new insights into the reading process and for many a renewed love of reading emerged" (p.14). Their philosophical beliefs regarding literature's role in education shifted to include both aesthetic and efferent aspects of reading. I wondered if her findings would be similar with a new generation of preservice teachers—a generation blessed with a much more culturally diverse and authentic selection of children's literature.

Carpenter (1997) researched the impact of the TLS 480 course on the reading practices of preservice teachers. Similar to Mathis, Carpenter found the most significant change in students was their enthusiasm and renewed enjoyment of reading. Carpenter attributed this result to four influential elements of the course: "(1) the influence of the instructor, (2) small group work; (3) class projects that provided active learning experiences emphasizing the affective elements of reading literature; and (4) self-evaluation that promoted students' choice and control over their own learning" (p.12). While not specifically using the term transactional reading, Carpenter mentioned numerous ways that preservice teachers transacted with literature.

More recently, Gonzales (2003) studied preservice teachers' perceptions of the major factors contributing to their identity as readers. He found that preservice teachers' identity of themselves as readers grew positively throughout the semester as they discovered new insights into the reading process. He also found that preservice teachers' "beliefs about reading and the teaching of children's literature was positively enhanced as a result of their literacy experiences during their lifetime and also the children's literature course" (p.17). The transactional experiences that his participants encountered during his course offered opportunities for them to experience literature in personally meaningful ways. As they lived through and with story while reflecting and discussing their experiences and roles as readers, they saw themselves as future teachers of literature—capable of offering rich opportunities for learners to experience literature in active, meaningful ways.

Schall's (2004) dissertation followed and examined how preservice teachers' understanding of cultural identity evolved through mapping and children's literature. She found that while preservice teachers explored their cultural identities and the cultural identities of others using literary engagements involving mapping, discussion, and reflection, changes in their beliefs were mostly at a surface level. While the engagements the preservice teachers participated in were transactive, the preservice teachers ended the course with knowledge of white privilege, but not always seeing white privilege within their personal identities. However, she concluded that preservice teachers in the study did learn more about themselves, their identities, and the cultural identities of others. They also shifted their understanding of cultural identities as group memberships.

A common factor in all of the above dissertations were findings that incorporating reader response engagements and quality literature increased or renewed preservice teachers'

appreciation and enjoyment with literature. This work has led to my own study where I examine:

1. How do preservice teachers' understandings of the roles of children's literature in the lives of readers evolve over the semester?
2. How do preservice teachers' understanding of integrating literature into elementary school curriculum change during the semester?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Louise Rosenblatt is credited as having developed transactional theory in 1938. In the 1978 edition of *The Reader, The Text, The Poem*, Rosenblatt credits William James, C.S. Pierce, George Santayana, and John Dewey for laying the philosophical foundation for her reconciliation with aesthetic and social commitments (p. xi). John Dewey especially influenced Rosenblatt with his views of the aesthetic value in daily life in his 1934 book, *Art as Experience* (p. xi). Dewey, like Rosenblatt, believed that it was the transaction between the reader and the text that gave meaning to the work. However, Dewey believed in a final summation. Rosenblatt reinterpreted the reading process to be an on-going transaction between the reader and the text with dialogue and reflection that continually shapes the readers' understanding with new experiences. Often that transaction involves a reader's questioning and reflecting upon previous understandings. There is no summation. Both Rosenblatt and Dewey agreed that readers constantly reflect throughout the reading process.

Dewey (1933) defines reflection as "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 9). Schon (1983) sees reflection as constantly being in action, with the reflectors are refining their understanding as they continually revisit their actions and

understandings (p.44). These views of reflection are discussed in further detail as evidenced in preservice teachers' responses in this research. Reflections were used in my teaching with preservice teachers in my course, and are employed as data for my analysis.

### **Reading as a Transaction between Text and Reader**

Reading is the situated relationship between the reader and the text. According to Rosenblatt (1994), "the actual reading process is an event at a particular time and place in which each element (the reader and the text) conditions the other" (p. 16). No two readers share the exact same experience while reading, since every reader brings to the text "personal attitudes, social and literary expectations, tentative organizing frameworks, and reaction to the emerging evocations" which guide the reader's attention during reading (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.165).

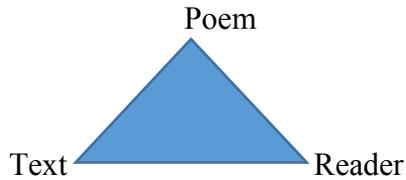
Rosenblatt (1998) adds that the transaction continues even after the reader leaves the physical event of reading the text by recalling the personal "evocations" derived from the encounter (p. 887-888).

Rosenblatt (1995) refers to this transaction between the reader and the literary work as the creation of the poem and states that without this constant negotiation between the reader and the text to make meaning, the written words are mere "ink blots on paper." The poem occurs while readers transact with text to include their personal evocations as well as their literary knowledge to create a unique meaning. The teacher's role is to provide experiences for students to transact with literature and explore meaning in a variety of ways, including discussion and reflection, so students are aware of the possibilities/potentials of the text. Understandings continually evolve as readers come to understand the text and their own thinking through those engagements and experiences. The initial and primary focus is on the aesthetic stance; however,

an efferent stance to explore the text is validated through discussion and further exploration of the text which clarifies, expands, and supports readers' responses and understandings.

Louise Rosenblatt's original book *Literature as Exploration* (1938), was groundbreaking in her argument that reading involves a reader in transaction with text to make both aesthetic emotive responses, and efferent factual meaning. Prior to that, the text was thought to contain explicit meaning. According to Rosenblatt (1978) text meaning does not lie in the text alone, or only in the reader's mind, but in the transactions between them. In transactional reading, readers individually or collectively tackle the problem of constructing a text's meaning. Meaning emerges through transactions based in both aesthetic and efferent stances with variances of both, upon a continuum, continually being accessed between individuals or group members as they transact with text.

Rosenblatt's idea that reading involves the reader, the text, and the poem in transaction was a new reader-orientated approach, focusing on gaining understanding of text and allowing for cultural diversity. Reader response theory provides a powerful means for understanding and interpretation for readers. Interplay between the reader and the text facilitates both aesthetic and efferent connections. These connections constantly change due to the particular reader's ability to interact with the text at that moment in time. Rosenblatt states in *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (1995), "Instead of thinking of the structure of the work of art as something statically inherent in the text, we need to recognize the dynamic situation in which the reader, in the give and take with the text, senses or organizes a relationship among the various parts of his lived-through experiences" (p. 90). It is through these experiences she ascertains that the individual makes meaning from the text; "the poem" occurs (See figure 1.1).



*Figure 1.1.* The Poem

The poem occurs while readers transact with text to include their personal evocations as well as their literary knowledge to create a unique meaning. The teacher's role is to provide experiences for students to transact with literature and explore meaning in a variety of ways, including discussion and reflection, so students are aware of the possibilities/potentials of the text. Understandings continually evolve as readers come to understand literary elements through those engagements and experiences. The initial and primary focus is a primarily aesthetic stance; however, an efferent stance to explore the text is validated through discussion and further exploration of the text which clarifies, expands, and supports readers' responses and understandings.

In transactional reading, readers individually or collectively tackle the task of constructing their interpretations of text. Meaning emerges through transaction based in both aesthetic (emotive response) and efferent (factual meaning) stances with variances of both, upon a continuum, continually being accessed between individuals or group members as they transact with text and reflect upon their understandings.

Using a transactional framework allowed me to base course instruction in learners transacting with text to explore and reflect upon their understandings. According to the TLS 480 course syllabus: a) learning occurs when we make connections to our own experiences. We will respond to literature through making personal connections to our reading and then exploring and critically examining those responses in literature circles with other readers. Our focus will not be

on a specific literary interpretation; b) learning is reflective as well as active; c) we live in a culturally diverse world. We will explore literature from a multicultural and international orientation to expand our understanding of the cultural pluralism in children's lives and their world; and d) we will have many opportunities to reflect on what we are learning through writing, talking, and self-evaluations.

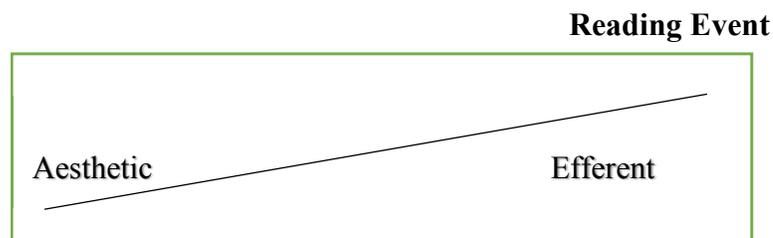
Since the course is based on students transacting with text it was logical to use transactional theory to assess and analyze changes that occurred throughout the semester. Of relevance for me was offering reflective opportunities to the preservice teachers in the course so they could interact with literature in ways that most had not previously experienced in their educational history.

It was my belief that by providing transactive experiences while discussing and reflecting upon those experiences with class engagements and outside assignments, students would become more aware of the relevance of transaction to understanding and appreciating literature in new ways. In this manner, transactional theory served as both a teaching method by offering relevant engagements with literature to preservice teachers, and also as an analysis method by providing rich reflections and discussions on and about those engagements and experiences.

### **The Reading Stance: A Continuum between Aesthetic and Efferent**

I believe that if preservice teachers understand how readers construct meaning, they are better prepared to offer meaningful instruction in their future classrooms. Since reading is a meaning making process rather than a skills-based process, it is necessary to provide examples and opportunities for preservice teachers to experience the reading process in such a manner. Rather than viewing reading as only a process that involves the individual skills of decoding and comprehension, preservice teachers needed to use literature to gain meaning through a natural

process of combining their knowledge and experiences with the strategies needed to construct understanding. They also needed to learn to select the stance from which they engage with the text. Rosenblatt's diagram of the Efferent-Aesthetic Continuum, Figure 1.2, illustrates the continuous negotiations in stances between the reader and the text during the reading experience.



*Figure 1.2 Louise Rosenblatt's Transactional Continuum*

The transactional process of reading is recursive and reflective, allowing a reader's aesthetic and efferent stances to freely flow and combine to create a unique interpretation of the text for each reader depending upon how the reader's personal experiences, emotions, and thinking are evoked during reading (Karolides, 2014; Probst, 1988; Rosenblatt, 1938). In an aesthetic stance, readers focus on their experience during reading and the feelings and thoughts that are "lived through" at the time. In an efferent stance, readers focus on the extraction of information from the text based on the task at hand or what is to be carried away or evoked when the reading is finished. Figure 1.2 illustrates this continuum with a diagonal line representing the flow of stance. The line never completely lies at the beginning or end of the continuum since the reader is never fully reliant on one stance, but rather alternates along a continuum with degrees of variance between both stances.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Numerous studies involving literature as a way to learn basic skills and content area knowledge exist. Often these studies examine preservice teachers' understandings and beliefs regarding uses of literature in teaching children how to read or how to learn content. My research

focuses on the sociocultural aspects of literature and does not examine literature as a way to learn basic skills (except when acknowledging that preservice teachers often view literature as a way to teach skills). The preservice teachers in this study were schooled during 2002 -2012, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era. Ken Goodman (2004) calls that Era “A time of the pedagogy of the absurd,” noting, “We have moved to a narrow and uninspired curriculum that limits the opportunity for students to become richly literate” (p.119). I looked at other research involving literature as a way to understand rather than as a way to comprehend (which signifies a correct answer and a correct way of knowing) to ground my research.

I began my search for this literature review using EBSCO through a large university library. I used the keywords of: Reader Response Theory, Transactional Reading, Preservice Teachers and Children’s Literature, Teacher Education and children’s literature. Once I found those initial articles, I read the abstracts to see if they related to my inquiry. After reading the relevant sources, I looked through their references to find additional supports. To ensure that I had not overlooked any relevant information, I contacted Leslie Sult, the liaison librarian to the College of Education, at the university. Leslie used Google Scholar and the dissertation database to find research that looked like it may be related to my topic. She scanned those, and then looked at the works cited pages to see what they used in their research. She also used the Google Scholar cited by feature to see who cited them to see if I she could generate any paths through the research. I then reviewed those sources and checked the reference sections of the relevant research to see if I could find additional information.

The studies ranged in scope and examined a variety of issues: future teachers’ changes in understanding the roles of literature in the classroom, the amount of aesthetic change in preservice teachers throughout their coursework, attitude toward reading, influence of previous

instruction, and more. Dissertations were found from universities documenting changes in preservice teachers' beliefs regarding the roles of literature. These sources are discussed and related to my study in this chapter.

### **Research on Literature Instruction/Courses**

In her dissertation, *Education Curricula: A repertoire for teacher as coach, critic, and curator*, McIlhagga (2016) discusses multiple roles—reading coach, literary critic, and reading curator—enacted in the pursuit of teaching children's literature. She argues that preservice teachers need to experience each of these three roles as students and readers in children's literature coursework. It is McIlhagga's belief that "By explicitly identifying different lenses and ways of thinking in the process of teaching children's literature to preservice teachers, the hope is that it will allow them to be able to more conscientiously consider the complexities of reading and teaching literature when they are in the classroom themselves" (p. 12). She found it is through "new and expanded experiences, as well as explicit metacognitive modeling, that preservice teachers are guided towards the possibility of enacting a more complex pedagogy with children's literature." While I agree with her belief that preservice teachers need to experience various roles including coach, critic, and curator, I also believe this can be learned using a transactional approach to learning in children's literature courses. Using a transactional approach to instruction entails that preservice teachers learn the importance of being a coach, critic, and curator during the reading process, rather than becoming a coach, critic, and curator for the purpose of teaching literature. In this manner, preservice teachers engage in and learn to provide literary experiences that encourage children to inquire, explore, and learn with literature rather than be told how and what to learn from literature.

Trimble's (2016) dissertation examined how young adult (YA) literature and memory narratives of adolescence affect undergraduates' understandings of the cultural constructs of adolescence. She also looked at how texts affect how readers perceive themselves and their experiences and how those interactions affect the way adolescence is perceived. Trimble utilized reader response engagements and narratives to stimulate critical responses regarding youth culture. She believed that texts alone would not change readers' beliefs about culture, stating, "It is the discussion that ensues, the collective reader response that eviscerates the totality of the 'typical teen' myth and allows for a new and intersectional understanding of adolescent individuality within community" (p. 15). I would also argue that reading a wide variety of literature, discussing interpretations and evocations from the reading, and reflecting upon those evocations helps eliminate problems of a "single story" (Adichie, 2009).

Trimble's findings from five case study participants revealed new understandings of self and others. These studies showed a reconceptualization of adolescence in which an understanding of universal commonalities occur, but also acknowledgement of the uniqueness of each individual. Trimble associates this change in understanding to the narrative and transactive experiences in the course. Trimble's (2016) findings indicate that "YA literature and lifestory narratives can facilitate reconceptualizing previously held notions of adolescence, replacing pejorative and generalized assumptions regarding adolescence with an openness and acknowledgement of diversity" (p. 7). It is important to implement strategies in preservice teacher literature courses that provide opportunities to revisit and question current beliefs about childhood and our lives so preservice teachers are prepared to teach in an unbiased manner.

While not all of Trimble's participants were in-route to become classroom teachers, they were planning on working with youth after graduation. Her findings were similar to other

children's literature courses in that she credited reader response engagements as having a strong impact on changes in beliefs and understandings of literature and its potentials.

### **Research on the Role of Literature in the Curriculum**

Numerous studies (e.g. Cousin, P.T., Berghoff, B., & Martens, P., 1998; Davenport, R.M., & Lauritzen, C., 2002; Flurkey, A., & Goodman, Y. M., 2000; Goodman, Y., 1996; Moore, R. A. & Gilles, C., & Wilson, J., 2005; & Theurer, J.L., 2002) show that students who regard themselves as being successful readers with many strengths utilize these strengths to gain meaning from texts. Whereas students who view themselves as struggling readers often lack the confidence and strategies necessary to be successful in making meaning from texts. When the preservice teachers involved in the previous TLS 480 dissertations ended their course in children's literature, their views of themselves as readers were most often positively changed. Morrison, Jacobs, and Swinyard (1999) found that teachers who read and model their reading habits have more students who, in turn, enjoy reading and read for pleasure. They state,

Perhaps the most influential teacher behavior to influence their students' literacy development is personal reading, both in and out of school. One overriding goal shared by most elementary school teachers is to help students develop the ability and passion for reading that will extend into a life-long reading habit. (p.81).

Some may argue that becoming a life-long reader is not pertinent to schooling. Student enthusiasm is not tested in annual yearly progress, and it's not related to college admittance. While that may be the case, Nancy Atwell (2007) claims, "the major predictor of academic success is the amount of time that a student spends reading. In fact, the top 5 percent of U.S. students reads up to 144 times more than the bottom 5 percent" (p. 107). If students who enjoy books read more, and students who read more score better on academic tests, then it is relevant to acknowledge preservice teachers' increased enthusiasm for literature and their new

understandings of what strategies led them to appreciate literature in new ways. While only Carpenter's dissertation focused on preservice teacher's enjoyment and enthusiasm for reading while in a children's literature course, it was apparent in all of the TLS 480 dissertations, including my research that preservice teachers increased their desire to read for personal enjoyment.

Kreig (2008) reiterates how results of performance-based testing are often unreliable as to student achievement because they neglect to show content that was not tested and thus neglected in order to increase time in test preparation. These findings correlate with the preservice teacher's reflections and discussions about their schooling experiences. Utilizing strategy-based instruction allows evidence-based results from standardized test scores. However, test scores are unable to illustrate the changes in pedagogy that occur in order to achieve changes in test scores. The preservice teachers in my study often claimed that they could not recall ever choosing a book to read in school. They claimed that discussion of literature was teacher directed and either aimed at understanding the author's intent or learning skills.

Price and Peterson (2008) introduce readers to the history of testing and take them through the NCLB era in which most of the preservice teachers in this study were formally educated. The authors provide detailed descriptions of some of the "unintended consequences" of NCLB, and how those consequences affect teachers in the areas of teacher accreditation, teacher learning, and teacher instruction. The authors posit, "Our teachers are suffering from a deluge of teach to the test strategies, which often stand in contrast to that which they know to be effective in nurturing the development of critical thinkers and problem-solvers" (p.132). Since the current group of preservice teachers were schooled with this perspective, universities need to

provide new ways of learning to these students so they are prepared to teach in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) era where critical thinking is valued.

Yaden, Rowe, and MacGillivray (1999), while looking at early literacy, argue that we must “continuously and honestly” revisit what literacy means stating that we need to ask, “What constitutes or counts as knowledge? Where is knowledge located? How is knowledge attained?” (p.29). While preservice teachers may be unaware of how their memories impact their current perspectives, many beginning teachers’ memories of school, both positive and negative, affect their current teacher identities. Miller and Shifflet (2016) warn of the “familiarity pitfall” discussing it as a hindrance to preservice teachers’ theoretical pedagogical praxis. To help alleviate the possibility of interference between past experiences and new understandings, ongoing reflection and discussion accompanied the engagements in TLS 480. These experiences encouraged new perspectives of literatures roles in their lives and in their futures working with children. Those engagements occurred throughout the spring semester of TLS 480 and helped ensure that preservice teachers asked themselves and discussed with others the pertinent questions mentioned by Yaden et al.

Tama Peterson (1991) promotes using literature in preservice teacher coursework, especially for programs in special education, arguing that the use of literature in teacher preparation programs “successfully plants seeds for thoughtful education practice” (p. 24). Students are exposed to multiple representations of society and are invited to formulate their own opinions about our world rather than seeing the world portrayed through the eyes of textbook creators who often stereotype diverse populations (Sleeter, 2005). Nystrand (2006) writes, “Recent sociocultural and dialogic research supports claims that classroom discourse, including small group work and

whole-class discussion, works as an epistemic environment (versus script) for literacy development” (p. 392).

While children’s literature courses are not intended to be courses in literacy, but rather courses in literature, the manner in which preservice teachers experienced literature during their educational careers influences their understandings of the roles of literature. It is my belief that using a transactional approach to literature instruction encourages readers to make connections among themselves, others, and the world. Providing preservice teachers who were not schooled in such a manner with opportunities to transact with literature encourages new connections with literature while gaining new understandings of literature’s importance for their future classrooms. A common goal of preservice teachers in this study throughout the semester was to find ways to help children enjoy literature. Morrison et. al (1999) would argue that their renewed enjoyment and understanding will have a positive impact on their future teaching careers since these future teachers will be modeling ways to learn that have impacted their attitudes toward literature.

Carter and Doyle (1996) support the findings of the dissertations from the children’s literature courses, stating, “persons have experiences, and thus every experience and its consequences are constructions from the interplay of a situation and the person who is experiencing that situation” (p. 122). This validates the reader response strategies used in the children’s literature courses mentioned, by offering credence to the transactions learners made with literature during their coursework. However, they also found as preservice teachers entered student teaching, “they were confronted with contextual pressures and demands that challenged their own sense of

rightness and effectiveness and their views of pupils' willingness to be cooperative with the candidates' approaches" (p. 125). While these transactions may not always be fulfilled during student teaching experiences, their research does find that when feeling confident in their future classrooms the teachers often went back to the new understandings they gained while in their teacher preparation programs. Their research highlights the importance of offering transactional experiences with literature and reader response engagements encouraging new beliefs about the roles of literature in classrooms. Without these experiences, preservice teachers are likely to resort to experiences they had in school and never question what is modeled in their student teaching experiences.

Research of Linek, Sampson, Raine et. al (2006) showed preservice teachers in their study went from beliefs that emphasized student understanding of word decoding and comprehension being key factors to reading success to one of integration of both aesthetic and efferent understandings of literature. They discuss preservice teachers' enjoyment of reading as well as their ability to make mistakes, and developing understandings of comprehension. These shifts in beliefs were credited to preservice teachers' field-based experiences, reflections on these experiences, and dialogue with mentor teachers and supervisors, which are all elements of transactional theory. The combination of utilizing previous instruction from university courses, mentor teacher lessons, reflections, and dialogue with both classroom mentor teachers and university liaisons allowed preservice teachers to examine their beliefs and instruction to make supported shifts in their strategic understandings.

These shifts and reflections on the outcomes of the shifts enabled preservice teachers

to integrate their personal educational experiences with university best practices and actual student teaching practice in a transactional manner. While this was an important part of the children's literature course that I taught, observing in classrooms on a regular basis was not possible for over half of the students enrolled in the spring semester. Their course work was ahead of their observation schedule and they were planning on completing their volunteer hours during the summer or the following semester when they were officially enrolled in the college of education. The two read aloud engagements that preservice teachers in my study participated in revealed new understandings of children's love of story and ways literature is used in classrooms.

While my research does not delve into the details of national policies and debates about Standards, it is important to acknowledge the elements that contribute to the ways that curriculum exists within a larger social context. This study focuses on TLS 480 as an opportunity for preservice teachers to rethink their conceptions of what it means to be literate and what it means to be a reader. The preservice teachers in my research learned under NCLB, a time of primarily skills-based instruction. With mandates from the CCSS, it is important to understand issues related to preservice teacher knowledge and understanding of how literature is incorporated into instruction and to provide necessary clarity of CCSS content related to literature. There is currently a gap in the research that relates to the impact of preservice teachers' understandings of the roles of literature in the classroom and their understandings of the implementation of those roles in their future standards-based classrooms. This understanding has the potential to allow teacher educators to gain new insights into student experiences prior to entering education courses and will also give insight as to necessary instructional content in literature courses.

Short (1993) stated, "Teacher research at the college level will help college educators to grasp more fully the potential of the theories and frameworks being implemented in public schools for transforming their own teacher-education programs and classrooms" (p. 156). According to Thompson's research in 1993, "One's philosophical views of teaching and learning and the content have implications for the manner in which curriculum is created" (p.18). Linek, Sampson, and Raine (2006) agree saying, "Instructors in teacher preparation programs need to be aware of the existing belief systems that preservice teachers possess and how to effectively translate existing beliefs about teaching and learning so that preservice teachers leave teacher preparation programs with the beliefs in line with current research about the teaching and learning process" (p. 184). While elementary standards have indeed changed since 1993, the belief that instruction at the college level needs to meet those standards remains the same. A change in student instruction and assessment mandates that future teachers receive current instruction that enables them to become knowledgeable in the change.

It is my belief that much literature instruction for children in elementary schools today is based upon Freire's (1993) notion of "knowledge banking" in education. In this mode of education (a mode I relate to the NCLB era), literature courses and the use of literature in K-12 classrooms is one in which children were viewed as "empty vessels" waiting to be filled with skills deposited by the teacher.

Barr, Taffe, and Yokota (2016) argue that literacy is, by nature, an ever-evolving concept and what it means to be literate continues to expand as we move from decade to decade. With that in mind it is imperative we examine current understandings and misunderstandings of the use of literature in education to ensure that today's preservice

teachers have the knowledge base to incorporate new conceptions of a literature-based curriculum into their past experiences with knowledge banking. The main assumptions for my study are that it is possible to have a literature-rich curriculum in 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms, and it is vital that preservice teachers reflect upon their understandings of literature as they learn about children's literature. Most students taught under NCLB standards have experiences that focus them on decoding and understanding text to gain a predetermined meaning in a given text.

Transactional experiences with literature early on in preservice teachers' schooling can encourage inquiry into the potentialities of literature throughout the educational experiences of teacher education. Early exposures to transactional experiences rather than waiting until the final student teaching semester may increase confidence in utilizing transactive experiences during student teaching and later in their teaching careers.

### **The Impact of Standards on Preservice Teacher Instruction**

This study focuses on TLS 480 as an opportunity for preservice teachers brought up under NCLB to rethink their conceptions of literature and its contributions to curriculum and understanding. It continues to elaborate upon previous studies regarding preservice teachers' experiences with literature in classrooms by examining new understandings through a transactional lens. With mandates of the CCSS, it is important to understand issues related to preservice teacher knowledge and understanding of how literature is incorporated into instruction and to provide necessary clarity of CCSS content related to literature. According to Pae, Freeman, and Wash (2014) "It is clear that teacher preparation institutions need to be poised to adjust their strategies to meet the needs of teacher candidates" (p. 86). There is currently a gap in the research that relates to the impact of preservice teachers' understandings of the roles of

literature in the classroom and their understandings of the implementation of those roles in their future CCSS classrooms. This understanding has the potential to allow teacher educators to gain new insights into student experiences prior to entering education courses and will also give insight as to necessary instructional content in literature courses.

### **Literature's Roles in Curriculum**

Many articles have been written about literature and its roles in classrooms. For purposes of this research, articles regarding literature's roles in classrooms related to understanding/transaction, rather than acquisition of skills, are discussed as well as research related to preservice teacher instruction in children's literature.

Short (2011) discusses the tension regarding the role of children's literature in elementary classrooms because of political policies around curriculum and the purposes of schooling:

Unlike secondary schools in which literature is a field of study, children's literature in elementary schools has primarily been viewed as a reading material that is used to teach something else, typically either skills or facts, or as a "free time" activity.

(p. 50)

Short informs us that children's literature is more than a tool to learn skills and facts or have fun. In fact, she states it is "integral to students' understanding themselves and the world" (p. 49). She calls attention to both the complexity of children's literature and its importance and relevance in elementary classrooms. It is this belief that guided my instruction.

The majority of preservice teachers in this study could not recall reading trade books in their primary and middle school grades. They recalled using textbooks (basal readers) for their reading instruction and also for their content instruction. When informing scholars about the

importance of preparing future educators to meet the needs of all learners, Morrison and Rude (2002) argue, “While not down-playing the importance of traditional pedagogy, the use of literary texts in conjunction with professional texts has complemented, enlarged, and personalized the experience of the learner” (p. 115). They promote the use of literature to show a variety of perspectives and support critical thinking unlike textbooks that promote a single story.

Wolf, Mieras, and Carey (1996) studied preservice teachers’ changes in thinking and utilization of responses to children’s literature. They found that preservice teachers expanded their questioning skills to become more open-ended, critical, and dialectic rather than teacher dominated when they reflected upon their experiences reading with children and shared those reflections with their professor and other preservice teachers. This finding identifies problems with the efferent types of questioning that dominated the schooling that preservice teachers from the NCLB era faced. It was my goal to provide the types of reflective experiences in TLS 480 that give opportunities for preservice teachers to revalue the types of questions that offer chances for readers to formulate understandings that evolve from their transactions with text.

Like Wolf, I hoped that transactive classroom experiences and field experiences with corresponding reflections and supportive feedback on preservice teachers’ responses, rather than being corrected, would provide opportunities for them to see that student responses to literature are restricted when they relate strictly to asking for information. Rosenblatt (1995) suggests:

To reject the routine treatment of literature as a body of knowledge and to conceive of it rather as a series of possible experiences only clears the ground. Once the unobstructed impact between reader and text has been made possible extraordinary opportunities for a

real educational process are open to the teacher (p.71).

Moving from efferent, information-based questioning to making critical connections invites both the preservice teacher and the child to engage in a dialogue about literature. This dialogue permitted avenues to connect with literature and “gain ever more complex satisfactions with literature” (p.71). Giouroukakis (2014) agrees and adds, “If teachers do not personalize standards and individualize instruction, and if they do not give opportunities to students to experience reading in an aesthetic way, they will have missed the mark of making the most out of a standards-based curriculum” (p.27). Probst (1998) confirms those beliefs adding that the role of the teacher is to promote dialogue with texts where readers share connections and experiences with the work. Short (1993) adds to the need for teachers of preservice teachers to “explore ways to put their theories about others’ teaching into practice in their own teaching... Teacher researcher at all levels needs to “go beyond the examination of student learning to encourage critical reflection on the researcher’s own beliefs and practices” (p. 156). With that in mind, I explored and reflected upon my beliefs about literature and curriculum with the preservice teachers involved in this research.

It is through this active involvement with literature that readers make meaning from text. Wolf (1996) supports the need for open-ended, critical questioning by stating, “if the preservice teacher moves from notions of the correct answer to creative and critical thinking, the children will return in kind” (p.493). Van den Branden (2000) maintains that learners need to go beyond reading simply for pleasure or to satisfy a required task; they need to question, reflect, and discuss to take their understandings to new levels. He states that active involvement allows readers to become in control of their learning and problem solving without seeking a solution from others. He supports the need for discussion and points out that “dialogue is key to bridging

gaps between learner's current level of proficiency and the proficiency need to comprehend the input with which the learner is confronted that learning may come about" (p. 438).

In January of 2015 in a speech titled "*America's Educational Crossroads: Making the Right Choice for our Children's Future*," then secretary of education, Arne Duncan spoke of the key aspects of education.

What we, as parents, want for our kids is an education that isn't just about knowledge – it's about those moments of excitement that we hear about at dinner at the end of the day, about creativity and wonder and curiosity. Fundamentally, we want our kids to have wonderful choices in their lives. And let's work together to pass a law that says that every single child in America deserves this kind of education that we'd want for our own children. The days in which lawmakers support schools that are somehow good enough for someone else's children, but not for their own – those days must be over.

While Duncan was speaking about the CCSS, the implications of that statement are numerous. They imply that all students require an education that sparks creativity rather than predetermined outcomes, that the nation must work together to guarantee an education that provides opportunities for future challenges, and that education should not become more quantifiable just to ensure that schools receive funds. Preparing future teachers to use literature as a way to know and understand ourselves, our lives, and the world is a step toward those goals for education.

### **Overview of This Research**

The goal of this research is to provide insight into the practices that encourage critical thinking about literature in teacher education programs and serve as a resource for rethinking the structure of preservice teaching courses. The following chapters of this dissertation situate the

story of preservice teachers' understandings of the values of children's literature within the field of preservice teacher education.

Chapter one provides an overview of transactional theory and the literature that guided my research. This chapter includes discussion of past research regarding children's literature teacher preparation courses. It also contains sources that guided my understanding of transactional theory and reflection.

Chapter two includes information on the methodology used in this study. It illuminates the learning engagements and reflections from the TLS 480 course used as data for this research. It provides a detailed description of the framework and data analysis used in this research. It also includes my discussion of the trustworthiness of my study.

Discussion and examples of preservice teachers' evolution in beliefs and knowledge regarding the values of children's literature in understanding, critical thinking, and curriculum are presented in chapters three and four. Chapter three is focused on the question, "How do preservice teachers' understandings of the roles of children's literature in the lives of readers evolve over the semester?" Chapter four focuses on the question, "How do preservice teachers' understanding of integrating literature into elementary school curriculum change during the semester?"

The dissertation culminates with chapter five and a summary of the findings and implications of this teacher research. It is my goal that this dissertation informs others about transactional experiences with literature for preservice teachers.

### **Summary**

This chapter discussed history and the literature that framed my research. I discussed the dissertations from previous TLS 480 instructors. I then described Louse Rosenblatt's

transactional theory. Next I reviewed the literature related to transactional theory and preservice teacher instruction in children's literature. I briefly discussed NCLB and CCSS and how they may have or will impact preservice teachers of literature.

While the preservice teacher research in this review vary in theme, they relate to the questions in my research. TLS 480 is a literature course, but many of the course objectives and standards involve an awareness of social, multicultural and international issues as they relate to literature and literature instruction. Learning beliefs related to the course and the studies in this literature review involve learning as a social process of interaction, and learning as sharing our thinking with others and reflecting upon that thinking. The studies regarding how preservice teachers incorporate one or more of the course goals and/or objectives have been used in some way to inform, guide, or support my research. My research will add to previous research regarding preservice teacher education in children's literature and teacher researcher roles in university education courses for a new era of preservice teachers. This research adds new ideas about both practice and theory and may inspire future teacher research in one of the areas I address.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Research Methodology**

As the instructor of TLS 480, I held both an emic position where I participated in engagements with preservice teachers, read with them, reflected with them, joined discussions with them and learned with them. I was a member of the community of learners. I also held an etic position as a teacher researcher who stood back to reflect on data from the course and learn from class members. As preservice teachers in the course explored various concepts and discussed their understandings, they often enhanced my understandings and challenged my thinking about literature and its implications.

### **Teacher Research**

My position in this study was that of a teacher researcher. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) propose that teacher research is systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers, which makes accessible some of the expertise of teachers and provides both university and school communities with unique perspectives on teaching and learning (p. 3). Teacher research is a valuable contribution to the field of research in that it offers a unique insider perspective to the study. Since classroom teachers have long-term, on-going relationships with the students being studied, they offer rich, detailed, knowledgeable perspectives that cannot be had through other forms of observation. With systematic analysis, rigorous data, member checks and triangulation of data, teacher research offers information that not only enhances teacher practices but also research on teaching.

As a teacher researcher, I was a contributing member to the culture of the classroom as both a learner and an instructor. Lanier and Little (1986) believe teacher research needs to examine both the student's and the teacher's analysis of her practice. I reflected on my

instruction and student learning after every class using the data gathered from that day's instruction and preservice teachers' responses to that instruction. Being the instructor permitted me to have access to data gathered throughout the semester, which offered opportunities to adjust curriculum to clarify student thinking, ensure preservice teachers were making steady progress toward their selected learning goals, and move forward with the course objectives. This afforded me an etic opportunity which enabled me to keep an open mind to ensure instruction was based on student knowledge and needs. I not only analyzed and reflected after each class, but also analyzed and reflected after the course finals, after the second individual reflection, and again after the final small group conference. I wanted to ensure that my reflections included analysis of my class instruction as well as analysis of preservice teachers' understandings.

Another teacher researcher belief that I did my best to incorporate was the aspect of humanizing the participants in my research. According to Paris and Winn (2014), mutual respect and validity of research are key factors to humanizing research (p. 2). Throughout the spring semester of TLS 480, I "collected words" in a space where mutual respect was central and learning and research were mutually beneficial. The preservice teachers benefitted from my on-going analysis of their current understandings, questions, and previous experiences as the instructor of the same course which allowed me to adjust content to further their growth while I explored the richness of their thinking.

### **Theoretical Framework for Research**

Since I was studying both the social and cultural dynamics of the preservice teachers in the course, I chose to use a qualitative method of analysis. Qualitative methods of collection and analysis allowed me to better understand and tell the story of the preservice teachers and the context in which their thinking and beliefs evolved from their perspectives and my observations.

Within qualitative methods, I chose to add a transactional theoretical framework. A transactional lens made my research different from previous studies. I built on the past research of Gonzales (2003), Carpenter (1997), Mathis (1994), and Schall (1993) by adding a specific theoretical framework for analysis of data and a focus on issues related to a global society. Jackson and Mazzei (2016) describe theoretical analysis as a way to plug data into specific tenets of a theory. They argue that “plugging in” positions both data and theory as machines and reveals both their nuances and “machinic potential” to interrupt and transform other machines and research. Using a theoretical framework for analysis created a robust search for connections across my data rather than filling in predetermined codes. Reading and rereading data from primary sources and searching for tenets and nuances of those tenets related to transactional theory allowed me to theoretically focus on my data. Descriptive narratives—complete with student quotes and daily understandings—related to the course content and objectives were often used to support and at times challenge my selected categories and the data within those categories.

In this manner, my focus was to understand which aspects of the TLS 480 course contributed to meeting the course requirements as well as influenced students’ beliefs and understandings related to children’s literature in the classroom. I was specifically interested in answering the questions:

- How do preservice teachers’ understandings of the roles of children’s literature in the lives of readers evolve over the semester?
- How do preservice teachers’ understanding of integrating literature into elementary school curriculum change during the semester?

## **Context of the Research**

This teacher research study was conducted in an undergraduate course, TLS 480, Children's Literature in the Classroom, at the University of Arizona where I was the instructor for the Spring 2016 semester. This course was a survey of children's literature during which we explored, through reading and discussion, a wide range of genres and issues related to children's books. Extensive and intensive reading of children's books was the primary focus of this course.

### **The Participants**

The majority of the 25 preservice teachers in the course were white, female, elementary education majors. Student enrollment through the university revealed that one student was a senior, 11 preservice teachers were juniors, and 13 preservice teachers were sophomores. 21 were female and four were male. Eight preservice teachers were Latinx, one student was African American, and the remaining 16 preservice teachers were White. 23 preservice teachers gave consent to have their data, which included written responses and oral discussions about issues related to children's literature, in this study (See Table 2.1).

TLS 480 is designed to take place in the junior year of education majors. A prerequisite to becoming an education major is to have a minimum 60 hours of experience working with children. The junior year—the first year of officially being recognized by the university as an education major—has a practicum component that requires preservice teachers to spend 60 hours volunteering or working in an elementary classroom. That requirement offers education majors the opportunity to experience real classroom settings and gain exposure and minimal practice with course content. Sophomores in the course had not yet completed the hours of service requirement and were not enrolled in a practicum for the semester. This distinction between sophomores and juniors led to significant advantages for juniors in the course who had already

**Table 2.1 Diversity of the Participants**

20										
19										
18										
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7										
6										
5										
4										
3										
2										
1										
<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>		<b>Sophomore</b>	<b>Junior</b>		<b>Anglo</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>African American</b>	

completed 60 hours of classroom observations and were currently visiting classrooms on a weekly basis. Many of the sophomores had not yet completed their 60 hours of classroom observations and had not had experiences working with children. During the semester these preservice teachers were not in classrooms which limited their opportunities to experience, question, and see literature being used in classrooms with children.

**The Course Syllabus**

According to the course syllabus the TLS 480 course is a survey of children’s literature during which we explore, through reading and discussion, a wide range of genres and issues

related to children's books. The objectives of the course naturally fit into a transactional framework and lend themselves to answering my research questions. The course objectives are:

- gain a better understanding of yourself as a reader and of how to engage in personal and critical response to literature
- develop a broad knowledge of the various genres and types of books for children, including the major authors and illustrators of these books.
- be able to evaluate the literary quality and appropriateness of specific children's books.
- be familiar with the literary and artistic elements and how they interact to create an effective book for children.
- be familiar with the reference sources for information on children's literature
- examine the role of literature in the lives of children.
- explore ways to engage children with literature for both personal and academic purposes.
- develop an awareness of social, multicultural and international issues as they connect to literature for children.

The course was designed to provide preservice teachers with numerous opportunities to respond and reflect upon their understandings of children's literature. These ongoing reflections assisted with self-monitoring of growth and understanding of course objectives. Class time provided numerous opportunities for preservice teachers to share reflections and responses to literature with others in the course. Responses often involved reflection on the experiences, interpretations of readings, and reflections on classroom engagements. These discussions offered time for preservice teachers to rethink their understandings and examine implications of those understandings, which in turn allowed for new understandings or deepening of knowledge to occur.

I wanted to incorporate as many opportunities for literature experiences as possible for preservice teachers. Since the majority stated in their beginning interviews that their literary experiences—and for that matter most of their learning experiences—had been question-and-answer types of instruction, I desired to encourage preservice teachers to practice what they were learning in context as much as possible. Lanier and Sedlak (1989) purport that student learning has often been trivialized in schools to support short term thinking and mastery of facts. Offering TLS 480 preservice teachers authentic and relevant learning experiences such as reading aloud to a group of children, creating text sets for a mini-conference of peers and community members, and selecting choice inquiry projects where preservice teachers delved deeper into content areas of interest, etc., enabled these preservice teachers to make connections from their learning and learning products to the actual teaching world. My goal was that learning be purposeful and relevant to the preservice teachers. The wide variety of engagements, readings, genres, and experiences provided in the course allowed for ongoing transactions to occur which provided me with rich data to analyze using a transactional theory lens.

**Course engagements.**

- Read one chapter from the text each week
- Read at least 5 picture books each week, for a total of 65 minimum
- Read at least one YA or Middle Grade novel or informational book per week, totaling 15 minimum.

**Learning projects.**

- Reflection Papers
- Read-Aloud
- Literacy Bag

- Book Browse
- Book Club
- Genre Presentation
- Author/Illustrator profiles
- Text Set
- Choice Inquiry Project
- Children's Literature Resource Portfolio (Benchmark Assignment)

**Learning goals and reflections.**

Preservice teachers were asked to respond to the following prompt for a beginning goal reflection:

- How do you see children's literature being a part of your life and life goals?
- What are your goals for this class?
- What do you want to learn in this class?
- You may add any relevant information that you like.

These initial questions offered an opportunity for me to learn about individuals and formulate my initial interview questions. It enabled me to check personal goals for the semester to ensure their relevancy to the course content, and to examine whether I addressed their goals sufficiently during the semester. Responses to the questions also served as a means for preservice teachers to monitor their own growth toward achieving their goals during the course.

***Initial student conference.***

I learned about preservice teachers' university standings and experiences during initial student conferences where I utilized a modified Seidman's (2012) three-tiered interview methodology. This method required three interviews. Using this approach I used primarily open-

ended questions to build upon and explore preservice teachers' responses to those questions. My goal was to have them reconstruct their experiences with literature.

After reading a preservice teacher's beginning goal reflection, I wrote notes in the margin. Those notes turned into the questions I asked preservice teachers to answer during our individual student conference/interview held on the first week of class. The interviews provided not only an opportunity for me to gain a deeper understanding of student experiences with literature, but also a chance to clarify their personal goals as related to course content. Those interviews provided information that helped guide my instruction and the experiences that occurred in the course during the semester. It also offered an opportunity to get acquainted and establish an environment of open communication since the conference was held outside of class time and not graded.

Seidman (2012) recommends formulating questions ahead of the interview, but allowing the interview to take on the natural flow of discussion in order to capture a vivid picture. Preservice teachers often asked questions regarding the course content or discussed personal issues that might impact their success in the course (e.g. work full time, learning disability, early class time not conducive to their sleep schedule, etc). By listening to concerns that arose and questions they had regarding the semester, I was able to gain insight into their goals, lives, and personalities. It enabled me to clarify their desires for the course and see where those goals corresponded to course content. I was often able to emphasize aspects of the course to fit with the needs and desires of the preservice teachers. In places where I found correlations between personal goals and course objectives, I wrote notes that I placed in their individual files to remind me to acknowledge those goals and show a correlation when they were addressed in class.

***Mid-semester goal reflections.***

These reflections asked preservice teachers to review their initial course goals and reflect upon the progress they were making toward those goals as well as adjust any of the goals that were no longer relevant. Those reflections and adjustments of original goals offered rich data on their perceptions of their personal growth and understandings in the course and provided affirmation and new perspectives on my understanding of their personal achievements. It also provided information that helped guide my future teaching for the remainder of the course.

***Course final.***

The course final revealed preservice teachers' final understandings of course content as well as personal insights regarding the roles of literature in their future teaching careers.

Questions from the final are shown below.

Think through your experiences in this course and evaluate your progress according to the following questions:

1. Evaluate your overall growth and learning in this course.
  - a. What were significant areas of thinking and learning for you during this course? Why were those areas the most significant?
  - b. Evaluate how you have met at least one of the goals you set at mid-term.
  - c. Describe how your inquiry project was relevant to you and expanded upon your learning.
2. What grade would you consider fair for yourself in this course based on:
  - a. Your growth and learning
  - b. The quality of your work (projects, logs, readings, etc.)
  - c. Attendance, preparation, and participation in class sessions

**Book reflections.**

Preservice teachers read a novel a week. They reflected on personal connections and responses that occurred from the text.

**Cultural x-ray.**

Cultural x-rays permitted preservice teachers to look beyond the outward appearances of characters in books to see their internal make-up: relationships, beliefs, desires, fears, and values. These character portraits permitted preservice teachers to view and understand global characteristics of people and so provided data on their perspectives of their cultural identities.

**Reading log.**

Preservice teachers read at least 5 picture books and one novel each week, for a total of 80 or more books. These books were of a variety of genres and were also recorded on the LibraryThing or another agreed upon method or site. The reading and recording of these books allowed preservice teachers to share their enjoyment, experiences and reflections/comments regarding children's literature with their peers. The log also enabled preservice teachers to reflect upon their text selection at later times to more critically examine the depth and growth in their comments over time and their ability to identify genres and themes that were prevalent in their selections. Each week one book from a specified genre was selected to share with a group during course time. These experiences provided opportunities for preservice teachers to explore genres and discuss books within the genres with peers. The log and sharing of the log allowed me to gain knowledge of what preservice teachers were reading, the connections they were making through their comments on those books, and their beliefs about using trade books in the classroom when they responded to themes related to the book and the book's genre. This log was used as a resource for their final exam and served as a reference in their teaching futures.

**Reflection papers.**

These short—most were approximately a page to a page and a half—papers focused on personal responses to books and learning activities. This was an opportunity for preservice teachers to dig deep and reflect on what was read or experienced during semester. The sharing of these reflections provided opportunities for incorporating the social aspects of literature that the group enjoyed as well as opportunities for me to gain knowledge of their evolution in thinking about literature and were used to answer both of my research questions.

**Choice inquiry project.**

A final project of personal significance related to course content was created/implemented and shared during the last two class sessions. This project was required if the preservice teacher desired to receive an A grade. All completed their inquiry projects. Data provided from inquiry projects was used to support preservice teachers' growth toward their personal goals.

**Children's literature resource portfolio.**

All of the course learning exercises, reflections that corresponded to each topic in the benchmark assignment, and the handouts and the syllabus were used to create a Children's Literature Resource Portfolio (Benchmark Assignment). The portfolio served as the basis for the final examination (in-class exam) as well as acting as a final evaluation of whether or not course objectives were met. The purpose of the portfolio was to gather and organize the projects and resources from this class according to the course objectives. The portfolio included a reflection for each section indicating how the artifacts demonstrated meeting the course objectives related to that section. These reflections were summative of the growth and understanding that each student made within the areas listed below (see Appendix A for a detailed description of the required content for the Children's Literature Benchmark Portfolio).

## **Data Collection**

Data consisted of both primary and secondary sources. The tenets selected from Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory were used to examine the primary data sources. Secondary sources provided support for the emerging categories/themes and a deeper understanding of the changes that occurred within perceptions of thinking across the semester.

### **Primary Data**

Primary data consisted of preservice teachers' course learning goals and reflections that occurred three times during the semester, book reflections, conferences, and interviews. Preservice teachers' responses to their learning goals and reflections revealed new understandings and development of thinking related to literature and its uses for them both personally and for their professional futures. Book reflections were used for class book club discussions. They provided rich data related to preservice teachers' connections with literature and how they understood literature's roles in children's understanding and education. Often, those reflections were incorporated into their Reading Logs and provided data related to question number one, How do preservice teachers' understandings of the roles of children's literature in the lives of readers evolve over the semester? Initial student conferences provided information related to preservice teachers' background experiences with literature and education. It also provided clarification of each individual's beginning goals and understandings for TLS 480. This information served as a starting point of gathering initial data.

### **Follow-up case study interviews.**

These final reflections and responses were used to develop questions for follow-up interviews conducted after the course was completed. They provided detailed support for what I

observed as a researcher and also support for unobservable data such as beliefs, desires, and hopes. The course final also informed my questions for the follow-up interviews.

I conducted two interviews with selected case study preservice teachers based on their willingness to participate in two additional follow-up interviews, their previous oral contributions and elaboration in classroom discussions, and also on their diverse representation of the class population (age, gender, grade level, and ethnicity). The first interview was used to clarify and support my understandings of statements they made during the course in my collected data. That interview allowed me to gain a more thorough understanding of their statements, and also provided an opportunity for preservice teachers to check my interpretations of their statements. In that manner, preservice teachers served as member checkers to ensure that my understandings were consistent with the intent of their individual intentions. The final interview consisted of any final questions that resulted from the first interview, a final member checking of my analysis, and a question that asked participants if there was anything else they felt needed to be asked to make this research more thorough regarding the changes that occurred in their beliefs and understandings related to my research questions.

I was able to restate previous responses and ask for clarification of those responses, check my understanding of those responses, and ask questions that might provide additional information related to my research questions. I continued to use Seidman's three-tiered interview process (2012) and had open-ended questions established prior to the interview. I also allowed the conversation to evolve as I did my best to actively listen rather than interrupt the flow of talk.

These final interviews lasted 86-95 minutes each and were recorded and then transcribed. I then read the transcriptions looking for information related to my selected themes. I

highlighted discourse related to literature as a way to understand in yellow. Literature as a social engagement was highlighted in purple. Meaning of text as a combination of both aesthetic and efferent stances was highlighted in green. I reread the transcripts twice to find those themes and one additional time to review my coding. Highlighting the interviews in this manner allowed me to quickly reference sources and add them to my final understandings of each theme related to my research questions.

Since the second and third interviews were completed after the semester, I had already completed transcribing my data and created an initial coding of my data. I knew which themes of transactional theory I needed to address and was able to ask questions that related to those themes. I understood that information from the final individual interviews and group interview might provide new data that could alter my original themes or offer a more distinct description of the transactional shifts that occurred during the semester. This was the first time that I was able to approach my questioning with a goal of gaining insight into thinking that related to specific aspects of transactional theory rather than the entire transactional theory of literature. However, I still needed to reexamine my data to discover the categories present within the selected themes. My questions for the final interviews remained open-ended to allow the interviewees to respond in a variety of ways. Appendixes B.3 - B.8 show the questions asked of each interviewee.

First interview.

I analyzed the data collected from the semester and identified areas where further information from preservice teachers would help clarify and/or enhance my understandings of student changes and allow me to more fully elaborate upon my findings. At that time, I had formed four themes from my analysis. I believed the interview would allow me to more clearly distinguish and more fully elaborate upon specific findings within the individual themes.

1. Literature as a Way of Understanding Ourselves and the World
2. Literature as an Opportunity to Gain Empathy toward Others.
3. Literature as a Social Engagement
4. Literature as a Combination of Both Aesthetic and Efferent Elements

I developed the following questions to ask preservice teachers in a follow-up interview after the end of the semester:

- How was the instruction in TLS 480 similar to and different from the instruction you received in school?
- How do you feel about the social aspects of literature (literature discussion circles, book clubs, discussions, collaborative reader response engagements, etc.)?
- In what ways do you see read alouds fitting or not fitting into your classroom environment?
- Will multicultural literature be a part of your curriculum? Why do you feel that way?

During September 2016, I sent an email requesting a follow up interview to the 23 preservice teachers who completed the course and consented to participate in my research. Five preservice teachers responded they were interested in participating; however, only four were able to do so. The four participants represented the diversity of the classroom with one White male sophomore, one Latina female sophomore, one White female sophomore, and one Latina female junior. This data served as a source of triangulation and member check.

I followed Seidman's (2012) recommendation that interviews be held for 90 minutes. That time frame ensured that I moved through the interview in a timely manner. In two instances, it offered opportunity for the interviewees to freely discuss their summers with me. Those conversations led to instances of elaboration on a previous question. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. The interviews allowed participants to clarify my understandings of

their responses and answer further questions to elaborate upon information that was not clear in final reflections and course evaluations. It also allowed them to serve as member checkers and review findings for accuracy.

#### *Final interview.*

The final interview was a group interview with the four preservice teachers who participated in the follow-up interview. It was held two weeks after the follow-up interview and lasted 95 minutes. One member needed to leave after forty five minutes. The group interview permitted the four preservice teachers to answer questions and contribute to previous responses with elaboration and often questions about the response. Group dynamics offered them an opportunity to socialize (one of their favorite aspects of the course) and to reflect upon and enhance their responses in an enjoyable way while also checking my findings.

#### **Secondary sources of data.**

Secondary sources of data consisted of descriptive narratives, cultural x-rays, reading logs, reflection papers from class engagements and projects (These reflections differed from primary source reflections in that they occurred as singular events related to a specific engagement rather than on-going events or book reflections which occurred weekly), and a choice inquiry project.

During class instruction and engagements, I took field notes with quotes to note new understandings related to course content that indicated changes in thinking. I also wrote notes to remind me of topics of discussion or things to further discuss in the next class. Emails were sent to preservice teachers after each class detailing what needed to be ready for the next class. Often the reflections that I had from the previous class were incorporated into the emails (e.g. After discovering that the majority of preservice teachers were summarizing the novel read for small

group discussion rather than reflecting on the book, I reminded them to remember to add personal connections they made with the text as they read). When appropriate, those notes were used as secondary data to support findings throughout my dissertation. They served not only as personal reminders to me of the happenings of the day, but also as data to enhance my understandings of particular class sessions and student reflections. Secondary data gathered from cultural x-rays provided data related to the theme of literature as a way to understand. As preservice teachers entered books continually throughout the semester, their Reading Logs permitted me to see the evolution in their understandings of the roles of literature in the classroom.

Inquiry project data varied depending on the project that was selected by a student. Inquiries provided data for all three themes. An example of this is when the inquiry project involved writing a book. The book often depicted a character who was from a marginalized population which provided readers with opportunities to understand. The preservice teacher who created the book often discussed how she would use this book as a social engagement with children. When introducing the book, the writer often discussed the genre of the book or how she might use the book as part of a thematic unit.

Tables 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 illustrate the time collection of primary and secondary data sources for beginning, middle, and ending data collections.

### **Data Analysis**

Data was collected throughout the semester and hard copies were stored chronologically by individual preservice teacher names in file folders. Data was analyzed through a transactional lens. Initial goals were read to gain a feel for possible themes. Using a class list, I typed dialogue from responses from these goals that contained strong emotive or future instructional

**Table 2.2 Beginning Data Sources**

<b>Beginning Data Sources</b>
<b>Primary Sources</b>
➤ 1/21/16—Beginning Goal Reflections due
➤ 1/21/16-2/6/16—Individual interviews
➤ 2/2/16—First novel reflection due (novel reflections occur most weeks)
➤ 2/2/16—First novel small group book discussion occurs (Book discussions occur most weeks)
<b>Secondary Data</b>
➤ 1/14/16—My Personal Narratives begin
➤ 1/26/16—Literacy Bag Due
➤ 1/28/16—Literacy Bag Reflection Due

**Table 2.3 Mid-Semester Data Sources**

<b>Mid-Semester Data</b>
<b>Primary Data Sources</b>
➤ Novel Reflections and Discussions Continue on a weekly basis
➤ 3/8/16 Text Sets Due
➤ 3/10/16—Midterm Reflections Due
<b>Secondary Sources</b>
➤ My Personal Notes continue
➤ 3/10/16—Text Set and Conference Reflections Due

**Table 2.4 End-Semester Data Sources**

<b>End-Semester Data Sources</b>
<b>Primary Data Sources</b>
➤ Personal Notes continue
➤ Novel Reflections and Discussions Continue on a weekly basis
➤ 4/12/16—Ted Talk, <i>The Danger of a Single Story</i> , Chimamanda Adichi (Watched and Discussed)
➤ 4/21/16—Read and Reflect on <i>Unlearning The Myths that Bind Us</i> , Linda Christensen
➤ 5/3/16—Choice Inquiry Project
<b>Secondary Data Sources</b>
➤ 5/10/16—Final Take Home Reflection Due
➤ 5/10/16—Course Final Exam
➤ 5/12/16—Initial analysis and coding of data begins
➤ 10/29/16—Karl Final Case Study Interview
➤ 11/2/16—Carly Final Case Study Interview
➤ 11/3/16—Astrid Final Case Study Interview
➤ 11/3/16—Allie Final Case Study Interview
➤ 11/4/16—Transcription of Interviews Starts
➤ 12/9/16—Final Group Case Study Interview

beliefs, opinions, or goals next to the preservice teacher's name on the list. The initial goals were then reread to see if anything potentially relevant was missed. Those items were added to the class list of response dialogue. I then reread the typed dialogue quotes to look for common themes that were related to any of the tenets of transactional theory.

Using a computer allowed me to highlight possible themes in specified colors and later change my groupings by adjusting the highlight color. Quotes that did not fit into one of the main themes were highlighted in purple to be labeled and discussed in a category called "other". I then reread the highlighted material, moved items to more appropriate categories, and checked to see if any of the purple highlighted items could fit into one of the three selected themes. Once that was completed, I waited a week and revisited the data to see if I found any discrepancies in my initial groupings. Some quotes fit into more than one category. In those instances, I looked to see which theme was more dominant and placed the item within that grouping. Midterm and final data were coded in the same manner. Secondary data was used to support findings from the primary data sources and show student evolution throughout various course engagements.

Specific categories were created from the highlighted data. However, my data was constantly analyzed through a threshold (a place where all of my data, theory, and memories met) that allowed new subcategories to evolve as new understandings from the shifting of analysis occurred when data was revisited. According to Jackson and Mazzei (2012), "The in-between-ness of the threshold offers up a temporary but forceful site for problematizing and thinking the new" (p. 721). In this manner, my thinking was not as Derrida (1981) states "arrested", but my understandings allowed transactional theory to be pushed to its limits (p. vii).

While investigating the role of transaction in TLS480, I specifically analyzed data related to my research questions. I created four themes:

1. Literature as a means for understanding ourselves and others
2. Literature as a social engagement
3. Literature as a way to gain empathy
4. Literature as aesthetic and efferent stances.

As I continued to reread and analyze my data by cutting and pasting quotes from reflections and class work into codes, I discovered places where data was relevant to evolution in thinking related to transactional theory. I allowed categories to merge and new subthemes to emerge.

These subthemes allowed me to further describe the shifts in beliefs and understandings of roles of children's literature. At times in my writing, I discovered that my understanding of my data evolved as related to transactional theory. Writing about themes and subthemes and then supporting those themes with evidence from my data enabled me to gain a better understanding of what my data revealed. With those revelations came minor shifts in the subthemes. An example of this occurred when I originally believed there needed to be four themes:

1. Literature as a social engagement
2. Literature as a way to understand ourselves and others
3. Literature as a way to gain empathy.
4. Literature as aesthetic and efferent stances

However, as I began writing about literature as a way to gain empathy, I realized that much of what I wanted to say fit with my data on literature as a way to understand ourselves and others. I

then combined the two categories into the theme of literature as a way to understand. My four themes merged to become three distinct themes:

1. Literature as a social engagement
2. Literature as a way to understand
3. Literature as aesthetic and efferent stances

It was through this open coding where new understandings evolved as I reflected upon my writing that a clear picture of the preservice teachers' beliefs and understandings emerged. I spent time rereading theory as my analysis was unfolding. I acknowledged my new understandings and adjusted my themes accordingly.

### **Framing the Research Analysis**

I utilized a transactive framework to specifically examine the ways in which preservice teachers evolved in their beliefs about:

1. literature as an opportunity to understand
2. literature as a social engagement
3. meaning of text as a combination of the aesthetic combined with efferent influences

I describe each theme and their categories and subcategories in chapters 3 and 4. Table 2.2 illustrates each theme, the categories and subcategories within each theme, and the characteristics of the categories. As stated earlier, overlap exists within the themes, but the preponderance of the data that fell within the themes helped answer my research questions. The first two themes: literature as an opportunity to understand and literature as social engagement were used to answer the research question, "How do preservice teachers' understandings of roles of children's literature in the classroom evolve over the semester?" The third theme and the data

related to it explained, “How do preservice teachers’ understanding of integrating literature into elementary school curriculum change during the semester?”

**Table 2.5 Data analysis themes and categories**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Sub-Categories</b>
<b>Literature as Opportunity to Understand</b>	<b>Self</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading others’ stories allows us to understand our experiences and feelings</li> <li>• Literature as a way to explore our own morals and values</li> <li>• Reading as a safety zone for entering other worlds and realities</li> <li>• Literature allows us to question our understandings and beliefs</li> </ul>	Therapeutic, escape, understanding of beliefs, safety zone
	<b>Others</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathizing with others enables us to understand social inequities and injustices</li> </ul>	Literature as democracy
	<b>World</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Injustices have occurred and still occur in our world</li> </ul>	Literature as curriculum
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Sub-Categories</b>
<b>Literature as Social Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature as an <b>oral</b> sharing of story that is enjoyed with others</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature as discussion/debate of ideas and issues</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature as a sharing of common interests/enjoyable moments with friends (book clubs)</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature as ritual/event (story time, read alouds, bedtime, etc.)</li> </ul>	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Sub-Categories</b>
<b>Literature as Aesthetic and Efferent Stances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature appreciation is enhanced with knowledge of aesthetic qualities</li> </ul>	Literature as knowledge
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature as a way to learn/understand</li> </ul>	Literature as a way to integrate content areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature as critical thinking of ideas and skills</li> </ul>	

**Timeline of Data Collection and Consent**

My research began at the start of the Spring semester, 2016. I collected all class work from the 25 preservice teachers enrolled in the course throughout the semester. Work was stored by their names in separate folders in chronological order. My personal descriptive narratives were written after each class session throughout the semester. Follow-up interviews with four preservice teachers from the course occurred in August and September of 2016.

**Trustworthiness of Research**

Data was collected from TLS480 preservice teachers during the Spring semester of 2016 and follow-up interviews with four volunteers from the course who represented the diversity of

the course population after they returned from summer break. Member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation along with my long-term field immersion of teaching the course for three semesters ensured trustworthiness. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability assure trustworthiness.

### **Credibility**

Member checking was done throughout the semester. Reflections and my questions of clarification of content in my weekly responses to those individual reflections, as well as interviews provided many checks by the participants of my understanding. Bi-weekly meetings with the two other TLS 480 instructors, as well as Dr. Short, offered opportunities to consult with my colleagues and discuss course content, instruction, pertinent questions and upcoming course events. These meetings allowed me to clarify my understandings related to my research by sharing my thinking with other instructors of TLS 480. Dr. Short also served as a source of triangulation with frequent checks of my application of theory, portrayal of information, understanding, and progress throughout the semester as well as during the entire dissertation process.

Another form of triangulation occurred with three colleagues who I shared an office with. I often found myself asking one of my peers to “listen to my thinking” or to check my understanding of analysis. Often this reaffirmed my thinking, but many times these conversations made me look at my understandings in new ways and make adjustments to ensure my claims could be supported. I was also a member of a writing group. This group offered information on how to effectively write for publication. We met as an entire class bi-weekly and also had small writing groups that met in-between those biweekly class sessions. These large and small groups offered opportunities for me to share my writing for clarity and accuracy. My

writing partners and professor often challenged me to clarify my thinking and elaborate with support from sources.

### **Transferability**

To help ensure the transferability of my findings, I described the population and data sources as clearly as possible. In many instances, transcriptions and photos of actual conversations and work samples provided documentation of the preservice teachers' understandings. This "real" evidence allows readers to see the characteristics of the course and its applicability to other situations.

### **Dependability**

A transactional framework was used as a lens to code the data. The process for the coding of the themes was described with definitions and work samples to demonstrate how themes were selected and how those themes related to my questions. As I discovered themes, I shared my findings with a writing partner as well as Dr. Short. This sharing provided opportunities for me to reflect on my interpretations and gain intersubjective agreement which decreased chances for bias. Preservice teacher data was shown in chronological order to provide a story of the changes that occurred in their thinking throughout the semester. This allowed for a transparency of the data, and as Lincoln & Guba (1985) recommend, it lets the data "speak for itself."

### **Confirmability**

To establish confirmability I used triangulation and personal notes from each class that served as a reflexive journal. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I collected weekly course data from the preservice teachers' assignments and engagements. These served as a primary source of data related to both of my research questions. I also kept a personal journal with summaries of the day's happenings and descriptions of specific occurrences from the class that showed

evidence of changes in thinking or brought a question to my mind. I included member checking with preservice teachers that represented the diversity of the class. I also met with peers and my advisor to discuss my understandings.

### **Consent and Confidentiality**

To ensure confidentiality of participants in the study I informed the preservice teachers at the beginning of the semester that I might use information gathered from the course for research. At the time, I was uncertain if I would write an article, my dissertation, or abandon the idea of using the TLS 480 course for inquiry altogether. About a month into the course, I was certain that I would use data from that group for my dissertation. I waited until the last quarter of the course to introduce a consent for permission to be included in my study. At that time, I believed there was a sense of unity among us. Although I realized we did not always agree on topics being explored in the course, we seemed to have established trust between us. We understood that our classroom was a safe place to delve into controversial issues. Since that trust was established, I felt comfortable asking them to sign a consent to participate in research form (see Appendix C).

After I explained the consent form to the preservice teachers, I asked Dr. Short, my advisor, to distribute the form and answer any questions they might have about consenting to participate in the study. When the forms were completed during class time, a class volunteer collected the forms, placed them in an envelope and sealed the envelope. The envelope was given to Dr. Short and placed into a locked safe in her office. I did not have access to the forms until all grades were officially posted. This insured confidentiality and lack of partiality for course grades. Once grades were officially posted, I retrieved the consent forms from Dr. Short who handed me the envelope from the locked safe. 23 of the preservice teachers in the course

gave permission to use their information for my research. To maintain anonymity of the participants, I used pseudonyms.

### **Relevance of My Research**

Our teacher education programs often claim they are based on a theoretical lens, and report that students evolve in ways of understanding that lens. Previous research from TLS 480 courses has shown that preservice teachers grow in enjoyment of reading (Mathis, 1994; Carpenter, 1997), they view themselves more positively as readers (Mathis, 1994; Carpenter, 1997; Gonzales 2003), they gain knowledge and new insights about the reading process (Mathis, 1994; Gonzales, 2003), and they gain understanding about culture (Schall, 2003). However, I wonder if these emerging qualities and traits enable preservice teachers to connect with transactional theory in ways that actually shift the beliefs they use to take action in their lives and teaching. Using a transactional framework enabled me to find moments when shifts occurred. It allowed me, as a teacher researcher, to examine those shifts in the context of preservice teachers' experiences within the course and their application and ownership of beliefs through course discussions, engagements, projects, and interviews.

### **Conclusion**

This qualitative research study used Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory as a framework for data analysis. Data was used to answer the research questions: 1) How do preservice teachers' understandings of the roles of children's literature in the lives of readers evolve over the semester; and 2) How do preservice teachers' understanding of integrating literature into elementary school curriculum change during the semester? The primary data sources used to answer these questions included: preservice teachers' course learning goals and reflections that occurred three times during the semester, book reflections, conferences, and

interviews. The data were analyzed to identify the major themes with categories and subcategories.

## Chapter 3

### Literature as an Opportunity to Understand

Before this class I knew that children loved storybooks but I did not realize to what extent it helps them not only academically, but on a psychological level as well. When children read they are able to relate to one another, escape reality, and learn through a character's experiences that they may never have. Having literature as a prominent part in a classroom is essential to boosting children's confidence and opening up new worlds to students. (Elise, Midterm reflection)

Elise's reflection illuminates the connections and opportunities that readers experience when they engage with text. Reading and meaning making evolve from the transaction between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 1938). Dewey and Bentley (1949) discuss the transactional relationship between the reader and the text as being fluid in that the reader and the text have a relationship in a "mutually constituted situation" (p. 69). This fluidity allows the reader to explore the contents of the book formulating and reformulating meaning during the act of reading. Readers challenge themselves to reexamine beliefs and explore new concepts and tensions in relation to personal life experiences and conceptual knowledge. In this manner, literature invites readers to explore and challenge current beliefs and understandings as well as experience alternate conceptions of what is or what may be new realities.

Preservice teachers in TLS 480 reflected on their understandings of the roles and relationships they had with literature throughout the semester. These responses, related to the theme of understanding, fell within three categories: 1) Reader—Self; 2) Others—Peers and People; and 3) World—Global Knowledge. Within the category of Reader, there were four subcategories: 1) Reading others' stories allows readers to understand their experiences and

feelings; 2) Reading is a safety zone for entering other worlds and realities; 3) Literature provides a way for readers to explore their own morals and values; and 4) Literature allows readers to question our understandings and beliefs.

**Table 3.1 Categories and Subcategories**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Theoretical Tenets</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
<b>Literature as Opportunity to Understand</b>	<b>Self</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading others' stories allows us to understand our experiences and feelings</li> <li>• Literature as a way to explore our own morals and values</li> <li>• Reading as a safety zone for entering other worlds and realities</li> <li>• Literature allows us to question our understandings and beliefs</li> </ul>	Lived through experience	Therapeutic, escape, understanding of beliefs, safety zone
	<b>Others</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathizing with others enables us to understand social inequities and injustices</li> </ul>	Literature as democracy	Literature as a means to break silence; injustices have occurred and still occur in our world
	<b>World</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Injustices have occurred and still occur in our world</li> </ul>	Literature as curriculum	Stories as knowledge
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
<b>Literature as Social Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature a an <b>oral</b> sharing of story that is enjoyed with others</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature as discussion/debate of ideas and issues</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature as a sharing of common interests/enjoyable moments with friends (book clubs)</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature as ritual/event (story time, read alouds, bedtime, etc.)</li> </ul>		

Tenet	Categories	Themes	Sub-themes
<b>Literature as Aesthetic and Efferent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature as critical thinking of ideas and skills</li> </ul>	Literature as a pleasurable experience (began as fun and evolved in most cases to elements of literature appreciation)  Literature as knowledge  Literature as a way to integrate content areas	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature as a way to learn/understand/Literature as curriculum</li> </ul>		

### Reading to Understand Ourselves

Looking at a book they might say this is not only me. This happens quite frequently, so it opens up the possibilities of understanding themselves and others.

(Astrid, 2<sup>nd</sup> interview)

Rosenblatt (1995) claims, “The organic nature of the literary experience provides some assurance that new insights will be assimilated emotionally as well as intellectually” (p. 261).

Transacting with literature offers readers new ways of viewing and perceiving their lives. Living through protagonists' experiences provides ways to see ourselves in others' lives and visualize new outcomes and possibilities.

Literature provides experiences for readers to engage in problem-solving situations by living the story and responding to the printed words and symbols. The reader's attention may focus on concepts introduced in the text while experiencing events as a protagonist living an adventure (Rosenblatt, 1978). Throughout the semester, preservice teachers often commented on either their personal connections with a character in a book or their desire to use literature to allow children in their classrooms to find answers and learn about ways to understand their own life problems. Often the characters within the book served as mirrors into their lives allowing them to see themselves and life circumstances reflected within the story (Bishop 1990a). These experiences enabled preservice teachers to accept and/or understand themselves and their lives at a deeper level. Discussion related to gaining perspectives of personal growth fall within this category.

The first week of class preservice teachers read the course syllabus at home, and then the objectives and standards for the course were discussed in class. After reading the course objectives, they were asked to select personal course goals for the semester. At times, they mentioned the role literature played in allowing them to understand the experiences they had in life by seeing those experiences mirrored in the lives of the characters in stories. Life's problems seemed manageable when they came to understand they were not alone. Often preservice teacher goals related to their desire to assist children in dealing with problems. They believed literature held opportunities for children to learn lessons and solve problems. Kayla, Katie, and Amanda discussed their desire to utilize picture books in their classrooms believing that these

books allow children to gain knowledge and understanding about themselves and their lives.

Kayla commented,

I hope that by reading to my students I can help them relate picture book problems to their own life problems. This way they can grow a deeper understanding of what is going on in their life. (Kayla, Beginning Semester Goals Reflection).

Katie elaborated on her lived through experience with books as she discussed the books in her Literacy Bag stating, “They helped get me through rough times or move forward in life.” She selected *Forever*, by Judy Blume, as a childhood favorite exclaiming:

This book was more directed towards girls, it was kind of those pointed towards learning about yourself and boys. It talked about first times and boyfriends. This book introduced me to love or what the author was trying to portray love to be. It showed her own experiences with her first boyfriend and what types of complications she faced. With this book it really just gave me reassurance as a girl, that some things were okay. (Literacy Bag Reflection).

The initial interview allowed me to delve deeper into Katie’s comment. I asked her to elaborate on the role that literature played in allowing her to “move forward in life.” Katie responded, “Especially as a teenager. You know, you have these doubts and sometimes I could read a book and know that what I was feeling was normal.” Others also commented on the problem-solving aspects of literature.

Amanda, like Katie, recalled how picture books allowed her to understand that she was not alone in her struggles. Amanda related to the protagonist in *No David!* Both she and David struggled with activity level and focus. I sat at Amanda’s table when she shared the contents of her Literacy Bag with the classmates at her table. When she pulled out *No David!* from her bag,

she was joyous and animated in her recollections of her transactions with the text. Her written reflection regarding the contents of her Literacy Bag illustrated the connection she made with the book.

I immediately got so excited when I saw some of my favorite childhood classics. The first one I grabbed was *No David!* by David Shannon. The author wrote it when he was 5 years old! I remember that as a child I could relate to it because it was about a little kid (David) who got into trouble but then his parents always loved him regardless. My parents always reminded me that they would love me unconditionally. That message and theme has always carried with me. (Literacy Bag Reflection)

Beginning responses revealed evidence that the majority of preservice teachers wanted to learn about a variety of genres, increase their knowledge of children's literature (a very vague goal), and gain practice in reading books with children. While both Kayla and Amanda directly mentioned finding books to help students solve problems, most responses in the beginning of the semester related to finding new books that could be used in their future classrooms. After they reflected on their Literacy Bags, they began to recall early experiences with literature and the impact those experiences had on their early childhood. Amanda's Literacy Bag Reflection is typical of her peers showing her fond memories of reading a picture book with her parents. In her reflection, she discussed how she related to David, the protagonist, and seeing her personal character traits modeled in David. Reading how David was loved helped her feel loved by her parents. Preservice teachers gained numerous experiences reflecting on novels throughout the semester. As the semester progressed, they made many connections with characters and reflected on how those connections related to their lives.

Beginning the second week of classes, preservice teachers responded to literature in a variety of ways. Picture books, poetry, and chapters from novels were read aloud at the start of every class, self-selected novels related to genre and theme studies were read weekly, and book browses and critical evaluation of texts occurred frequently. These exposures to and with literature allowed preservice teachers to gain a variety of experiences with various genres and also a variety of revelations responding to literature with peer and teacher support. As the semester evolved, preservice teachers became comfortable sharing their responses to literature in literature circles and written reflections. In a written reflection on *Locomotion* by Jacqueline Woodson (2003), Brittany discussed her personal connection with Lonnie.

When I was in middle school, one of my favored educators suggested that I should keep a journal and write down my inner most emotions and feelings regardless it being good or bad. To my understanding by doing this I could, not only reflect on my emotions, but also it would be a way to unleash my feelings on paper, as opposed to acting out in an unconventional and distraught manner. Therefore, when reading the book of *Locomotion*, I immediately felt a connection made with the main character. My writing was far from being considered poetry, but it was an extension of me and my inner emotions, as Lonnie's poetry book was an extension of him and his emotions as well.

Brittany's reflection showed her personal connection to Lonnie. She, like Lonnie, used writing as a way to express herself when her emotions became overwhelming. Preservice teachers frequently reflected upon similarities between themselves and the protagonists in stories. Many reflections discussed personal connections with characters in terms of possibilities to grow as citizens. Jack discussed how he desired to push himself to see beyond a surface level after reading the novel *Wonder*, by R.J. Palacio (2016).

*Wonder* really inspired me as a reader and as a person to strive for more and to realize the position I'm in. August taught me that people might be going through a lot but you can't just label them and move along with your life. Everybody deserves patience and to make sure that his or her story is heard.

Brittany's and Jack's mid semester novel reflections illustrate how transacting with literature provided opportunities for preservice teachers to connect with literature in a personal, evocative experience. Brittany associated her experiences with anxiety disorder to Lonnie's experiences of loss. Rosenblatt (1995) discusses how this literary connection serves as a form of psychoanalysis allowing readers to free themselves from their fears and obsessions as they are helped to see the unnecessary constraints and frustrations these tensions place upon them. For many readers, living within the story may provide "the basis for a release from unconscious fears and guilt" as they gain new perspectives (p. 192). While Brittany's reflection showed acknowledgement and acceptance of her personal life circumstances, Jack's experience with the story *Wonder* allowed him to more deeply explore and understand his beliefs about others. As Jack discussed August's problems with being "labeled," he searched from within to explore his beliefs, and then challenge himself to strive for more and realize the position he's in as a healthy individual. Both Brittany's and Jack's transactions with texts supported Probst's (1988) assertion that, "literature may lead to a sharpened understanding of ourselves and our society" (p. 381).

Based on Rosenblatt (1938), I believe that preservice teachers' desires for self-understanding and for knowledge about people provide an important avenue into literature. Their personal involvement in these works generated greater sensitivity to its imagery, style, and structure; this in turn enhanced their understanding of its human implications. For most in the course, these opportunities to self-select novels, reflect, and share their experiences with the text

allowed new understandings of their life experiences and perspectives on humanity and what it means to be human.

The end of the semester offered opportunities for preservice teachers to discuss the experiences that were most meaningful to them from the semester. The course final also asked them to apply and explain how literature may be used to assist in learning. Amelia, Lana, and Astrid reflected about their personal connections with characters and themes from novels read during the course of the semester. They discussed the social and psychological insights experienced through literary engagements.

A question on the final exam asked preservice teachers to look through their reading logs—lists with summaries, bibliographical information, and personal connections pertaining to the book—to select a theme they found relevant to create a text set. In her text set reflection, Amelia discussed her new understanding that literature provides paths for children to gain personal understanding. She listed five books pertaining to the theme of “Expressing Emotions.” Below, she demonstrates how literary experiences prepare children to engage in processes of evoking personal meaning from text.

I see this theme as significant due to showing students that it is okay to have all different sorts of emotions. Books allow students to read about how characters feel and how other people cope with situations. I believe this would be a great theme to start off the school year with so students feel like they can express how they are feeling to me while also showing them that they aren't alone when it comes to how they feel. These books show various emotions from the characters but in the end it is positive because they overcome their struggles.

Amelia's thematic text set shows her understanding of the importance of providing readers with texts that offer experiences to see themselves and their lives reflected in story. She discussed her belief that literary experiences enable children to feel less alone. Like Amelia, Astrid grew to view the study of literature as having potential to create self-acceptance. She selected a text set theme of "Fitting In" on her final exam.

I think the theme of fitting in, growing up and discovering oneself, being yourself, and not caring what others think is a very prevalent theme in literature and especially the books I read this semester. It is also a very important theme for young children, such as my future first graders. So many people starting at a very young age and through adulthood are insecure, feel lost, and not confident in who they are. Books like this help with this issue starting at a younger age to show them how it's okay to be different and that's what makes you unique. It teaches them to be confident and embrace who they are. Books that carry this theme come in all forms, many chapter books, picture books, and realistic fictions.

While the creation of text sets provided opportunities for preservice teachers to discuss how literature allows readers to understand themselves, Lana discussed how literature provides opportunities for readers to feel understood through connection with characters. In her final novel reflection for the semester, Lana revealed how she has grown to realize that reading about others allows us to understand our selves. Lana's reflection below shows her personal connections to the novel *El Deafo* by Cece Bell (2014).

When I read *El Deafo* it was so personal to me because I felt that the main character and I had parallel feelings. In the story, Cece felt very alone and different at first and that's how I currently feel with my recent diagnosis with type 1 diabetes.

Lana's reflection demonstrates her unique and personal experience with the novel. Lana always arrived early to class and was eager to discuss her life and experiences prior to the start of class. The second week of class, Lana was diagnosed with diabetes. She put on a brave smile, but was hesitant to discuss the emotions she felt from her new identity as a diabetic. While her experience with diabetes did not mirror Cece's loss of hearing, Lana was able to gain a better acceptance and understanding of her newly aroused feelings that stemmed from her diagnosis. After reading *El Deafo*, she revealed to me that it was very "therapeutic" for her to read the novel. She felt that she could relate to all of the feelings CeCe, the protagonist in the story, felt as she learned to adapt to having a disability.

Follow-up interviews at the semester's end allowed me to dig deeper into responses from previous reflections. On Allie's midterm reflection she wrote, "It will be enlightening to learn more about the impact and effect on students that literature has." I was curious to learn more specifically what Allie meant by her statement, and asked her to, "Tell me some of the things that you now believe literature impacts and effects." I learned more about Allie's beliefs in her response:

I definitely believe that one of the impacts has a lot to do with just self-exploration and finding out who you are, and I think sometimes, you'll read a book and you'll say, "Oh that sounds just like me, or that sounds like my best friend." You can really involve yourself into the story, and then that impacts your life, because you're like or you'll remember oh, I read that in a book this one time or I remember that character. It's like you create these connections that you wouldn't have been able to make if you didn't read the books. Whether they're like scientific books or whether they're fantasy books. You know, you create those connections and then you understand better.

These responses exemplify how preservice teachers began to discuss and reflect upon not only the personal connections they made with texts, but also the value they found literature to have in providing opportunities for the future students in their classroom. Their responses to text and prompts indicate an understanding of the potentials of transacting with literature. Rosenblatt (1984) reported transacting with literature is a self-liberating process, and the sharing of literature through discussion and engagement may be an even greater means of overcoming limitations of personality and experience. The end of the semester revealed a belief in literature's potential to assist with understanding of ourselves, how we understand others, and the desire to apply those beliefs in their future as educators.

### **Reading Is a Safety Zone for Entering Other Worlds and Realities**

Preservice teachers realized that literature provides opportunities to explore outside of ourselves. They also saw reading as a safety zone for entering other worlds and realities. They found purpose in using literature as a means to explore different life stories. These escapes served as places of comfort and security... as safety zones.

Safety Zones from literature were evidenced through comments relating to the connection that preservice teachers had with books as friends in troubled times. They commented on unconventional relationships with family and peers and literature as offering a means of acceptance. The stories within the covers patiently waited for the reader to engage, much like a friend, to comfort and accept in troubling times. In the security of the classroom, preservice teachers often discussed and revealed personal conflicts and how literature assisted them in those difficult times.

In her Beginning Goal Reflection, Brittany discussed how reading stories allowed her to take a break from daily struggles and relax as she read.

The fact that I could essentially leave my problems, worries, including life's trials and tribulations for a limited amount of time, really helped me as a small child. It's as though when I began reading a book I was fully connected with the text and taken over by the magic of the story. Growing up I was diagnosed with disorder, therefore I felt as though I have always needed an escape from my inner demons anxiety. Reading children's literature was my amazing escape, and I will be forever grateful, due to that aspect.

Brittany was able to take a "time out" from her personal inner turmoil as she read. Living within the story as she read allowed her to put her "inner demons" on hold.

While Brittany found literature to be an escape from her internal struggle with anxiety, Jacob utilized literature as an escape from external factors—his peers.

I was teased a lot growing up and I read a lot. I knew that I always had a good book waiting after school. I read a lot in elementary and middle school, because I didn't really have many friends. I'd start to read and then it was dinner time. I'm not sure what happened to the three hours from after school to dinner, but I know I read lots of books.  
(first interview)

Kayla found literature to be an escape from familial problems. Kayla's Beginning Goal Reflection illustrates how books allowed her to leave her problems behind. Kayla also described how she would like to learn to overcome/escape her shyness by learning to read aloud.

I know children's books were a great escape for me when my family was going through a divorce. I would always go to my room and read a book and pretend I was one of the characters... I hope to learn to become more self-confident when I read out loud. I am very shy and hope I can come out of my shell and show good expression.

Similar to Kayla, Katie discussed how literature allowed her to travel to new places and leave her current world to experience new realities. When reflecting on why she selected the book *The Giver* by Lois Lowry (2002) for her Literacy Bag she wrote,

For me this book was just so different and really caught my attention. It was almost like that transition book for me from reading a bunch of easy novels to going to harder more in depth books. Overall it was an easy read, but I can't even describe the impact this book had on me. When I read this book, it made me feel like I had my own type of getaway because the world in the book was so much different than our own world.

While reading *The Giver* Katie left behind her current confusions about reality and traveled to a new reality. Reading served as a “getaway” for her to travel to new worlds and return slightly refreshed. In Astrid's follow-up interview from the course, she supported Katie's belief that literature provides opportunities for readers to temporarily escape reality by stating, “You can learn a lot from reading. Not just romance and stories, but you can see a whole different world.”

Preservice teachers' pleasure from books as a place of comfort when the world seemed harsh is easy to see from their descriptions of feeling different from their peers; others like Amanda also felt different. A follow up interview with Amanda revealed that she was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder at a young age. She felt as if she was always in trouble. Seeing her personal qualities of hyperactive inquisitiveness represented through the protagonist, David, and hearing her parents profess their unconditional love for her when they read her the story at bedtime, helped Amanda to feel accepted and safe not only within the time and space of the book, but throughout her life. For these preservice teachers and others like them, books served as safety zones—a cherished, secure place between the covers of a book, a place of acceptance.

As I read and reread reflections and interviews from the course of the semester, I realized literature no longer served as getaways into protected worlds. Their final goals neglected addressing the fantastical elements of literature. Exploring new realities and escaping life's truths was important to many of the preservice teachers as children, and yet they failed to conceptualize the relevance of escape and fantasy in the future roles as literacy agents. While literature's ability to escape reality was not observed as being significant during the semester, literature's role as a means to explore beliefs was often noted.

### **Literature Is a Way to Explore Morals and Values**

In literature we read and reflect upon ideas concerning good and evil. Rosenblatt (1995) argues that as readers freely and spontaneously connect to literary works, they will “undoubtedly reflect not only on the work itself but also on the problem it presents” (p. 113). Preservice teachers often discussed how literature allowed them to examine their beliefs by exploring—in literature—various perspectives of right and wrong throughout the semester.

In her Beginning Goals, Tammy discussed her understanding of teaching values through literature as she mentions the “hidden life lessons” found in books.

We use these books to teach them hidden life lessons and to relate to them. Children's literature will be a big part of my future because of all I can do with it, not only with my students, but my children as well. Children's literature serves as an example of endless life lessons.

Rosenblatt (1995) would agree with Tammy's reflection. She asserts, “In books, they (referring to the reader) are meeting extremely compelling images of life that will undoubtedly influence the crystallization of their ultimate attitudes, either of acceptance or of rejection... Literature treats the whole range of choices and aspirations and values out of which the

individual must weave his own personal philosophy” (p. 19). Tammy elaborated on her goals in our initial interview. She wanted to become a math teacher, but she believed that there may be times when she would need to find books for children to help them better understand appropriate behavior. She believed that there were many books that could be used to show consequences of not making “good choices.” Her initial goals included finding books that would allow children to understand why they need to follow rules without being lectured.

Preservice teachers read numerous novels to explore a wide variety of issues in the course. There were no prompts to consider while reading. They were encouraged to select, read, and respond to literature in ways that were meaningful to them. Without teacher influence, they were able to “weave their own personal philosophy.” They challenged their current understandings with new encounters found in the literature they read. Items in this category related to discussion of issues, but neglected to show acknowledgement of self-questioning. Discussion of literature found within this category enabled preservice teachers to think about societal issues without mention of questioning their current beliefs regarding those issues.

When preservice teachers were initially asked to read a novel and write a reflection approximately one page in length, most were hesitant; I received a few emails asking for more clarification. Marcy’s email describes how many were feeling prior to the first novel reflection.

What specifically do you want me to write about? I’m not sure I understand what you mean when you say this should not be a summary of the book, but rather a response to the story about the connections, feelings, and thoughts you had while you read the book. Even with a direct request not to summarize the books, most preservice teachers responded with summaries of the stories they read and then added a few sentences with statements such as: “I

really liked this book. It was well-written,” (Marcy, first choice novel reflection); “I thought the story was very realistic.”

Maggie also had a difficult time elaborating and supporting her statements with personal beliefs; instead preferring to discuss literary elements found in the text without addressing her personal connections. This is seen in Maggie’s first literature reflection of the novel *Maniac Magee*, by Jerry Spinelli (1999). “The author did a good job making the characters believable.” Maggie filled an entire page with comments and evidence supporting the authenticity of characters in the story pointing to what the text described without acknowledging any aesthetic experiences that occurred during her reading.

These comments from initial reflections illustrate the reluctance and hesitancy of preservice teachers to respond to literature with personal evocations. My desire for preservice teachers to appreciate literature on a personal level needed to be supported with classroom experiences related to transacting with text. Based on Rosenblatt’s (1995) belief, “Discussion of personal responses, of the text as lived through, can thus give rise to a truly inductive study of literature” (p. 272), I followed up the weekly reading of novels and written reflections with literature circle discussions. In those discussions, preservice teachers shared their personal responses to novels read in small groups with peers. Reader response engagements were used as starting points for the discussions. Responding to literature in this manner allowed them to revisit texts and share personal connections allowing them to look at the text through multiple perspectives and explore literature more critically. These oral literature discussions encouraged both efferent and aesthetic stances and pertained to a variety of societal issues. The free flowing social aspects of literature reflection within group discussions, which will be discussed more

fully within the theme of literature as a social engagement, began to carry over into their written novel reflections as the semester continued.

Midsemester book reflections offered opportunities to read and respond to a variety of texts. After reading *Wonder* by R. J. Polacio, Amelia discussed the “message” of bullying that she found in the story and how that message could be integrated into her future classroom curriculum.

I found much value in this book and I believe it portrays a great message. With that being said I would much rather have the whole class read it because I really do believe everyone can get something out of this. I would specifically want it to be read in the beginning of the school year, that way bullying can be talked about. I believe this book opens the door by being able to talk about some of the issues that could go on in the classroom, such as making fun of others and not feeling like you fit in. There is very much so a stereotype that is present and it is defining who is “normal” and who is not. I like how this book focuses on how everyone is different and it portrays the fact that it is okay to be different. I believe this book can create a great discussion between the class and in the end I would hope that they are able to realize bullying is wrong and everyone is different.

Amelia wanted children to learn that bullying was wrong. She believed that literature could be used as a starting point to discuss values such as bullying. At this time, Amelia believed the discussion would stem from the perspective of Auggie, the boy who was bullied throughout the story. Amelia has a specific objective to be learned from discussing the effects that bullying has on the victim. Lanie also reflected on how *Wonder* contained the lesson of acceptance.

By the end of *Wonder*, the lesson of accepting others despite their differences is very important.... After reading this novel, audiences realize that just because somebody is not the same as you do not mean they are not people that share similar desires, fears, and interests.

Amanda believed that books could be used to explore values and discussed how *Does My Head Look Big in This?* by Randa Abdel-Fattah (2008) provides opportunities to discuss many values.

There were a lot of powerful quotes in the book. Many of them made me step back and look at my own life. Some were very deep and some were very unique. Every one of them made me go “aha”. The first quote that stood out to me was when Amal said, “Sometimes it's easy to lose faith in people. And sometimes one act of kindness is all it takes to give you hope again”. This was such a beautiful quote that is applicable to everyday life. It made me reflect on my own experiences too. The next quote that jumped out at me was “What’s the good of being true to your religion on the outside, if you don’t change what’s on the inside, where it really counts?”. This is so true in every religion and life in general. It reminds me of the expression “don’t talk the talk if you can’t walk the walk”. If you truly believe something, then it should affect you inside and out. This includes your thoughts, behavior, heart, and even attire in Amal’s case.

As the semester progressed preservice teachers gained new insights regarding “lessons” and “morals” found within children’s literature. They learned through discussion, engagements, and reflection that literature offers numerous opportunities for readers. According to Rosenblatt (1938)

Literature has value when only as it is linked with the student's own primary response to work. His judgement on it will thus be thrown into sharper relief; for if he is indeed functioning freely and spontaneously, he will undoubtedly reflect not only on the work itself but also on the problems it presents and the personalities and actions of the characters. (p. 113).

Final exams and interviews provided opportunities to examine how preservice teachers evolved in their understandings of the contribution of literatures to the formulation of values and beliefs. The preservice teachers realized readers bring their moral and religious codes and social philosophy primarily assimilated from family and community background to their reading (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.89). After listening to Adichie's Ted Talk, *The Dangers of a Single Story*, they questioned their conceptions and came to understand that it is imperative for teachers to present multiple perspectives of stories.

In the final group interview, Carly discusses the need to teach issues from a variety of angles stating:

You need like five books, and each book is gonna come at it from a different angle. It will focus on different aspects I guess. And so out of any topic you're trying to teach that will be another obstacle that depending on what book your student reads they're going to be taking in different formation even though it's the same topic. So, they'll need to discuss what they are reading and hear all the different angles to view that topic.

A huge shift in thinking occurred for preservice teachers in their beliefs regarding interpreting literature. Initial goals revealed they thought certain books offered specific morals and values to be taught to children. However, as they engaged with literature and freely transacted with text they grew to discover the lessons to be learned are actually determined by

readers' ability to navigate and reflect upon their reading. With repeated opportunities to reflect upon literature and engage in reader response engagements, preservice teachers came to the realization that values and morals were found within most books. They grew to accept multiple interpretations and began to feel comfortable discussing their beliefs regarding the lessons learned from literature.

### **Literature Allows Readers to Question Understandings and Beliefs**

Literature offers opportunities for readers to experience numerous stories with characters across time and places. Reading literature allows readers to affirm and question their identities while unconsciously examining alternate beliefs and themes throughout the engagement. Reading and transacting with characters as stories evolve enables readers to critically question their beliefs, values, and understandings about what it means to be human. Rosenblatt (1995) argues that transacting with literature allows readers to address psychological questioning regarding, "What are the basic human traits that persist despite social and cultural changes?" (p. 12). Furthermore, Rosenblatt claims that "Literature treats the whole range of choices and aspirations and values out of which the individual must weave his own personal philosophy" (p. 19). Preservice teachers frequently reflected and questioned their self-identities as they transacted with literature. Literature discussions took those transactions a step further allowing opportunities for preservice teachers to share their perspectives with others and question their beliefs more critically.

Amanda and I met to follow up on her beginning goals reflection and discuss her relationship with literature. I interviewed Amanda and the other preservice teachers to gain more insight into their current thinking regarding their experiences with children's literature and their goals for the course. While Amanda originally professed to me that she did not enjoy reading

and could not recall ever finishing a novel, I found that she actually had many profound responses to and with literature in her life. In our interview, Amanda discussed her connection with the character David in *No David!* Later, Amanda recalled reading a Judy Blume book, saying, “I remember reading *Are You There God, It’s Me, Margaret*, and questioning my faith. I tried to see things as she did.” These books and Amanda’s recollections of reading them demonstrate how her early transactions with literature allowed her to not only explore her identity as a child with ADHD and her identity as a preteen, but to also question her family’s unconditional love for her in difficult times and her relationship with G-D.

Midway through the semester we watched Chiamanda Adichie’s Ted Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*, in class. After listening to Adichie discuss the problems that arise when literature only portrays one perspective of a story, preservice teachers began to question their interpretations of the values and morals within literature and to look at the problems in stories through a variety of lenses. Caroline and Kyla’s reflections illustrate how reading a variety of multicultural literature, reflecting on the readings, and sharing those reflections with others encourages new understandings.

After reading *Inside Out and Back Again*, by Thanhha Lai (2011), Caroline reflected upon her realization that she takes many things for granted and in fact leads a life of privilege. “Reading about Ha’s life as an immigrant from Vietnam put the meaning of hardship in perspective. I admit, some days I am selfish in thinking that my life can be hard. But when I read this book it reminded me of the privileged life I live.” Caroline also discussed her new questioning of privilege and what it means to be white in literature circle stating, “I never really thought about the advantages I have living here and being white... I completely take safety for granted.”

Caroline explored new beliefs about immigration after reading what immigrating to the United States feels like through the perspective of Ha, a young, Vietnamese, girl. While Caroline questioned her beliefs, Kylie questioned her values as she connected with Lonnie, the protagonist, in *Locomotion* by Jacqueline Woodson.

Another poem that stuck out to me was “Dear God”. Lili, got Locomotion a bible to read. As he reads the bible he writes a letter to God, letting him know what’s going on in his life. I think by Lonnie writing to God, he is hoping that God might answer some of his prayers. A line that Locomotion uses is “The Lord works in mysterious ways.” I really like that he said that because I believe in that too. I believe that everything happens for a reason and God knows what’s best for us. Even in a hard situation like Locomotion’s God is always still there to call out too.

At a first glance, both Caroline and Kylie’s reflections may be perceived as pity for others, but listening to literature circle discussions revealed that they were challenging previous conceptions of ethnicity, race and poverty. Rather than discussing immigration and foster care as simply other people’s problems, or situations that separate ‘them from us’, Caroline and Kylie see ways in which we share similarities, even though circumstances prevent some from having equal opportunities. Both preservice teachers empathized with the characters in the stories and realized how society creates obstacles for people from marginalized populations. Rather than seeing problems as their problems versus my problem, these preservice teachers questioned societal messages and saw many issues as our problems.

Midsemester reflections illustrated how preservice teachers read aesthetically making connections with characters and problems in the stories they read. Final engagements with and reflections involving values and beliefs show how preservice teachers applied their new

understandings of the roles of literature in examining and questioning multiple perspectives of values and beliefs found in stories. Continued exposure to literature with opportunities for discussion and reader response engagements revealed preservice teachers' developing understanding that sharing beliefs encourages us to more critically view societal values and beliefs. Final reflections and interviews indicated a variety of ways in which students evolved in their understandings of literature's potential in the teaching of morals and values. When asked what experience in the class she found to be most significant, Katie eluded to the role literature plays in allowing readers to question values and morals when she discussed the relevance of literature discussion groups for her future classroom.

Literature discussion groups I hope are in every classroom because this helps students understand a book, not all books write on the page what the author wants to say, sometimes you have to look deeper and having these discussions in a classroom would help everyone develop a new way to view the novel that was read and help them think critically.

Katie's belief that literature discussions help readers to view novels in new ways since "not all books write on the page what the author wants to say," indicates that she understands that the reading process involves a transaction with the reader and the text—a constant back and forth—where the reader continuously questions thinking. During this process readers use their understandings of both literary knowledge, personal experiences and world knowledge to understand the text.

A question on the final exam asked the preservice teachers to create thematic text sets using books from their reading logs. Using a variety of genres they successfully assembled text sets with themes related to exploring values and beliefs and also explained why those themes

were relevant. Topics from those text sets ranged. While themes varied from stereotypes, family, friendship, perseverance, and fitting in/diversity, all of the text sets included a variety of perspectives. The final exam also asked them to select two books-- One book should be a novel and a picture book—they considered to be thematically or conceptually related and high quality literature.

The majority of the preservice teachers explained that these books were of high quality due to their authentic representation of the theme and addressed issues allowing readers to think critically about beliefs. Carrie's book selection offers a glimpse of preservice teachers' understandings of the value of literature in encouraging readers to question values and beliefs.

The chapter book, *Leon's Story* strongly relates to the picture book, *Henry's Freedom Box*. Both stories share the struggle for social justice... I consider these books high quality because they are multicultural texts that explain reality of their life during the 1900's. The stories tell truth while incorporating empathy for not only themselves, but to acknowledge the injustice in the social structure during that time.

Carrie experienced numerous opportunities to connect with literature first on a personal level and then with others challenging her to question her beliefs and examine them through various perspectives. Rather than seeing the differences between herself and the characters she read about, Carrie saw interests shared with the characters. She acknowledged that the freedoms she had were desirable to all, and her goals in life were more similar to others than different.

Numerous reader response engagements to literature throughout the semester permitted preservice teachers to view literature as part of a balanced curriculum. Perspectives on literature as creating pathways of understanding sociocultural issues evolved into seeing literature as a form of introducing topics and critically thinking about those issues through new literary

experiences throughout the academic year. Maggie's final exam revealed how many preservice teachers felt about literature when the course ended. When asked to think about the most challenging issue from the course Maggie responded,

I realized that racism and cultural identity issues will always be a problem in our society. No matter how many times we change the law or no matter how much time has passed, people still choose to believe that race matters. These kinds of acts reflect upon our children, and the cycle will continue. That is why when I am a teacher, I will do my best to incorporate different types of cultural books during read alouds, or even for lessons, throughout the year. Even though Black history month is in February, I will make sure to read and use African American cultural books during the months of December and April.

Maggie's response shows her desire to provide numerous opportunities in her future classroom for children to examine and question their beliefs regarding race and culture.

A second interview with Carly supported Maggie's desire to provide repeated experiences to a topic with a variety of texts and expanded upon preservice teacher understandings of values and beliefs.

After your class, I kind of understand how and why you learn from literature. Because of all the reflections and discussions... There can be so much literature on the same topic, there will be so many different points of views on that specific topic. And you know if you only expose a child to one specific point of view then they'll like have that ingrained in their mind, and that's kind of like the danger of a single story. Whereas if you grab them with a variety of books with different points of views, they'll be able to, I feel like they'll be able to decide which one they think is what they agree with.

At the end of the course preservice teachers had not only read and transacted with a variety of topics, they had also realized the importance of questioning their beliefs through multiple interpretations and perspectives on each topic. While the course textbook and Reader Response engagements throughout the semester enabled them to experience new content, ideas, and ways of understanding, Adichi's Ted Talk influenced their views on having a "single story" as a reference for them questioning whose story they listened to. The article, *The Myths that Bind Us*, by Linda Christensen (2019), led them to question their previous notions of equity in literature. Class discussions and literature circles provided preservice teachers with spaces to hear and cooperatively 'debate' sociocultural issues making them question their understandings and accept that there are many factors that lead to understanding. By the end of the course, preservice teachers saw the need to read from a variety of perspectives in a variety of genres as a way of challenging themselves to question their understandings. Literature helped preservice teachers to better understand themselves while also providing a means to understand others and the social inequities and injustices that occur.

### **Understanding Others**

Another category that emerged within Literature as an Opportunity to Understand was understanding others. The struggles that a character faces or understanding that a character is gaining agency were coded as offering examples of empathizing with others. These codes pertained to personal connections with the protagonist or conflict the protagonist was going through, but differed from connecting to self because, in these instances, the reader was connecting with a protagonist who differed in identity from the reader. Discourse related to personal connections with text or self-questioning that indicate a reader reached beyond self-

interest or current understanding of social inequalities to see other possibilities was coded as literature as a way of understanding others.

According to Rosenblatt (1938), literature permits readers to see “extremely compelling images of life that will undoubtedly influence the crystallization of their ultimate attitudes, either of acceptance or rejection” (p. 19). Transacting with literature allows readers to experience life’s situations through a variety of perspectives. Living through the story enables readers to experience life through the eyes and the soul of the other. As preservice teachers transacted with literature throughout the semester, they discussed their beliefs and understandings of sociocultural issues. This knowledge developed throughout the semester, as evident in preservice teachers’ course engagements, reflections and interviews. They experienced life and hope as they lived through the story with protagonists who mirrored themselves and came to understand others as stories opened windows for them to enter new cultures and experiences. Literature also served as sliding glass doors allowing readers a personal connection to experiences different from their own (Bishop, 1990).

### **Empathizing With Others Enables Us to Understand Social and Cultural Issues**

During the first week of class, preservice teachers were asked to select personal learning goals related to course objectives. In doing so, they thought about the role of literature in developing an awareness of social, multicultural, and international issues as they connected to literature for children. The preservice teachers read with an aesthetic focus making personal connections as they responded critically throughout the semester. Reflecting upon those literary engagements allowed them to question and re-evaluate their perceptions, misconceptions and biases regarding people from marginalized populations. Beginning goals, midterm engagements,

reflections, discussions, final exams and interviews revealed their evolving beliefs regarding the role of literature in understanding others.

The start of the semester showed a desire from many preservice teachers to understand how literature allows readers to learn about others. After reading the course objectives, they recognized—some for the first time—literature contains social, multicultural and international issues. Beginning goals revealed 15 of the 23 preservice teachers desired to learn more about the roles of multicultural literature in the classroom. Many of those goals related to understanding others.

Astrid stated, “I would love to read children’s literature from other places around the world and learn more about cultures, traditions, ways of dressing, and general information that is easily taught through reading.” Like Astrid, Kylie also mentioned multicultural literature in her beginning goals stating, “I want to find books that relate to different cultural issues.” Astrid and Kylie’s goals addressed learning about others through literature in general terms not mentioning why those goals were relevant to them. Amanda also mentioned a desire to read multicultural literature. She acknowledged her lack of exposure to diverse cultures and issues in her beginning goal reflection when she admitted, “I have never been aware of issues or controversies with books. Whether it is a book that stereotypes or a novel that has strong bias, I am excited to become aware, recognize, and discuss such findings.” Others, like Amelia, elaborated on why they had selected their initial goal.

I would like to learn about the social and multicultural issues connecting to children’s literature. For me, it is important to know this because I want to make sure my students know the classroom is a safe environment and nonjudgmental about diversity. I want to know how to make that clear in my classroom while also knowing the specific issues

connected to pieces of literature... I also think it would be interesting to learn about the issues of social and multicultural [*sic*], because it isn't just said right there on the paper but rather has to be analyzed and looked beyond the words on the book.

While the majority of preservice teachers responded they desired to learn ways children's literature addressed social, multicultural and international issues, three preservice teachers raised concerns over the controversy in utilizing diverse literature. Ellie's reflection was representative of those concerns when she responded,

It is a goal to find all different kinds of new and diverse books, but I also want to learn how I can teach them without being offensive in any way. I know I would never intentionally be offensive, but I want to learn how to ensure that I am not.

The coursework needed to address utilizing multicultural literature in the classroom and also acknowledge and support preservice teachers' discomfort in addressing societal inequities. According to Rosenblatt (1968), as their teacher, it was "my task to foster fruitful interactions—or, more precisely transactions between individual readers and individual works" (p. 26-27). In order to do that, reading and engaging with multicultural novels became part of a regular diet in the course. Preservice teachers participated in many engagements that allowed them to experience new perspectives. Christensen's article, *The Myths That Bind Us*, and Chiamanda Adichie's Ted Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*, made them question not only the reading choices they made, but also the interpretations they made regarding whose voice was being heard and whose story was being told within the novel. Book reflections and midterm reflections revealed new understandings and evolving views on cultural issues represented in literature.

Preservice teachers read Jacqueline Woodson's (2004) novel, *Locomotion*, as a class assignment. The story is told by Lonnie Collins Motion, Locomotion, an eleven-year-old boy

who lost his parents when their house caught fire. He and his sister were then placed in separate foster care homes. Locomotion misses his parents and sister and struggles to be happy. Ms. Marcus, his teacher, engages Lonnie in writing poetry to express himself. Through Locomotion's poetry, we learn about Lonnie's struggles with academics, G-D, loss, race, and more. The preservice teachers placed Post It Notes on "AHA" moments that caught their attention, had small group discussions, created a cultural x-ray, and wrote written reflections for the story.

Lanie's written reflection on *Locomotion* indirectly discussed the topic of childism. Young-Bruehl (2012) describes childism as stemming from prejudice in which children are viewed as less capable due to small stature and young age. When Lanie realized that Lonnie, an eleven-year-old, was able to reflect on life situations from mature perspectives usually associated with adults, she examined her thinking about children's perspectives and understandings of complex life situations. Prior to reading the novel Lanie, and many others in the course, believed that children shouldn't be exposed to controversial topics. They also believed when children are immersed in atypical familial and life situations, they are unaware of the circumstances and inequities that contribute to those situations. Lanie's comment demonstrates how she began to understand that a child's view is meaningful, and she can learn about life from a child when she stated, "The mindset of the child and his way of dealing with hard situations really blew me away and made this book open new doors in my own personal life."

Lanie understood that children often have insightful views and perceptions of the world. She came to realize that it is not one's age that offers wisdom, but one's experiences and reflections upon those experiences, and, in fact, children experience life and its joys and frustrations in a similar manner as adults. Literature circle discussions further elaborated Lanie's

statement when the social aspects of literature were discussed. Carly's reflection, like Lanie's, illustrates how the preservice teachers were evolving in their beliefs and understandings about children, their experiences, and their understandings of those experiences.

*Locomotion* addresses the different racial stigmas that surround African-American males. The fact that Lonnie, at the age of eleven, was already being stereotyped by different people because of his gender and race really stood out to me. He gets looks when he goes into stores, and his little sister's foster mother does not really trust him. I think that Lonnie makes a very deep point when he said that, "Maybe it's that if you're white you can't see all the whiteness around you." I know that I would probably not describe someone as being white, or even make the conscious observation that someone is white, but I would describe someone as being black, just because that is a difference between the person and I. *Locomotion* was a story that touched me in many ways. It dealt with loss, race, family, and transformations. Lonnie goes through a major transformation from his outlook on life in the beginning of the book to the end. This story allowed me to see the life of a person living a very different life than I do, and helped me to understand a different person's point of view on family and life.

Reflections allowed preservice teachers to freely associate with and examine their thinking about elements of stories in ways that were meaningful and relevant to them. Sharing their reflections with classmates and their instructor offered opportunities for them to hear related responses and new angles to their views. The cultural x-ray engagement offered another opportunity for them to delve deeper into the complexities that lie within a character. The purpose of a "cultural x-ray" is to help readers consider the multiple layers of experiences, traditions, and beliefs that contribute to cultural identities (Short, 2009). Creating cultural x-rays

permits students to recognize multiple cultural identities within a character, develop conceptual understandings of culture, and raise awareness of how and why culture matters to each person.

After reading *Locomotion*, preservice teachers gathered in groups of four and chose a character from the story to examine more fully, revealing the unique culture, beliefs, and values of that individual. Astrid, Allie, Candie, and Lanie chose to examine Lonnie more fully. Their conversation revealed what they know from Lonnie's outward appearance and factual information and what they know from his actions and inner thoughts revealed in his poetry that may not be apparent on the outside.

Allie: So what do we know about Lonnie?

Astrid: He's 10 and a boy

Lanie: So that goes on the outside, right?

Allie: Tammye said, if we can see it or if it stated in the book, it's something we put on the outside, because it is a visible trait. So, if we learn it from reading the story and Lonnie's actions it goes in his heart.

Candie.: He's African American and quiet. Would quiet go on the inside or outside?

Astrid: I think we can observe Lonnie being quiet in the story.

Candie: So, it's outside.

Astrid: So, what can we put inside?

Lanie: He misses his parents and sister. I think he's angry too.

Candie: Yah, he's angry.

Allie: We need to be able to show why we think he's angry.

Astrid: What about when his teacher makes him write and he doesn't want to?

I left that group and went to another, because they were definitely on the right track.

These reflections and the cultural x-ray illuminate how transacting with literature enabled readers to understand others in a multitude of ways. Reading *Locomotion* and freely responding in written reflections to the experience allowed preservice teachers to gain insights and understandings about diverse cultures. They also gained new understandings about others in respect to white privilege and childism. As they read Woodson's story, they connected with a variety of *Locomotion*'s poetry entries. They experienced life through his eleven-year-old perspective, and in doing so, they felt Lonnie's hardships as he revealed his feelings to his teacher, to himself, and to us, the readers. They realized that children experience life and emotions as do adults. The social acts of transactional reading are discussed in later section that further elaborates upon preservice teacher's changing beliefs about children. Lonnie's moving story provided preservice teachers both windows to understand what it was like for one young, orphaned, African American boy in the foster care system.

Empathy for others continued to evolve throughout the semester as preservice teachers transacted with literature. They gained new realizations and new understandings of diversity and cultural differences. They conceptualized literature as venues to explore truth and discuss whose truth is being told and under what circumstances that truth exists. Final exams and follow up interviews offered ways for preservice teachers to explain their beliefs regarding literature's ability to enable readers to perceive events as others do and gain understandings through a variety of perspectives.

A third and final interview permitted me to further delve into preservice teachers' understandings of how literature provides opportunities for readers to understand others. During the interview, I asked Allie to tell me about what she felt was the most important thing she learned in TLS480.

Allie: Books help out with looking into other people's perspectives and understanding more. I mean there is everything out there so, whatever you look for you are going to find. So, for example, if you are looking for a different religion and you are very caught on to like one perspective and then you read a book and you are like, Oh my gosh. So, I see what they do, and I see why. Well, you can just see into another perspective. So, yah, it really helps out with just learning more about other people's beliefs and ways of thinking. Um, for example, I grew up in a very Catholic family and so when I, it is very conservative, but not as conservative as Muslim families. So, whenever I saw like a hijab, I don't, I just, I did not agree at all. I felt very like, feminist, and I felt no this is just wrong, and then I read the book, the one in your class, the one that, the hijab one...

Me: *Does My Head Look Big in This?*

Allie: Yes, that one. And then I notice that she's like. That it's actually like a decision. It's not as if they're getting imposed into it's just like a way of seeing yourself. It's like pure, and it's like really, really beautiful in its own way. So, I was like, Oh my gosh! I had been so closed minded on that aspect, and that's just one example of like many, many, many that there are out there.

Allie's discussion of her original thinking regarding diversity as different from me to one of diversity as an expression of the beauty within all humanity was representative of many preservice teachers. The understanding of literature's path to see the world as a diverse and beautiful "Us" rather than a world of "me and them" was obvious when Allie discussed her very conservative views and her evolution in acceptance and appreciation of beliefs that differed from her own. Although not all preservice teachers became as empathetic as Allie by the end of the course, they did demonstrate a desire to expose children to diverse literature, discuss

sociocultural issues (e.g. border crossing, racial and ethnic diversity, poverty, etc.), and question their understandings of others.

Their understanding of literature's unique ability to expose readers to other ways of being and living changed from one of believing that understandings of others could be held in isolated books to recognizing that literature allows readers to experience cultures through actively engaging and responding to and with a variety of texts. Preservice teachers worried about creating a stereotypical view. They believed that numerous genres with multiple exposures to a culture enabled children to understand the differences and similarities within a culture, which supported children in being flexible in their understanding of culture and empathetic to the need to create a world with opportunities for equality.

### **Understanding the World**

Social injustices, such as unfair labor laws, racial, religious, gender, ethnicity, age, or sexual orientation discrimination, continue in our society. Those issues and how they impact distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges go unacknowledged. Literature enables us to learn about issues—not only the facts, but also the life stories that accompany the facts.

In the previous section, *Empathizing with Others Enables Us to Understand Social and Cultural Issues*, I illuminated preservice teachers' evolution in thinking regarding people who differed from themselves and their understandings of the social inequalities contributing to those inequities. In this section, I explore how, through literature, readers do more than learn about others; they experience and understand national and global events through a variety of perspectives and historical times. They grow to understand both the historical and personal/emotional aspects of the stories—they learn the human and societal factors—that contribute to our multifaceted world. Literature affords readers experiences to participate in

societal issues in a lived through, aesthetic, experience that I discuss later in the dissertation. In this section, I discuss how experiences with global literature allow readers to question and understand often challenging or controversial topics in our world such as war, politics, conflict, etc., as they gain knowledge in ways that textbooks deny. Rosenblatt (1995) explains reading is a situation with “interrelated emotional and intellectual planes. Therein lies its many educational potentialities” (p. 228). This section illuminates preservice teachers’ changes in thinking about the interrelatedness of the emotional and intellectual planes and how that relationship impacts acceptance, appreciation, and understanding of diversity. It addresses their evolution in understanding of the roles of literature in the curriculum and on literature as a means of understanding our world and building awareness of global issues.

### **Becoming Aware of Global Issues**

When selecting goals at the beginning of the semester, preservice teachers frequently mentioned that they hoped to learn more about literature. Numerous times preservice teachers discussed that this was their first class after being admitted into the College of Education. That statement held the implication that now it was important to learn not only facts to graduate from college, but learn what was to be required of them as a future educator of children. Most often those goals pertained to learning about the different literary genres. Not until midterm did they begin to see the potential of literature for understanding global cultures and issues.

Amelia and Maggie’s beginning goals reflections demonstrate how many of their peers felt regarding appropriate learning goals for this course.

My goal for this class is to learn and understand ways to bring literature into my future classroom that is meaningful and applicable to the students. This is important to me because I want to be able to start learning ideas to take with me

into my future classroom. This class means a lot to me because it is my first semester of taking College of Education classes so I am excited and eager to learn about what needs to be done as my role as the teacher. (Amelia, Beginning Goals)

Maggie also refers to her desire to understand how she can expand upon her knowledge of children's literature for her future teaching career:

I would like to develop an extensive knowledge of different types of books and genres, so that I am able to refer to specific books in my future career. I want to get exposed to as many different types of books as I can during the course of this class.

Kayla agreed with Amelia and Maggie and wanted to become more aware and knowledgeable about children's books; however, she also desired to learn how she could utilize literature to teach values and become a more confident reader. Her reflection below illustrates her goals and uncertainties that were shared by others at the onset of the course.

I have a few goals for this new class. I want to get familiar with more children's books which I think will not be a problem. I want to understand the values that children's literature books hold. I remember always thinking about the theme of the story and the lesson I just learned after reading a book...I want to make sure I understand what I am reading when I read to my students. I also want to challenge myself and ask questions about the material I am reading. For example, is it right to introduce heavy controversial topics to young students through picture books... I want to know if authors have a specific goal in mind when creating these small picture books.

While Kayla mentioned that she “desired to know if authors have a specific goal in mind when creating these small picture books,” Candie’s goal is more typical of her peers. She states, “Another goal is to not just read through the books and write but be able to analyze sentences to really have a grasp on what the author longs for me to understand.” At a quick glance both women appear to have similar goals related to understanding an author’s intent. A more critical reading of the two goals makes it apparent that while they both desired to learn about the author’s role in writing a story, Kayla questioned if authors have a “specific goal in mind when creating these small picture books,” while Candie believed the author did have a specific goal in mind for the reader to uncover. Candie desired to learn ways to “analyze books in order to find what the author longs for me to understand.” At the beginning of the semester, the majority of preservice teachers believed that the meaning of the text was held within the words on the page and it was the job of the teacher to teach students to learn ways to understand the author’s intent.

These goals reflect the range of preservice teacher thinking at the beginning of the semester. With just three class sessions under their belts at the time of writing their beginning goals, their ideas and desires regarding children’s literature in classrooms were somewhat limited to their personal literary experiences and at a surface level. Most indicated they desired to learn more about children’s books and genres. Many looked for ways to teach an author’s intent or a definitive lesson that was directly held in books while a few questioned if literature could possibly contain answers to “controversial topics.” As the course progressed and they transacted with literature, they discovered new revelations about literature and its potentialities for global knowledge. The midsemester novel reflections and midterm reflections illustrate changes in thinking about literature.

Midway through the semester preservice teachers prepared for a mini conference that featured Kashmira Sheth as a guest speaker. They read many of Sheth's books. She writes both picture books and young adult novels featuring Indian characters and storylines. Carmen's reflection on the novel *The Keeping Corner* (2009) demonstrates the changes that were occurring in thinking about how literature teaches us about the world.

The story *Keeping Corner* by Kashmira Sheth opened my eyes to India's culture and struggles during the early 1900's. It immediately caught my attention when I read that twelve-year-old Leela was already married. Living in this time period in the United States, it is difficult for me to imagine a time when it would be considered normal for a child that young to be married. This story touched me in many ways, not only because of Leela's struggles, but also because of India's struggles as a country. Kashmira Sheth's book transferred me to another time and place.

Carmen and her peers' reflections and discussions moved from one of believing that literature told a single story where meaning was held in the words the author wrote on the page to one in which the reader made personal connections to gain meaning from the text. These experiences with literature allowed preservice teachers to expand their thinking about literature.

On the midterm, preservice teachers were asked to evaluate their growth in relation to their beginning course goals and to provide evidence to suggest they are reaching toward their attainment. Astrid discussed her progress toward her goal of reading multicultural literature and learning about other cultures stating, "Now I do not only read for reading, I read to know more about the world and to examine somebody else's perspective about the world." Her comment reveals how preservice teachers not only read numerous diverse novels, but they also transacted

while reading those novels, questioning their thinking and seeing the story as it evolved through the eyes of the protagonist and emphasizing with others.

As the semester continued, preservice teachers began to see ways in which using literature in the classroom potentially impacts children to see beyond themselves, and read to learn and understand the similarities amongst humanity rather than the differences. Their understanding of literature's ability to show social injustices and inequities grew from seeing it as a valuable lesson learned for their personal benefit to one of desiring to utilize literature in their future classrooms to offer a variety of stories to be heard and questioned in their future classrooms. The final exam revealed desires to teach understanding. Lana's final reveals not only her new realizations about character diversity, but also her desire to incorporate diverse multicultural literature helping future students in her classroom understand that we live in a diverse society with mutually honored freedoms and responsibilities shared by all.

Reading Lana's responses to questions on the final exam shows her new understandings of literature and the transactional role of the reader in making meaning with text and understanding others. On the final, Lana discussed her new appreciation for critically looking at characters in stories and responding to literature in ways that enabled her to make deeper connections. "I thought that responding to literature really stood out to me and had the biggest effect on my life. I learned to think about the characters in new ways and really get to know them past a surface level." To further reveal Lana's new perceptions regarding commonalities amongst cultures, a look at her selection for paired texts reveals her desire to use literature to assist students in developing cultural sensitivity. While Lana acknowledges that there are differences that exist between cultures influencing values, beliefs, learning and behavior, she also realizes that there are similarities and certain human rights due to all individuals. Preservice

teachers were told, “From your reading records, choose two high quality books (one picture book and one chapter book) that are conceptually or thematically related to each other.” Based on her knowledge of genre, literary elements, visual elements and connections/tensions, Lana selected *Keeping Corner* and *The Rough-Faced Girl* and then compared and contrasted the two books.

“Keeping Corner” it really shows a time when females were degraded in a culture and how a young widow had to find the strength to live her life happily without ever being married again. In “The Rough-Faced Girl” it’s a Cinderella story with many elements of Native American culture. I definitely felt that both of these books coincided with each other because it shows the difficulties that the main character struggled with living in their culture. Even though both of these diverse cultures are very different from each other I think that they have similar elements that grab the reader and make them critically analyze a certain culture and make compare and contrast those elements with their own culture, ultimately realizing that there are some character traits that all people share, no matter what culture they are from. I found these books to be very beneficial to me as a reader and future educator by looking more into a culture and learning about different ways people have once lived, but also realizing that that’s only one single story.

In this excerpt, Lana mentions that she found these books to be beneficial not only to herself presently, but also in her future as an educator. Lana’s reflection reveals her current beliefs regarding the role of literature in creating a more democratic society—a place where acceptance of diversity is acknowledged, appreciated and valued. The stories read and reflected upon in classrooms enable readers to live the lives of characters who differ from themselves. These lived-through experience offer new exposures to cultural and societal issues that otherwise

may never have been contemplated. Other preservice teachers also supported Lana's change in thinking with their selection of a theme and books to support that theme in order to create a text set. The understanding that one book contained a single story and multiple perspectives of that story were needed to ensure a thorough telling of an issue grew as students engaged in reading new genres and transacting with a variety of global issues within those genres. They came to see how reading a wide variety of text with multiple perspectives offered opportunities for silent voices to be heard. Brittany's selected text set theme, *Recognizing African American Culture and Depicting Their Injustices That Follows*, demonstrates the realization preservice teachers arrived at by the conclusion of the course. When introducing her text set, Brittany, like Lana, explains that she believes it is "necessary for everyone to be exposed to this theme."

This theme is significant to me because I felt that I also thought I knew that Americans haven't been segregated since the Civil Rights Acts, but as I read some of these books it really opened my eyes to misconceptions and the truth that exists in our society. I feel that it is necessary for everyone to be exposed to this theme.

Later, Brittany discussed each of the five books she selected and mentions in two of the selections her empathy toward the protagonist. Below are those two reflections.

*Lullaby (For a Black Mother)* by Langston Hughes (poetry, picture book)

I felt that this book was a very sweet and soft book showing the love and passion of a black woman and her baby. It doesn't necessarily show an injustice, but rather that the culture and love between a mother and baby is universal.

*She Loved Baseball: The Effa Manley Story* by Don Tate (historical fiction, picture book)

I believe this picture book belongs in my theme because it tells about a true story in the past about an African American woman who loved baseball and actually became a famous baseball manager in the industry. I felt that this book is very significant because the character not only conquered her discrimination as a minority, and she was a successful African American, but also that she was a woman who had to overcome many unfair obstacles to achieve her dreams. I believe that Effa Manley is a strong woman and a relatable role model for all girls. They can see that girls and African Americans can do anything they believe they can do.

Lana's and Brittany's final exams discussed empathizing with characters in books and how literature enables readers to understand differences and see commonalities among diverse populations. Both preservice teachers came to understand that literature exposes readers to new understandings; however, it was not always apparent if they realized that injustices still occur and the fight for equity involves more than believing in yourself.

Many of the preservice teachers discussed using literature to see they were not alone in their feelings, beliefs, and positions in the world, but did not mention how literature provides avenues to discuss sociopolitical issues that continue to create obstacles to equity even in the United States. Brittany's text set illustrated her current understanding on equity when she stated, "They can see that girls and African Americans can do anything they believe they can do." Her comment acknowledges that literature provides exposures to others' rise above discriminatory factors to achieve goals, but it does not mention those factors. This may indicate that some preservice teachers still do not acknowledge or realize that some continue to be more privileged than others.

Carmen's response to the final exam indicated which experience from class she found to be most personally significant

I feel like through reading all of the books, I figured out what was considered to be good literature for children, and what would be appropriate for children. It also helped me learn that literature can be used for everything when it comes to education. A teacher can use books for lessons on history, math, science, and geography. It helped me discover that the best way a teacher can start a lesson, even for a subject like math, can sometimes be to read a book.

### **Reflecting on How Literature Allows Us to Understand Our World**

Final follow up interviews permitted me to further delve into preservice teachers' views on literature as a means of understanding our world. When I met with Astrid shortly after the conclusion of the course, I asked her to discuss how she saw the use of trade books in her future classroom differing from her use of textbooks. This transcribed conversation elaborates upon Astrid's earlier comments and supports other responses from the final exam.

Astrid: Books help out with looking into other people's perspectives and understanding more. I mean there is everything out there; so, whatever you look for you are going to find. So, for example, if you are looking for a different religion and you are very caught on to like one perspective and then you read a book, and you are like, Oh my gosh. So, I see what they do, and I see why. Well, you can just see into another perspective. So, yah, it really helps out with just learning more about other people's beliefs and ways of thinking. Text books don't do that. They just give you facts and one view. Um, for example, I grew up in a very catholic family and so when I, it is very conservative but not as conservative as Muslim families. So, whenever I saw like a hijab, I don't, I just, I did

not agree at all. I felt very like, feminist, and I felt no this is just wrong, and then I read the book, the one in your class, the one that, the hijab one

Me: *Does My Head Look Big in This?*

Astrid: Yes, that one. And then I notice that she's like. That it's actually like a decision. It's not as if they're getting imposed into it's just like a way of seeing yourself. It's like pure, and it's like really, really beautiful in its own way. So, I was like Oh my gosh. I had been so closed minded on that aspect, and that's just one example of like many, many, many that there are out there.

Astrid, similar to her peers, expanded her understandings of the roles of literature. While she had a broad range of goals related to literature when she began the course, she went beyond her original goals. Her first goal reflection stated, "I would also love to read children's literature from other places around the world and learn more about cultures, traditions, ways of dressing, and general information that is easily taught though reading." Astrid's numerous experiences with literature throughout the semester facilitated her goals to reach a more evolved level. As she transacted with literature, she took what she already knew, believed, felt, and desired and mingled them together with everything the text offered and evoked within her. In doing so, she and the majority of her peers acknowledged that literature does more than teach measurable academic skills; it encourages readers to experience the world through the eyes and hearts of the characters and content within the text. Those connections with story and characters helped readers to gain empathy toward protagonists and new appreciations and understandings of diversity.

The end of the semester discussions, engagements, final exams, and interviews encouraged new thinking regarding the possible roles of literature. It showed that most

preservice teachers now hoped to use literature as a way to understand others who differed from themselves and learn about the beliefs and cultures of characters to understand societal issues and challenge their understandings not only for themselves, but for their curriculum as future educators. Another comment from Astrid in our second interview summarizes preservice understandings regarding the roles of literature in the classroom at the end of the course. “As a teacher, we only have so many experiences we can show the kids. So, through a book they can actually see endless possibilities of experiences.”

### **Literature as a Social Engagement**

In the previous theme, Literature as a Way to Understand, I discussed preservice teachers’ responses related to literature as a means to offer readers opportunities to understand sociocultural issues. This section, Literature as a Social Engagement, involves the bonds and learning that occur through the sharing of stories, including: comments related to social aspects of literature, sharing stories orally, literature as a ritual/event (e.g. storytime, read alouds, bedtime, etc.), literature as a sharing of common interests/enjoyable moments with friends through book clubs and literature circles, and discussing/debating ideas and issues from literature. Data coding revealed that the preservice teachers valued literature as a way to share and discuss story. Literature served not only as a means to learn, but also as a means to collaborate, share, and explore with others allowing the mere “ink blots on the page” to evolve into pleasurable moments of acceptance, bonding, debating, learning, and evolving as literature became a social engagement. In this section I move from the responses that involved understanding issues through literature, to the social bonds and learning created through the sharing of stories.

During the course of the semester, the classroom became a safe place to share responses evoked from literature read in and for the course. As the instructor of TLS480, it was my responsibility to provide various textual experiences within a respectful, open, and equalizing space. The preservice teachers frequently reflected upon readings, engaged in reader response engagements and collaboratively worked in small groups sharing their beliefs, experiences, and ideas with others. In this manner, many voices were heard, and a “testing of those voices against their own” occurred. With my support, these frequent experiences enabled preservice teachers to enhance and expand their understandings, developing a richer understanding and appreciation of literature and the literary experience (Karolides, 2005). It was through those experiences that understandings of the social aspects of literature developed. Beginning, midsemester, and final reflections show those changes in thinking.

Beginning reflections pertaining to the social aspects of literature were strictly emotive. Preservice teachers frequently reflected and shared past literary experiences from their early childhood as being social in nature. Many recollections involved bedtime stories read by parents and storytimes at school. Tammy discussed her early memories of story as being an oral tradition in her family rather than book reading. While her literary experiences were atypical of her peers; like them, she acknowledged the positive role that story played in her life. Preservice teachers recalled literary social engagements as pleasurable experiences.

Tammy’s beginning literature memories and goals reflection discussed her desire as a future educator to have multicultural literature in her classroom to expose students to diversity. She also desired to use literature to “learn how to correlate these children’s books with real life lessons for these students.” Her reflection did not discuss her early experiences and memories

with literature. In our first interview at the beginning of the semester, I asked her to tell me about her memories with literature. Tammy replied,

My parents didn't read books to me. Not every family reads books to their kids. My dad used to tell me stories. Usually the stories had a moral or value. We did a lot of things together, but we didn't read. I don't remember having books in the house, but we played and spent time with each other... I think it's really important that books teach children values. The stories my family told me almost always taught me a value.

Tammy's earliest memories involved stories as a social event. Tammy valued the time spent with her family engaging with story and learning valuable lessons from those tales. Most early literacy memories involved reading books as a favorite family event. Kylie integrates oral storytelling memories with social literacy engagements in her reflection.

My mom is a fourth grade teacher and every night before I went to bed she would always read two bed time stories to me. Sometimes it was the same book, sometimes it was a book I have never seen before, or sometimes she would make up stories at the top of her head. When my mom and dad read to me every night it was something I always looked forward to.

Ellie also discussed the ritual of sharing bedtime stories in her initial goal reflection stating,

I always had a routine before bed that consisted of reading the book, "the giving tree". Because of the numerous times of the book being read to me I had it memorized? I would pretend I could read the book for my little sister. When I saw the fascination in her face that I could read this book, it gave me a strong desire to learn how to read.

Ellie continued to see literature as a social event as she “outgrew picturebooks” saying,

I still read all my old books to my younger siblings. Even when my siblings out grew all my old books I was teaching a Sunday school class and reading religious picture books to my class. I remember that it could always silence even the craziest group of children because of the shared anxiety for me to flip the page.

During the second week of class, we took a walking fieldtrip to the University of Arizona Main Library Children’s Section. Notes from my observations of the field trip and Literature Bag sharing enabled me to recall the joy they had in sharing childhood favorites and the memories of reading many of their selections with parents, siblings and teachers. My personal notes from the field trip reveal the pleasure evoked while finding and discussing old favorites. As I helped locate books, I overheard Jack excitedly talking to Marcy.

Jack: I found it! I loved this book!

Marcy: Oh my G-D, me too!

Jack: My mom used to read this to me every night. I used to be terrified of the Wild Things.

Marcy: I almost had it memorized. I loved that his dinner was hot when he got home. Kind of like *The Wizard of Oz*. You know, “There’s no place like home.”

At that time, more people joined the two and excitedly reminisced about their memories of *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak (1983). Similar groups formed and more joyful conversations occurred as other childhood favorites were found.

The beginning reflections, interviews, and notes revealed understandings that stories and literature provide pleasurable experiences when shared with others. Sharing stories with family, friends, and teachers was always remembered with fondness; however, beginning comments

regarding the social aspects of literature neglected to reveal desires or memories of discussion pertaining to connections (outside of personal) with those stories and ideas. Sharing memories was a start to recalling the pleasures that literature brings. During the course of the semester, preservice teachers needed to rekindle that joy and also be exposed to ways to socially engage with literature to challenge and expand their unique understandings of texts. My role was to create a collaborative classroom environment that encouraged them to reflect on their understandings of literature readings, examine those reflections and relate them to other experiences and readings, as well as encourage dialogue within the classroom that allowed for a variety of perspectives to be heard and respected.

At midterm, Carmen voiced her understandings of how reading and then listening to others' experiences with story allowed her to hear new perspectives and challenge her understandings.

Class discussions are another thing that have made this class an interactive learning experience. They allow one to hear different opinions, which can sometimes help one see something that one would not have seen had he not heard another person's idea.

Carmen and her peers became aware of the role of discussion in understanding not only stories, but also the societal issues intertwined within the stories. The reflections from Carmen and Lanie revealed individual comments pertaining to the story *Locomotion* (see dialogue on pages 29 and 30). My participation in literature circle permitted me to observe the connection with text, discussion, and sociocultural issues and how the social aspect of discussion enhanced and reaffirmed understanding of sociocultural issues. The transcription of a literature circle from *Locomotion* by Jacqueline Woodson provides a vivid picture of her thinking.

During the fifth week of class, the preservice teachers read the novel *Locomotion*. While reading the book, they used Post It Notes to recall events in the story that sparked “AHA Moments”—times during reading that evoked a personal connection. They also participated in literature circles consisting of four or five classmates to discuss the story. I briefly joined Carmen’s group of four to share in the discussion. The following excerpt is from that discussion.

Lanie: I didn’t realize that someone so young could think as maturely as Lonnie did. It kind of blew me away and made this book open new doors in my own personal life. When he so innocently said, “If you are white, you don’t see the whiteness around you,” (Pointing to the quote in *Locomotion*) I just wanted to cry.

Me: What page is that on?

Lanie: Oh, 13.

Carmen: I picked the same quote. When I read it, I just had to put the book down and think about it for a while.

Brittany: I remember you (referring to me, the course instructor) were talking about childism. We talked about that in one of my other courses too. I never really thought about how deeply children are able to think. It was so sad how Lonnie had to see the dark in the world at such a young age.

Karl: It made me think about my future as a teacher. I guess I can’t always think that just because they are little something doesn’t affect them.

Lanie: or affect them in the same way it affects you.

Brittany: Yah.

This literature circle dialogue reveals how discussion enables readers to clarify and expand upon their understandings of many societal issues. The four White students in the

literature circle had not previously contemplated white privilege and had only recently been introduced to the concept in their educational coursework. Reading Lonnie's thoughts regarding a TV commercial enabled them to see social media through the perspective of someone of color. Nieto and Bode (2012) assert, "Students from the dominant culture need multicultural education more than others because they are generally the most miseducated or uneducated about diversity" (p. 49). Discussion allowed the preservice teachers to confirm earlier thoughts and expand upon their understandings regarding white privilege, and question their thinking regarding children. While I had observed in previous reflections and engagements these preservice teachers understood that being white held certain advantages that people of color did not always have, the idea that our society often neglects to portray the United States as a place of diversity which represents and honors that diversity was something that had previously gone unnoticed. Reading and discussing white privilege through the eyes of an eleven-year-old African-American boy helped these readers to understand children are capable of understanding complex issues, and, in fact, notice these controversial concepts even when adults do not introduce these themes. Discussing *Locomotion* and other multicultural books with peers in open-ended ways enhanced the literary experience allowing preservice teachers to expand upon and broaden their thinking about many issues.

At midterm Marcy commented on new perceptions of the roles of literature discussion saying:

Literature discussions have also helped me develop my understanding of literature, because I had the chance to hear other people's opinions and viewpoints on certain topics. It is interesting to me how many people can read the exact same book all together, but come out of it with completely different understandings and opinions. This is an

important concept to comprehend when teaching, because each individual student brings something different to the classroom based on their culture, background, and past experiences. It's important to encourage this discussion so that students have the ability to voice their opinion and make personal connections with the literature.

Observations from literature discussions and midterm reflections enabled me to see new developments in beliefs about incorporating discussion into their future classrooms. The preservice teachers demonstrated growth in their understandings of novels through discussion and also began to realize roles of social interactions with literature.

Astrid's comment in her final interview illustrates new understandings of the role of discussion in understanding the world.

So, the main thing that I see is for discussions, we actually have to think outside of the box. It's not just answering a specific set of questions; it's more like what you think about the reading. How we interpret, and then we're able to see the experiences that everybody else had. Cause maybe we read a book and we had this idea and then somebody else brings a completely new idea and we see a broader sense of the theme of the book of the story in general.

Astrid's reflection regarding discussion highlights many benefits of sharing literature with others. She mentions "thinking outside of the box" which acknowledges that readers use different lenses to analyze literature when hearing others' responses to a shared text. She also became aware that reading involves individual interpretations and these interpretations change with new experiences—in this case, discussion. Astrid states, "It's not just answering a specific set of questions; it's more like what you think about the reading." She and her peers were understanding and valuing higher level thinking throughout the reading process. At the

semester's close, preservice teachers were aware of the importance of sharing ideas and discussing them in order to increase their consideration of different perspectives.

### **Final Discussion of Literature as a Way to Understand Ourselves and Our World**

Initial goals, interviews, and personal reflections revealed preservice teachers' literacy goals as well as understandings of children's literature and its influence upon our lives. Interviews and personal reflections divulged that at one time they enjoyed stories; however, only one was reading literature for pleasure at the start of the course. The majority of preservice teachers desired to learn ways to make literature enjoyable for children and to inform readers of sociocultural issues. Opportunities for discussion and reflection involving both personal and cultural connections made with texts permitted them to gain a developing regard toward literature as providing opportunities for understanding themselves, others, and the world in new ways through transactional reading. Not only did preservice teachers revisit favorite stories from their childhood that once brought them pleasure, but they also experienced new quality literature with numerous opportunities to self-select personal reading material for enjoyment. Weekly discussions of both the personal evocations from texts as well as the literary elements encouraged experiencing pleasure from literature and new viewpoints beyond initial understandings. Transacting with texts in a variety of ways helped them to rekindle fond childhood memories with story while they questioned their beliefs regarding their personal identities, others, and our world. They began to realize the importance of interplay between text, self, and experiences.

Research shows effective teachers use multiple texts with a range of formats and difficulty levels to share information with their students (Libresco & Balantic, 2013; Poe, 1992). Preservice teacher discourse from the semester revealed literature-based inquiry from multiple

perspectives challenged them to extend their understandings of values and beliefs and to question their previous beliefs. Beginning understandings of how literature invites new understandings evolved into understandings about the ways in which: 1) literature is made 'fun' and 'pleasurable' when personal connections and new understandings are made; 2) dialogue and reflection provide an opportunity for readers to challenge their current understandings; and 3) personal connections with characters and stories encourage readers to see themselves reflected in literature, and to see multiple perspectives as readers learn about the world.

The end of the semester revealed preservice teachers' desire to apply transactional strategies and new understandings of literature to their futures as educators. The next chapter addresses how their understandings of transactional stances during reading relate to their knowledge of teaching literature in the classroom. Data related to aesthetic and efferent stances is examined to understand their use of literature to gain knowledge and think critically

## CHAPTER 4

### **Teaching: Literature as a Way to Learn**

In chapter three, I discussed how preservice teachers' understandings of literature grew to include constructing meaning from text which involved reflecting on understandings, accepting multiple interpretations and questioning understandings. This chapter discusses transactional stances during reading and then builds upon preservice teachers' understandings and beliefs to explain relationships to their understandings of teaching literature in the classroom. It differs from the previous chapter by focusing on data related to preservice teachers' desire to help children learn strategies and concepts, rather than to personally learn these for themselves. It specifically addresses: 1) preservice teachers' evolving beliefs regarding children thinking critically with literature and; 2) how literature is curriculum in elementary classrooms.

#### **Thinking Critically with Literature**

TLS 480 course instruction is based primarily in a transactional philosophy. In chapter one, I explained Rosenblatt's transactional theory. Figure 1.2 illustrated the reading event as a continuation of the reader and text transacting. Readers are never completely reading in an aesthetic or efferent stance, but alternating between stances to gain an understanding of the text. This transactional experience permits readers to alternate stances when necessary and gain a unique interpretation of the literature being read. In this manner, as readers are exposed to quality literature and transact with literature, they appreciate the literary experience as they gain meaning, knowledge, and strategies. This section discusses the journey of preservice teachers as they rethought what it means to read and think critically and how that connects to their future roles as teachers.

The theme of literature as an event that involves readers taking aesthetic and efferent stances clearly emerged through data analysis. To further clarify, preservice teachers wanted to learn about teaching so that: 1) Literature serves as a way to learn and understand; and 2) Literature offers opportunities for critical thinking to occur. There were ranges in preservice teacher goals and understandings of these categories, but their comments clearly fell within those two areas. As the semester progressed, the students grew in their knowledge of the categories; however, confusion arose as the preservice teachers challenged their previous understandings of teaching critical thinking as a skills-based concept and thinking critically as a transactional process that offers opportunities to experience new perspectives and understandings. Table 4.1 breaks down the goals and findings discussed in this chapter.

**Table 4.1 Goals and Findings Related to Critical Thinking**

**Literature as a Way to Learn**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Sub-Themes</b>
Literature as an Aesthetic and Efferent Event	Literature as a way to learn/understand	Critical skills versus critical understandings
	Literature as critical thinking of ideas and concepts	

The majority of preservice teachers in TLS 480 had not experienced reading through a primarily aesthetic stance in many years. They claimed the focus in school was reading to get to the author’s purpose or to find specific answers to questions posed by the teacher or out of personal need, implying that a more efferent stance was encouraged. Karolides (2005) affirms that classrooms across grade levels have an emphasis on accumulating comprehension facts often to the exclusion of an aesthetic engagement. Out of 23 preservice teachers, only one claimed to

have had literature circles or open-ended literature discussions in elementary, middle, or high school. In initial goals and interviews, preservice teachers did not mention utilizing their lived-through experience of a text to delve into analyzing texts and thinking critically. They were unaware of the connection between aesthetic and efferent stances and how to utilize both to enhance their appreciation and knowledge of and about literature. They did not realize how personal connections to literature could allow for deeper and more critical understandings of text.

Beginning comments illustrate preservice teachers' acknowledgement of their current lack of pleasure and involvement with reading, their desires to bring and find pleasure in literature, and their goal to learn how to utilize children's literature to teach in their future as educators. These goals were self-selected and relevant to their future as readers and teachers of literature. There is much research related to the influence and role of the teacher in supporting children's enthusiasm for literature (Hastie & Sharplin, 2012; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Brooks, 2007; Lewis, 2005; Carpenter, 1997; Graves, 1994,1990,1984; Mour 1977).

I hoped my strong passion for literature would be evident and 'contagious' for the preservice teachers in the course. I also knew it was important for me to utilize literature and modes of instruction to inspire the preservice teachers to rekindle their love of literature so they could inspire children to also engage deeply with books. I believed it was imperative for me to provide experiences that related enjoyment of literature to thinking critically and curriculum in the classroom. I understood merely providing experiences to enjoy literature was a superficial way to incorporate literature into classrooms, but I also believe it's possible to incorporate both pleasure/appreciation, background knowledge, and personal experiences into thinking critically. The reader response strategies that I offered the preservice teachers were ways to connect their

personal evocations into thinking more critically about others and our world while potentially increasing their appreciation for literature.

A major purpose of post-secondary education should be teaching students to think critically, speak respectfully, and act with civility. The ability to share knowledge, values, and differences in viewpoints in civil ways is foundational to family and community, to the nation and globe, (Miller, 2017, p. 377).

While I agree with Miller that it is essential to teach students to think critically, speak respectfully, and act with civility, I believe that this instruction needs to occur in the earliest years of life. I have seen preschoolers work together to critically problem solve. I have used literature in Kindergarten classrooms to enable children to see and understand other ways of knowing and living. Unfortunately, many students arrive at universities with a view of knowledge as composed of a single truth. As an instructor of TLS 480, I needed to not only provide opportunities for preservice teachers to learn to challenge their perspectives, but also to realize that as future teachers it will be their jobs to teach children to understand multiple ways of being and knowing. It will be their jobs to ensure that future generations think critically about our world.

### **Beginning Goals and Thoughts Regarding Literature and Thinking Critically**

Some preservice teachers specifically mentioned a beginning goal of learning to use literature to think critically in terms of a transactional framework. Many wanted to learn ways that literature taught children to learn about other countries and cultures. Others mentioned that they wanted to learn about the sociocultural aspects of literature.

Some alluded to a goal of gaining knowledge in ways that address specific aspects of critical thinking as a set of skills (e.g. identifying, assessing, analyzing, defining, interpreting,

reasoning, synthesizing, and evaluating). This is a form of critical thinking, but not a focus of transactional reading. Carmen and Amelia illustrate both of these variances of critical thought.

“My goals for this class are to learn how to critically read books so that I can understand them and be able to discuss them with my students in the future” (Carmen, Beginning Goal Reflection [2016]). I learned from a follow up interview with Carmen that the term “critical thinking” had been repeatedly emphasized throughout her childhood. It was a term that many preservice teachers used in reflections and in class discussions. Some understood many of the numerous components involved in skill approaches to critical thinking, but I was unsure if any understood how thinking critically through a transactional lens permitted readers to gain understanding that could be applied to the world around them. Carmen’s reflection mentioned her need to read critically to teach her students, but I was left to ponder if she believed her students needed to learn to read critically to understand, or if that was simply the role of the teacher. Rosenblatt (1995), Smith, Appleman, Wihelm, and Wiggins (2014), Short (2011) and others believe that teachers often view their role as the provider of information, implying it is their role to teach students to find the answers that they know to be true rather than teach student to find answers through inquiry using a critical lens. Dewey (2001) argues,

Thinking which is not connected with increase of efficiency in action, and with learning more about ourselves and the world in which we live, has something the matter with it...  
And skill obtained apart from thinking is not connected with any sense of the purposes for which it is to be used (p.158).

I neglected to clearly differentiate the difference between “thinking critically” to understand our lives and world and “critical thinking” as a way to show specific knowledge or skills in my interactions with preservice teachers during the course.

Amelia's initial goal reflection indicates an awareness of using thinking critically to understanding ourselves and our world. She mentions analyzing the content being read, a component of critical reading. "It would be interesting to learn about the issues of social and multicultural [*sic*] because it isn't just said right there on the paper but rather has to be analyzed and looked beyond the words on the book," (Amelia, Beginning Goal Reflection [2016]). Her goal mentions the reader's ability to gain knowledge and understand societal issues through analysis of text. Amelia relates thinking critically to understanding others, our lives, and our world.

Both Carmen and Amelia share a desire to utilize critical ways of thinking involving text. Carmen's goal, and perhaps understanding, of critical thinking pertained to traditional cognitive skill levels, while Amelia's goal was more of a transactional perspective. As their instructor, I was entrusted to provide and develop those initial understandings throughout the semester with transactional literary experiences for them to build upon those initial responses and gain understandings and strategies enabling them to think critically about their world.

Rhody and Lanie's Beginning Goals Reflections and Literacy Bag reflections show their desire to regain appreciation for literature. Their initial goal responses discuss early experiences and a love of books and fondness for story. However, these responses also acknowledge a current lack of appreciation for literature. Only one preservice teacher mentioned currently finding time to read for pleasure; however, all had a desire and an understanding of their need to incorporate literature into their teaching futures for instructional purposes.

In Rhody's beginning goal reflection, she discussed her current lack of reading and her realization that she will need to read to be successful in TLS 480. "Immersing myself in a subject

like literature is very beneficial because I am not a big fan of reading. Even if we are focusing on children's books, *forcing* (use of italics for emphasis) myself to read is very helpful.”

Braithwaite (1999) reminds us that teachers' literacy beliefs do affect their literacy practices. Rhody's understanding of herself as a reader and the relevance of her desire to find captivating books to entice her to want to read personally were important to her future as a childhood educator. Morrison, Jacobs, and Swinyard (1999) found that teachers who enjoy reading motivate their students with a variety of literary experiences. Although not directly referenced as transactional, their research findings reported that teachers who read widely are more likely to implement transactional reading strategies into their curriculum.

Without directly acknowledging an understanding of teacher beliefs and practices and a connection to instruction that utilizes literature for thinking critically and curriculum, the preservice teachers were making a connection to their need to rekindle their enthusiasm for trade book reading. Lanie's beginning goals mention a desire to change her current disposition regarding literature.

“A huge goal of mine this semester in this course is to have a better understanding of the importance of reading. I want to have a different mindset as I look at books for children.” The next day, in a follow up interview, I asked Lanie if she could elaborate upon her goals.

Lanie: In the syllabus it talks about cultural issues, and I want to learn how children's books can teach about cultures and races since I had never done that in school.

Me: Tell me what you meant when you said that “You had never done that in school.”

Lanie: Had a book teach me about something except maybe how to do something like a science experiment.

While the Beginning Goal Reflections revealed a desire from the preservice teachers to learn ways to utilize literature in classrooms, they did not offer information regarding previous exposures to and experiences with children's literature. Without this information, I was missing the background information I needed to use their experiences as instructional aides in the course. However, their creation of a Literacy Bag enabled me to learn about books that played important parts in their lives and how those books were meaningful to them, thus offering insights regarding their prior experiences with literature. The Literacy Bag and discussion (both oral and written) of the books within that bag offered further information regarding the preservice teachers' memories of literature in their lives.

Rhody's statement that she is not a big fan of reading has alarming significance for her future as a teacher of literature. I learned through her Literacy Bag reflection that she enjoyed story and learning through literature as a young child.

I chose *The Pop-Up Mice of Mr. Brice* by Dr. Seuss because it was my favorite book to read before bed time almost every single night while I was in elementary school. It is a pop-up book that teaches about the alphabet, counting, and many other things... This book impacted me because it was a simple book that got me very excited to read, which was very difficult for me. Another book that I chose was *Ready Set Read!* by Joanna Cole. The book was filled with different short stories, poems, and riddles. I always enjoyed reading this book because there were so many different options for what to read and they were all so entertaining. This book impacted me by showing me different types of literature can be exciting and fun to read.

At one time, Rhody enjoyed literature and appreciated the emotive pleasures she received while reading. She also acknowledged that she was impacted by the variety of genres which

provided “exciting and fun” modes of entertainment. Even at such a young age, Rhody was able to distinguish the variety genres that she was exposed to from her family interactions with text.

Astrid recalled her experiences with literature as a child when selecting books for her Literacy Bag.

The third book I chose was *Cuando Hitler se Robo el Conejo Rosa* (When Hitler stole the pink bunny [*sic*]) by Judith Kerr. This book represents a very big transition in my life, from being a little kid that went around in elementary to a girl in middle school. When I was in elementary school they never made us read a single picture book in the whole six years. When I got to middle school, it was almost the same; we never read a book until the last year. My teacher really liked that book so she told us that if we read it she would give us extra credit. The sad thing is that almost nobody read the book assigned because we were not taught the value of reading books in our free times.

This excerpt from Astrid’s Literacy Bag Reflection permitted me to understand how Astrid viewed roles for literature in the classroom as well as reading for pleasure. My personal notes from observations in the small group sharing of Literacy Bags during the second week of class reinforced Astrid’s comment that reading trade books in school was not a common occurrence. Astrid was the only student who selected a book for her Literacy Bag that was a teacher recommendation from elementary or middle school years.

My personal notes from the day we shared our Literacy Bags enabled me to recall the happiness shared by preservice teachers as they discussed their Literacy Bags.

Today was a lot of fun! Everyone shared and interacted. They were so happy as they told about their favorite books. It was obvious that books had given them pleasure when they were young. I heard comments, “I loved this one!” “Me too!” I made my mom read

this to me almost every night even though, I'm pretty sure, I had the book memorized.”

Lots of students talked about repeated readings of favorite stories. Tons of smiles and laughs today. (Personal Notes from 1-26-16).

Observing preservice teachers share and explain the relevance of books that were prominent in their lives was revealing and rewarding. I gained a new perspective and understanding regarding their views of making reading “fun”. At one time, reading was pleasurable for them. They enjoyed story and the sharing of stories with their families. They laughed and sought solace at and with characters as they related to both the commonalities and adversities we share as humans. They valued literature in their younger years. My role as instructor evolved as I discovered that I could tap into their previous enthusiasm for children’s literature while incorporating new titles, diverse themes and multicultural literature through a variety of genres and transactional experiences for them to move beyond personal evocations to critical thinking.

After observing the sharing of goals, Literacy Bags, and initial interviews, I had a better understanding of why most preservice teachers selected goals for the course that mentioned learning how to use literature to teach skills, or learning how to make reading “fun” or “pleasurable” for students who will be in their classrooms. Many mentioned a desire to rekindle the joy of reading that they had when they were young. A few mentioned course objectives regarding a desire to learn how to use literature to teach cultural aspects as well as learning about the genres of literature and how the genres helped students learn about literature. These personal goals continued and expanded as the semester progressed and understandings of the potentialities of literature evolved. As transactional experiences with text continued, critical thinking regarding their reading developed.

### **Midsemester Goals and Thoughts Regarding Literature and Thinking Critically**

I now think of children's literature as more than just a story for children, it can be a way for children to think critically, creatively, and develop strong analytical skills, (Maggie, Midterm Reflection, Spring 2016).

At midterm, the students completed a take-home self-evaluation. Realizations that appreciation and pleasure from reading were not separate from knowledge about literature, such as literary elements, began to appear. When asked to reflect on progress made toward their beginning goals, Maggie responded:

After learning a lot of what goes behind making a story and what details need to be present in order to have a successful genre, I notice these specific details while reading the story, while still enjoying the book.

Marcy, like many others, supported Maggie's new realization in her response to the midterm question asking her to reflect on her progress toward her initial course goals when she states, "I have changed as a reader, because I now notice elements of literature, themes, and illustrations that I had not paid much attention to before. This knowledge has lead me to develop a greater appreciation in general." Marcy was becoming aware of the continuum of aesthetic and efferent stances. She acknowledged how thinking efferently allows her to have a greater appreciation and understanding of the literature she reads. Marcy was now taking a primarily aesthetic stance in her initial readings, and she had also become aware of her incorporation of the author's style and narrative techniques used (an efferent stance) to support her interpretation of the text.

Maggie and Marcy discussed thinking critically in terms of recognizing literary elements while gaining a deeper appreciation for the story. In her midterm, Lana discussed critical

thinking in terms of finding themes within literature to create new perspectives of reaching beyond ourselves to understand other cultures and events.

When asked to respond to the prompt, “What has been a significant area of thinking and learning for you during this course?” Lana discussed her evolving understandings of teaching children to think critically through literature in content areas.

My thoughts have evolved by understanding that children’s literature is a valuable resource to get children to think and analyze critically. For example, if I were to teach children about the Indian culture and they were unenthused about reading in the text book, I could have them read *Sona and the Wedding Game* and have a class discussion about the wedding traditions that exist within that culture. I now think of children’s literature as more than just a story for children, it can be a way for children to think critically, creatively, and develop strong analytical skills. I have developed as a reader from learning deeply about various genres, analyzing illustrations further learning from Molly Bang, and looking at a text set and seeing a certain collection of books being transformed over time.

While many commented on their new insights regarding the transactive process of reading, discussing how they connected understandings of literary elements to gain a greater appreciation for the story, they also focused on efferent stances and progress toward goals of learning about genres and multicultural literature to more fluid understandings of meaning and our world. Most were starting to discuss the importance of thinking critically with literature and in doing so incorporating a variety of critical thinking skills.

Midterm reflections revealed progress toward goals and an understanding that a primarily aesthetic reading permits deeper understandings to emerge during the reading process by

allowing readers to focus on their experiences during the reading, rather than their findings from the reading. The preservice teachers were experiencing pleasure with literature by once again having ‘lived through’ experiences as they had as children through taking a primarily aesthetic stance as readers. As they enjoyed picturebooks and young adult novels, they were incorporating the knowledge and understandings they were gaining through course content and experiences regarding literary elements. Many were acknowledging that reading was enjoyable as they also began to see a recursive process where the reader flows between stances (aesthetic and efferent) to various degrees during the reading event. Those preservice teachers were experiencing a connection between literary knowledge and an increasing appreciation for literature. They were also realizing that recognition of literary elements and genres enhanced readers’ abilities to understand text more fully and evaluate themselves on their biases as they transacted with literature; they were critically reading texts in a transactive way.

### **Final Goal Reflections and Thoughts Regarding Literature and Thinking Critically**

The semester’s end revealed new attitudes toward reading and new understandings regarding the roles of literature in the classroom. Preservice teachers appreciated the transaction that occurs between a reader and a text. They valued the individual experience that each reader has with texts. They appreciated how books open mirrors, windows, and doors for critical thinking. However, some confusion regarding the term “critical thinking” remained. In Rosenblatt’s transactional theory, critical thinking is a way of knowing, not a set of skills. When readers bring their knowledge to the text and challenge their understandings with new information and ideas gained from the literary experience and from dialogue with other readers, they bring a critical lens to the reading event. These new interpretations “provide a framework of values with which to meet further experiences in literature and life,” (p. 102). The following

final self-evaluation reflections, final exam answers, and interviews describe the evolution in the preservice teachers' beliefs and understandings regarding thinking critically and literature.

Katie desired to learn how books could teach at the beginning of the year. My initial interview with her revealed that she wanted to use literature to teach about specific academic content "without stepping on anyone's toes." At the final, Katie demonstrated that she realized books play a key role in the curriculum; however, a book does not contain all the answers without the involvement of the reader.

Not all books write on the page what the author wants to say, sometimes you have to look deeper and having these discussions (referring to literature circles and class discussions) in a classroom would help everyone develop a new way to view the novel that was read and help them think critically.

Through experiences with literature in our classroom, Katie became less fearful of offending students' beliefs; instead realizing that discussion in a classroom where everyone's voice is valued allows for thinking critically and deep conversations. Katie's reflection helped illustrate changes in perception regarding the intent of literature. For most, the belief that the meaning of the story was found within the print changed to the meaning of the text as a complex ongoing transaction between the reader, the print, the purpose for the reading and a variety of other factors present at the time of the reading. They understood that transacting with literature permitted readers to gain new perspectives about our world and allowed for the development of critical understandings as readers flowed between stances in their transactions with literature. They understood that toes might be "stepped upon," but, when views were listened to with respect and questioned in ways which support diversity of thought, further inquiry and empathy more readily occurred. These preservice teachers had new perspectives of critical thinking.

They understood that critical thinking was not isolation of higher order skills, but rather learning to understand ourselves and the world around us.

Preservice teachers responded to the prompt on the final: “We engaged in many experiences with children’s books this semester, such as read alouds, browsing and reading many children’s books, literature discussion groups, strategies for responding to literature, text sets, etc. Which of these experiences did you find most personally significant? Why? And Which of these 480 experiences would you use in your own classroom with children?” Responses to the prompt revealed preservice teachers believed a single text and a single method for teaching were not enough to meet the needs of their future students. They realized that in order to make content relevant for all learners a variety of methods, genres, and transactive engagements were needed. They believed that including personal evocations and connections with text increased motivation and understanding. Rhody and Carmen’s responses exemplify preservice teachers’ new understandings of how those beliefs connected to thinking critically.

Rhody responded that all course experiences were personally significant and elaborated upon why each was important to her. A portion of her response is below:

Paired text readings would be a good addition to the classroom as well. Using an informational text and a biography or any other genre can help the students to make sense of what they are reading and it can also be the cause for a lot of AHA moments.

Rhody’s response illustrates her new beliefs regarding the need for both aesthetic and efferent stances during reading. Using a variety of genres, she points out allows readers to gain new insights through hearing information in modes they resonate with best while reaffirming and elaborating upon what was read from other genres. Rhody’s additional comment regarding how this causes “a lot of AHA moments” reveals her new belief that AHAs—personal connections to

the text—are viewed as key aspects in the reading process and need to be incorporated into her future classroom. She now believes there is a connection between aesthetic and efferent stances during reading. She values having personal connections and gaining knowledge with literature and is acknowledging the importance of finding reading materials that provide an emotional release so readers gain a more complex appreciation for literature.

Rhody saw the value in not only learning facts through informational texts, but also in enjoying the story from insider perspectives on those “facts.” She once again reveled in the joy of tradebooks as she did as a young child, and now realized how literature shows the implications of the facts for our lives and our world. She learned to question and value multiple perspectives and the understandings that accompanied them. Rhody believed it was important for her future students to personally connect with texts to evoke more critical understandings of our world.

Carmen’s response to the same prompts are another example of preservice teachers’ understanding at the end of the semester that negotiations between stances along the aesthetic/efferent continuum permit readers to gain critical understanding.

I really value teaching based on individual needs and wants of the students in my class. I know many students do not necessarily enjoy reading for fun. I think text sets can make them excited about the subject you are leading them into. This helps me keep their individual needs in mind because I know many students struggle with wanting to read and learn.

Carmen’s reflection shows her understanding that using a variety of texts containing various styles, perspectives, genres and difficulty levels offers all readers opportunities to find literature they resonate with and enjoy on a specific theme. Carmen and her peers realized aesthetic

appreciation permits readers to make personal connections, allowing them to search for deeper, more critical questions and understandings.

Most preservice teachers believed at the beginning of the course that to learn new concepts and ideas, a textbook or informational trade book was needed. At the end of the semester, they understood that deeper understanding accompanies exposure to a variety of perspectives and experiences. They hoped that in their future teaching careers, they would be allowed to provide rich textual experiences so children could hear, discuss, and question information and ideas.

### **Final Interviews Related to Thinking Critically with Literature**

In my first interview with Allie she discussed her new perspectives of deriving meaning from literature. Allie was one of the two students who read for pleasure prior to the onset of TLS 480; however, she did not recall reading trade books in school. She did remember reading textbooks and answering questions about information found within the text. In the first follow-up interview, Allie discussed how she currently reads textbooks and novels.

Allie: I now have been starting to think how does this chapter fit into this entire book. If that makes sense.

Me: Okay. So, you are trying to make meaning from it?

Allie: Right.

Me: And it's your job to figure that out?

Allie: To figure out exactly and how to use that meaning. Not just to figure out what exactly it is but how to actually implement it in your life.

In this excerpt, Allie revealed new beliefs about understanding and thinking critically with literature. She went from believing that book reading was to find specific answers for

predetermined questions to believing that books have meanings for her to interpret from the clues in the text and for her to apply to her life. Carly also discussed changes in thinking critically during our final interview.

Carly: It's kind of a general idea that you learn from reading. But after your class, I kind of understand how and why you learn from literature. Because of all the reflections and discussions.

Me: So, you weren't used to reading and reflecting?

Carly: I guess just the way you asked us to reflect and discuss along with the chapters in the book; it really helped to teach us how children learn from reading.

Me: What are some of the things that you think they are gaining from books that you didn't think about before?

Carly: Well, the first thing that comes to mind is like the connections that they make and how those connections actually affect their lives and their future and how they see the world.

Me: Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

Carly: Um, well I guess it all really depends on what types of literature a child is exposed to will really impact um just how they um it just it shows what they're exposed to in literature, that will be what they know you know? Along with life experiences but this kind of reminds of the Ted Talk the Danger of A Single story. I really liked that Ted Talk. I've even told my friends to watch it. Yah, the literature that the students read it you know it, I feel like it teaches them about the world and different cultures. And you know the more you read the more you'll know. The more um the more perspectives you'll have on the world, because there can be so much literature on the same topic, but

there will be so many different points of views on that specific topic. And you know if you only expose a child to one specific point of view then they'll like have that ingrained in their mind and that's kind of like the danger of a single story. Whereas if you um grab them with a variety of um variety of books with different points of views, they'll be able to, I feel like they'll be able to decide which one they think is what they agree with.

At the end of the semester Carly realized that children have the ability to know about and discuss a variety of topics. She believed they had a right to hear a variety of perspectives and need to discuss and reflect upon their understandings with others in order to understand their interpretation. Karl and Astrid also eluded to critical thinking in their final interviews.

Karl, like Carly, began the semester believing that textbooks held answers and using literature to teach might contradict a child's beliefs or offend someone's value system. After the course Karl had new understandings and questions about using literature to teach critical thinking. Karl's worries regarding potential misunderstandings, as well as understandings of critical thinking are demonstrated in his discussion of the potentials of literature as a source of critical understanding.

Karl: If you want to teach it in a history scene, then that's how they're going to interpret it as. If you want to teach it in a way this is relatable to like I have a class where they are like take this book and uh segregation and like relate it to like how it could be related now. If you go on that mentality, they might pick all the wrong things out of the book. Well, not necessarily [Karl was referring to the current controversy over building a border wall]... That's actually, that's critical thinking. That's what they are supposed to be doing. And so, that way if you instead of just voting for one candidate over the other, you can think about why you're voting for one candidate over the other. You can think

about why you're doing it. So, it's when you take issues like that and put it into today it gives you a better understanding of why you're doing what you're doing. And who you are and what your beliefs are.

Karl demonstrates an understanding of what transactional critical thinking involves, stating that critical thinking is questioning your beliefs rather than simply accepting them as truths. He believes that literature allows readers to see life through a variety of perspectives giving them support to not only understand themselves and others, but also to negotiate new realities through application of those understandings. For him, critical thinking is a way of living your understandings, and Karl believes it is important for children to read literature rather than textbooks to gain that understanding. Most preservice teachers came to value thinking critically; however, they rarely used the term critical thinking to refer to ways of understanding our lives and world. Karl was one of the few preservice teachers who correctly used the term critical thinking to incorporate reflecting and questioning personal beliefs and applying understandings into our lives to create a more democratic society.

Allie also participated in a final interview and she elaborated upon her response to the course final where she had indicated that literature discussion was the most relevant thing she gained from the course. In our final interview, I asked Allie to elaborate upon her term "studenting" and how she believed literature discussion groups prevented "studenting."

Me: How do you believe that literature discussion groups prevent students from "studenting out of class"? What opportunities do the literature discussion groups provide that answering questions from a novel do not provide? How were they different experiences?

Allie: So, the main thing that I see is for discussions, we actually have to think outside of the box. It's not just answering a specific set of questions; it's more like what you think about the reading. How we interpret, and then we're able to see the experiences that everybody else had. Cause maybe we read a book, and we had this idea and then somebody else brings a completely new idea, and we see a broader sense of the theme of the book or the story in general. When you're answering questions you want to memorize what the book says, and you don't really think about what it means as you just want to answer the questions...

Since Allie was enrolled in TLS 480 prior to her 60 hours of volunteer work in an elementary school setting, this was her first experience in a classroom setting since she was in elementary school. During the Fall semester of 2017, she was completing her 60 hours of volunteer work and 45 hours of practicum in a Kindergarten classroom and also a third grade classroom. Allie continued to discuss "studenting" as she elaborated on her first classroom experiences. Literature and instruction with text were taking on a new meaning for her as she grappled with what she saw in classrooms and what she had experienced the previous semester in TLS 480.

Allie: I've actually seen that (referring to studenting) in my classes. The third graders they have a lot of reading and then afterwards they have to fill in the bubbles. It's just multiple options, and they don't even think about what they read. Most of the kids, they just guess. Instead of actually trying to look at the text again and trying to put the answers so that just is really problematic because they're not really getting involved into what they're reading they're just trying to get it done and turn it in. They're not understanding the content and the questions. They're just trying to answer for answering

instead of learning. As a teacher we only have so far. I mean we only have so many experiences we can show the kids. So, through a book they can actually see endless possibilities of experiences.

Allie's responses illustrate a transactional understanding of critical thinking and the need to use literature not to simply teach knowledge at a basic level of understanding, but to use literature to create a rich learning environment where children inquire about the meaning of text and use literature to create understanding.

### **The Final Group Interview**

You know what was interesting about my classroom was that the teacher had so many books, but she never really used them, (Carly, 2016).

After transcribing the individual interviews, I realized that I needed more information on how the preservice teachers were observing literature being used in classrooms. These preservice teachers had not had the opportunity to observe in classrooms during their semester in TLS 480 since they were not officially enrolled in the college of education. Without having observed teachers in classrooms using literature while they were learning about literature in the classroom, they lacked the opportunity to discuss children's transactional encounters. Since the final interview occurred in the following fall semester when they were in methods courses and classroom practicums, I wondered what questions they had about what they saw in classrooms that related to their experiences in TLS 480.

In our group discussion, Carly, Astrid, Karl, and Allie discussed their concerns for creating an inquiry-based classroom while incorporating test taking skills.

Carly: I guess I still wonder if there is a way to like incorporate the CCSS like the stuff that is gonna be on the test to like what you want to teach your students directly... I know I would like to figure out how to incorporate the test material.

Astrid: Well, I've seen for the last Wednesday I think, the little guys (referring to the Kindergarten class that she is observing for 45 hours) had lesson plans that had books incorporated into the lesson plan that worked very well with AZ State Standards and so it worked very well.

The final group interview was an opportunity for the preservice teachers to once again discuss their understandings of literature in the curriculum. As I guided them with questions, they responded and elaborated on each other's responses. I wondered how their personal approaches to literature had evolved since taking TLS 480.

Astrid: You may look for the answers only instead of looking for the whole book as a context. Cause, I see now that a lot of books have stories in them. Like before, I thought a book would be like information, information, information, but no, most of the times the books actually have like a beginning a middle and an end even if it's an informational book they still have like a process that they go through to make the reader read easier.

When asked about the most influential part of the course:

Me: Now that the class has been over, what are some of the things that you think you really took from the course? You mentioned story (looking at Allie)

Allie: Well, yah, because before the class I had never read a children's book; so, of course, I got a lot of a lot of new ideas and I actually thought it's just like about fairytales, but no they have so many subjects within them. There are so many children's

books. I had no idea the quantity that there is nowadays. And there's still not enough like multiculturally.

Carly: I guess I never realized how much of an impact that reading can have on anyone. Just because of the connections that people can make with the books. Throughout all the books I've read I'm trying to think and I was just reading for fun and it's about a girl and then you know the reading of like more controversial stories and like there are books for like younger children about things that I thought were controversial. I guess I had a change of perspective because like reading has a greater impact on people than I had thought.

Astrid: Most of the books that I like to read are the same style of book. Kind of the same characters. You know, kind of about the same things. So, it was like really cool to kind of branch out of that and gain a bigger view of the types of authors and stories that are out there.

Karl: It's just hard after using textbooks for like the past ten years it's just hard to compare like how the children's literature has bettered my reading. Realizing how fun it was to read books again just for fun. Instead of FOR school.

Carly: Cause since I was so annoyed from being assigned from all this homework. I just thought of myself as oh, I'm not a reader, but then after this class, I was like yah, I like to read.

Me: What was it? What was it about this class and reading chapter books that changed your mind?

Carly: Um, I guess maybe the way we analyzed stuff in class or maybe the way we were led to kind of think about the books. Like how we were searching for the AHA moments.

And searching for connections and things like that and that helped me kind of realize that reading is enjoyable.

In the final interview preservice teachers' discussed how literature provided opportunities to "think outside the box," and understand difficult or controversial issues in new ways. Without using the term critical thinking, the preservice teachers discussed what it means to think critically and the value of using literature to promote critical thinking. They also mentioned ways that reading literature rather than text books offered opportunities for readers to search for connections and meaning in enjoyable ways.

### **Analysis of Literature and Thinking Critically**

Preservice teachers engaged in many experiences allowing them to connect with literature. Since novels in the course were almost always self-selected, high quality, and high interest, motivation to read was high. Primarily aesthetic connections with stories motivated them to share their thinking of the literature as they read not only for course requirements but also for their personal pleasure. They enjoyed sharing and discussing their personal experiences with a text, hearing others' experiences and connections, and personally reflecting upon the AHAs evoked from those experiences. Data collected from TLS 480 showed personal connections with text and the sharing of those connections increased the readers' desire to read. Discussion of text was also found to increase higher levels of thinking by engaging in civil, respectful, and difficult conversations to hear new perspectives, question their thinking, and relate texts to other contexts.

Data also shows that preservice teachers' motivation to participate in reading engagements that promoted critical thinking increased as they made choices of texts and were provided with open-ended opportunities to share their thinking and learn from others.

## **Discussion of Critical thinking and Understanding**

Although preservice teachers appreciated the new understandings that occurred from transacting with literature, many continued to think of critical thinking in more cognitive, traditional terms of skill-based learning rather than a transactional definition of constructing meaning. However, it was apparent at the course's conclusion that preservice teachers acknowledged critical thinking with literature as evolving perspectives of the world that could be applied to future encounters not only with text, but within their lives.

The majority came to realize the importance of an initial aesthetic stance leading to a more efferent stance. At the conclusion of the course the preservice teachers came to see a need to read to understand our diverse world. They spoke of reading "for pleasure" and incorporating prior knowledge and skills. They enjoyed reflecting on their reading and discussing and engaging with literary tasks. They described their new understandings of literature as a way to learn and appreciate the diversity around us. Similar to Lewis (2005), I believe the more we emphasize the difference between reading aesthetically and efferently the more we deny the possibility for a critical engagement that can bring together the personal, critical, and pleasurable. As evidenced in the section on literature as a way to think critically, preservice teachers developed an aesthetic appreciation for literature by the end of the course. They brought in literary knowledge of text while engaging in making meaning from the text to increase pleasure for reading and critical understanding. Data highlighted the preservice teachers' awareness of how aesthetic appreciation may be taken beyond personal connections to thinking critically about those connections.

While critical dialogue was valued in the classroom, it was not demonstrated at the conclusion of the course that the revelations and implications of the dialogue were considered as

critical thinking, but rather as new knowledge and “pleasure” with literature. While this knowledge often involved sociocultural issues and political beliefs and perspectives, it appeared that the evolution in thinking about those issues was frequently regarded as pleasure with literature, rather than critical thinking about literature. This is further elaborated upon in the next section regarding literature as curriculum and is also discussed in chapter five as part of implications for further research.

### **Literature as Curriculum**

Once the unobstructed impact between reader and text has been made possible, extraordinary opportunities for a real educational process are open to the reader.

(Rosenblatt, 1995, p.71)

A transactional view of literature as curriculum entails literature instruction that develops motivated and strategic readers who view literature as a means of pleasure as well as a form of learning. Teaching becomes a matter of improving the individual’s ability to evoke meaning from the text by leading readers to reflect self-critically within this process. Rosenblatt (1968) asserts,

The starting point for growth must be each individual’s efforts to marshal their resources and organize a response relevant to the stimulus of the printed page... The teacher’s task is to foster fruitful interactions—or, more precisely, transactions between individual readers and individual works (p. 26-27).

In this manner, engaging with text becomes a means to inquire, question, reflect, and share to learn about our world. Knowledge becomes relevant through lived through experiences. Those experiences are developed through texts from a variety of sources and forms of exploration. Individual and group transactions with teacher support and guidance throughout the process

encourage learners to gain agency in their acquisition of knowledge and understanding. This section explores how these types of experiences permitted preservice teachers to gain new understandings of curriculum—how they came to view the potentialities of trade books for learning versus textbook understandings. Those experiences became data to answer the research question, “How do preservice teachers’ understanding of integrating literature into elementary school curriculum change during the semester?”

After analyzing data related to preservice teachers’ knowledge about literature in the curriculum, I noticed the preservice teachers held similar goals regarding literature and instruction (see Table 4.2). Due to the common desires of the students, I selected one articulate student, Rhody, to illuminate the changes in thinking and understanding about literature and curriculum throughout the semester. In addition, I share responses from other students to point out changes that occurred but may not have been evidenced in Rhody’s collected data. This permits the continuity of evolution without the need to filter out the differentiation of a variety of students. It is my belief that looking closely at Rhody, along with a few examples from others to identify her shifts in thinking, provides a clearer understanding of how their thinking evolved over the semester.

### **Beginning Goals and Interview Responses**

The first few classes of TLS480 were used to help establish a learning environment that was a safe place for preservice teachers to express themselves while learning about the objectives of the course. It is my belief that a learning environment needs to be a place that is respectful where learners feel their voices are important and are heard. If readers are expected to share personal responses and expose their beliefs to others, the classroom must encourage acceptance of diversity in perspectives. Rosenblatt (1995) supports this belief when she states, “The

classroom situation and the relationship with the teacher should create a feeling of security” (p. 64). To create that environment, we learned about each other by sharing personal artifacts and explaining how those artifacts played a role in our lives. We shared story maps where we created a roadmap of the journeys we have had with story and literature from our earliest memories to our current lives. We also read and discussed the syllabus and clarified understandings, and we explored the Worlds of Words to become acquainted with the layout of the collection and share books with each other. Each day we listened to a read aloud and shared responses to the story. Our first three classes established a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom as well as established a beginning acknowledgement for the diversity within our class and the diversity of children’s literature. These experiences provided a context for students’ beginning learning goals.

As seen in Table 4.2, the majority of preservice teachers selected a personal goal of learning about children’s literature. After meeting individually with each student, I was able to gain a better understanding of what they were referring to when they stated they wanted to learn more about children’s literature. The word “more” most frequently referred to the use of literature to teach lessons, or learning how to use literature as a tool for teaching.

While the preservice teachers frequently referred to books as “tools,” I resisted and continue to resist using that term for literature. Tool implies that an object has a specific purpose and is used to carry out a specific function. I don’t believe that literature has a specific purpose to be held by all who read. In a transactional view of literature, literature is a way of knowing. Depending on who is reading, the mood, needs, memories, and literary knowledge they bring to the reading, and understandings evoked while reading, elicit infinite ways of knowing. Transactions with literature through reflecting, discussing, questioning, and connecting to other

**Table 4.2 Beginning Learning Goals of Preservice Teachers**

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*	Learn to use literature for teaching (Morals, lessons, curriculum)	Learn to make reading fun/pleasurable	Learn the genres of literature	Learn the sociocultural issues of children's literature	Learn what's new in literature	Learn why literature is important	Other: get an A, Be organized

\*The number of responses is greater than the number of participants. This is due to the option given to preservice teachers to select one or more personal learning goals for the course.

texts and content permit the roles literature plays in curriculum to evolve as readers evolve.

According to Wolfgang Iser (1978), "literary texts initiate 'performances' of meaning rather than actually formulating meanings themselves" (p. 26-27). In this manner, literature is not a tool as it does not serve the purpose of completing a task, but rather a role of gaining understanding for interpreting an issue or idea at that particular time. Literature is not an end to gaining knowledge, but rather a means to gaining new insights and questioning what we believe and know as we experience situations through text.

## **Beginning Goals: A Transactional Belief of Literature's Potentialities**

Rhody's beginning goal reflection and comments from the interview indicate preservice teachers' desires and hopes for using literature in curricular instruction.

My goals over the course of this semester for this class would start with learning the basics of teaching children's literature. With the basics, I will be able to progress towards the understanding of the importance of literature in the classroom... My goals for this semester are to dig deeper into the subject of children's literature and really learn about how books can help children to learn. I would also really like to learn about how children learn through different types and genres. (Rhody, Beginning Goal Reflection)

The follow-up interview permitted me to gain knowledge of who Rhody was as an individual: Why she was taking this course, her perspectives of herself as a reader and future teacher, her interests, clarification regarding her specific goals and why she selected those goals, and also anything else she wanted me to know about her. This information allowed me to feel more connected to Rhody as a learner and also as a person. It permitted me to enhance specific areas of the syllabus connected to Rhody's goals.

When meeting with Rhody in the follow-up interview, I had specific questions related to her goals, but I also allowed the conversation to flow to areas Rhody wanted to discuss.

Me: I'm curious. You wrote about "forcing yourself" to read for this course. What did you mean by "forcing yourself?"

Rhody: I've never really liked to read. When I was really little my mom read bedtime stories to me, mostly fairytales, but then I guess when I started school I don't remember reading at home except when I had to for homework you know like when you have to read every day for 15 minutes. I remember my mom used to get so frustrated with me,

because after first grade I just didn't want to do the reading. She was so good about helping me. She read to me and got me books with the CDs. By third grade I stopped reading.

I probed as to why...

Rhody: I think it wasn't fun anymore because there weren't any pictures. The books just seemed so big and it took me so long to read them and I just didn't like it.

Me: Did you get to choose what you wanted to read?

Rhody: I think I did but I couldn't find anything I liked. That's why I want to know how I can use books to teach in a way that is exciting for the kids.

Me: That's why?

Rhody: Yah, because I want them to like books. I know it's important.

Me: Why do you think it's important they like books?

Rhody: Well, then they'll want to read. I don't want them to think of it as a chore. When I was in school, every time we had to pull out a book I felt miserable and I don't want my students to feel that way, you know?

Me: You talked about reading different genres?

Rhody: Yah, maybe kids would find one they liked and not hate reading so much when they didn't read picture books any more or maybe certain genres are better for certain subjects. I don't know. I just think it would be good to learn more about it and maybe this class can help me like books again, but it does seem like there is a lot of reading required and that worries me.

My interview with Rhody revealed her desire to rekindle her early enjoyment with literature. Rhody believed it was important for her as a future teacher to enjoy reading. She also

believed it was important to learn about genres of literature. She questioned if different genres would resonate differently with different readers. Rhody thought gaining knowledge of genres might help her find books to fit with different content areas when she began teaching.

Since Rhody's goals were synonymous with many of her peers in her desire to learn how literature may be used to teach, throughout the semester I often asked the preservice teachers how they believed a book might have an impact on children's understandings. I also modeled ways that books could be integrated into classrooms during our class sessions. Interviewing each preservice teacher at the onset of the course allowed me to select specific titles related to personal interests. One preservice teacher hoped to teach physical education; so I found poetry books, historical fiction, biographies, etc. related to athletes and sports to entice her to want to pick up books and browse them. A large group of preservice teachers in the course enjoyed fairytales. I found a variety of genres and cultural versions of fairytales to share with them throughout the semester. This increased the enthusiasm and motivation to complete assignments and read. It also reinforced the personal pleasure found in literature which many stated as a beginning goal to achieve or rekindle during the course. My aim at this time was to assess where the preservice teachers were in their literary responses and assist them in improving the quality of those responses.

Each week of the course offered opportunities for exploration of specific genres or themes. As the preservice teachers learned about the history of a genre, its characteristics, award-winning books from that genre and more, they also browsed many books from that genre and selected a novel to read from that genre that would be reflected upon and discussed in small groups. I believed personal choice would motivate reading and also enhance a variety of perspectives to be read, discussed, and shared. Since the five novels the preservice teachers were

to choose from offered different perspectives and stories on a similar topic, I was guaranteed that discussion between readers of different books would involve not only a sharing of the summary of the literature selected, but also a sharing of the evocations and questioning of the thoughts, beliefs and emotions aroused as different interpretations and perspectives of the topic were explored.

Rhody: Lonnie Collins Motion is a character who made me feel different emotions while reading the story. At some points I was so excited for him and at other times I wanted to cry. While reading about Lonnie going to the store and being looked at differently because the color of his skin made me think. This happened a lot in history with African Americans but I still see it happen today. It is not right that we still hold these racist practices. Anybody regardless of their skin color could potentially steal something. I also related to the faith part of the book.

Alena: As I read though the novel, (referring to the book *La Linea*) I understood that the experiences Miguel, Elena, and Javi endured are actual occurrences that immigrants go through trying to make it here. I was very moved by this novel and I now have a different perspective on the midst of Mexican illegal immigrants trying to make it North.

Rhody and Alena's written reflections illustrate one of the powerful potentials of trade books. Trade books offered a variety of voices to be heard. Stories read for class were usually told from an insider perspective (the books were written by authors of the culture being portrayed) rather than by outsiders who did not have the lived-through experiences and understandings of the characters portrayed. Beginning written reflections acknowledged discrimination in the United States and mentioned gaining new perspectives. In chapter 3, small group discussions portrayed new realizations from preservice teachers regarding their

acknowledgement of white privilege after reading *Locomotion*. Through story, preservice teachers gained new awareness of indirect and direct positive acknowledgement and opportunities afforded to Whites. Previous educational opportunities with textbooks included the history of discrimination, but lacked connections to current situations. Small group discussions about the novels took the stories beyond historical and cultural awareness and into global and political awareness.

During the semester the idea of building a wall to prevent entry into the United States was discussed as a key issue for the upcoming presidential election. On one hand, the wall could be seen as way to help ensure no one entered the United States without going through legal channels. On the other hand, the wall could be seen as a costly means of segregating the U.S. from other countries. Presidential candidates often discussed the wall as either a way to keep others out and keep the U.S. safe or as a way to offer opportunities and safety to others by letting them into the U.S. *La Linea* by Ann Jaramillo (2008) tells the story of two teenage children trying to enter the United States to reunite with parents, search for opportunities for higher education and employment, and find safety from corrupt officials in Mexico offered a new perspective on immigration and the building of the wall. When border crossing was presented to readers through the perspectives of Mexican adolescents, the concept of building a wall took on new meanings challenging beliefs and understandings of immigration, freedom, equality, right and wrong, legality, and more. What once seemed liked a simple issue of should or shouldn't we build a wall became a story of human beings. What and whose stories will change if we build that wall? How will this impact our lives and our futures? How will this change history?

Conversations regarding walls built throughout history arose. My personal notes from that day discussed some of the comments I heard in student discussions. "Think about the Berlin

Wall? They tore that down.” “Did the Great Wall of China prevent people from entering China?” Without realizing it, the preservice teachers were using novels to inquire about our world. When conversations began to wane, I brought the class back together as a whole and mentioned some of the things I overheard. I didn’t need to point out to them that they had taken literature and story into curriculum. They commented on how many topics they mentioned and how this novel could be used in a classroom.

### **Midsemester Goals: A Transactional Belief of Literature’s Potentialities**

Initially, Rhody wanted to learn the “basics of teaching children’s literature” and “the importance of literature in the classroom.” More specifically, she desired to understand how various genres and different types of story help children learn. At midterm Rhody explained how the creation of a group text set demonstrated her progression toward those goals stating:

I have been googling children’s books that are popular today. It is easy to find out what children are loving and what teachers are using. This goal is being accomplished with the required reading of 80 children’s books. Another goal I had was to become familiar with books that are socially advanced. I think that my text set topic of “Gender Roles” helped me reach this goal. The books we chose didn’t stereotype men and women based on gender. Also in class we read about different cultures and this helps me expand my knowledge and accomplish my goal... As I move into the second half of the semester I want to keep my current goals of learning about socially advanced books and popular books of this generation. I also want to add a goal of becoming a better read aloud reader.

Rhody addresses not only the sociocultural aspects of literature in the classroom when she discusses the text set she created with three other classmates, but also the relevance of reading about different cultures. While her reflection lacks detail regarding how cultural

awareness is related to curriculum, Rhody's book reflections often mentioned how she might utilize the book for curricular instruction. Excerpts from her reflection on *The Keeping Corner* by Kasmira Sheth (2009) demonstrate her evolving understanding of some of the possibilities for incorporating literature into the curriculum.

If I was teaching, I think this book could be good for allowing students to explore this Indian culture. But I also think that some other Indian cultures should be explored as well. Since this is set in an earlier time period and some of the traditions could have changed and evolved, I think the book needs to accompany other more current stories.

Rhody's reflection reveals knowledge regarding the role of literature in providing new perspectives on social issues. It provides insight regarding Rhody's understanding of the need to accurately portray diversity and cultures. After listening to the Ted Talk *The Danger of a Single Story* by Chimamanda Adichie (2014), preservice teachers became very attuned to stereotyping others by only showing one perspective, a single story. In her Ted Talk, Adichie warns that if we hear only a single story about another person or country, we risk misunderstanding. Adichie's talk resonated with the preservice teachers and became a common reference in their understandings of teaching with literature for the remainder of the semester.

Lana's reflection demonstrates how preservice teachers continued to desire to make progress in learning how to use literature as a form of instruction.

My new goal for the rest of the semester is to find ways to incorporate various genres of books that can be relevant to school lessons. Now that I am gaining comprehension of many genres of literature I try to think about how I could incorporate different genres while teaching a lesson. Also, I would love to have many different kinds of genres of books in my classroom because I have learned that students all enjoy different types of

books, it would be hard to have only one type of children's books that all a large group of students would all enjoy. I hope to really take the information I have learned about different genres of books and incorporate them in lesson plans as I become a teacher. Lana, like the majority of her peers, acknowledged that a variety of genres and student choice through book selection assist in enticing children to read and making the reading process meaningful.

Student Midterms mentioned goal development, but they failed to show the shifts occurring in discussions and text reflections. Carly's reflection on *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhha Lai (2011) was typical of her peers in that it contained her personal connections to a character and then moved beyond the personal to mention implications of how the text enables new perspectives of historical events and new knowledge of those events.

I was surprised while reading this book at how insightful and deeply meaningful it became. Throughout this novel I noticed that there were many parts that related this young Vietnamese girl to every other little girl on this earth. I related to her when she rebelled against her mom by stepping on the tile, showing that not only boys are good luck. She was standing up for what she believed in, that she shouldn't be restricted from doing things just because she is a *girl*. Also, she's from Saigon, but she still bickers and teases her brother like any siblings would. Having details like those included in this book really help the reader be able to feel more relatable to the protagonist despite the differences in race.

This portion of Carly's reflection was typical of other beginning reflections in that it mentions a personal connection to the character. Preservice teachers continued to make connections with characters and almost always mentioned that connection in their reflections, as

the semester progressed their reflections evolved. The shifts that occurred focused on two major areas: 1) relating the connections to sociocultural issues, and children's understandings of these issues; and 2) relating the theme of the book to curricular content. Carly's reflection addresses those two new foci.

This book really helped me put a different perspective on the Vietnam War. Granted, I never really thought of it that much, and never really thought much of how it could have affected the Vietnamese that now live here. This book really helped me open my eyes. Taking me through the life of this little girl showed me the hardships that many Vietnamese families faced, like famine, the loss of loved ones, and the assimilation into American. It also showed me similar ideas and thoughts that we as humans have. The moment that Ha first saw an American man, she didn't know it was possible to have the kind of hair he had. She innocently plucked his hair just out of curiosity. This showed me that young children from other countries can be just as unfamiliar with cultures and ethnicities just as children in America are. They are ignorant of us just as we are of them. This made me think about the great importance it is to educate young students on the various cultures and nationalities that exist today. And not just to show the differences of "others", but to show them how we are all so similar.

This portion of Carly's reflection is truly revealing in that it illustrates the correlation between the aesthetic and efferent stances for herself and her future students. Carly's personal connections with the story assisted her understandings of the history of the Vietnam War. Her evocations took her beyond simple memorization of facts regarding the war to the ramifications of war. She questioned how the war continues to affect the lives of the Vietnamese people today. Carly also realized that understanding various cultures allows her to greater comprehend

“the similarities that we as humans have” and then connect these insights to her future work with children.

My personal notes from March 1st reveal the preservice teachers’ enthusiasm for teaching with literature.

Today I read *Exclamation!* Not only did they enjoy the story, but conversation erupted during and after about the many uses of the book. I loved the creativity in applications. They suggested so many ideas that I had them discuss in small groups how this book could be integrated into curriculum.

Midterm reflections revealed progress toward goals with new levels of understanding. Preservice teachers’ desires to read a variety of novels or learn about genres of literature evolved to include examples of why those goals were relevant to children and how they could be incorporated into classrooms and learning. Twenty-two out of 23 desired to maintain and build upon their initial goals believing they were still relevant. After an initial read aloud experience, many desired to add a goal of becoming more confident and “better” at reading out loud to a group.

### **Final Goals and Interview Responses: A Transactional Belief of Literature’s Potentialities**

Preservice teachers gained insight regarding the roles of literature in the classroom throughout the semester. The end of the course revealed the majority believed providing multiple opportunities and strategies for students to transact with literature throughout the entire day and across subjects offered increased personal pleasure with a deeper level of understanding. They realized instruction and multiple opportunities to engage with a variety of genres and themes across multiple texts are necessary in order for children to read critically, learn effectively, and share their understandings with others. The class final offered more insights to

the preservice teachers' understandings of literature and their understandings of transactions with literature and how they contribute to curriculum.

Rhody responded to the first question, Which of these 480 experiences would you use in your own classroom with children? Her response shows her belief that a variety of literature from a variety of genres is important for classroom instruction. Furthermore, she believes that discussion of texts permits children to challenge their beliefs and grow when they hear different perspectives from their classmates.

I would use most of these things in my classroom. I for sure will use text sets because of my reason stated above. Another experience that I will use is literature discussion groups. I think this is a great way for students to grow on their thinking and personal beliefs, because they hear the different voices from their classmates. Literature discussion groups are also a good way to see that they read and that they are understanding what is going on. From this class I browsed a lot of children's books and have an impressive library of books that I will also incorporate in my classroom.

The second question asked, "Of the many social and cultural issues, we discussed this semester related to children's literature and bringing children and books together, what is the one issue that you found most challenging to think about and to consider in your professional roles? Why?"

Rhody's response expresses her knowledge of the power of literature to create a story of the history and sociocultural issues of our world and also the awareness and acknowledgement that the majority of preservice teachers felt regarding the sensitivity and sometimes controversy that may accompany those issues.

There were many different social and cultural issues discussed in this class but I know the most challenging for me would be the topic of racism and religion. I have firm religious views of my own and that will have to be set aside when discussing religion in history or if asked by a student. Another major one I would struggle with would be racism. Many books that we read for the school focus on racism and the civil rights movement. I would struggle with what I would deem appropriate to share with my class. There are violent parts of history that could scare some children and I know when I am a teacher I will have to research and reflect what I will say and teach based on their age.

Rhody believed she had met her beginning goal. “It is a goal to find all different kinds of new and diverse books, but I also want to learn how I can teach them without being offensive in any way. I know I would never intentionally be offensive, but I want to learn how to insure that I am not.” Rhody and the majority of her peers developed an appreciation for trade books in the classroom. They realized that all sides of a story needed to be heard and discussion of those perspectives also needed to occur in classrooms to enhance connections and understand the relevance of societal issues. They also realized that the content within a book had numerous implications for curriculum depending on the characteristics of the group reading the book, and so teacher support and guidance will vary. The preservice teachers understood that certain topics, such as religious beliefs, gender issues, race and identity, and equality, are issues that are controversial, but also need to be discussed and understood by children.

The semester’s end revealed a desire held by most to teach social issues to children of all ages and also a realization that as future educators they needed to not only know the curriculum and standards to be taught in each grade level but also the individual interests and needs of students in their classrooms. The majority of preservice teachers understood that all children

need to understand our world and the good and bad within it in a safe environment to encourage children to live within and navigate that world with empathy and understanding. Their final reflections acknowledged a realization that they must be both knowledgeable about literature and child development to ensure appropriate selection of text and strategies to critically understand that text.

Another area of curriculum that was addressed on the final was the preservice teachers' ability to utilize texts they read throughout the semester and integrate those texts to show awareness of genre, style and theme. One question asked them to use their Reading Records to choose two high quality books (one picture book and one-chapter book) that are conceptually or thematically related to each other, and then based on their knowledge of genre, literary elements, visual elements and connections/tensions, compare and contrast the books with each other. Rhody's response indicates her ability to integrate literary knowledge with critical thinking.

The two books I have chosen to be high quality literature are *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee and *Something to Prove* by Floyd Cooper. I chose these books because they both have the same genre of realistic fiction. They also focus on the issue of racism. However, they focus on racism in different lights. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* it shows how hard and brutal the majority of people were with inequality, and *Something to Prove* shows the struggles but also the reward of working hard and fighting for that equality. Both the protagonists in each story focus on fighting for race equality. I would say these are both very high quality novels because *To Kill a Mockingbird* has so many lessons aside from racism like growing up and social pressures. It also shines a realistic life into the history of the time when African Americans were not treated equally. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is an advanced novel but could and should, in my opinion, be read in middle

school. The picture book *Something to Prove* is about a real person and focuses on his journey to overcome the hardships of inequality that are shown in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

This book also has high quality illustrations that go perfectly with the text.

Although a few preservice teachers still questioned if they could/should use controversial books in their classroom, most were aware of numerous ways to effectively use them for curricular instruction. Two students were preparing to teach middle school math and elementary physical education rather than general elementary education. Those two preservice teachers wondered if they would be able to integrate literature into their content. The degree of comfort with this realization varied among the preservice teachers.

Carly's reflection on Thanhha Lai's *Inside Out & Back Again* (2011) illustrates her new understanding of the value of trade books to gain knowledge over textbooks. She came to realize that through story we see a variety of perspectives on a theme which gives readers opportunities to question and reflect upon their understanding, ultimately creating deep understandings of difficult concepts.

This book really helped me put a different perspective on the Vietnam War. Granted, I never really thought of it that much, and never really thought much of how it could have affected the Vietnamese that now live here. This book really helped me open my eyes. Taking me through the life of this little girl showed me the hardships that many Vietnamese families faced, like famine, the loss of loved ones, and the assimilation into American. It also showed me similar ideas and thoughts that we as humans have. The moment that Ha first saw an American man, she didn't know it was possible to have the kind of hair he had. She innocently plucked his hair just out of curiosity. This showed me that young children from other countries can be just as unfamiliar with cultures and

ethnicities just as children in America are. They are ignorant of us just as we are of them. This made me think about the great importance it is to educate young students on the various cultures and nationalities that exist today. And not just to show the differences of “others”, but to show them how we are all so similar.

Another point that came up in my mind while reading this was the danger of the single story. This occurred when the American schoolteacher decided it was up to her to tell the class where Ha came from, and only showed them devastating pictures of Vietnam during wartime. Ha even thought to herself how that’s not what her home was. The teacher was making Ha out to be some poor little girl from a terrible land. There was so much more to her home, like her mother’s lavender incense and her beloved papaya tree, but now all her classmates are just going to misjudge her even more than they already have. Having that point in this novel could be a good point to arise in a classroom, showing proof of the single story and how it negatively affects lives. The single story is also present in the situation of how Ha did not know English. Her classmates thought she was dumb, and she felt so dumb, because she didn’t know their language. But little did they know that she was incredibly intelligent, just all in her own language. This book can really help students open their eyes to understanding the differences in language and that just because you can’t speak one, does not mean that you don’t know anything else concerning other subjects. It can be used to spark curiosity about a country, and what it is truly like. Then I can find more books that give different perspectives and are of different genres to give them more stories to gain information and different perspectives.

Not only does Carly's reflection mention the role of literature in the curriculum, but it also focuses on what it means to be human in a global society. Carly's desire to use literature to teach learners to understand the commonalities shared as humans while also introducing them to new information about culture, history and geography reveals her new understanding of the value in learning others' stories to help understand the world. Rosenblatt (1995) explains, "Whatever the form—poem, novel, drama, biography, essay—literature makes comprehensible the myriad ways in which human beings meet the infinite" (p. 6). Carly's final comments show her desire to use real literature to go beyond a simple interpretation of cultures and events and the people who form them. Later, in her final interview, Carly further develops her explanation of the values of literature in curriculum while addressing her concern for being sensitive to the developmental readiness of introducing certain topics to young learners.

In the previous section on literature and thinking critically I shared Katie's response. It is important to revisit Katie's final reflection to reveal the dynamics of the crossover between thinking critically and literature in the curriculum.

Not all books write on the page what the author wants to say, sometimes you have to look deeper and having these discussions (referring to literature circles and class discussions) in a classroom would help everyone develop a new way to view the novel that was read and help them think critically.

Katie was aware of the limitations of readers to see beyond their own experiences and transactions with text to find expanded understandings. Social interactions permitted yet another part of the story to be added to the whole interpretation. She realized discussing, reflecting and questioning with others allowed new perspectives of meaning and critical understandings of curriculum to occur.

The course final revealed that this group of preservice teachers enjoyed discussion in small groups and their weekly written reflections often mentioned many insights into teaching that they discovered through discussion and working with others. Since transactional theory involves sharing of perspectives, I gained great insights into their strong beliefs that literature in the classroom needs to reach beyond personal interactions. I also desired to learn more about their beliefs regarding literature in the curriculum and their perspectives on incorporating literature into their future classrooms.

Analysis of the course final revealed that three people mentioned all of the material from the course was relevant for their future teaching, and it was alluded to by most that literature and literature transactions have the potential to impact curriculum in many ways. A range of statements from the final offered specific examples of what preservice teachers found to be beneficial, but they lacked the depth to illustrate the implications of their responses.

- “AHA’s would be great for my own classroom because it gives the students a chance to write down things that they learned and figure out on their own just from reading the text” (Rhody).
- I also want to incorporate text sets because I believe it is a beneficial experience where they are able to critically think about books and find a specific theme from a variety of books (Amelia).
- Literature can be used for everything when it comes to education. A teacher can use books for lessons on history, math, science, and geography (Carmen).
- Overall, I will use a lot of the engagements in my own classroom because of their flexibility and usefulness to many subjects, especially literature” (Amanda).

Students implied that the use of literature throughout content areas facilitated inquiry, deeper understandings, and critical thinking of content and curriculum. Interviews provided an opportunity for elaboration upon those statements. I discussed those findings individually with four students who remained in town after the final. I also met with the four students as a group. Excerpts from those interviews elaborate on their beliefs about literature in the curriculum.

### **Final Interviews**

I needed to check my understandings/analysis of data from the final exam. Follow-up interviews with four preservice teachers provided additional information regarding their beliefs about literature in the curriculum. The spring semester of TLS 480 ended in May. The majority of students were leaving town for the summer months; so, follow-up interviews needed to wait until everyone returned for the fall semester. This lapse in time was beneficial in that it allowed preservice teachers to solidify their understandings. However, it also contributed to lapses in ability to recall certain memories and information. To assist in recall of information, I often restated comments previously written in reflections and then asked for clarification and/or elaboration.

Astrid returned to the university early to begin her 45-hour placement in an elementary school classroom. This was the first time Astrid observed in an elementary school classroom. Astrid and I discussed the past summer months and then progressed to her current experiences in her placement in a third grade classroom.

The third graders they have a lot of reading and then afterwards they have to fill in the bubbles. It's just multiple options, and they don't even think about what they read. Most of the kids, they just guess... That just is really problematic, because they're not really getting involved into what they're reading they're just trying to get it done and turn it

in... I feel like its missing the discussion part between peers... They're not understanding the content. And the questions they're just trying to answer for answering instead of learning.

I asked Astrid if that was an example of what she referred to as "studenting" on her course final. Astrid's reply acknowledged her belief that literature provides a story that creates understanding rather than pieces of information to gain facts and pass tests or grade requirements.

Yes, they look at the questions, and they just look for the answer in the text instead of actually seeing the text as a whole. I feel like it (referring to discussion with others) would actually help them out a lot with understanding cause they're not doing really well right now.

Astrid also discussed the problem she had finding diverse texts at a variety of levels to capture student interests and also show representations of multicultural world we live in. "I thought that I was lucky to find three books that represented the deaf population, but they were all white." Astrid left the course with an understanding of the importance of using literature that accurately portrays the population being presented. She also understood the need to show multiple representations of the population to avoid creating or reinforcing stereotypical representations of cultures and to create opportunities for people of color to see themselves represented in literature.

Allie was classified as a senior from the number of units she had taken at the university. She transferred her major to elementary education and, like Astrid, she was currently in her placement classroom interacting with students and observing for 45 hours. In her follow-up interview Allie shared her beliefs regarding the roles of literature in the curriculum and her conflicting observations from her placement classroom.

Sometime you can't really see it, but if you're reading about it, you're learning about it; it kind of opens that, that perspective of other people, because it might not be something that you've personally experienced but once you read about it you're like, "Oh I never really thought about how, just like the book we read, *The Chinese Wall*. It's one of my favorite books... We did a text set and it was one of the books in my text set. So, I've never experienced things like that coming from unwanted families so to read about those kinds of things it really enlightens you into what students may be walking into your classroom." What you connect with in a book might not be what someone else connects with, but you're still like gaining that knowledge of that perspective which I really like, but I don't get to see that in my placement.

In our discussion, Allie mentioned, "probably 99% are Hispanic," when speaking of the students at the school. However, they had different family configurations and issues: traditional families with both parents and siblings at home, divorced parents, single parents, parents with alcohol addictions, etc. Allie desired to see these students reading literature that represented the diversity and culture of their families and felt that books with those representations were not found in her classroom. However, Allie saw her practicum teacher using pop culture (e.g. rap and texting) to bring text and the students' voices into the curriculum. Allie spoke with the teacher who explained her belief that in a middle school environment with switching classes for different periods, it was difficult to offer novels and also teach the skills for that grade level. Allie was hopeful that she would be able to integrate trade books into her instruction more readily when she switched to an elementary school for her student teaching. In our interview Allie mentioned joining teacher groups that would support her in implementing her beliefs into her future classroom.

Carly was also completing her 45 hours of classroom observation when we met for a follow-up interview. On Carly's course final, she stated that at the start of the class (referring to TLS 480) she was unsure if she would feel comfortable reading books that involved controversial issues. On the course final she again mentioned her concern, but she was aware of the need.

I think the most challenging issue I faced was how explicit and graphic some books can be. What comes to my mind is how in *Call Me Stupid*, the boy's father was a nasty drunk. I was never really exposed to such things as a child so I was surprised. I was raised in a household where everything was highly censored and protected, so my instant reaction to such details was to be appalled and question whether those details were classroom and child appropriate. But after reading the chapter about social and cultural issues, I truly had a revelation. I realized how important it is that children are exposed to these issues so that they can prepare themselves for the real world and make connections if they do have poor household conditions and family relationships.

I wanted to gain more information about Carly's current beliefs regarding realistic fiction that depicts a wide variety of sociocultural issues. I asked Carly, "Would you introduce a book like *Just Call Me Stupid?* to your students?"

Carly: Some of them (Referring to students in her practicum classroom) actually are living with it, and it's a reality that um they will probably appreciate reading about it to be able to like make connections. And I was just initially surprised by it, because I grew up in a more conservative household, and I don't think I even knew about that type of like, that type of life until I was in middle school. So, Yah, it was just surprising to me... I think you need both hope that world is a good place and understanding that it's not a

perfect place. I guess I realized that even if I didn't offer them books that had problems, they would see it anyways, so I should help them make sense of it.

The follow-up interviews filled in gaps I had in my understanding of the preservice teachers' beliefs. It was also helpful to hear their new insights regarding using literature in the curriculum now that the three teachers had been placed in schools and seen literary transactions outside of our classroom.

### **Discussion**

The epistemology at the base of transactional theory returns the responsibility for learning to the student. Knowledge- especially knowledge of literature- is not something to be found, not something the teacher can give to the student; rather, it is to be created by the individual through exchanges with texts and other readers (Probst, 1988, p. 381).

The beginning of the semester revealed most preservice teachers wanted to learn how to use literature in the curriculum. Both individual and group transactions with literature allowed opportunities for them to share experiences with literature in a comfortable, nonjudgmental environment. With those transactions, they began to understand how to go below surface-level responses and reading to answer questions. They also began to believe that choice, discussion, and personal connections allowed readers to gain a more critical understanding of story, our lives and our world.

Throughout the spring, new experiences provided opportunities for new understandings. Creation of a group text set opened new discoveries regarding integrating literature throughout the curriculum. It required preservice teachers to share a variety of texts with different genres and difficulty levels on a specific topic. Text sets encouraged them to choose topics related to a theme, inquire and investigate that topic, and share their findings in unique ways with others.

Many commented that text sets were one of the most beneficial parts of the course since it incorporated all of their experiences into a culminating project. They saw the power of a literature-based curriculum.

At the courses' end, all preservice teachers stated that they rekindled their enjoyment with story. They grew to understand the difference between textbook learning and trade book learning. They found literature to more readily afford opportunities for deeper understanding and critical thinking; however, many remained uncertain as to how they—as new teachers—could abandon a more traditional mode of instruction using textbooks. Short and Burke (1989) argue, “The way students learn to teach in teacher education classrooms will shape the way they teach in their own classrooms,” (p.205). Preservice teachers left the course with numerous transactional experiences with literature. They were now at a crossroad where they needed more experiences within the school system to observe and implement literature in classrooms.

Lanie's beginning goal, “A newfound appreciation of what someone can learn from a story is what I want to have by the end of this course,” reflects a major shift in preservice teachers' understandings for the semester. Lanie and her peers left TLS 480 with new appreciations for literature and beliefs that student choice, transactions, stances and connections with text increase desire, motivation, and understanding. Their belief that literature in school is for the purpose of reading instruction changed. They understood literature opens new, intriguing ways to learn about our world; literature is an integral part of curriculum. They also left with many questions about how these beliefs could be put into practice in classrooms. The complex relationship of belief and practice will effect whether or not their actions as teachers continue to be guided by their understanding of reading as transaction.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Findings and Implications**

A primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience by envioning conditions, but that they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth (Dewey, 1997, p. 40).

### **Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this research was to explore the ways in which transactional experiences with children's literature provide preservice teachers with new understandings of the roles of literature in classrooms. This research explored the numerous ways that transactional theory provides opportunities for learning to occur within a course for preservice teachers on children's literature in the classroom. I identified key aspects of transactional learning that contributed to their appreciation of literature, deeper understandings, and changes in understandings.

Previous research of Thompson (1993), Mathis (1994), Carpenter (1997), Gonzales (2003), and Schall (2004) researched preservice teacher changes while taking TLS 480. Their work was also grounded in transactional theory and shares some common findings (e.g. preservice teachers rekindle a lost pleasure with literature as they engage in transactional engagements with literature, and preservice teachers gain deeper understandings of literature's potentialities for curriculum). My work expanded upon their findings by using a transactional lens for analysis and addressing a group of preservice teachers who were educated under NCLB, a primarily skills-based time of instruction. This study examined how preservice teachers who may not have experienced literature as ways of knowing and understanding as elementary students in classrooms rethought possible roles for literature in the curriculum. Using a

transactional framework related my findings to the learning experiences in the course which was taught with methods of instruction grounded in transactional theory. This understanding has the potential to allow teacher educators to gain new insights into student experiences prior to entering education courses and will also give insight as to necessary instructional content in literature courses.

### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter summarizes my study and then discusses implications of my research. I begin with the theoretical framework that guided my research. Next I discuss my research questions, and how using Rosenblatt's (1938) transactional theory contributed to answering those questions. My methodology section follows and expands upon how, what, and when data were collected to answer my research questions. I next discuss the major findings from this research. The implications of my findings follows. In this section, I discuss what my findings mean for me, other teachers of TLS 480, and also for future research. I conclude this chapter with my personal thoughts relating to the findings of my study.

### **Theoretical Frame**

I used qualitative research as a teacher researcher during a semester-long course, TLS 480 Children's Literature in the Classroom. Using Louise Rosenblatt's transactional framework for my analysis permitted my findings to connect with my course instruction. A transactional theory framework offered a new lens for examining preservice teacher's understandings as they learned about children's literature.

Applying a transactional framework to my research allowed me to use the textual data from the course to create codes related to transactional theory. These codes helped me to find categories related to themes connected with Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory. Gale,

Heath, Cameron, Rashid, and Redwood (2013) support using a framework for coding, because it creates rich descriptions of the categories created from the codes. This descriptive narrative of the findings told the story of the shifts in beliefs, perspectives, and understandings.

### **Research Questions**

Using a transactional lens for analysis revealed three predominant themes within transactional theory.

1. Literature as a social engagement
2. Literature as a way to understand
3. Literature as aesthetic and efferent stances

The data collected within those themes served as the sources I used to answer my research questions:

1. How do preservice teachers' understandings of the roles of children's literature in the lives of readers evolve over the semester?
2. How do preservice teachers' understanding of integrating literature into elementary school curriculum change during the semester?

### **Methodology**

The data for this study was gathered from preservice teacher reflections, discussions, and other artifacts gathered as part of the learning engagements within the course to explore these research questions. Collected data was divided into three time frames at the: beginning, middle, and end of the course, to delineate changes in understandings and beliefs. Organizing my data into time frames with primary and secondary sources provided insights into changes and events that lead to the changes more manageable and observable.

### **Findings and Implications for the Teaching of Children's Literature**

The most significant findings my research revealed were:

1. Preservice teachers valued and learned from transactive experiences with children's literature, and those experiences offered opportunities to conceptualize and understand the importance of interplay between text, self, and experience.
2. Reflections and discussions of both the personal evocations from texts as well as literary elements encouraged experiences of personal evocations from literature and new viewpoints beyond initial understandings that often involved thinking critically.
3. Preservice teacher discourse from the semester revealed literature-based inquiry from multiple perspectives challenged them to explore and extend their understandings of values and beliefs and to question their beliefs.
4. An environment that feels "safe" to voice individual ideas among a community of learners is a relevant factor for discussion and sharing of experiences and understanding.
5. Encouraging an awareness and use of aesthetic stance is a key factor in gaining new understandings for *all* generations of preservice teachers.
6. Using terminology in context and revisiting those terms is essential to the awareness and appropriate use of those terms by preservice teachers.

### **The Values of Transactional Theory in Instruction of Literature in the Classroom**

This research provided an opportunity for me to examine my utilization of transactional reading theory and its impact on preservice teachers' beliefs and understandings of children's literature in the classroom while enrolled in TLS 480. This research also highlighted which aspects of my instruction connected with changes in preservice teachers' understandings of the roles of literature. While I have always used reflection, discussion, and choice in my classrooms, I have never explored the depth of these engagements with literature and their impacts on

readers' understandings. Like Tierney and Pearson (1981), I believe that if teachers understand the nature and process of deriving meaning and knowledge from text, they will have the basis for evaluating and improving learning environments.

Data analysis suggested that grounding instruction in transactional theory offered opportunities for exploration of beliefs and opportunities for new understandings of literature to occur. My research findings suggest the following five points are valuable teaching concepts to incorporate into instruction for preservice teachers learning of the roles of children's literature in the classroom. These teaching points are: opportunity for choice, importance of reflection and discussion, intertextuality, encouragement to utilize the aesthetic/efferent continuum, and integrating specific terminology into course content.

#### **The importance of choice.**

This research revealed that preservice teachers prefer and benefit from having some autonomy in their learning of children's literature in classrooms. Offering preservice teachers choices throughout the course occurred in a variety of engagements: book selections for their required weekly reading logs, selection of a weekly novel from five or six instructor-selected thematic novels, themes for text set project, and inquiry projects. I found that preservice teachers appreciated finding books, themes, and projects that personally resonated with them. Most commented that choosing books and engagements that they connected with and/or felt had significance for their futures, motivated them to explore the content more deeply. Choice was also credited as increasing a positive attitude toward literature. Their reflective comments credited choice as being significant in supporting their motivation to complete assignments and push themselves to participate fully due to their investment in carefully selecting books.

#### **The importance of reflection and discussion.**

An important finding for instruction was the difference between the outcomes of reflection and discussion. I observed and documented how reflection engaged readers in making connections with text. Ongoing reflection of literature and literary events increased preservice teachers' abilities to connect with text beyond surface level personal connections and move toward reflections that incorporated textual elements and broader connections to global understandings and issues of democracy and power. This supports Rosenblatt's belief that "literature is often treated as a body of information to be transmitted, rather than as experiences to be reflected on" (p.292). Reflection offered opportunities for preservice teachers to experience reading along the aesthetic/efferent continuum by removing the goal of reading to find a specific meaning. Preservice teachers believed they learned more from literature by initially focusing on the personal connections they had while reading and experiencing literature as an event that allowed them to revalue their understandings as they lived through stories.

Discussion was another transactional engagement that was found to be beneficial for preservice teachers in understanding literatures' roles in in our lives and in the classroom. Discussion served as a way for preservice teachers to expand their understandings by hearing others' perspectives. Discussion had valuable outcomes for creating new understandings, and it also served as a social event that preservice teachers looked forward to on a weekly basis. While this research occurred 15-25 years after previous studies in the TLS 480 class, the significance of reflection and discussion in understanding literature remained primarily unchanged for preservice teachers.

### **The importance of intertextuality.**

When preservice teachers worked together to create text sets, they stopped seeing literature as simply stories that exposed new perspectives, and began to see how literature could

actually guide the curriculum and be used throughout all content areas by exploring thematic connections across books. Finding books from a variety of genres and ability levels offered a new experience for preservice teachers in considering new types of intertextual connections that could go across the curriculum and across readers' lives. Their reflections revealed a new appreciation for literature as a way to learn content in meaningful ways that offered creativity, imagination, knowledge, sharing, and a variety of perspectives. Many were surprised that reading literature first with a primarily aesthetic stance could lead to a more critical efferent understanding.

### **The importance of establishing a “safe” environment.**

The beginning of the semester began with activities to get to know one another. We shared personal items that told a story of who we were as individuals, we shared literary moments in our lives, created and shared our favorite books and the roles they played in our lives. We shared and listened with our classmates. As we listened, we learned about our classmates and their lives. I encouraged active participation by providing open-ended engagements with literature and the sharing of those engagements with partners and small groups. I participated with preservice teachers learning with them while we explored literature. Short (1990) refers to this type of classroom as a “community of learners.”

The more we worked together with partners, small groups, and as a whole class, the more we grew in our comfort to contribute. While we were a diverse group of learners with various strengths and weaknesses, we grew to appreciate the unique qualities each individual offered to our groups. The more preservice teachers learned about each other, the more comfortable they seemed in sharing their connections, ideas, and opinions. This is not to say that we always agreed, but we did come to value the sharing of our ideas and contributing to group engagements

as opportunities to contribute to others' perspectives while we questioned and revalued our understandings of literature and power.

### **The importance of supporting an aesthetic stance.**

When preservice teachers freed themselves of more traditional educational modes of reading with a primarily efferent stance and responded to literature with peers to create their text sets, they not only learned factual knowledge about the themes they investigated, but they often rekindled the pleasure they once had as young children when they shared literature with family. Discussing their personal evocations and understandings from literature with others offered opportunities for them to experience happenings as if they were living in that moment with the story. Discussing those personal understandings derived from reading with a primarily aesthetic stance provided a space for questioning and thinking critically as they explored their differing interpretations. Preservice teachers discovered that reading with a focus on experiencing and living through story gave them understandings that were more meaningful to them, more empathetic, and more permanent in their memories.

### **The importance of using terminology in context.**

Using terminology in context and revisiting those terms is key to preservice teachers' ability to understand and use that language in their own thinking and talk. Terms that were introduced and frequently used in conversation during the course appeared appropriately in preservice teacher discourse. However, confusion with some definitions of terms, specifically the words critical thinking and aesthetic reading was evident. I believe that if I had integrated these terms in naturally appropriate classroom occurrences and responses to preservice teachers more frequently they would have gained a more complex understanding of the terms which will in return, make those terms more usable in their thinking and talk with each other. This more

applicable use of terminology will provide more opportunities for preservice teachers to use the terms in class and gain the competence needed to apply and use the terms in their teaching careers.

My research supports Carpenter (1997), Matthis (1994), Schall (2004), and Trimble (2016); and their dissertation findings as well as research from Rosenblatt (1995) and Short (1990, 1993, 2011) that establishing a safe classroom that encourages learners to be heard encourages deeper and richer understanding of literature to occur. This environment provides opportunities for risk taking in sharing of ideas and understanding as well as experimenting with new methods of learning without fear of being ostracized. This information is not new, but it is interesting to find that Dewey's (1938) beliefs about learning environments are still relevant today. It was this environment that offered opportunities to learn in transactional ways. Rosenblatt (1995) argues that transactional learning with reader response engagements encourages literature to exist in unique personal experiences. It was this belief that I used to put theory into practice.

Providing transactional experiences to preservice teachers offered opportunities for them to be active learners who explored and questioned their learning. The preservice teachers in this study grew to understand that literature offers multiple ways of knowing which allows for a variety of interpretations that evolve as readers evolve. They left the course with new understandings of literature and its roles in our lives and in our classrooms.

### **Implications for Further Research**

My research was short term and examined one semester of learning for preservice teachers. Further longitudinal research using a transactional lens for analysis evaluating understandings of children's literature and its roles in classrooms by following preservice

teachers through not only their student teaching, but also their individual journeys into their classrooms would fill a gap in research. It would reveal if preservice teachers' understandings and beliefs from TLS 480 carry over and are applied in their classrooms after graduation and delve into which beliefs transfer into their instruction and why or why not their practices align with transactional theory.

### **Implications for Teacher Education Programs**

Two thirds of the students in the course were still in their sophomore year and had only experienced working with children in learning environments for their required two read alouds. At the time of this course, they had yet to experience field work in an educational setting. Four of the 23 preservice teachers were unable to visit classrooms and performed their read alouds to young relatives or, in one case, children located within an apartment community. So, while TLS 480 was infused with new understandings and strategies to engage with literature 16 of the preservice teachers were somewhat distanced from school environments and lacked authentic experiences and opportunities for them to practice these understandings and strategies with children. Classroom observations through practicum requirements did not start at the university until the junior year. While these preservice teachers were provided opportunities to transact with literature in our TLS 480 classroom, they were not afforded the opportunity to see these literary experiences employed in actual classrooms. Bainbridge (2011) supports the idea that practice while learning allows for new knowledge to be incorporated into past experiences stating, "...it is widely acknowledged that the relationship between internal and external objects is initially best explored experientially, given it involves feelings and emotions, before becoming cognitively and consciously known and understood" (p. 27).

Preservice teachers in this study personally connected with literature and regained pleasure and new understandings of text and its potentials for curriculum, but many still lacked the actual encounter of observing and participating with children in literary transactions. Without those experiences I wonder if those preservice teachers will continue to hold their new beliefs when they began to work with children in actual school sites through practicum placements, method courses, and student teaching experiences. This phenomenon should be further explored with a research study where the majority of preservice teachers in TLS 480 are in field experiences to see if there are differences in findings.

### **My Personal Thoughts**

With occasions to experience literature as opportunities to gain new understandings incorporating both aesthetic and efferent interpretations, preservice teachers grew to see new values in and with literature. It is important that literature instruction for preservice teachers incorporate transactive ways for preservice teachers to understand the roles of literature in our classrooms and in our lives if they are going to incorporate those ways of knowing into the future teaching careers. When learning about children's literature with transactive engagements, preservice teachers understood many values literature affords readers in understanding our world. They realized that learning with literature is not strictly for skills as most had been taught in school. They came to understand that literature is not a pleasure or knowledge activity, but rather an on-going flow between the efferent and aesthetic which creates reading as a unique experience for each reader. They came to value the reading process rather than the reading product. The end of the semester concluded with preservice teachers' desires to teach readers to read transactively, and experience the reading process through a variety of engagements to encourage critical thinking and thinking critically.

If education is going to prepare students to live in a multicultural world, our preservice teachers must expose those learners to understanding culture and different ways of knowing. Literature and transactive learning with literature provide a means to accept and appreciate different ways of knowing and encourages learners to think critically about those ways. Most of today's preservice teachers have experienced learning with a skills-based curriculum and will enter the teaching profession in an era of skills-based instruction. Without exposure to alternative ways of knowing, learning, and understanding, future teachers will most likely enter the teaching profession believing it is their job to use direct instruction to meet curricular testing demands. Without a disrupt in their focus on the product to an awareness of ways of knowing and learning, preservice teachers will be prepared to continue teaching in the manner in which they learned.

The preservice teachers in this study challenged their concepts of what it means to use literature in the classroom. They focused on the process of learning rather than the product and changed their perceptions of the roles of literature in the classroom. Their understandings of critical thinking grew to encompass sociocultural awareness. If universities are going to prepare preservice teachers to be ready to enter the teaching profession, they must offer preservice teachers alternative ways of learning and knowing to ensure future educators are prepared to teach in ways that fit in with current demands, and also teach learners to understand how to learn in a diverse world. Teaching preservice teachers about ways to use literature and how to transact with literature in curriculum is one way that universities can do just that.

## Appendices

### Appendix A, Benchmark Portfolio

#### **\*Children's Literature Resource Portfolio (Benchmark Assignment)**

**ALL** of the learning exercises will go into a notebook or expanding file folders (whatever format will be useful for you). Include all the handouts and the syllabus. Take photos of your group work to include as artifacts.

- The purpose of the portfolio is to gather and organize the projects and resources from this class according to the course objectives.
- The portfolio should include a reflection for each section indicating how the artifacts demonstrate how you have met the course objectives related to that section.
- You will use your portfolio as the basis for your final examination (in-class exam) and it will act as a final evaluation of whether or not you have met the course objectives.
- Include a Table of Contents for each section.
- The sections of your portfolio will include:

#### **Responding as a Reader**

- Projects and handouts in which you reflect on yourself as a reader and in-depth personal responses to the books you have read in this class.
- Possible artifacts include your reflective journals with your personal responses to literature, Book Clubs, etc.
- Course objective: You will gain a better understanding of yourself as a reader and of how to engage in personal and critical response to literature.

#### **Knowledge of Children's Literature**

- Projects and handouts that reflect your knowledge of children's books and ability to evaluate the literary quality and appropriateness of these books. Includes the range of books which you read as part of the class and your ability to organize text sets of conceptually related books.
- Possible artifacts include your reading records and inventories of your records, chapter AHAs, genres project, text sets, etc.
- Course objectives: You will develop a broad knowledge of the various genres and types of books for children, including the major authors and illustrators of these books. You will be able to evaluate the literary quality and appropriateness of specific children's books. You will be familiar with the literary and artistic elements and how they interact to create an effective book for children.

#### **Reference Sources and Resources**

- Projects and handouts that reflect your knowledge and use of reference sources on children's literature and how to locate information on authors, illustrators, and poets as well as books on particular themes or topics.
- Possible artifacts include library exercises, library guides, author/illustrator/poet projects and handouts, professional articles that focus on children's literature as a field, poetry handouts. .
- Course objective: You will be familiar with the reference sources for information on children's literature.

#### **Literature Engagements with Children**

- Projects and handouts that reflect ways in which literature can be used with children.

- Possible artifacts include read-aloud reflections, literature response strategies, professional articles or handouts on the use of books with children, professional conference reflections.
- Course objectives: You will examine the role of literature in the lives of children. You will explore ways to engage children with literature for both personal and academic purposes.

### **Social and Cultural Issues in Children's Literature**

- Projects and handouts that focus on specific cultural and social issues in children's literature such as censorship, stereotypes, and controversial books.
- Possible artifacts include reflective journal entries and professional articles, projects or papers on these issues.
- Course objective: You will develop an awareness of social, multicultural and international issues as they connect to literature for children.

## Appendix B.1, Course Syllabus

TLS 480-2  
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE CLASSROOM  
Spring 2016, T/Th 9:00-10:30  
Education Room 455

Instructor: Tammye Gregoire

Email: tgregoire@email.arizona.edu

Office: 439b

Phone: 520-307-6997

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday before class, 8:00 am - 9:00 am or by appointment

### Reading Materials

Required readings:

- 80 or more children's books (at least 15 of which are chapter books)
- *Locomotion*, by Jacqueline Woodson
- *Keeping Corner* by Kashmiri Shef
- Articles and books TBA with sufficient notice

### Required Text:

- Short, K. Lynch-Brown, C., Tomlinson, C (2013). *Essentials of Children's Literature*, 8th ed.

### Sources for children's books:

- Tucson public libraries (Pima County Public Library system) or school libraries
- University of AZ Children's Literature Collection (Main library, 3rd floor)
- WOW Library (located on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the U of A Education building)
- Poetry Center
- University bookstore
- Local books stores (eg. Kid's Center, Bookman's, B&N...)
- Scholastic Book Club orders (an economical way to begin building your personal library)
- Internet booksellers such as amazon.com, hpb.com, barnes&noble.com (their used book sites are an economical way to acquire books)
- For books not published in the US try amazon and scholastic sites from other countries

**Course Description:** This course is a survey of children's literature during which we will explore through reading and discussion a wide range of genres and issues related to children's books.

### Course Objectives

During this course you will:

- gain a better understanding of yourself as a reader and of how to engage in personal and critical response to literature
- develop a broad knowledge of the various genres and types of books for children, including the major authors and illustrators of these books.

- be able to evaluate the literary quality and appropriateness of specific children’s books.
- be familiar with the literary and artistic elements and how they interact to create an effective book for children.
- be familiar with the reference sources for information on children’s literature
- examine the role of literature in the lives of children.
- explore ways to engage children with literature for both personal and academic purposes.
- develop an awareness of social, multicultural and international issues as they connect to literature for children.

**Beliefs about learning:**

Our class experiences are based on the following beliefs about learning (adapted from Dr. Kathy Short):

- Learning is an active process. We will immerse ourselves into reading and responding in various ways to many children’s books.
- Learning is a social process of collaborating with others. We will explore our thinking about our reading through inquiry and dialogue in small groups. There will be many opportunities for informal interaction and sharing about literature in small group and whole class experiences.
- Learning occurs when we make connections to our own experiences. We will respond to literature through making personal connections to our reading and then exploring and critically examining those responses in literature circles with other readers. Our focus will not be on a specific literary interpretation. We will make decisions about the books we read and the resources we develop based on our needs and experiences as individuals and as teachers and librarians.
- Choice allows learners to connect to their experiences and feel ownership in the curriculum. We will have choices in what we read, how we respond, and the specific focus of projects and small group activities.
- Learning is reflective as well as active. We will have many opportunities to reflect on what we are learning through writing, talking, and self-evaluations.
- We live in a culturally diverse world. We will explore literature from a multicultural and international orientation to expand our understanding of the cultural pluralism in children’s lives and their world.
- Learning is a process of inquiry. We will search out the questions that matter in our lives and develop strategies for exploring those questions and sharing our understandings with others.

**Language Reading & Culture Statement of Principles on Multicultural Education:**

The members of the TLSS community are committed to providing equal opportunity and nurturing an academic climate dedicated to social justice. Injustice takes many forms. Oppressive acts are sometimes overt, but most are subtle, and are difficult to document. These hidden forms of discrimination are identified in the literature as microaggressions, often resulting from unexamined attitudes and beliefs. Macroaggressions are expressions of both the overt and systemic forms of injustice.

Our commitment to social justice reflects an orientation to our goals and practices in education and ultimately, an orientation to life that values a diversity and inclusion of viewpoints and experiences of all people as valuable contributors to the experience of schooling and society. This

stance recognizes that individuals bring a variety of linguistic, social, and cognitive strengths from their families and communities into the classroom; we view these strengths as assets.

- We value and honor human diversity.
- We recognize that all relationships include dynamics of power. We are committed to relating to each other with conscious awareness and sensitivity to these power dynamics.
- We pledge to contribute to expanding the linguistic and cognitive strengths that learners possess and bring with them to the classroom.
- We understand that systemic policies, traditions, and laws along with personal beliefs, experiences and attitudes affect personal relationships and equitable treatment and opportunity for all.
- We strive to provide a context where we all have the venue, the opportunity, and the confidence to express our experiences and that these experiences will be heard constructively, critically, and with sensitivity.
- Hence, we are not color blind. We will not erase who someone is in the name of equality, nor deny the historical, material and emotional impacts of racialized and gendered identities, and colonial legacies.

We stand alongside and speak out with our colleagues, staff, students, and community members when any of us or others experience micro- or macroaggressions. We recognize that those of us who enjoy privileged status due to our racialized, gendered, heteronormative, or otherwise privileged aspects of our identities may be unaware of the ways this privileged status marginalizes others. We pledge to listen to our colleagues, students, staff, and community members when any of us or others make efforts to remain diligent in maintaining awareness of micro, macro aggressions, and raise our awareness around issues of invisibility, marginalization, normativity, power, and privilege.

We view these goals as both crucial and ambitious. The entrenched nature of oppression requires both institutional restructuring and new social discourses. Therefore, our stance on disrupting existing and persisting inequities requires attention to micro and macro level interactions. Every interaction is an opportunity for disrupting processes of marginalization, whether overt or subtle, both through person-to-person exchange and through resisting oppressive structures and systems. We commit to holding one other and ourselves accountable, through our research and practice, to rejecting entrenched inequalities, and to cultivating new discourses as groundwork for imagining new social worlds.

### **Standards Addressed**

Students in the Elementary Education Program are assessed on the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards, the International Society for Technology in Education National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers (ISTE NETS-Teacher), and the University of Arizona Teacher Preparation Programs Professional Standards. The Standards work in concert. By addressing them, graduates of the Elementary Education Program demonstrate that they are professionals and are prepared to participate in the very important process of educating young children.

Arizona Professional Teaching Standards: InTASC Standards

•**Standard #1: Learner Development.** The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

•**Standard #2: Learning Differences.** The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.

•**Standard #3: Learning Environments.** The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

•**Standard #4: Content Knowledge.** The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.

•**Standard #5: Application of Content.** The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.

#### **NETS-T**

•**#3: Model Digital Age Work and Learning.** Teachers exhibit knowledge, skills and work processes representative of an innovative professional in a global and digital society.

•**#4: Promote and Model Digital Citizenship and Responsibility.** Teachers understand local and global societal issues and responsibilities in an evolving digital culture and exhibit legal and ethical behavior in their professional practices.

#### **University of Arizona Professional Standards**

Teacher candidates at the University of Arizona demonstrate a commitment to their academic program and to education by:

- attending, being on time, and being prepared for scheduled classes and field experiences;
- having a professional appearance;
- communicating professionally and respectfully orally and in writing with peers, colleagues, instructors, K-12 students, teachers, administrators, families, and community members;
- looking beyond self and respecting differences of race, ethnicity, language, social class, national allegiance, cultural heritage, disability or perceived disability, gender, and sexual orientation;
- accepting and acting upon reasonable criticism;
- understanding and respecting others' perspectives;
- questioning and testing their assumptions about teaching and learning;
- separating personal and professional issues;
- exhibiting their knowledge through inquiry, critical analysis, and synthesis of the subject;
- maintaining or exceeding the minimum grade point average of 2.5 G.P.A.

## **University Policies**

- Behavior in an Instructional Setting: It is assumed that students will not demonstrate disruptive behavior. See <http://policy.arizona.edu/disruptive-behavior-instructional> for more information. This includes:
- Possession of drugs, alcohol or firearms on university property is illegal.
- Smoking and soliciting are not allowed in classrooms. Eating and drinking only allowed with prior approval of the instructors.
- Pets, telephones, pagers and other electronic devices that distract students are not allowed in classrooms.
- Students creating disturbances that interfere with the conduct of the class or the learning of other students will be asked to leave and campus police may be contacted.
- The classroom should be a safe place; therefore, we expect students to respect the teaching/learning environment and each other. We do not tolerate any form of harassment.
- All cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices should be turned off in the University and school classrooms. If you have an emergency situation, you may set your phone on vibrate and step out of class to receive a call. This exception must be explained to the instructors prior to the class.

## **Student Code of Academic Integrity:** See

<http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/codeofacademicintegrity> for more information.

**Threatening Behavior by Students:** See <http://policy.web.arizona.edu/threatening-behavior-students> for more information.

## **Special Needs and Accommodations**

It is the University's goal that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options.

Students who need special accommodation or services should contact the Disability Resources Center, 1224 East Lowell Street, Tucson or 621-3268 or email: [uadrc@email.arizona.edu](mailto:uadrc@email.arizona.edu) or <http://drc.arizona.edu/>. You must register and request that the Center or DRC send me official notification of your accommodations needs as soon as possible.

Please plan to meet with me to discuss accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate. The need for accommodations must be documented by the appropriate office.

## **Miscellaneous**

- Personal computers may be used for class note taking and activities, but should not be used for personal reasons during class.
- Please limit trips to the bathroom during class.
- NOTE: Drinks are permitted as long as they are in a covered container.

## Student Code of Conduct and Plagiarism

Please read and abide by the following policies on plagiarism and threatening behavior:

- University of Arizona policy on plagiarism  
<http://dos.web.arizona.edu/uapolicies/UACA/policies.pdf>
- University of Arizona policy on threatening behavior  
<http://policy.web.arizona.edu/~policy/threaten.html>

## Weekly Assignments

**1. Read one chapter from the text each week** (you may have a short article to read and reflect upon during some weeks), be prepared for class discussion and activities related to the reading by bringing two AHAs prior to each Tuesday class.

**2. Read at least 5 picture books each week, for a total of 65 minimum.** This number includes a variety of genres and will be recorded on the LibraryThing site. It may include books we read together in class as well as books set up during book browses. Please include poetry books, as well.

**3. Read at least one YA or Middle Grade novel or informational book per week, totaling 15 minimum.** One must be listened to in audio book format and one must be a graphic novel. You will need to read some novels on your own time (outside of the novels listed on the syllabus) to reach your minimum goal of 15 novels.

## Learning projects OR “Getting the gray matter going”:

### Reading Records

- Extensive and intensive reading of children’s books is the primary focus of this course. Record your reading on LibraryThing.com on your library page. Your records will vary from brief annotations or categorizations to more extensive annotations and analysis of your reading. The major function of the record is for you to write down information you want for the future.
- The information you provide about books should include:
  - bibliographic information (author, title, illustrator, publisher, date, number of pages)
  - type of book format and literary genre
  - short summary of the main plot
  - tags or subject headings that describe the content and the themes of the book
  - your response to the book (comments on connections, strengths, or concerns).  
Note: it is NOT appropriate to copy comments and summaries from sites like amazon, goodreads, etc.
- The reading for this course should be done weekly. There may be some weeks when you read fewer books than others but this is not a project that you put off until it is due. This course is based on continuous reading of children’s literature and you will greatly decrease your learning and participation in this class if you are not reading regularly throughout the course.
- Include poetry books in your reading record since poetry is so often overlooked in classrooms and libraries.

- You are expected to read a minimum of 80 books in a combination of picture books (minimum of 65) and chapter books (minimum of 15), reflecting a range of genres and age levels.
- Your Reading Records on LibraryThing will be checked monthly during the semester.
- The purpose of the course is to introduce you to new literature so try to **read books that are new to you, not old favorites.**
- If you are reading a series count only one of the books as part of your 80 books. Additional books in the series can count as ‘above and beyond’ the 80 required.
- Focus on books for children and young teens.
- You may include books read during class time as part of your LibraryThing

### Reflection Papers

The focus is on personal responses to books and learning activities. This is a chance for you to dig deep and reflect on what you read or experienced. **Aim for at least one typed page (500-600 words), single spaced with one inch margins, 12-point standard font. Please spell check and re-read your journal entries before turning them in.** Note: it is fine to use double-spacing if you really prefer that style.

Reflections include:

- your personal learning goals (revised mid-semester)
- responses to books and articles to be discussed in literature circles (so you are ready to contribute to the discussion – classmates do not appreciate students who are not prepared!)
- Mem Fox understanding and personal importance
- article and/or video responses
- self evaluations
- read aloud evaluations

### Read-Aloud

- Listen to or read Mem Fox on reading aloud to children. [www.memfox.com](http://www.memfox.com): How to Read Aloud (Introduction, And Do It Like This, Ten Read-Aloud Commandments). Write a reflection about the primary things you learned from listening to Mem Fox. Then choose two of Mem Fox’s Read Alouds to watch for evidence of her ten Commandments.
- Each student will read aloud twice to a group of children (group = at least 3 kids), once at the beginning of the semester and then again towards the end of the course. *The reading can be a single picture book or a chapter from a novel. The audience can be any group from toddlers to teens.* Practice so you can read it WELL. Write a reflection about the Read-Aloud experiences, paying attention to verbal and non-verbal feedback from your audience.

### Library Exercises

Complete the library orientation provided by the university. Visit the library and complete the exercises as assigned during the semester. The links to the exercises can be accessed through D2L or by going to the following page: <http://lro.library.arizona.edu/course-guide/191-LRC-480>.

- 1.) Amazing Race
- 2.) Literature Resource Center
- 3.) CLCD
- 4.) SATA & Literature Resource Center

## 5.) A to Zoo

### **Literacy Bag**

Select between 5-6 books that are/were relevant to you and who you are as a reader. These books need to range from important books from earliest memories to today. Put these books in a bag and bring your literacy bag to class with you. Write a reflection on how these books impacted you.

### **Book Browse**

Each Tuesday when a genre is covered in class a selection of books in that genre will be available for a browse. This will assist in becoming acquainted with new texts in a variety of genres. Books browsed at this time may be used for Thursday's Book Club as well as your Reading Records.

### **Book Club**

When a genre is covered in class, each student will share a favorite book of that genre with their 'book club' on Thursday, convincing their club members to read the book. To prepare for the 'share', bring a paper with the title, a small picture of the cover, a short summary, and 4 bullet points on why you like the book. As your group shares, add your book club partner's books to your sheet. On the back of your paper, record several books from the book browse that you want to go back and read. On specified weeks, students will share a required reading or choice novel in the genre being studied that week. During those weeks, students will write a reflection (500-600) words about their novel.

### **Genre Presentation**

Small groups will introduce key elements of genres covered in class. This short presentation will include a completed formatted sheet and power point or other form of oral presentation.

### **Author/Illustrator profiles**

Create a PPT or flash card presentation on an author or on an illustrator. Include basic biographical information, major works, and why he/she is important in the field. Also include why you picked this person. Discover why this author or illustrator writes or illustrates what he/she does. Present this to the class and upload your document to D2L. Make a copy for your small group presentation by printing 6 slides/cards on a page.

### **Text Set**

Create a text set of books that are related by a common theme. Record the bibliographic information, summary and your rationale for why this book is worthy of being in the text set. You will do this exercise as a small group.

### **Choice Inquiry Project**

Create a project of special interest to you that you will share with the class during the last two class sessions. You will submit your topic at midterm and receive feedback several weeks before the project is due.

### **\*Children's Literature Resource Portfolio (Benchmark Assignment)**

**ALL** of the learning exercises will go into a notebook or expanding file folders (whatever format will be useful for you). Include all the handouts and the syllabus. Take photos of your group work to include as artifacts.

- The purpose of the portfolio is to gather and organize the projects and resources from this class according to the course objectives.
- The portfolio should include a reflection for each section indicating how the artifacts demonstrate how you have met the course objectives related to that section.
- You will use your portfolio as the basis for your final examination (in-class exam) and it will act as a final evaluation of whether or not you have met the course objectives.
- Include a Table of Contents for each section.
- The sections of your portfolio will include:

#### **Responding as a Reader**

- Projects and handouts in which you reflect on yourself as a reader and in-depth personal responses to the books you have read in this class.
- Possible artifacts include your reflective journals with your personal responses to literature, Book Clubs, etc.
- Course objective: You will gain a better understanding of yourself as a reader and of how to engage in personal and critical response to literature.

#### **Knowledge of Children's Literature**

- Projects and handouts that reflect your knowledge of children's books and ability to evaluate the literary quality and appropriateness of these books. Includes the range of books which you read as part of the class and your ability to organize text sets of conceptually related books.
- Possible artifacts include your reading records and inventories of your records, chapter AHAs, genres project, text sets, etc.
- Course objectives: You will develop a broad knowledge of the various genres and types of books for children, including the major authors and illustrators of these books. You will be able to evaluate the literary quality and appropriateness of specific children's books. You will be familiar with the literary and artistic elements and how they interact to create an effective book for children.

#### **Reference Sources and Resources**

- Projects and handouts that reflect your knowledge and use of reference sources on children's literature and how to locate information on authors, illustrators, and poets as well as books on particular themes or topics.
- Possible artifacts include library exercises, library guides, author/illustrator/poet projects and handouts, professional articles that focus on children's literature as a field, poetry handouts. .
- Course objective: You will be familiar with the reference sources for information on children's literature.

#### **Literature Engagements with Children**

- Projects and handouts that reflect ways in which literature can be used with children.
- Possible artifacts include read-aloud reflections, literature response strategies, professional articles or handouts on the use of books with children, professional conference reflections.

- Course objectives: You will examine the role of literature in the lives of children. You will explore ways to engage children with literature for both personal and academic purposes.

### **Social and Cultural Issues in Children's Literature**

- Projects and handouts that focus on specific cultural and social issues in children's literature such as censorship, stereotypes, and controversial books.
- Possible artifacts include reflective journal entries and professional articles, projects or papers on these issues.
- Course objective: You will develop an awareness of social, multicultural and international issues as they connect to literature for children.

### **Attendance Policy**

In teacher preparation courses at the College of Education, we focus on your learning. To lay a strong foundation for your development as a professional in four semesters is a challenge. Time in academic courses and time in classrooms is at a premium, and we strive to engage you fully in both. Our courses integrate knowledge and practice and are performance-based. We model practices for you to learn and ask you to demonstrate your understanding of the content.

Because courses are preparation for your career as teachers, being dependable, responsible, and punctual are behaviors that you must exhibit. The children whom we teach as well as their families and the community expect this of us when we are in schools, and so the faculty in the College of Education expect this of you during the semesters you are in the program. Being dependable, responsible and punctual are signs of the professional behavior we expect you to demonstrate while at the College of Education and throughout your professional career. We have high expectations of you, possibly higher than you have experienced before the program.

In accordance with the University of Arizona Academic Policy for class attendance, the following guidelines are in place:

- Plan to be in class and in your classroom every day scheduled.
- Any personal events you have, such as doctor's appointments, vacations, family events, or hours at work, should be planned after your course meeting times. Personal events should not conflict with class sessions.
- All holidays or special events observed by organized religions will be honored for those students who show affiliation with that particular religion.
- These absences, as well as other excused absences, require that you contact your instructor ahead of the class session to provide an explanation of why the absence merits exception.
- Absences pre-approved by the UA Dean of Students (or Dean's designee) will be honored (for example, absences required of athletes).
- Arriving to class on time and being prepared are professional behaviors. We will start class promptly each day. If you arrive more than 5 minutes late, or leave more than 5 minutes early, this will be noted.
- Three or more late arrivals or early departures **will** constitute an unexcused

absence.

- We know that unexpected events occur. You are allowed **two** excused absences from class for illness or personal emergency. The reason for the excused absence must be justifiable and for the most part unplanned and unavoidable, for example a car accident or an unexpected illness that results in an emergency room visit.
1. In order for the absence to be excused, you must:
    - notify your instructor as soon as possible.
    - make arrangements for another student to gather handouts and take notes for you if you are missing coursework. You are responsible for catching up on any missed material.
    - complete a make-up assignment.
  2. Multiple absences may indicate issues that need to be addressed because they may reflect a lack of professionalism. More than two excused or any unexcused absences will result in a conference with the instructor(s).
  3. Multiple excused or unexcused absences **will** result in lowering your grade by one full letter. For example, if you were receiving an A in the course, the highest grade you could receive is a B. Each additional absence after that will result in lowering your grade an additional level. For example if you were receiving a B in the course and were absent another times, the highest grade that you could receive would be a C.
  4. Multiple excused or unexcused absences may result in a failing grade for the course, unless a valid and justifiable reason has been provided, or as per University policy, “excessive or extended absences from class are sufficient reasons for the instructor to recommend that the student be administratively dropped from the course.”

### **Grading Policies**

- Self-evaluation is an integral part of this course. You will be asked to submit an initial statement of goals for this semester. For selected projects, you will be asked to turn in a self-evaluation in which you state your goals for that particular project and evaluate the process you went through in reaching those goals. You will receive evaluative comments for each of your projects based on your goals and the project intent. You may resubmit projects that are not satisfactory in meeting the goals and intent. At mid-semester, you will revise your goals for the course and evaluate your learning at that point in the semester and will receive evaluative comments from me. At the end of the class, you will write an overall self-evaluation of your learning throughout the class.
- Your final grade will be based holistically on both my evaluation and your self-evaluation of your growth and learning related to the course objectives, the quality of your written work, and your attendance, participation, and preparation for class sessions. While you can negotiate the ways in which you define and complete class projects, you must complete all of these projects to fulfill course requirements and your final grade for the course will be based on the thoughtfulness and quality of this work with a B reflecting the completion of all course projects at a satisfactory level. You must exceed those requirements in some way to receive an A, but can choose which projects to emphasize. Your mid-term evaluation will include a discussion of the grade for your work completed as of that date so that you can establish goals for maintaining or improving your final grade for the course. The instructor will not give Incompletes for the course except in extreme situations and only with prior approval.

- Late assignments will affect your final grade.

A - Complete all assignments for the course at a satisfactory level (**v**) and meet attendance and class participation requirements. In addition, complete one or more Personal Choice Inquiries for a final project (negotiated with instructor).

B - Complete all assignments for the course at a satisfactory level (**v**) and meet attendance and class participation requirements.

C – Issues with several missing or incomplete assignments or attendance, tardiness, leaving class early, or participation in class sessions

D – Unsatisfactory (**v-**) in multiple areas related to assignments, attendance and participation.

E – Failure to complete multiple assignments at a satisfactory level and/or multiple absences from class.

**Tentative Semester Plan** (This schedule can and most likely will be modified by the instructor at some point during the semester with adequate notice)

**Weekly Assignments:**

Date	Day's Theme	Reading Due for Class	Reflection Due	Other Things Due
TH 1-14	Intro to Children's Literature: Syllabus Review/ Class Overview & Introductions			-Buy textbook & class books -Buy a Three Ring Binder and five dividers with tabs -Post to D2L Dropox that you have read syllabus -Sign Up for LibraryThing & post login to D2L
T 1-19	LibraryThing and the WOW Library *Bring laptop What is an AHA?		-How do you see children's literature being a part of your life and life goals? What are your goals for this class? What do you want to learn in this class? Post to D2L	
TH 1-21	The Importance of Story	- <u>Essentials: ch1</u> -Two AHAs. Bring a hard copy of your AHAs.		Complete Library exercise Explore the Children's Literature Collection

				UA Main Library – bring Cat Card
Date	Day's Theme	Reading Due for Class	Reflection Due	Other Things Due
T 1-26	Starting to Look Closely at Books Connecting with Kids and Literature	<u>Essentials</u> : ch2 2 AHAs -Read 5 picture books & novel/Record (6 books)		Literacy bag
TH 1-28	Responding to Literature	Choice Novel Book Club	Literacy Bag Reflection	
T 2-2	Connecting with Kids and Literature	<u>Essentials</u> : ch3 2 AHAs -Read 5 picture books & novel/Record (12 books)	Book Club Novel (500-600 words. This is not a summary).	Visit Mem Fox's Read Aloud site. Read her thoughts on Read Alouds. Go to You Tube and select two Mem Fox story Read Alouds to listen to.
TH 2-4	Elements of Literature		Write a reflection on this Mem Fox Activity. Post to D2L Dropbox.	
T 2-9	Picture books	<u>Essentials</u> : ch4 2 AHAs -Read 5+ picture books & novel -Read (18 books)		
TH 2-11	Invitation/Molly Bang			Book Club
Date	Day's Theme	Reading Due for Class	Reflection Due	Other Things Due
T 2-16	Poetry	-2 AHAs from ch 5 -Read 5 picture books & Locomotion (with Post It Notes on AHA moments)/Record		

		(24 books)		
TH 2-18	Traditional Literature	<u>Essentials</u> : ch6 2 AHAs -Read picture books & novel/Record (30 books)	Reflect on Locomotion	Book Club
T 2-23	Poetry Center Fieldtrip 1508 E Helen St, Tucson, AZ 85719			-Work on Portfolios and bring portfolio to class
TH 2-25	Text Set Work Time – Annotated Bibliography		Reflect on your relationship with poetry. Do you like it? Do you read it without being asked? Do you have a favorite poet/poem? Were nursery rhymes/poetry a part of your childhood? Is poetry important for the classroom?	Book Club <b>Read Jack Daw</b> <u>Article Exercise - Research West: Best Books for Children and A to Zoo</u>
T 3-1	Fantasy	<u>Essentials</u> : ch 7 2 AHAs -Read 5+ picture books/Record -Read a <b>CHOICE Novel</b> . (36 books).		Bring six books related to your text set theme to class with you today
TH 3-3	Invitation Day Realistic Fiction			Book Club Annotated Bibliography Posted to d2l
T 3-8	Realistic Fiction & Text Set Displays	<u>Essentials</u> : ch 8 2 – AHAs 5 picture books and Keeping Corner(42 books) -Selected article	Keeping Corner	Book Club
TH 3-10	Mini-conference: 4:15-7:30		<b>MIDTERM REFLECTION</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Read Aloud and

			<b>DUE</b>	reflection completed and submitted to D2L
T 3-15 & TH 3-17	No Class Spring Break			
T 3-22	Historical Fiction	<u>Essentials</u> : ch <b>9</b> – <b>2 AHAs</b> Read 5+ picture books & Breaking Stalin’s Nose/ Record (48 books)	Reflect on Conference and Text Set presentation	
TH 3-24	Biographies		Review Jack Daws w/informational texts	Book Club
T 3-29	Informational Text	<u>Essentials</u> : ch <b>10</b> 2 AHAs -Read 5+ picture books & <i>Stalin</i> /Record (54 books)	Reflect on the relationship between paired texts	
TH 3-31		(60 books)		Book Club Benchmark Portfolio check - bring portfolio to class.
T 4-5	Multicultural and International Literature	<u>Essentials</u> : ch <b>11</b> 2 AHAs -Read 5+picture books/Record -Read your Choice <u>Novel</u> . (66 books)		
TH 4-7	Multicultural and International Literature contin...		Reflect on your Choice Novel	Library exercise: Complete Something About the Author, SATA, & Exercise-Literature Resource Center
T 4-12	Literature in the Curriculum	- <u>Essentials</u> : ch <b>12</b> 2 AHAs		

		-Read 5+ picture books/Record -Read your Choice <u>Novel</u> . (73 books)		
TH 4-14	Author Presentations			
T 4-19	Reluctant Readers/Engaging Children with Literature	<u>Essentials</u> : ch. 13 2 AHAs -Read 5+ picture books/Record -Read your <u>Novel</u> . (79 books)		
TH 4-21	<b>No Class</b>	Read Christiansen article	Reflect on Christiansen Article	Work on Portfolios and Inquiry Projects
T 4-26	<b>To be determined By class</b>			
TH 4-28	<b>Choice Inquiry Project Presentations</b>	-Read any remaining picture books ( <b>You must have at least 65</b> ) -Read any remaining <u>Novels</u> ( <b>You must have AT LEAST 15 total</b> )	How have your views on engaging children with literature evolved throughout the semester? How will you motivate reluctant readers?	<b>Benchmark Portfolio (Binder)Due</b>
T 5-3	<b>Choice Inquiry Presentations</b>			
Tuesday 5-10	<b>FINAL EXAM: 8:00 – 10:00</b>		<b>*Attendance is <u>required</u> to receive a "complete," grade for the course.</b>	<b>Come to Class-Bring food for the Potluck, if you like</b>

## **Appendix B.2, Midterm Reflection**

### **LRC 480 Mid-term Reflection Final due date: Tuesday, March 22, 2016**

Please reflect on your learning as you **answer the questions in bold**. The questions underneath are to help you think through your answer and make it as complete as possible. Use single spacing, standard margins and fonts, then upload your document to the D2L Dropbox when you are finished.

#### **1. Evaluate your growth in relation to your goals for the course.**

- Examine your initial goals. What were they?
- What evidence can you cite that suggests you are attaining your goals?
- What progress have you made on your initial goals?
- What have you learned that relates to these goals?
- Which ones are no longer relevant to your learning? Why?
- What are your goals for the second half of the semester?
- Add, delete and modify your goals as needed and **relay your plan for attaining them.**

#### **2. Evaluate your attendance, class preparation and participation.**

- Have you attended class regularly?
- How many absences did you have? Did you turn in assignments due and a “make-up assignment” on the days you missed?
- Did you arrive on time and stay for the duration? How many times were you late or left early?
- Have assignments been turned in on the due date?
- Were you prepared for class?
- Did you actively participate in the whole class and small group discussions and were free from cell phone use?

#### **3. Discuss the work you have completed thus far in the course. Cite evidence that supports the quality of your work. Describe how these activities have enhanced your learning of children’s literature.**

- Browsing books
- Literature discussion activities (consensus board, text rendering, book clubs, ...)
- Reading Records/LibraryThing (where are you in your goal of 80 annotated books in Librarything?)
- Chapter Reflections/ AHA’s

**4. Reflect on the aspect of social learning.**

- What have you learned from others during class discussions?
- Do you listen intently to others as they share their responses to their reading?
- How do you encourage and support others to share their thoughts?
- Do you engage in deep discussions—conversations that challenge your current thinking—within your group?

**5. What has been a significant area of thinking and learning for you during this course?**

- What connections are you making between the literature discussion books, the textbook chapters, and the large group/small group discussions in class?
- How are your thoughts about the roles of literature in your classroom evolving (The importance of, and strategies for hooking kids on quality literature)?
- How are you changing as a reader as a result of the class experiences?

**7. What are your concerns, suggestions, and positive reactions to our class so far?**

- The appropriateness of the assignments in terms of both relevance and amount?
- What can I do to facilitate your growth as a learner and as a reader?
- What feedback can you give me regarding the class organization and learning engagements?

**8. Based on the evidence you have cited above, what grade do you think you have earned this semester so far? What do you plan to do in the last half of the course that goes above and beyond the course requirements?**

- Keep in mind that meeting the requirements outlined in the syllabus qualifies as a **B**.
- Significantly surpassing the listed requirements of the syllabus through an inquiry project that has personal significance to you qualifies as an **A**.
- Not meeting the requirements outlined in the syllabus qualifies as a grade lower than a B.
- If you want to achieve an A or raise your grade one level, describe what you plan to do for your inquiry project (minimum of 10-hour time commitment), and list specific goals of that inquiry that will guide your effort to go beyond what is already expected (e.g. what will you gain from completing this inquiry project).

**9. Transformation Project for the Mini-Conference**

- What did you contribute to the text set project? Discuss your work specifically in the following areas: annotated bibliography, research, display, presentation, group discussion.
- Describe the ways your group worked together.
- What was a significant area of growth or learning for you in this process?
- What did you learn about literacy and literature through: the creation and, presentation of your text set?
- What did you learn about literature from Kashmira Sheth and Raul Colon?

### **APPENDIX B.3, FINAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FOUR CASE STUDIES**

1. What courses are you currently taking?
  - 1a. What types of literacy experiences do you see in your current classes?
2. Who is teaching your courses?
3. Where are you placed?
4. What types of literacy experiences does your placement offers you?
5. Were you able to read over the summer or currently?
6. How are you reading assigned books and pleasure books?
7. What types of literacy have you been engaged in?
8. Is there anything else that you believe I should know about regarding:
  - Teacher implementation of literature that you see
  - Current “AHA” moments regarding literature, reading, implementation of literature?
  - Frustrations with literature, reading, implementation of literature?
9. Is there anything else you believe I should know?
10. Would you be willing to discuss the course objectives from your methods courses and how TLS 480 fits in with those course and does not fit in with them, and also to check to see if I have accurately described your responses?

#### **APPENDIX B.4—INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ASTRID**

1. Do you still believe that How are you thinking that literature discussion groups, text sets, and read alouds, literature discussions and text sets will be incorporated into how you teach?
2. Can you elaborate on what you meant by “studenting their way out of class?”
3. Can you tell more about why you believe that it’s a challenge to show your children books that have different perspectives from diverse populations?
4. Have you seen any examples of that in your methods courses or student teaching placement?

## **APPENDIX B.5—INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ALLIE**

1. At Midterm you said, “It will be enlightening to learn more about the impact and effect on students that literature has.” Can you tell me some of the things that you now believe literature impacts and effects?
2. You talked a lot about seeing yourself in books. Any times where it’s not yourself that you see in a book?

## APPENDIX B.6—INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CARLY

1. You were wrote about strategies to respond to literature that you would use with students including, read alouds, discussion groups, book browses, and reflection, can you discuss why you would use those engagements in your classroom?
2. You said that literature discussion groups would help students expand their thinking. Tell me more about how you think they would expand thinking.
3. I'm thinking for you personally, you are more of a quiet learner. In the end you started to contribute more to group discussions, but 11.34 mostly small groups you participated a bit more. So, did that have anything to do with enjoying literature discussion groups more than whole class discussions?
4. Did you ever find that your perspectives changed after hearing others?
5. Those were the most rewarding things that you mentioned in the final... things that you wanted to take with you from the class and use in your class in the future, but the next question was what are the most challenging issues that you found in class? What do you find as challenging?
6. How about “controversial books” and literature? How do you think introducing a book like *Just Call Me Stupid* would be effective or ineffective?
  - Would you/could you use it? Would you try and stay away from it?
7. When you're giving or having a read aloud in your classroom, correct me if I'm wrong,... The read alouds were more for a sense of gathering together and creating a community of learners and enjoy a good story, and not avoid, but um look for stories that could make your students feel good about the world and themselves and be kids?

## APPENDIX B.7—INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR KARL

1. You were talking about read alouds and how they spark creativity and imagination. I was hoping that you could elaborate a little upon that. How do you see read alouds sparking creativity and imagination?
2. You also commented a few times on multicultural literature saying, “It was the most challenging thing to think about and consider in your professional role” and you mention that the issue of racism between white people and African Americans was difficult. You referenced *Leon’s Story* as an example. You thought maybe the language would be offensive and the violence at too young of an early age, and it might make it difficult for you to respond to their questions, or what if they started to use offensive language, you also said, “There were so many potentials where you could insult another classmate and all these other things”, but you said that using multicultural literature was a great way to show people how it could inspire children to become more brave and stand up to defend their culture. Can you explain a little bit more how multicultural literature could be used to defend their culture in ways that wouldn’t be offensive or do you want me to put that in two different questions?

## Appendix B.8, Final Reflection

### Final Self-Evaluation, Spring 2016 TLS 480, Children's Literature in the Classroom

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Think through your experiences in this course and evaluate your progress according to the following questions:

#### Evaluate your overall growth and learning in this course:

1. What were significant areas of thinking and learning for you during this course? Why were those areas the most significant?
2. Evaluate how you have met at least one of the goals you set at mid-term
3. Describe how your inquiry project was relevant to you and expanded upon your learning.
4. What grade would you consider fair for yourself in this course based on:
  - a. Your growth and learning
  - b. The quality of your work (projects, logs, readings, etc.)
  - c. Attendance, preparation, and participation in class sessions

\_\_\_\_\_

**Provide evidence** supporting that grade. (Keep in mind that meeting the requirements outlined in the syllabus qualifies as a **B**. **Surpassing the requirements of the syllabus by successfully completing a personal choice inquiry project qualifies as an A**. Not meeting the requirements in the syllabus qualifies as a grade lower than **B**. Also keep in mind the attendance policy related to more than two excused absences/unexcused absences/make up assignments/ or chronic tardiness.)

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