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## The Use of Critical Literacy Methods to Teach for Democratic Consciousness

Tavia Quaid  
*Concordia University - Wisconsin*

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The Use of Critical Literacy Methods to Teach for Democratic Consciousness


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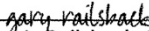
I certify that I have read this dissertation, and that, in my opinion, it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a dissertation for the degree of Doctorate of Education.

  
Jerry McGuire, PhD., Dissertation Chair

I certify that I have read this dissertation, and that, in my opinion, it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a dissertation for the degree of Doctorate of Education.

  
Robert J. Bizjak, EdD., Committee Member

I certify that I have read this dissertation, and that, in my opinion, it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a dissertation for the degree of Doctorate of Education.

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The Use of Critical Literacy Methods to Teach for Democratic Consciousness

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College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Leadership in Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Jerry McGuire, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

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## Abstract

This action research study was initiated out of my concern that secondary education was heavily focused on career preparation rather than citizenship and student participation in the democratic process. An interest in how critical literacy teaching methods could increase student democratic consciousness prompted the three-cycle critical action research design. The foundation for the study was critical theory. Critical theorists, in particular seminal writer Paulo Freire (1970), have addressed goals for education that develop student inquiry and analysis of how different types of power are portrayed by writers, thus identifying the key components of critical literacy. Social constructivist Lev Vygotsky (1934/1997) addressed literacy methods that align with critical literacy teaching strategies. Vygotsky's methods are included in the International Baccalaureate's approaches to teaching and learning: the pedagogic framework for the instruction of IB's curriculum. The study research question was *to what extent does critical literacy, as implemented with the International Baccalaureate's Approaches to Teaching and Learning, develop students' democratic consciousness and their skills for participatory democracy*. In three ninth grade pre-baccalaureate classes in the Pacific Northwest, this study used critical literacy instructional methods to address reading, speaking, writing, questioning, and creative discourse to develop students' democratic consciousness. Critical discourse analysis, new historical criticism, reflective journals, research that identified the origin and purpose of the sources, Socratic seminars, informal and formal correspondence, and self-assessment were the key instructional strategies implemented. The cycles were based on three core texts: *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Paton 1948/2003), *The Samurai's Garden* (Tsukiyama, 1994), *Enrique's Journey* (Nazario, 2013). Socratic seminars and online discussions expressed student questioning and respect for others' ideas and perspectives, while creative assessments

demonstrated student insight and proved the impact of affective learning. Formal letters to elected officials proved students' ability to present a logical argument for societal improvement. However, the results indicated that more authentic evidence of student democratic participation might have been observed if opportunities for service learning had been included among the instructional methods. The study results demonstrated that younger secondary students showed democratic consciousness in response to multi-skill critical literacy methods that promote student inquiry, reflection, and creativity.

*Keywords:* democratic consciousness, critical theory, critical literacy, instructional methods

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to Fr. Michael Norkett (1941-2018) whose compassion, humility, humor, and love guided me in my youth and supported my pursuit of a career in education. The faith that gives me strength and hope is a flame fanned by the memory of his presence in my life.

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I am also grateful and very proud of my freshmen students 2019-2020; they were my inspiration. Without their willing participation, this study would not have been possible.

Finally, I thank my family for their support and encouragement. The years of study, and the months of research, analysis and writing made me a bit of a semi-present person. Gabrielle, Anastasia, Tom: thank you; I love you.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

I chose to become a public high school teacher to contribute to a healthy democracy in the United States. As a social studies and language arts instructor I have often felt success and occasionally felt failure in supporting the development of my student's understanding of democracy and comparative governments. I have never specifically monitored how I teach democracy as a concept, nor have I intentionally studied the effectiveness of critical pedagogy as a means for developing student democratic consciousness. This study intends to do just that. The condition of democracy in the United States has an effect on the world. The U.S. economy, military engagements, diplomacy, and U.S. influence or participation in alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Organization of American States (OAS), and the United Nations (UN) affect living conditions across the globe. I am studying how democracy is learned and how a democratic consciousness is developed so that I can contribute to the knowledge base that supports the best interests of national and global citizenship.

The development of public education in the U.S. during the 20th and 21st centuries has, in part, responded to larger social issues that have paralleled the authoritarian challenges to democracy on the world stage. Since the post-World War I Paris Conference of 1919 human society has endured a second and more horrific world war, 50 years of Cold War ideological and economic damages, and 30 years of globalization and politically shifting regimes. However, while public education has been constant in the western world, it has not always been democratic. Arguably, the education system has been top-down, and it has used propaganda to emphasize an American, capitalist perspective. While democracy in the United States of America includes multiple political parties, it has consistently defaulted to recognition of only two, leaving many groups under-represented in the political system. In the public education

system, individuals and groups have suffered from racist and sexist social norms, which the education system has had to address.

### **Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem**

An examination of how public education in the U.S. has changed over time indicates that just as social consciousness prompted citizens to seek political, judicial, and electoral changes, so too the public education system was prompted to change, both willingly and unwillingly. Historical episodes affecting public education are exemplified by the fallout after the Supreme Court decision in the Brown vs. Board of Education case of 1954. President Eisenhower felt it necessary to use the national guard to integrate Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas, and President Kennedy used the national guard to support James Meredith's acceptance to the University of Mississippi (Branch, 1988). While the fight for civil rights prompted change in American society, the role the U.S. played in the Cold War led to theoretical discussions of U.S. hegemony abroad (Leebaert, 2002; Powaski, 1998; Westad, 2007). The inconsistent extent to which the U.S. has upheld democratic values in its foreign affairs suggests weaknesses in its commitment to the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights and in its willingness to prioritize democracy over economic gain (Prebisch, 1959).

Among the theorists who examined hegemony was Paulo Freire who connected oppression and power to control of education. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) applied critical theory to teaching and learning. His explanation of *conscientização* (consciousness) is seminal to the notion of critical pedagogy. While Critical Theory aims to challenge the dominant ideology's oppressive behaviors, Freire described using dialectic in classrooms to develop student voice, critical thinking, and reflection that promotes ideas for social change. Freire's notions of teaching for justice have inspired many educators; his work is

significant to the writing of bell hooks' *Teaching Community* (2003) and Cornell West's *Democracy Matters* (2004). Together, their work has been adapted to form engaged pedagogy, and contribute to critical race theory and critical literacy. These connections are relevant to teaching and learning, and they support teaching for democracy in public education today. Recently, evidence of public education as a means of supporting democracy is seen in the efforts of states and school districts to maintain equal protection to all students, regardless of a student's or parent's citizenship (Immigrant Student's Rights to Attend Public School, 2019). This proposed study will draw from critical theory, critical pedagogy, and research on critical literacy to understand how these ideas and teaching methods can develop democracy.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The condition of democracy is a global concern. Anger with the political establishment, poorly attended city government meetings, and cynicism are common signs of a break down in democracy (Brandt, 2019; Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018). This is a problem because it affects the quality of life that people experience. While citizens who are not aware of the social significance of individual agency are problematic, participation in protest actions has increased in recent years. According to the Democracy Index (2018) that is published by the Economist Intelligence Unit, the condition of democracy has weakened globally and consistently over the last few years, even though many individuals are making strides to participate in social change. Educators are concerned. Public institutions and non-governmental organizations are making efforts to address the symptoms. However, gridlocked legislatures, violations of human rights, the arrest and murder of journalists, and authoritarian regimes that are opaque rather than transparent in their decisions are chipping away at democratic principles (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2019). Regime instability and tyranny allows war and famine to continue in Yemen and



Syria. Boko Haram terrorism and the instability of governments in Africa fail to address kidnapping, murder and the spread of Ebola (Associated Press, 2019; Sutton, 2019). Lack of transparency and a limitation on human rights have cost Hong Kong protestors their lives (Alankara, 2019; Victor & Ives, 2019). Equivocation based on corporate influence on legislators has prevented gun control legislation in the United States (Gambino, 2019; Zurcher, 2019).

The complex situations across the globe have many causes. Contributing factors include long work hours, lack of understanding as to how to affect change, entrenched ineffective political systems, and media sources that reinforce the dominant ideology (Brandt, Linzer, O'Toole, Puddington, Repucci, Roylance, Schenkkan, Shahbaz, Slipowitz, & Watson, 2019). Teaching students to respond knowledgeably and purposefully is the goal of critical theory. Critical theory aims to confront the dominant ideology to bring about social change. To meet the theoretical aims, the objective of critical pedagogy is to teach students to read, understand, question, discuss and then take action against injustice for social change (Brookfield, 2006; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988; Davis, 2012, West, 2004). This study intends to contribute to the body of knowledge needed to support education as a means for improving the global condition of democracy. Through critical action research, this study will monitor and explain how critical literacy methods, used in conjunction with the IB Approaches to Teaching and Learning, affect student understanding of democracy and support the development of a democratic consciousness.

### **Purpose of the Study**

To better understand how people learn to participate in democracy and to help students develop a democratic consciousness, I proposed to study how critical pedagogy can be used to

teach a conceptual understanding of democracy and to promote democratic participation in high school students.

### **Research Questions**

The main question for this study is: *To what extent do critical literacy teaching methods, as implemented with the International Baccalaureate's Approaches to Teaching and Learning, develop students' democratic consciousness and their skills for participatory democracy.* The subquestions that I aim to answer are:

- To what extent does my teaching of language analysis techniques, such as critical discourse analysis and the application of literary theories for interpretation, demonstrably affect my students' recognition of authorial intent and the manipulation of meaning?
- To what extent does my facilitation of Socratic dialogue affect my students' ability to question and articulate an independent perspective on social issues that originate in the assigned text and that connect to students' lived experiences?
- To what extent does my teaching that develops formal written and oral communication skills affect students' ability to act for social change or improvement?
- To what extent does my instruction for reflection affect student democratic consciousness?

### **Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study**

The role of public education is foundational to society and to individual development (Dewey, 1916/2004); this central purpose is vital for sustaining a healthy democracy in the U.S. and for promoting greater global citizenship. For example, the recently published Washington State standards for Social Studies include specific criterion for civic education and democratic

consciousness. This is relevant, as this study will occur in the Pacific Northwest (Civic education new graduation requirements, 2019).

The study directly relates to teaching for democracy and to the methods used for teaching critical literacy. While this study aims to work with high school freshmen, the results may contribute to general knowledge regarding the effects of critical pedagogy and to educational knowledge regarding how a democratic consciousness develops in teenagers. The content of the literature review indicates that there is an academic concern for democratic participation and for critical literacy; however, using the two in tandem is not a common academic topic. Previous studies addressed teaching for critical literacy in terms of becoming aware of authorial perspective, and for understanding representations of different situations and types of people (Cleary & Locke, 2011; Epstein & Gist, 2015; Janks, 2013; Simmons, 2016). Analysis of text to develop a better understanding of democratic ideals and individual democratic participation is an objective of this study. Studies consulted have included a variety of high school students, most of whom were juniors or seniors. To better understand how democratic ideas are grounded and developed, my work with freshmen allows for an early teen perspective. Thus, if the study has limited results, the student participants still have time in their high school curriculum to become more familiar with democracy and the significance of individual democratic participation. Student participants will benefit from the process by becoming more aware of their own thinking about democracy. Teachers and school officials who plan curriculum may benefit from the results in terms of planning for the implementation of critical literacy strategies and, or for teaching to develop democratic awareness.

## **Definition of Terms**

### **Approaches to Teaching and Learning**

The Approaches to Teaching and Learning is an explanation of the teaching practices the IBO promotes as a means for developing specific skills and dispositions in students (Approaches to Teaching and Learning, 2019).

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

The initials CDA refer to critical discourse analysis. CDA is both a theory and a method of teaching that considers all forms of text as informative. As method, it considers how language is expressed and what that expression conveys about society, power in society, and ideology (Rogers, 2004). In this study CDA refers to the method of instruction that focuses student reading on how an author conveys meaning in a text through key diction and syntax to identify issues related to government power, individual agency, and social conditions.

### **Critical Literacy**

Critical literacy includes teaching strategies for reading texts to recognize those authorial perspectives that promote the dominant culture or forms of oppression, discrimination, or marginalization. Critical literacy strategies may focus on representations of race, gender, culture, class, or any form of social injustice presented in text, including print, visual and audio media. Students are taught to identify how writers construct meaning, and to question the representation of what appears normal or acceptable. Students are also prompted to reflect on their own reality and consider how their lived experience affects their interpretation. As a teaching goal, “critical literacy promotes textual engagement that emphasizes consuming (reading, listening, viewing), producing (writing speaking, designing), and distributing texts for real life purposes and audiences” (Borsheim-Black, Macaluso & Petrone, 2014, p.124).

## **Critical Pedagogy**

Critical pedagogy includes different teaching methods that address the goals of critical theory. Critical pedagogy seeks to educate individuals so that they become aware of their own identity in an historical time and space, that they become advocates for social justice for themselves and others in response to their understanding of their own and others situations, that they participate in civic activities, and improve their quality of life by confronting discrimination or marginalization. Critical pedagogy allows students to “exercise their agency through verbal and non-verbal self-expression in which affects as well as concepts become involved” (Villacañas de Castro, 2016).

## **Critical Theory**

Critical theory is a conception of the world that recognizes the limitations of the dominant ideology as hegemonic, oppressive, and alienating, and therefore aims to challenge the dominant sources of power to pursue liberation, justice, equality, reason, and democracy (Brookfield, 2006; Marcuse, 1978).

## **Democracy**

In this study, democracy means “more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (Dewey, 2004, p. 83). There are different forms of democracy based on processes for making and executing laws, and for choosing representatives to make and execute laws. The United States of America is a democratic republic. Democracy depends on citizen participation, “a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated” (Dewey, 2004, p. 83).

## **Democratic Consciousness**

Democratic consciousness is the awareness of an individual that democracy is maintained and improved through participation. In this study, the concept of democratic consciousness is based on Freire's term *conscientização*. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) Freire uses this term to describe the realization of individual agency based on literacy, individual reflection, and willingness to participate in actions for social change. Freire states, "Reflection upon situationality is reflection about the very condition of existence: critical thinking by means of which men discover each other to be 'in a situation'" (p. 100). As the understanding of one's own and other's situation becomes clearer and fuller, a greater awareness of reality emerges. Freire explains this as "*conscientização*," and defines it as "the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence" (p.101). Thus, democratic consciousness is awareness of one's own ability and opportunity to speak and act for social change.

## **Discourse**

Discourse is the use of language in context. In this study, discourse is the use of language written and spoken in the classroom setting. Discourse study examines how language is used or formed in different types of text to create meaning (Flowerdue, 2012).

## **International Baccalaureate Organization**

The International Baccalaureate Organization, often referred to as IB or IBO, is a non-governmental organization that develops, governs, and maintains an educational program for primary years, middle years, career development and the secondary diploma. The IBO has headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland; Brussels, Belgium; and Cardiff, Wales. It has regional offices in different countries. All IB teachers must be trained to use the IB curriculum by certified IB trainers (About the IB, 2019). The IBO has several levels of curriculum. The

Diploma Program or DP is specific to upper level high school or gymnasium students. In this study, the IB secondary diploma program's Language A Literature curriculum is the basis for the teaching decisions I make as the instructor-researcher. (Language A Literature Guide, IBO, 2019).

### **Learning Criterion**

A learning criterion is a specific indicator of a broad skill. In language arts, criterion include spelling, syntax, fluency, oral expression, reading comprehension, recognition of literary elements and devices, organization of ideas. Learning criterion relevant in this study relate to writing, speaking, and reading, as identified in the Language A Literature Guide (IBO, 2019).

### **Learning Standard**

A learning standard is a written goal identifying the knowledge and skill/s that a student needs to demonstrate as an indication of learning. These are usually identified by grade level. The Common Core State Standards Initiative developed a widely recognized set of standards used in the United States (Common Core State Standards, 2019).

### **Literary Criticism**

Literary criticism is the application of a literary theory that demonstrates a particular understanding of a text based on the ideas that inform a specific literary theory (Castle, 2007). This study includes teaching the application of historical and new historical criticism and structural criticism. Historical criticism considers the effects of an author's life on his or her writing and new historical criticism examines the historical time period in which a work of fiction is set (Abcarian & Klotz, 2006; Appleman, 2015). Structural criticism examines how a work is organized and how the language is presented. Emphasis is on form, not meaning

(Eagleton, 1996). In this study, the participants will consider author choices such as chapters, paragraphs, inclusion of dialogue or dialect, and embedding of text within the narration.

### **Literary Theories**

Literary theories are frameworks for understanding literature. There are two broad categories of theory: those that focus on the diction, syntax and structure of the text, and those that consider the text in connection to an historical concept such as Marxism, feminism, de-colonialism (Castle, 2007).

### **Rubric**

According to the Glossary of Education Reform, “a rubric is typically an evaluation tool or set of guidelines used to promote the consistent application of learning expectations, learning objectives, or learning standards in the classroom or to measure their attainment against a consistent set of criteria” (Great Schools Partnership, 2014). Rubrics relevant to this study assess writing for text analysis, writing for an argumentative purpose, and student speaking and listening skills.

### **Socratic Seminar**

Socratic seminars are text-based, classroom discussions that maintain specific etiquette expectations. Participants are required to come prepared with questions about an assigned text. The discussion is meant to deepen all participants’ understanding of the text and of different perspectives or interpretations of the text’s meaning. The seminar name is based on the Socratic method of using questions to arrive at truth, or the most complete understanding possible for those participating (Polite, & Adams, 1997).



## **Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations**

A common assumption regarding action research is that its results are not widely applicable. The study of one school or classroom can be site specific (Mills, 2017). However, the means for dealing with a problem or issue can utilize methods or strategies that are transferable. This study addresses the development of democratic consciousness through the application of several different critical literacy strategies. Thus, an assumption that the research's value will be limited by the research design, fails to consider how other schools or teachers seeking to improve student understanding of democracy, the development of a democratic consciousness, or an educational interest in increasing students' critical literacy might be facilitated by an explanation of the process and results of this study.

A limitation of the research design is that it focuses only on my students and does not address the development of democratic consciousness or the understanding of democracy for a wider group at the school site. Different research methods could gather data from a larger sampling. However, other designs would not offer the same opportunity for reflection and improvement of my own teaching methods.

The decision to work with my freshmen rather than my seniors is a delimitation. Freshmen will have further opportunities to develop their democratic consciousness if the work done in this action research design is not successful. Furthermore, I choose to monitor the methods that apply the IB Approaches to Teaching and Learning because these approaches align with critical literacy, and global mindedness and good citizenship are goals of the curriculum that enhance the understanding of democracy. Critical literacy pedagogy is also a delimitation that I choose because the intention is to develop students' sense of agency as proponents of democratic social change. The core texts for this study are also delimitations, as it was my

professional decision to choose these texts and to develop a critical action research plan that focuses on elements of democracy that arise in these works of literature. The order of the assessments is a delimitation; I have arranged them to maximize time to score, give feedback, and reflect on the lessons and results, so that cycles two and three build on what is learned in cycle one. The final student assessment in the three cycle process is an oral presentation because it will be the quickest both to score and provide feedback just before the school year ends.

### **Summary**

This study examines how the understanding of democracy is taught and democratic consciousness can be developed using critical literacy pedagogy. Studies of democracy globally indicate that government by people for their own health, happiness and well-being is challenged by a variety of forces (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018; Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, 2018). In the United States, the goal of maintaining democratic practices has historically been an objective of public education. Critical theory examines oppression created by a dominant ideology and critical pedagogy aims to use teaching methods to assist students in recognizing their own situation within a time and place affected by ideological forces. As a result of learning to identify and understand how society is unjust, an individual can speak and act for social change. Critical literacy includes a variety of teaching methods that approach reading, writing, reflection and discourse as means for developing students' critical consciousness. In the IB diploma program, the Approaches to Teaching and Learning recognize critical theory and critical literacy goals for promoting learners who ask good questions about what they are learning and who are able to self-interrogate as they learn (Approaches to Learning, 2019). Additionally, the IB curriculum aims to develop affective and metacognitive skills that promote global citizenship and international mindedness. Thus, as a public high school educator in an IB diploma program, this

study examines teaching for democracy that uses critical literacy pedagogy as incorporated with the IB Approaches to Teaching and Learning. The main research question is, *to what extent does critical literacy, as implemented with the International Baccalaureate's Approaches to Teaching and Learning, provide effective teaching methods for developing students' democratic consciousness and their skills for participatory democracy.* Research supporting critical theory and critical literacy as frameworks for teaching for democracy is identified and explained in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The condition of the United States as a democratic republic depends on an equitable and inspiring education. The argument that democracy requires education is supported by the writing of philosopher John Dewey and many critical theorists. Critical theory, in support of a more just and democratic society, is the basis for critical pedagogy (Brookfield, 2005). To understand the thread that connects a philosophy of education to democracy and the relevance of critical theory to developing education for a democratic citizenry, this study will examine the ideas expressed by Dewey (1916/2004; 1938/1979) and the theorists who built on his ideas to support arguments for critical pedagogy (Davis, 2012; Freire, 1970; Habermas, 1984; hooks, 2003; Marcuse, 1964 and 1978; West, 2004).

Critical theory will be defined and described, and the main claims of Paulo Freire's (1970) argument for consciousness raising learning, to develop a truly democratic society will be explained in connection to the objectives of critical pedagogy. This study aims to understand the connection between critical pedagogy and its application through critical literacy methods, to answer the question: *To what extent does critical literacy, as implemented with the International Baccalaureate's Approaches to Teaching and Learning, develop students' democratic consciousness and their skills for participatory democracy.*

In the conceptual framework, democracy is the first concept defined and explained. It is followed by an explanation of critical theory and the goal of progressive transformation to reach an inclusive, just, and equitable society. To connect critical theory to public education, I define critical pedagogy and explain relevant examples. Both historically and currently, issues of race and gender equity are significant to the development of democracy in the U.S. Thus, critical

theorists bell hooks, Angela Davis, and Cornell West are recognized for their arguments supporting critical literacy.

In the final section of the framework, I address critical literacy as a critical pedagogy that can be used in secondary education to support and develop democratic ideals and behaviors. The International Baccalaureate's Approaches to Teaching and Approaches to Learning are explained because they include guidance for implementing and recognizing critical literacy to promote global mindedness as a form of democratic consciousness. Next, critical action research is defined and explained as a research process for improve teaching.

Following the descriptions of democracy, critical theory, critical pedagogy, and critical action research, the literature review will examine the attributes of curriculum content, teaching methods, and student skills that reinforce critical literacy for developing democracy.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Democracy**

Democracy is a multifaceted construct; it is a political philosophy and a form of governance. Its purpose is defined as promoting safety (Mills 1859/1969), the common good (Carpenter, 2013) liberty, (Berlin, 1969) and social justice through equal voice (Brookfield, 2005). Democracy is a form of government that allows mature, reasoning adults the power to make rules that affect others, individually and collectively, for the sake of safety. In a safe society, humans can live according to their individual interests (Mills, 1859/1969). In western civilization, the common philosophical perspective is that a democratic society provides the greatest liberty to individuals; thus, democratic self-government is necessary for individual freedom (Berlin, 1969). The United States chose a democratic republic form of government to

allow greater voice to the governed (Maier, 1998), and by doing so created the necessity for public education to provide the thinking and literacy skills needed for civic participation.

In U.S. history, the notion that democracy's ability to function requires enfranchised citizens to be educated began with the founding fathers; it has been bolstered legislatively with the nation's growth (Bruun & Crosby, 1999; Carpenter, 2013; Goldin, 1999). Jefferson held that there were two key purposes for education: to develop the intellect as fully as possible in preparation for the discourse and deliberation demanded by the responsibilities of citizenship, and to develop the skills of leadership necessary for each generation (Darling-Hammond & Aness, 1996). Expanding on this notion of education as a societal responsibility, Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, Walt Whitman, and William James all emphasized public education as foundational to the maintenance of a democracy. Mann emphasized the development of the individual, so that one's self interest as well as the nation's would be improved. Barnard and Mann both emphasized the use of public funds to enrich the intellect and well-being of all children as necessary for the good of democracy; they countered those who held on to aristocratic or elitist access to education. Whitman's love of America extolled democracy as ideal because it recognized everyone equally and could improve the material standards of life for all. His idealism demanded public education, while his recognition of imperialist and elitist tendencies provoked his critics. James wrote compellingly of the importance of nurturing the intellect and that only a first-rate education would strengthen the nation, especially during times of great international competition. (Mayer, 1964).

In the early 1900s, John Dewey, a philosopher and education theorist, argued that any society that chooses to be democratic must provide a system of education to support the continuity of the society itself. Education is the sustenance of social life (Dewey, 1916/2004).

Arguably, each individual participant in a democracy must be able to reason for him or herself. Individuals must learn and develop the ability to express what they think is necessary for society to be just and to question the decisions of those elected to government office. Oversight by the governed is a form of political and societal guardianship. To support the great diversity of voices that are part of the U.S. requires teachers who can facilitate the growth of democracy. In a society that purports to be progressive and to provide individual freedom to its constituents, an education must be provided “to increase the capacity of individuals to act as directive guardians” (Dewey, 2004, p. 309). The term *progressive* is relevant to an understanding of the U.S. Constitution as a living document. In the U.S., progress toward achieving a truly democratic society can be measured by the attributes expressed in the preamble: these are actions toward a more perfect union of the people and states, toward the establishment of justice, toward domestic tranquility, a common defense, the general welfare and toward a guarantee of the effects of liberty (U.S. Const. preamble).

An example of progress to improve justice, welfare, and liberty includes the expansion of voting rights. Amendments 14, 19, and 26 increased the franchise; chronologically, they added voting rights for African American men (1868), women (1920), and citizens age 18 and above (1971) (U.S. Const. amendments xiv, xix, xxvi). This example of democratic progress is especially important today because the U.S. includes citizens of different ethnicities, gender identification and sexual orientations, various faiths, and contrasting economic perspectives. Thus, another attribute of democracy is respect for diversity, or as expressed in the seal of the nation *e pluribus unum*, out of many we are one (Charles Thomas’s design, Act of Congress, 1782).

Democracy in the U.S. includes an ever-wider sphere of people whose variety is identified by the census bureau for ethnic and cultural background differences (US Census Bureau 2010). Between 2000 and 2010 the Hispanic population grew 43% becoming 16% of the total population; in 2018 the Hispanic population was 18.3% of the total population. The black or African American population grew slightly between 2010 and 2018, from 13% to 13.4% of the total population. The Asian only population grew from 5% to 5.9%. The white alone population in 2010 was 72% and grew to 76.5 % in 2018 (US Census Bureau, 2018). Thus, ethnic diversity is one factor of democratic voice in the plurality of the U.S.

Individuals are not born with an understanding of governance; therefore, it is necessary for people to learn how government affects individuals and society. The philosophical perspective emphasizing education as a necessity for a democratic form of government is engrained in the American experience. Benjamin Franklin endorsed education that recognized man's place in society; he believed "to serve one's fellow man was both a privilege and a responsibility" (Mayer, 1964, p. 89). In its second century, the recognition of education as essential to American democracy is well expressed by the writing on the entablature of the Boston Public Library: "The Commonwealth requires the education of the people as the safeguard of order and liberty" (1888). By the early 20 Century, the industrial growth of the United States and the expansion of the nation westward prompted the states to increase opportunities for education (Bruun & Crosby, 1999; Goldin, 1999). To keep the needs of democracy a focus in education required social and political attention, and as the interests of capitalism created a demand for workers, money for schools and laws to require education were passed (Goldin, 1999). An example of the challenge to learning for citizenship and advancement, versus learning for employment or capitalist benefits, was obvious in the disagreements between



Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois regarding education for black men. Washington was satisfied with an agricultural or industrial education and DuBois argued that it was not in the Black man's best interest to be pigeonholed to labor for a White owner class (Sundquist, 1996). Within their disagreement is the larger ideological issue of which is more important in the U.S., free market capitalism or democracy. Historically, the shift from the "gilded age" to the Progressive Era was an awakening of the need to protect democratic ideals and to reign in the effects of the "robber barons" such as Rockefeller at Standard Oil, and Carnegie at American Steel. It was during the Progressive Era that questioning of what an education should be was addressed by John Dewey in *Democracy and Education* (1916/2004).

Dewey argued that education for democracy has to provide a clear understanding of social functions; it must use the resources provided by public education to develop each student's abilities to reach her or his greatest potential (Dewey, 1916/2004). While Dewey's writing does not mention race, the issue of education for all was then and has continued to be a challenge in the U.S. The concept of education as a means for assisting all individuals, regardless of ethnicity, gender, family economic or social status is in line with the goals of critical theory and critical literacy pedagogy. Because democracy is an important social construct and schooling is important to instill democratic ideals, I studied the influence of critical theory on critical pedagogy and the effects of critical literacy in secondary humanities education.

### **Critical Theory**

In a democracy, because the public good is derived from the people themselves; the ability to understand oneself and others requires recognition of when and how one group negatively impacts others (Mills, 1959/1969). It is this type of awareness that prompted the development of critical theory. Critical theory "views thinking critically as being able to identify,

and then to challenge and change, the process by which a grossly iniquitous society uses dominant ideology to convince people this is a normal state of affairs” (Brookfield, 2005, p. viii). Critical theory evolved over the 20th century. It originated with the writings of Gramsci and Horkheimer and it includes writing over several decades that is referred to as the Frankfurt School. What the critical theorists have in common is a sense that the reasoning individual needs to be emancipated from all forms of slavery or oppression that limit the ability to live according to one’s own interests and allow others to do likewise. The early critical theorists wrote in response to the rise of fascism in Europe, and more contemporary theorists write in response to colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, sexism and all forms of oppressions (Bonham, 2009; Brookfield, 2005; Horkheimer, 1972). Today critical theory has branches of thought that focus on radical change, race, gender, and education (Davis, 2012; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988; hooks, 2003; Marcuse, 1964; West, 2004). All branches of the theory hold common assumptions: oppression or discrimination and inequality are realities in Western democracies; the dominant ideology creates an understanding of social inequalities as normal; critical theory provides a means to understand and then change society (Brookfield, 2005). To overcome repressive ideological patterns, a post-colonial society needs educators to expand the voices heard in society (Okello & Quaye, 2018). An essential part of the democratic learning process is the opportunity to know oneself and to understand how the self fits into society. To connect democracy, critical theory, and critical pedagogy, an explanation of how critical theory examines the role of language and questioning to develop social awareness that can lead to social change will be addressed next.

**Communication, Questioning, Reflection.** The critical theorist Jurgen Habermas wrote *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984) that describes language as a way of knowing when

it occurs for the purpose of reaching a shared understanding. Communicative action reaches its most effective form when it becomes a practiced and developed habit. In Western tradition, the concept of discussion and questioning for the purpose of learning goes back to the Socratic dialogues recorded by Plato (Cooper, 1997). In dialogue with Phaedrus, Plato quotes Socrates:

The dialectician chooses a proper soul and plants and sows within it discourse accompanied by knowledge—discourse capable of helping itself as well as the man who planted it, which is not barren but produces a seed from which more discourse grows in the character of others. Such discourse makes the seed forever immortal and renders the man who has it happy as any human being can be. (Cooper, 1997, p. 553)

This comment indicates the purpose of what is known as Socratic dialogue: the use of questioning as part of discourse that develops new understanding for the participants engaged in the discourse. In particular, the writing of Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire elaborates on the need for student questioning and classroom discussion that does not situate the teacher as a power holding authority (Freire, 1970). No student should feel intimidated by an instructor; the classroom environment should promote inquisitiveness and interactions rather than establish a forum in which the teacher is a dictator and the pupils are silent task completers. Thanks to critical theorists, the classroom becomes a setting for dialogue that develops a relationship based on the sharing of ideas. The format of using a shared text or single visual representation to grapple with a concept is referred to as a Socratic seminar (Polite & Adams, 1997; Tredway, 1995). Such dialogues, if used to promote questioning of the dominant ideology or issues of social inequity serves the purpose of critical theory and can be incorporated into secondary teaching methods.

Teaching that questions the dominate culture, that gives those with no or little social power a voice, and that provides an understanding of personal freedom is foundational to democracy (Berlin, 1969; Dewey, 1916; West, 2004). Thus, learning in an educational system that introduces skills beyond reading comprehension, by promoting student questioning of a text's original audience, the author's purpose, and the use of language, allows students to challenge what is expressed and to relate new information to their own social reality (Approaches to Teaching and Learning, 2019). When these skills are applied to material or juxtaposed against evidence representing the dominant ideology, the questioning process promotes learning that develops democratic participation. Like the Socratic method, critical theory claims that questioning and challenging everyday arrangements in society is necessary for driving social change (Freire, 1970; Kellner 2003; Marcuse, 1964).

Part of the process of learning through questioning is individual reflection. The ability to consider a situation or problem to solve and, in turn, recognize how it relates to something already known, or how it creates a new concept, is an aspect of thinking necessary for learning (Dewey, 1916). If a democratic society is weakened by an inability to provide equal rights to all, news articles that present the arguments of those whose rights are denied or works of art that express the effects of rights denied, can be used to communicate social issues to students. Reflective learning happens when students process the information and can compare the ideas expressed with their own experiences (Dewey, 1916).

A class discussion that includes questioning and sharing of what students think in response to their initial understanding of information in a text results in student learning through the process of comprehension, reflection, questioning, and discussion (Polite & Adams, 1997; Tredway, 1995). Addressing issues that affect the well-being of all members of society is

essential for a functioning democracy. Therefore, a democratic education must introduce and promote reflective learning. Denying a dialectic process is what Freire's writing refers to as banking education; where students simply repeat information and teachers are talking heads who do not engage students in the sharing of ideas (Freire, 1970).

Interactive or engaging teaching is the priority. One education class described its process of sharing ideas to deepen a common understanding of art education goals: "Imagine a page on which student A is adding a video, student B is typing text, student C is reading and commenting on the text, and the instructor is assessing the interactions at the same time" (Ward & Blanchfield, 2018, p.28). This example demonstrates the effort to move away from the teacher as the sage who tells students what to think. Education that simply transfers information from the teacher to the student produces no growth and is non-reflective. Freire's writing is highly critical of banking education; instead he explains: "dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's 'depositing' ideas in another" (Freire, 1970, p. 77). The interaction of students and teacher, in a process of questioning and discussing a text's meaning and each other's perspectives, enhances the understanding of the topic or issue for all involved. Learning is thus democratic in the opportunity to be heard and to hear multiple points of view.

With reflection, communication can lead to emancipatory knowledge; what critical theorist Habermas describes as the condition of a consciousness free of ideological control (Habermas, 1971). In explaining democratic decision making, in *Toward a Rational Society* Habermas notes, "[it is] a consensus arrived at in discussion free from domination (Habermas, 1970, as cited by Brookfield, p.268). Emancipatory knowledge is demonstrated when an

individual can question the dominant ideology and articulate reasons for finding fault or limitations in how the ideology meets the expectations of democratic principles, such as individual liberty and equal justice for all. This level of individual engagement in one's learning, regarding social conditions, would be a result of critical pedagogy. Teaching methods to reach this quality of learning would include critical literacy.

**Individual consciousness: art and discussion.** The level of individual conscience necessary to critique the dominant social ideology is a common concern among critical theorists. The history of the U.S. includes clashes between the white majority and people of color, between enfranchised men and the female population, between religious conservatives and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community, and between capitalist interests and supporters of the working class and the poor. In each case, one side has operated from a position of political power and influence, while the other has been marginalized. The history of minority activism demonstrates the lived examples of what critical theory aims to promote: the ability to be reflective and to use discourse skills for social justice.

In the 1960s and 1970s, theorists Herbert Marcuse and Paulo Freire influenced the application of critical theory in education. For Marcuse, the dominant ideology affecting society was consumerism, a result of capitalism. The wealth and influence of industrialists and corporations affected everything from legislation to advertisements in every form of media. Marcuse argued that the ubiquity of capitalist power in combination with modern technology and advertising was lulling people into passive acceptance of consumerism (Marcuse, 1964). This condition numbed people from recognizing social repression. Marcuse referred to this focus on satisfying consumer needs as a condition of one-dimensional thought (Marcuse, 1964). However, his writing presented means for reawakening individual thought and gaining critical perspective.

Marcuse argued that one means for gaining a new perspective in response to social oppression is through art: “art breaks open a dimension inaccessible to other experiences” (Marcuse, 1978, p. 72). In its own language art uniquely expresses reality (Brookfield, 2005). Art, as social critique, communicates an artist’s idea in response to a lived experience. The message conveyed might evoke or provoke an audience response. Great works of art are known to have profound effects on humans. Hearing a Brahms melody can be soothing; hearing Djembe tribal drums can be enthralling; seeing Picasso’s *Guernica* can be disturbing; the experience of being inside a gothic cathedral can be inspiring. The worldwide response to the 2019 roof fire of Notre Dame de Paris demonstrates the power of art. The building was a UNESCO World Heritage Monument even before the fire of April 2019, but the world response, including millions of small donations from private citizens, indicates the effect art has on individuals (Adamson, 2019). To awaken people to new perspectives so that they can challenge the societal inadequacies that prevent democracy is a goal of critical theory (Brookfield, 2005; Kellner, 2006; Marcuse, 1964).

Marcuse (1978) argued that art has the capacity to impact individuals in a way that promotes new thinking. This new thinking can facilitate recognition of one’s own situation or position in society. For Marcuse (1964), a new consciousness might identify how the dominant ideology is manipulative or repressive. Marcuse’s work focused on capitalism and consumerism as disruptive to social justice. He aimed to awaken people from the dominant ideology that presented capitalist profits that rely on a vast consumerism as normal and acceptable. Marcuse claimed that adult education for democracy requires distancing oneself from stupefying influences through inwardness, reflection on subjectivity, and examination of memory (Brookfield, 2005). A new consciousness was needed to allow people to recognize their

complicity in a system that convinced them to purchase goods they do not need, and to work for corporations whose officers earned exponentially greater salaries and that hire employees based on practices that discriminate based on gender and ethnicity (Marcuse, 1964). Arguably, the dominant ideology Marcuse wanted to challenge still exists. His perspective is relevant to modern secondary students, as the latest video games or computer applications to be purchased create distraction from contemporary social justice issues such as equality for immigrants, racial profiling by law enforcement, or the differences in U.S. union wages versus third world wages. Forms of art that convey these realities can be used to prompt a critical educational experience.

African American activist, professor and author Cornell West (2004) traces the legacy of American authors who have articulated the unachieved ideals of democracy. West develops this position by pointing out the ability of art, especially literature, to express the reality of the human condition in America; he references canonical writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, W.E. B. DuBois, and James Baldwin as significant for developing perspective on the human condition, race, and democracy in America. Though of different times, writing styles, and races, each author's work continues to challenge readers to think. Emerson and Whitman contemplate human life as part of nature, as interdependent on others and affected by forces larger than oneself. DuBois and Baldwin express the qualities of being made to feel other; they identify universal human emotions and traits that the White dominant majority fail to recognize, let alone respect in their Black fellow citizens. Like works of two-dimensional art and music, powerful literature can provoke epiphanies and provide opportunities for reflection, questioning, and discussion. Critical pedagogy aims to create these rich learning experiences (Brookfield, 2005). West recommends using art to prompt discussion of race and challenges to democracy (West, 2004). Thus, aesthetic critical theory connects Marcuse's critique of capitalism to West's



critical race theory through the use of aesthetic literacy that can use works of literature or rap music to express racial realities that identify social injustices.

Freire built on Marcuse's ideas. In his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire suggested that a critical pedagogy could help individuals gain a new consciousness, or *conscientização*, an attitude of deepening awareness that emerges through education. With a new consciousness, students would recognize social injustice, articulate their acquired awareness, and question the failures of the dominant ideology to provide true democracy. Freire argued that the oppressed must identify their oppressors and the indicators of their condition to challenge the injustices they experience. To develop this ability in an educational setting, Freire (1970) refers to dialogue and discourse that engages students and teachers in an exchange of ideas as equals. His concept is often referred to as Socratic dialogue. Freire's process challenges pedagogy to be dialectic and model reasoning that empowers students to question the assumptions underlying the injustices in society. He describes truly educational dialogue as something that exists in the following conditions:

the dialoguers engage in critical thinking—thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and men and admits of no dichotomy between them—thinking which perceives reality as process, transformation, rather than as a static entity—thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved. (Freire, 1970, pp. 80-81)

When students understand their situation and gain the ability to confront the dominant culture, then the transformation of social conditions can happen (Freire, 1970).

**Questioning and application.** The classroom dynamic of consciousness raising dialogue can be used in conjunction with secondary humanities content. Questioning a text's perspective

and social assumptions is especially relevant for understanding the differences between the concept of democracy and the societal conditions in which students are situated. Critical theory recognizes the power of literature and narratives to provoke student awareness of social injustice (Davis, 2012).

The difference between Marcuse's and Freire's writing is arguably audience. While Marcuse appears to challenge the mindset of those entranced by consumerism and a dominant capitalist ideology, Freire prompts those oppressed, whether economically, ethnically or culturally, to recognize their own humanity and ability to challenge social conditions. This type of consciousness can be achieved in secondary classrooms using critical pedagogy that develops critical literacy skills. Marcuse's writing presents social criticism that challenges educators, and Freire's writing provides pedagogic ideas to address social issues that hinder the realization of a just democracy. Introducing students to literary art that confronts the social norms they understand can lead to dialogue and reflection that inspires students to act locally for social change.

### **Critical Pedagogy**

Critical pedagogy has developed from the theories of Marcuse, Freire, and Habermas. While these theorists wrote about adult education, their concepts are directly applicable to teaching methods in secondary humanities classrooms, high school language arts and history in particular. Critical teaching aims to develop students' critical thinking, which includes the skills of conceptualization, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Critical thinking allows students to recognize how contemporary society uses oppressive habits to maintain a system that benefits the few while promoting conformity (Brookfield, 2005). To make critical theory useful for secondary educators and students, critical pedagogy needs to be limited in focus and allow

teachers to work within their classroom context to facilitate student learning for social change (Neumann, 2013).

A focus on communication to promote understanding is the basis of humanities classes. The use of language and different forms of expression, including various forms of writing and media, comprise the core materials of literature-language arts and social studies curriculum. Beyond teaching students to read, write, and speak with grammatical correctness, critical literacy introduces the ability to question an author or source's original purpose, the manner of expression, and the assumptions conveyed by the author (Wilson, 2014). To utilize critical pedagogy, an educator might critique society through a careful selection of text that allows a class to address issues of injustice. For example, a class might read a novel and examine the treatment of women. A consideration of how women are portrayed and treated in the text leads to a greater awareness of women's status in contemporary society. This use of critical pedagogy is explained by Wilson (2014) who discusses the introduction of critical theory in secondary literature education. One example unit of study focuses on the novel *Jane Eyre* (Bronte, 1847/2014) because it provides examples of historical mistreatment of women and raises questions about how women have been represented in literature.

The ability to understand the status of women and other marginalized groups in their own lives is enhanced when students apply questions regarding an author's representation of female characters, the expected or given roles of women in the context of the novel, and what is conveyed about women based on their dialogue. The use of literary criticism in a secondary class can range from simple to sophisticated based on student skill levels, but introducing the process is important for developing student awareness of their own role in the making of meaning. Beyond an explication of plot, setting, and the use of stylistic literary devices, critical pedagogy

promotes a richer response to literature in terms of recognizing the reader's role in how the text conveys meaning (Wilson, 2014). In combination with discourse or dialogue that allows a sharing of ideas, critical pedagogy recognizes questioning by students as a skill necessary for meeting the goal of challenging the injustices of the dominant ideology. In Wilson's example, sexist social norms can be identified and challenged (2014).

**Critical race theory.** Among the branches of critical theory as a means for recognizing and responding to forms of oppression, critical race theory aims to examine and respond to racism so that ethnicity is not used against any one group for the benefit of others. A common concern of critical race theory is the presence of discriminatory practices in societies that have laws and political beliefs that espouse equality and justice. The significance of critical race theory in the U.S. is particularly significant as black citizens are statistically more likely to be pulled over or shot by police officers (Weir, 2016). The concept of critical pedagogy challenging the dominant ideology is presented by Angela Davis in relation to critical literacy using media sources. Davis identifies the need to confront violence against people of color or those who are ethnically different from the U.S. White majority. Discussing the dehumanization caused by racism, Davis explains the significance of seeing others as different or lesser. One essay in her book *The Meaning of Freedom* (2012), powerfully illustrates the extreme behaviors that are made possible when one group dehumanizes another. Davis (2012) refers to photographs from Abu Ghraib prison, in Iraq, depicting war crimes by the U.S. military that expose dehumanizing acts. Her argument connects the behavior of the soldiers in the images with the historical behavior of White people who lynched Black people in acts of racist, gratuitous violence (Davis, 2012). In an educational setting, students might read a U.S. history textbook that describes racism in the U.S., then compare photographs of domestic, race-based lynchings with

photographs of U.S. military behavior abroad. After reflection on what the information means and how it connects to what is already known, students can develop questions regarding the depth of social injustice, and conditions of rule of law in the U.S. and its military. Davis' example demonstrates the value of critical literacy for developing democracy. As mentioned earlier, ethnic diversity in the U.S. is constantly increasing. Thus, the ability of public education to teach in support of democratic inclusion is arguably imperative.

The ability of students to recognize and connect issues of class, power, race, gender or economic opportunity in literature to current issues is meaningful learning that meets the initial goal of critical pedagogy. The notion of positionality, recognizing how the individual is situated physically within a social context, is a concept that teachers can introduce to students. Okello and Quayle contend that "(P)ositionality calls upon educators to do the hard work of reflexivity working to discern one's historical, socio-cultural, and political positions" (Okello & Quayle, 2018, p.50). When teachers clarify the historical setting and conditions of a text and prompt students to understand their own position in society, together teachers and students can compare and contrast their lived experiences with the experiences identified and described in the texts they study. The experiences students might share and the context that they might feel challenged to understand include "gender, sexual orientation, class, race, and spirituality" (Okello & Quayle, 2018, p. 50). The use of dialogue or discourse to share questions, responses, and reflections is a method for learning that connects critical theory, critical pedagogy, and critical literacy.

In *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (2003), bell hooks states, "conversation is the central location of pedagogy for the democratic educator" (44). In keeping with Freire's emphasis on discourse, hooks recognizes the sharing of information and ideas as important for affirming the interaction of learning. Teachers and students are equal in the listening and

examining of ideas. Combining dialogue, critical reading, and self-awareness, critical pedagogy increases the students' understanding of the world as it is and allows for a reconceptualization of how it might become more democratic. Reflecting on one's own experience in contrast or comparison to historical or fictional characters contributes to a greater consciousness of social conditions. Evidence of critical literacy that supports democracy is apparent in learning that allows students to question the context and intent of a source and to establish a greater understanding of their world (Allen, Hancock, Starker-Glass, & Lewis, 2017; Stovall, 2006).

**IB approaches to teaching and learning.** The International Baccalaureate Organization (IB) considers every diploma teacher to be a language teacher. A core value of the organization is international mindedness, and IB contends that this concept includes three key IB aims: multilingualism, an interest in global engagement, and respect for intercultural understanding (About the IB, 2019). In the Approaches to Learning, IB teachers are trained to recognize three types of skills: cognitive, affective, and metacognitive. The cognitive skills include thinking and information processing. The affective skills include emotion and behavior management, and metacognitive skills regulate the effectiveness of learning and evaluate understanding and the application of practical abilities (Approaches to Teaching and Learning, 2019). One of the ten IB learner attributes is being a thinker. The approaches to learning states that a thinker is identified by use of "initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions" (Approaches to Teaching and Learning, Thinking skills, 2019, p.1). IB recognizes the revised taxonomy of skills written by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) that ranks the ability to create, plan, and produce as the highest in a 6-level ordering (Approaches to Teaching and Learning, 2019). Evaluating and critiquing are level 5, and analyzing, differentiating, and organizing are level 4. To facilitate

student proficiency in the higher order skills, lessons and units of study are meant to embed different types of thinking into the daily practices of learning (Approaches to Teaching and Learning, 2019).

Communication skills are also built into lesson planning. The tenets of IB incorporate the idea that communication includes a cluster of abilities ranging from note taking and listening, to formulating an argument and writing for different purposes. In addition to modeling communication that is encouraging, IB Approaches to Teaching emphasizes the use of open-ended questioning and prioritizes thinking over knowing. IB teachers are expected to recognize information technology and social media as participatory platforms for communication and collaboration (Approaches to Teaching and Learning, 2019). Thus, in the IB curriculum, teaching for democracy and global citizenship should include digital learning space that is relevant to contemporary democratic participation.

Finally, social skills are essential to democratic participation, and they are recognized by IB as fundamental to learning and constructing meaning as social beings. The ability to interact with peers, to accept and express different perspectives, and to adjust to changes in a social environment should be developed in the school setting. Lesson planning that includes discussion, collaboration, reflection, and shared responsibilities provide opportunities to develop social and emotional skills (Approaches to Teaching and Learning, 2019). The basic steps identified in the Approaches to Teaching specify the importance of focusing on particular skill development and using explicit directions and sharing examples of skill use at different levels. A direct connection to critical pedagogy is allowing for student self-assessment for both skills and knowledge (Approaches to Teaching and Learning, 2019).

The Approaches to Learning include three different formats for unit planning: strong teacher regulation, shared teacher regulation, loose teacher regulation. In each model, the student objective is maximum thinking. As indicated in their names, the differences among the models relates to the amount of student choice or form of participation. Each model includes inquiry, action and reflection; thus, they all relate to critical pedagogy.

I used Planner 3, the loose regulation, in each iteration of this critical action research design. My aim was to understand the effectiveness of my instruction on how democracy is understood conceptually and on how my students' democratic consciousness developed. I evaluated my instructional effectiveness in response to the application of critical literacy methods that I used in each unit of study. The critical action research design allowed me to gain an understanding of how language analysis and different types of literary criticism affected student understanding of democracy in response to the three works of literature we study: *Cry, the Beloved Country*, by Alan Paton (1948/2003); *The Samurai's Garden*, by Gail Tsukiyama (1994), and *Enrique's Journey*, by Sonia Nazario (2013). The unit assessments, along with field notes, reflections, and collegial feedback bolstered the reliability of my results.

Critical action research is a form of the action research design. All action research is aimed at improving teaching practices through an iterative process that includes determining a focus or topic, gathering data, analyzing the data, and developing a plan (Schmuck, 2006). Critical action research uses the same iterative process, but it includes an educational focus that aligns with critical theory in teaching for enlightenment, individual liberation, and development of democracy (Mills, 2014). The plan explained in Chapter 3 elaborates on how critical literacy teaching methods were taught, analyzed, and revised in my iterative research design.



The following literature review expands on what critical literacy is and how it is applicable for secondary humanities classrooms that aim to increase student understanding of democratic ideals and student capacity to participate in a democratic society. I examine the connection of critical theory to critical pedagogy and the application of critical literacy as a method for humanities teachers in secondary education to understand how education develops democracy.

### **Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature**

Critical literacy includes teaching methods that lead to social change. When students read and participate in purposeful and meaningful discourse that challenges dominant and oppressive ideological beliefs and behaviors, students become better equipped for active participation in a democracy. Teaching methods that promote student skill development, including questioning, discussion, and choice of research materials also facilitate the expansion of student knowledge and the ability of students to take action for the common good. Through critical literacy teaching methods student can demonstrate learning that promotes democratic ideals.

In her article “Critical literacy in teaching and research,” Hilary Janks (2013) uses three cases studies to demonstrate the methods and results of critical literacy as a means for teaching democracy as an action-based construct. In her work as an instructor and researcher Janks (2013) connects critical literacy to the pedagogic theory of Paulo Freire (1970). Freire promoted teaching that provokes student questioning of the status quo or hegemonic powers that marginalize or oppress specific groups of people. Through identifying the means of oppression, students can come to understand and deconstruct the issue. It is then possible to reimagine or describe a revised and more just reality. Janks (2013) updates Freire’s learning process. She explains a process that recognizes an unjust construct, deconstructs it through a learning process,

and then reconstructs or redesigns the issue or subject in a more just or inclusive form (Janks, 2013). One of the case studies in the article explains how this process can be both successful in helping the marginalized but fail overall due to provoking a backlash from the dominant group.

The Tucson School district in Arizona created a Mexican American Studies program. Based on observations, Janks identified the program as transformative for students of Mexican ancestry. However, due to their gaining a voice in the community, the dominant power was disturbed, in this case privileged White conservatives who sought to elimination of the program. The attorney general of Arizona favoring the position of the dominant group, ruled the program illegal (Janks, 2013). Janks' article argued that, in some cases, education for democracy is a political action.

Janks (2013) connects the Tucson program to critical literacy and the goals of critical theory by noting that the course included a range of texts from different genres and perspectives that allowed students to analyze and recognize perspectives that are different than their own. This led to identification of the White majority perspective as privileged and recognition that one group's status caused the alienation of others. As a result, students examined how and why some texts were considered subversive; they could find such texts in the public domain to acknowledge their challenge to the approved curricula. Finally, students could choose to take action in response. Janks notes their option to support their instructors' fight to keep the program or to make their own suggestions to the school officials regarding inclusiveness. The steps described illustrate critical literacy as a way of learning and living to promote civic action to develop a more democratic society.

This example from Janks demonstrates the reality of White majority repression. An educational response requires methods such as critical literacy as a means for developing a just

and equitable society. Through the process of teaching students to read for understanding, by using questioning, discussion, and student choice in supplementary materials, the objectives of critical theory can be realized; the ideals of democracy can be understood and acted upon. The following research studies support this claim through a separate consideration of each teaching strategy.

### **Critical literacy Reading Strategies**

**Questioning authorial intent.** When students question an author's purpose, message, and perspective, it helps readers to understand whose story is being told and why. This leads to further consideration of whose voice is being limited or ignored. When students become skilled in discerning the perspective of the author (or speaker or narrator) it encourages further consideration of the social power in the text. Critical literacy prompts students to notice where power resides. Janks (2013) argues that the quality of diversity and the level of access to skills, knowledge, or tools for personal success identified in the text must also be considered for a reader to use literacy to act for social change.

To illustrate this point, a 2016 study by Simmons indicated that student discussion and questioning, based on the results of literary analysis coding, were the most important part of the learning process. Simmons (2016) study was qualitative. It included observation and discourse analysis to examine the responses of students as they learned to use systemic functional linguistics (SFL). The data used to study three sections of AP language and composition classes included,

field notes, classroom supplementary materials, students' written work, projects, and SFL practice as well as reflections, family dialogue journals, audio-taped student presentations, audio-taped classroom presentations, and a verbal protocol analysis on

seven focal students, five girls and two boys, as representative. (Simmons, 2016, p. 193).

The data provided a robust range of evidence regarding student learning.

The discourse analysis methods taught and applied by the students in their learning included monitoring several aspects of written language: hedging—the use of vague or equivocal diction, modality-language that represents the text’s speaker’s sense of obligation, judgement, or probability, and appraisal-recognition of attitudes about or expressed by characters. Looking at these aspects of the text, students learned to code for critical consciousness. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) evaluates how grammar choices expose authorial assumptions or express authorial values (Simmons, 2016). Referring to the work of Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999), Simmons noted that CDA provides a means to understand how linguistics and critical social science communicate, by recognizing how language and society have a relationship (Simmons, 2016).

For example, students learn to identify how the word choice an author uses establishes a tone that can be formal or informal. When reading dialogue, students learn to notice differences in who holds power in different relationships based on the diction and sentence structure of the characters. These observations can lead to discussion of when and why different tones or registers are important in communication, and analysis of language in dialogue can develop student understanding of how spoken language conveys status. If an author includes dialogue in dialect that suggests limited awareness of standard grammar, does this mean the author intends for the characters speaking to appear unintelligent, or is the dialect historically accurate and meant to inform readers about social conditions for the characters speaking? Through SFL and CDA analysis formats students become more discerning readers.

In Simmons' study, the student work included use of SFL tools to produce depth in language awareness. Systemic functional linguistics analysis is an understanding of how grammar functions to create meaning (Simmons, 2016). Students learn to identify grammar components and acknowledge their effect on shaping meaning; this is the coding process. When this is complete, the students use critical discourse analysis to write, discuss, and present their understanding. In the study, the evidence of student coding included written work, oral presentations, class discussions, and the verbal protocols. To develop critical consciousness, students coded texts using the protocol analyses. The texts in the study included novels in the Harry Potter series, Shakespeare's *Othello*, and a speech by Barak Obama. The cycle of learning that applied both SFL and CDA included describing the language components, interpreting the meaning, explaining effects of language and meaning, and then problematizing how what is understood presents issues that may be historically informative or suggest social injustices that are still relevant. Teaching that incorporates SFL and CDA was shown to encourage democratic participation (Simmons, 2016).

Simmons argued that the scaffolded instruction transformed privileged students' understanding of social dynamics in the U.S. Their learning caused them to recognize harmful social inequities resulting from dominant ideologies and allowed them to be critical of injustices (Simmons, 2016). These skills are especially relevant when considering how and why authors such as Mark Twain and Zora Neale Hurston include dialect in character dialogue. The diction and syntax choices students learn to identify as intentional in the writing of a text can increase the student's understanding of a text as social criticism.

Simmons (2016) concludes that SFL "is a form of emancipatory education" that develops student ability to identify, question, and then challenge oppressive social practices" (Simmons,

2016, p. 205). Thus, a classroom learning community can examine text language, discuss or write about real world issues in comparison, and potentially recognize an opportunity for social action.

In a study of English second language learners, researcher Cleary (Locke & Cleary, 2011) found that using multiple and diverse texts facilitate student understanding of how writer's position readers. For example, in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain positions his readers so that they feel they are experiencing the story as Huck narrates it. The narrative in combination with the different uses of dialect allows readers to hear the sounds of the South as well as the sounds of different classes and social conditions. In Cleary and Locke's work, intertextual study, the use of multiple texts that refer to the same topic, was especially useful with limited English learners; it helped to improve student recognition of portrayal, version, representation, and construction as language components. Students were able to challenge the writers' positions based on their own perspectives (Locke & Cleary, 2011).

The Locke and Cleary (2011) project was funded over 2 years and included a series of case studies. It was conducted by researchers from the University of Waikato, New Zealand and participating public school teachers. The mixed-methods data for the study included "reflective profiles, questionnaires, interviews, observations, teacher reflections, student work samples, and pre- and post-test results and assessment task products" (Locke & Cleary, 2011, p. 122). Instructors used the reflective profile, information from their own reflections on how instruction affected their students, to examine the extent to which their own assumptions enhanced or limited the critical discourse work. All data was analyzed collaboratively. Two student learning objectives of the study: understanding text and context relationships and recognition of how the

construction of a text affects the readers' meaning, specifically align with critical literacy goals (Locke & Cleary, 2011). Both goals were addressed using guided questioning.

Although the skills may seem heady, teaching students to be good questioners begins with using guided questions to assist students in developing habits of inquiry. Soares and Wood (2010) describe the use of critical literacy as a method for raising social consciousness with middle school grade six students. They explain a scaffolding for reading social studies texts to develop a democratic classroom (Soares & Wood, 2010). While less sophisticated than SFL or CDA, Soares and Wood (2010) discuss the Ciardiello (2004) model. This reading strategy starts with examining authorial or narrative perspective by asking questions such as what does the author want the reader to know, and what are the interests and values presented? (Soares & Wood, 2010). These questions can lead to a small group or whole class discussion of whether someone or some group is being favored or ignored. The class can plan a group action or can allow individuals to brainstorm or submit ideas for how students can address the issue in their own community.

**Questioning writing style or structure.** Another type of questioning is aimed at deconstructing the effects of text style—the effect of the writing techniques an author uses that establish the voice readers hear, and structure—the organization of the work of literature based on its genre. To identify and examine how a writer's literary choices impact readers, Simmons (2016) describes the use of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), and critical discourse analysis (CDA). As previously mentioned, part of the discourse analysis methods includes monitoring vague language or hedging, modality or the attitude the narrator or speaker conveys, and appraisal of characters presented within the text. Students become keen observers of language that indicates uncertainty or probability, degrees of intensity, and statements of judgement. The

process of coding promotes the development of a student's critical consciousness; the use of SFL tools builds a depth of language awareness. Ideally, students notice how language leads to representations of empowerment and marginalization (Simmons, 2016). Identification analysis examines characters or individuals mentioned in the text and considers how pronouns and adjectives connected to characterization and how the use of standard or colloquial speech are used to develop a point of view regarding the character or person in the text (Simmons, 2016). This type of work can lead to a profound awareness of class differences and social behaviors that demonstrate privilege and discrimination.

The context of Simmons (2016) study provides a sharp contrast with that of Stovall (2006). At the time of her study, Simmons' high school students were predominantly middle class, mid-western, and according to Simmons of "privileged experiences" (2018, p. 194). They felt unaware of how serious race issues were in the U.S. In contrast, Stovall's study participants were entirely students of color. In his study, Stovall's students were given an opportunity to use non-traditional text to provide a more engaging examination of literature, popular culture, and social justice. Lyrics of Black hip-hop artists were studied to recognize a cultural voice with which the students could identify (Stovall, 2006). While Simmons' (2016) study provoked students of privilege to recognize the limitations of learning that only focuses upon the dominant culture's experiences, Stovall (2006) explored with the student participants the differences between the reality presented in hip-hop lyrics with that presented in the mainstream news and historical accounts of life (Stovall, 2006). When considering how critical literacy expands student awareness of race history in the U.S., the various types of texts used in the two studies demonstrate the benefits of making widely different perspectives and genres available.



Stovall's (2006) study was ethnographic, based on six workshops that were part of a unit in a social studies class. All 19 participants were students of color in a Chicago public high school in a class titled Society and Social Inequities. The researcher was the concept facilitator who worked with the classroom instructor. The basis for the researcher's work was bell hooks' methods for engagement. Data included student reflective writing, historical research, and journals. Also, field notes were recorded; the teacher and facilitator debriefed on their observations after each workshop. At the end of the six workshops student evaluations were completed (Stovall, 2006).

Stovall, (2006) clarified that analysis of rap lyrics must recognize the necessity of metaphor and use of hyperbole or "braggadocio" that is part of the message. The students who identified with rap as a culturally based form of expression reflected on their ability to appreciate and critique lyrics. The students discussed lyrics that expressed sexism, extreme consumerism, misogyny, and the reality of these topics in their lives (Stovall, 2016). The inclusion of texts by artists who represent historically oppressed groups increases student awareness of the social limitations to democracy. By specifically examining how a text is written, the distributive effects of power, diversity, and access to education and other social benefits are made more apparent. As a conclusion to this study, Stovall challenged the participants to develop a new curriculum that would more accurately reflect the breadth of voices and experiences in America; he asked that they propose their curriculum to the school's administration at the end of the academic year (Stovall, 2016). Stovall's study and the summative project demonstrate student action for a more democratic society.

The inclusion of lyrics based on student choice in combination with the researcher and classroom instructor's selections increased student interest and connection to the material being

studied. The application of close, analytical reading, and the depth of discussion based on student and instructor questioning exemplify the use of critical literacy skills. The students became aware of the lack of Black voices in the social studies curriculum. The opportunity to read text outside the traditional selections and to plan curriculum that would give voice to a larger story demonstrate teaching and learning for the development of democracy.

**Questioning diction choices.** Additional depth to literary analysis includes examination of specific word choice. Dyches (2018) discusses consideration of denotation and connotation to recognize possible differences in interpretation and changes in meaning over time. Locke and Cleary (2011) look at positive and negative words to identify an author's ability to sway the reader's perspective. This process addresses the objective of developing student awareness of language as not being neutral, leading to student identification of value judgements in the text that can prompt student reflection and individual discernment regarding the topic (Locke & Cleary, 2011). The result is similar to that explained by Simmons (2016). Modality analysis, part of SFL, examines the use of qualifiers or intensifiers in the language. English modal verbs include should, would, could, might, must, and need. When used, these verbs expose a sense of attitude. Along with qualifying adverbs such as possibly or always, readers can detect how a writer is positioning readers (Simmons, 2016). The ability to discern blatant and subtle uses of language allows a reader a choice in responding to literature that evokes emotion that reinforces or criticizes social conditions. For examples, Simmons included Othello in her study as an example of a canonical text. When the students coded the play for modality, they noticed the character Iago's use of phrasing that included the adverb "surely" and verb phrases "I pray" and "I think" when speaking to Othello, a character of a higher rank. The students also noticed that

this conditional language is not used by Iago with other characters (Simmons, 2016, p. 200). By identifying modality shifts, the students recognized power in social relationships.

### **Critical Literacy Dialogue Strategies**

**Use of discourse regarding text and language questions.** Dyches (2018) prompted student evaluation of curriculum itself by using charts to show the studies of secondary literature over time. This activity prompted students to comment on what they observed. The students quickly noted the prevalence of White male voices and the types of injustices presented in their writing (Dyches, 2018). This initial process was the groundwork for later class discussion of how studying specific injustices privileges those victims' voice. This led to student research of choice that identified current injustices around the globe (Dyches, 2018).

Dyches (2018) used case study methodology to complete a phenomenological investigation of how students apply critical theory when examining curriculum, to determine whether it is used as a hegemonic force. The study participants were mostly White students; other ethnic groups represented 10% or less of the total student participants. The school was described as affluent, situated in a suburban Midwest location. Participants included 25 students in a World Literature course. The researcher taught a 4-day mini-unit; both a pre and post mini-unit survey regarding injustice were completed by the students. All classroom instruction was recorded. Copious notes were taken during meetings with the teacher, students, and during the coding process. Eight students volunteered to be in a focus group to discuss the unit. Inductive analysis was then used to reduce and code the large amounts of data, leading to the identification of themes. The final coding provided theoretical results; the triangulation helped to establish credibility (Dyches, 2018). For the students, the result of the close reading, questioning, and discussions was an informed awareness of how dangerous to democracy it is to be taught only

the traditional, limited perspective of history and literature. The study emphasized the power of text-selection itself. Teaching students to question content increases their recognition of the dominant ideology, thus providing them a means to challenge it.

In contrast to an awakening for privileged students, Locke and Cleary (2011) argued that providing voice to students who frequently feel marginalized in mainstream education is a significant means of developing their sense of agency. Working with indigenous English second language learners in New Zealand, one unit of study examined technology in people's lives. Earlier it was explained that this study examined the use of multiple and diverse texts within a single unit and determined that intertextuality benefitted student connection to the reading and their understanding of how language conveys meaning. In the thematic unit studying the effects of technology on people, Cleary used a process called the bus stop activity. Working in small groups, students discussed their response to several statements regarding scientific experimentation as 'playing God' and whether prolonging human life was always justifiable. Next, each group shared their response; the final group reviewed each group's response. This process prepared the students for the main ideas presented in a multi-text study including Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, a film on cloning, a short story, and an article regarding cellular memory and organ donation (Locke & Cleary, 2011). The discussion improved the student's awareness of how technology affects people in their own community, and students gained a sense of agency regarding the ability to question medical advice or treatment (Locke & Cleary, 2011).

**Use of class discussion of themes and representations.** Student empowerment to share ideas, question text, and challenge concepts in open dialogue is a goal of critical theory. The power to question leadership is important for promoting the ideals of democracy. Critical literacy supports teaching students to be equal inquirers of text for the sake of learning. Locke and

Cleary (2011) drew upon Fairclough (1992) to define discourse as a way to do more than represent the world but also to signify and construct meaning (Locke & Cleary, 2011). The use of discourse and reflexivity were used as students responded to multiple texts and media regarding the same historical event. To address issues of justice the story of Rubin Carter—a prize-fighter convicted of murder and later exonerated—was examined. The class study included Bob Dylan song lyrics, the film *The Hurricane*, Carter’s autobiography, and websites that provided different versions of the night of the crime for which Carter was tried and imprisoned (Locke & Cleary, 2011). After studying each form of information, class discussions aided in student attention to the use of language and a writer’s ability to shape meaning. During the course of the study, students were swayed in favor of Carter’s innocence by some sources and then convinced of his guilt by others. The entire process developed student awareness of how language creates meaning that is effective beyond a text. Other studies also advanced this concern for truth in representation.

In discussing rap lyrics and videos, the students in Stovall’s (2006) study described not taking the lyrics seriously; however, in class discussion they recognized that some people do not like rap because of the content. The topic opened up dialogue regarding how people can take different texts and videos seriously or not, yet some messages are disguised by the visual imagery. This was noted as relevant to artists losing control of what is in their videos based on producer choices rather than the imagery being representational of the artists’ lives (Stovall, 2006). Acknowledging different realities and perspectives regarding artistic representations can lead to greater appreciation of ethnic diversity and socio-economic conditions in society.

Most of the research considered in this review focuses on increasing secondary student awareness of social issues, or democratic consciousness. However, some critical literature

articles discuss work with middle school students. Soares and Wood (2010) address the use of Ciardello's (2004) model for applying critical literary in social studies instruction. Ciardello's model includes five themes for guiding questions that promote student learning and understanding. After "examining multiple perspectives and finding authentic voice" the next three themes are "recognize social barriers and cross borders of separation," "find one's identity," "the call to service" (Soares & Wood, 2010, pp. 488-493). Together, these themes along with guiding questions help students to recognize and respond to examples of exclusion or discrimination. Students are encouraged to appreciate their own identity and culture as they discuss and contrast a sense of self with characters or the historical figures studied (Soares & Wood, 2010). The call to service promotes a sense of civic participation and meets the goals of critical theory to act on one's acquired understanding to increase social injustice.

### **Critical Literacy for Student Voice**

Critical literacy provides a means for hearing student voice as democratic participation. When students articulate their understanding of social issues, they can also brainstorm ideas for change and improvement. In the research articles referenced, a common result of the student analysis was the ability to express awareness of how writers or authors affect their audience. Students identified how the use of language created a perspective about a topic or character. Researchers noted that improved student reading skills allowed them to respond by recognizing the similarities and, or, differences between the texts and their own lived experiences (Buckley-Marudas, 2016; Dyches, 2018; Locke & Cleary, 2011; Simmons, 2016; Soares & Wood, 2010; Stovall, 2006). Individuals, and writers, are affected by the time and place in which they live; thus, the ability to appreciate how positionality functions within a text adds to a reader's skills in evaluating factors that limit or promote democracy. Critical literacy encourages reading that

notices the social dynamics that critical theory challenges: social dominance, oppression, and injustice.

**Student connection to positionality in text compared to own position in world.** An important component of student voice is the ability to discuss a text based on how it corresponds to one's own situation. The multi-step analysis used in Simmons' (2016) study noticed specific diction and style choices that created psychological effects as a result of class hierarchy in the Harry Potter novels (Simmons, 2016). The term *position* can be examined in terms of geographic location, job or role within a company or organization, or social status based on cultural or economic factors. In Simmons' (2016) study, students recognized how author J.K. Rowling presents class and race prejudice through the characterization of the elf Kreacher (Simmons, 2016). The text provided a fictional situation with real world implications. Simmons (2016) explains that a teaching objective for the unit was to increase her students' awareness of their own privileged social status (Simmons, 2016). Education that exposes dominant ideology and promotes student voice and action to challenge injustice resulting from that ideology is a critical literacy goal (Dyches, 2018; Soares & Wood, 2010; Wilson, 2014).

The choice of a popular work of fiction can be motivating for students. The option to read any of the novels in the Harry Potter series raises the issue of text within a curriculum. In a study focused on the influence of curricula on student learning, Dyches (2016) noted that students recognized that curricula can reinforce hegemony. In Dyches' (2016) study, the high school world literature students realized that limitations to specific topics or materials presented a skewed belief in a universal ability to pursue the 'American Dream' (Dyches, 2016, p. 244). Student reading and discussion demonstrated a new understanding of how racism in the U.S. has consistently limited opportunities for people of color (Dyches, 2016).

Soares and Wood (2010) similarly note that students benefit by learning to recognize whose voice is heard in a text; using guided questions, even middle school students can become aware of their own perspective in response. Citing Ciardiello's (2004) second theme, finding authentic voice, prompts students to discuss and evaluate the texts they study while developing and expressing their own position (Soares & Wood, 2010).

The issue of social position was also examined by Mendoza (2017). Based on a concern for how pre-service teachers learn to address positionality, she incorporated a unit for her university education students. Mendoza (2017) claimed that developing the significance of place-based knowledge adds to critical literacy because power dynamics in a place and about a place are part of what establishes the dominant ideology. Mendoza (2017) concluded, that pre-service teachers benefit from learning to include place-based awareness as a component of student knowledge so that discussion and analysis of texts can increase students' understanding of different perspectives (Mendoza 2017). The methods Mendoza (2017) used for her study were descriptive; initially, she gathered the written responses to worksheets she created for her students based on a museum visit. The study was not expansive; however, it relates to critical theory in understanding the significance of social power and white, colonial dominant control in the Americas. Data regarding discussion was key to demonstrating student questioning and understanding. Additionally, the study included the use of materials other than literature as "text" for promoting topical awareness.

#### **Student choice of supplemental materials to enrich or enhance understanding.**

Selecting text for student reading and study is a core teacher task. While humanities teachers are often provided a district selected anthology and a survey of history textbook, the selection of specific texts to be read, discussed, and written about is generally a matter of teacher



professional choice. Providing opportunities for students to make their own reading or research text selections is one means of bringing democratic practices into the classroom (Breunig, 2005; Buckley-Marudas, 2016; Dyches, 2018; Janks, 2013).

The final step in Dyches (2018) study of injustice provided students time to research a lesser known, but large-scale injustice that was currently occurring in a foreign country. Students then shared their findings regarding the realities of other lived experiences (Dyches, 2018). Stovall (2006) completed his study with a challenge to the students to choose material that would confront the deceptions about life in the U.S. as presented in the White or Anglo centric social studies curriculum. Two student suggestions included the chapter “Slavery Without Submission, Emancipation without Freedom” from Howard Zinn’s (1997) *A People’s History of the United States*, and selections from Talib Greene’s (2001) *Reflection Eternal* album (Stovall, 2006). These choices indicate a race-based perspective on U.S. history that challenges the mainstream history texts. These student choice selections diversify the voices contributing to a study and discussion of the condition of democracy in America. The situation presented by the last part of Stovall’s unit, in which the students’ choice of material for enriching their study of U.S. history included minority experiences, demonstrates what several researchers describe as the opportunity for students to express connections between their authentic sense of culture and their academic environment (Breunig, 2005; Mendoza, 2017; Okello & Quaye, 2018, Stovall, 2016). This process can be both creative and significant for challenging hegemonic ideology, or the social status quo.

The article “Media literacy art education: Logos, culture jamming and activism (Chung & Kirby, 2009) discusses a unit of study for deciphering advertisements. The focus of the unit connects to Marcuse’s claims regarding consumerism as a mind-numbing aspect of capitalist

control. Marcuse claimed that people need to be aware of their own manipulation (Marcuse, 1964). Chung and Kirby quote Kalle Lasn (1999) the founder of Adbusters Media Foundation who claimed advertising is toxic, a form of pollution for humans. Adbusters considers corporate advertising to be a psychological project that interferes with people's lives (Chung & Kirby, 2009). Thus, to question it and challenge the claims and assumptions advertising makes is a form of critical literacy. Their unit includes discussion of logos as art or design that are meant to be attractive and memorable. The student work examples incorporated the logos studied but placed them upside-down or backwards with added text or images to demonstrate the product's actual effect. One example used the same font and colors that appears on a Coca Cola product, but states "obesity" (Chung & Kirby, 2009, p. 37). The student ads were shared and discussed in class, and an additional action taken based on their new knowledge was to post a message on their own social media site. Another example of student response was an art project to make t-shirts with their re-imagined ads as a "living billboard" (Chung & Kirby, 2009, p. 37). This form of critical literacy powerfully demonstrates students actively challenging the dominant ideology for the benefit of others.

**Student choice regarding point of view: challenging ideas in text or authorial choices.** Critical literacy teaches students to question meaning in a text based on a variety of factors. The choice of materials and the subject matter of the texts can be questioned to identify how various topics are privileged and other topics are ignored as educational subject matter. Teaching students to question a writer's point of view and purpose, and to question the use of specific diction and style elements are common steps of critical literacy pedagogy. Because the people are the authority in a democratic state, the power to question is essential in a democracy. Thus, providing space and time for student questioning of a writer's position and ideas is an

essential part of critical literacy. Alison Cleary's main finding mentioned that using multiple and diverse texts facilitated her students' understanding of how writers position readers. Intertextual study was especially useful with the limited English learners. Comparing theme related texts helped to improve student recognition of portrayal, version, representation, and construction as language components. Students then challenged the texts' claims or ideas based on their own perspectives (Locke & Cleary, 2011). Arguably, students can learn to identify these narrative components without challenging an author's position. Thus, the instructional decision to promote student questioning to develop a broadened consciousness of social issues is a pedagogical choice.

### **Review of Methodological Issues**

#### **Action Research Study**

Cho (2015) conducted action research to understand how preservice and inservice teachers, participating in graduate education and in-service classes, perceived challenges to utilizing critical literacy in their instruction. The findings were based on self-reflective writing assigned to improve the teachers' practices. These reflections and other data were collected as online discussion posts, electronic portfolios, and field notes from classes. The results from both groups indicated that the standards-based mind set and focusing on test results in education creates obstacles for implementing critical literacy.

#### **Case Study**

Dyches (2018) conducted a case study with secondary English students who analyzed injustices presented in their curriculum and the how the choice of which literature is presented in a school curricula privileges specific voices over other voices. Recognition of the privileging or silencing of different voices or representations developed student cognizance of other examples

of privilege and injustice in society. Critical literacy was found to be a significant praxis for secondary learning.

Mendoza (2017) studied her graduate education students' responses to a place-based literacy lesson using case study research. To improve her students' awareness of the significance of place, Mendoza collected answers to guided questions during a field trip experience. The goal was to increase awareness among pre-service teachers of the significance of place and representation of different voices in the materials presented for literacy. Inquiry based methods were presented as key for providing a rich learning context.

Chang (2013) completed a 9-year case study of the long-term effects of critical pedagogy, community engagement, and sociocultural learning. Chang tracked 26 of his former elementary students; he interviewed individuals as well as groups of students and parents. Also, he took observation notes and finalized the study by collecting narrative data on two students, one Latina and one Asian-American male, throughout their high school experiences. He tracked their responses to issues of race, agency, literacy, and teaching methods over time. The finding suggests that early counter-hegemonic pedagogy that develops critical and sociocultural skills lead to engrained social awareness and stronger democratic practices.

### **Ethnographic Study**

Stovall (2006) used practical and theoretical lenses to defend the use of hip-hop and aspects of popular culture as relevant contextualizing material for studies in the humanities. The result of the ethnographical study of student responses to an art form reflective of their own experiences promoted the use of rap as a creative technique for developing critical literacy in high school students. Included in the study was an explanation of participant responses to specific lyrics and discussion ideas. Stovall also described the class collaborative work to

develop a lesson that allowed for student choice of the text to be studied. The process exemplified democratic classroom practices and an effective approach for addressing representations of race and racism over time.

Buckley-Marudas (2016) completed a case study with an ethnographic perspective based on layering texts related to a foreign culture. The article focused more on the use of digital learning than how the students were impacted by the study of other cultures. The study intended to add to the scholarship regarding digital learning by examining how multiple, collaborative, and simultaneous text usage created a layered conceptual approach to learning. The study was situated in a classroom where students had constant technology access. The use of technology was substantial; however, the quality of the student discourse or critical literacy skills were not distinctly identified.

Epstein and Gist (2015) implemented a case study using culturally relevant pedagogy, including critical literacy, to develop critical consciousness. Three New York City public school teachers used strategic instruction for a sustained unit focusing on race and racism. Focusing on racial grammar, recognition of racial hierarchy's psychological effects, and addressing race directly were the three elements of instruction. Formal interviews were conducted, and lesson observations and field notes were collected. A result of the study was the extension, affirmation and challenge to the students' understanding of race. A recommendation for further study was that the intersectionality of gender, sexuality, class, immigrant status and race be recognized as identity markers to be examined using culturally responsive teaching.

### **Literary and Discourse Analysis Focus**

Simmons (2016) studied the instructional use of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) as an instructional tool for developing critical literacy skills in high school students. Monitoring of

student responses to using appraisal, modality, and identification analyses assisted student recognition of positionality. This awareness increased student confidence and accuracy in defending or refuting authorial claims. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) was linked to critical discourse analysis (CDA), which promotes student writing and speaking for expressing critical consciousness.

Locke and Cleary (2011) explain the results of a 2-year project examining literature teaching in multicultural classrooms. The article focuses on the results of the study in Alison Cleary's high school class. The methods used scaffolding, metalinguistic understanding, and critical literacy discourse. The students benefitted from units that included multiple texts addressing similar subject matter. The students struggled with the critical literacy skills, but they all demonstrated progress on the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) exam. The ability to question the author's perspective and the promotion of student voice and agency caused a noticeable shift in the students' interest and understanding of the texts studied.

Collin and Reich (2015) adapted Gee's (2005) method of discourse analysis to compare two high school history lessons that used different methodologies. One lesson plan was from Reading Like a Historian (RHL), created by the Stanford History Education Group, and the other lesson plan was from the Zinn Education Project (ZEP); it was based on a critical literacy model. The discourse analysis considered the lexical, syntactical, and semantic patterns in the text used for addressing social understanding. As a result of the study comparison, the Zinn lesson, while modeled on critical literacy, did not lead to critical literacy skills or awareness being demonstrated.

## **Mixed Method Study**

Ralfe (2009) conducted a mixed-method study using questionnaires, tests, interviews, recorded lessons, photographs and field notes, and a case study to determine how well critical literacy can affect student attitudes and understanding of gender. The researcher aimed to evaluate critical literacy's ability to assist student recognition of inequalities and injustices, and to improve student awareness of their own language usage regarding gender. The study tracked the implementation of a new state curriculum that emphasized social justice, fundamental human rights, and democracy (Ralfe, 2009). The specific material promoted student questioning of portrayals of women. The study results noticed an enhanced awareness of gender issues, primarily among female students; however, stereotypes and gender role expectations did not make relevant shifts.

## **Synthesis of Research Findings**

The literature suggests that critical pedagogy includes a variety of methods that support critical literacy skills. Scaffolded reading strategies, various small group and whole class questioning and dialogue, and specific close reading linguistic analyses were discussed by multiple researchers. The use of critical literacy techniques was found to be valuable for addressing a variety of topics that relate to a core goal of critical theory: social justice. Qualitative studies demonstrate that, as a result of critical literacy learning, both advanced readers and second language readers develop abilities to understand and question authorial perspective, recognize instances or portrayals of injustice and oppression, become adept at articulating their own responses to the subject matter, and acknowledge or even pursue democratic actions to affect social change.

## Coverage

I used the Concordia University Portland library to find research studies and articles for my study. Both the three-dimensional stacks and the electronic library were beneficial to my research. Databases, including EBSCO, Education Source, and ProQuest Education, provided relevant articles regarding research studies of critical pedagogy, critical literacy, and democracy education. The electronic catalogue allowed access to many scholarly journal articles using JSTOR, Sage Journals Online, Taylor and Francis Online, and Wiley Online Library; these resources provided examples of how secondary educators use critical literacy in their work. The writing of critical theorists, particularly the works of John Dewey, bell hooks, Herbert Marcuse, Jurgen Habermas, Henry Giroux, Cornell West and Paulo Freire were available in hard copy in the library stacks or purchasable on-line. Thus, primary philosophical texts, education articles, research study articles, and educational reports contributed to the breadth of my research.

In attempting to understand democracy from an idealist historical theory, I reviewed the Enlightenment writers Locke and Rousseau, the 18th century educational ideals of Jefferson, the 19th century democratic conceptions of Mills, and perspectives of several 19th century educational writers including Mann, Barnard, and Whitman; finally I read the late 19th and 20th century writings of Dewey that connects democracy and education. The connection between Dewey's ideas of democracy and education were reinforced by the Frankfurt School critical theorists whose adamancy regarding democracy and education were strong responses to the Third Reich. The Frankfurt School writers Marcuse and Habermas were contemporaries of Freire whose pedagogical work focused on critical consciousness and the significance of dialogue and reflection in the learning process. I read chapters or complete works of these writers to solidify and deepen my understanding of critical theory.



Critical pedagogy research demonstrated that there are several teaching methods that promote critical literacy. While most of the articles I found described studies in English or language arts classes, a few were situated in social studies classes or focused on teacher education. This predominance prompted me to focus my own study on the effects critical literacy teaching methods have in my instruction. I chose to examine how my use of critical literacy pedagogy affects my English literature students, rather than my history students, because there were more examples of methods for critical literacy to which I could compare my own work and with which I could support my own instructional practices.

I found studies from Canada, South Africa, and New Zealand that increased my understanding of how critical literacy skills are universally relevant for democratic consciousness development. There were many articles available describing critical literacy studies in Europe and China, but I chose not to consult more foreign examples because my interest is in improving the development of democracy education in the United States. Thus, most of the studies I read related to public education in the U.S.

My own work as a teacher in an International Baccalaureate diploma program sparked my interest in the connections between the critical literacy literature and the aims and objectives of the English and history courses I teach. I also recognized that the Approaches to Teaching and Learning that ground the classroom guidelines for IB instruction overlap with the tenets of critical pedagogy. Thus, using access to the IB online resources for instructors, I identified key connections between the IB Approaches to Teaching and Learning and critical literacy.

With the exception of democracy and critical theory philosophers, and reports on federal guidelines for public education, all the materials I studied were published in the 21st century. The materials discussed in the conceptual framework and literature review come from the

following academic topics: democracy, democracy education, critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical literacy, critical race literacy, critical literacy methods. As mentioned, the IB materials are accessible to trained IB instructors on a private web site. Together, these materials cultivated my interest in how democracy is developed through education and the extent to which the IB Approaches to Teaching and Learning are effective methods of critical pedagogy for developing students' democratic consciousness.

### **Critique of Previous Research**

All of the literature reviewed for this study used qualitative methods of research, a few studies included mixed methods (Chang, 2013; Dyches, 2018; Locke & Cleary 2011; Ralfe, 2009). Only one study included a several years-long case study of 26 students that concluded with a focused study of two students from the original group (Chang, 2013). Consistent among these studies was the use of student work, observations of classroom lessons, and interviews or small group discussions that recorded student comments and reflections.

The studies that explain the use of specific literary analysis methods are beneficial to my planning for a specific study of how critical literacy affects democratic consciousness. Locke and Cleary (2011) referenced a reading and group analysis strategy called “bus stop activity” (p. 128). While a simple process, it is described as functioning in a context with second language students who are clarifying and synthesizing ideas from informational texts in connection to a historical novel. These skills are vital to developing democratic consciousness; students cannot recognize and question injustice or privilege without identifying how it is conveyed. The process in this activity can be adapted for practicing identification of details and synthesizing information using material at different reading levels.

The bus stop process includes having discussion prompts; then setting time for students to find details in the text that address the prompts. This is followed by time to work in groups, which then summarize the information before sharing it with the class. The procedure-based lesson allows all students an opportunity to read, reason, speak, and collaborate. Prompts can include challenges to the text, promoting student questioning of the claims or perspectives presented. The activity indicates that a class is divided into small groups for discussion and sharing; the final group summarizes what the other groups have shared. A modification to the process presented is to allow the final group to express any reasons they have to defend a different perspective.

On a more advanced level, Simmons (2016) discusses systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) which are “linguistic tools” (p. 193) for questioning an author’s use of language to develop student critical consciousness. Simmons explains the use of these forms of explication to examine themes such as different types of oppression. The study concluded that using these literary skills was a “form of emancipatory education” (p. 205) that increased student awareness of the power of language and of their own responsibility as citizens to speak and act in opposition to all forms of oppression. The methods produced a positive effect that seems replicable. However, it is also a developmental process. Depending on the amount of time available for a study, using SFL and CDA may not show the same depth of critical consciousness results.

The two studies using ethnographic methods demonstrate different effects. One was focused on the use of new technology and digital literacy more than critical literacy (Buckley-Marudas, 2016). The other study was specifically a critical literacy study emphasizing representations of race (Stovall, 2006). While both studies tracked how students responded to

specific texts and how they interacted in the process of understanding what was read, the different objectives of each study exemplify how classroom dynamics are significant to the learning process for critical consciousness. Buckley-Marudas (2016) argues that the research showed student ability to track their own learning and to gain critical literacy skills.

The Buckley-Marudas (2016) study describes the use of overlapping texts and online collaboration, including evaluation of text validity as source material. One project indicated that the students were working on gathering information to hold a mock trial of Cortes' men for crimes against the Aztecs. This is a very compelling topic for understanding the history of the Americas from a critical literacy perspective; yet, the article provides only a cursory narrative and no details of how the reading impacted the students' consciousness of democracy. Thus, while the project addressed an impressive topic for promoting critical literacy, it is not clear from the article whether the learning included substantive recognition of the cultural oppression at the heart of the topic, nor if there was any follow-up activity or reflection as a result of the learning. The article does indicate that access to digital text can be valuable for critical literacy.

In contrast, Stovall (2006) explains the effects of the six-workshop study of hip-hop lyrics as ethnically relevant to the broader course topic of Society and Social Inequalities. The study specifically references bell hooks "engaged pedagogy" (2003, p. 586) as the intentional promotion of student participation in the learning process. Student journals were noted as one of the sources of data for the study, along with student evaluations that indicated their likes, dislikes, and suggestions for workshop improvement. While both studies discuss learning and suggest different means of developing critical literacy, Stovall's (2006) inclusion of student journals, opportunities to provide feedback on the classes, and an indication that critical literacy

skills were demonstrated by the students is a stronger example of what bolsters an informative critical literacy research study.

A limitation of this literature review, in terms of balance of methodologies, is the absence of quantitative studies related to critical literacy. Several articles regarding democracy and quantitative reports on studies of democratic participation have added to my understanding of current concern for how democracy is supported and how it is experienced (Economist, 2018; Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, 2018; Hacking, Blackmore, Bullock, Bunnell, & Martin, 2018; Thomas & Hartley, 2010). Based on the literature, I aim to conduct a qualitative, critical action research study examining how students understand democracy and how my implementation of critical literacy methods, used with the IB Approaches to Teaching and Learning, affect student democratic consciousness.

## **Chapter 2 Summary**

This chapter identifies democracy as a political theory and a form of government that ideally provides people personal freedom and personal agency regarding how society functions. The role of public education in the development and maintenance of democracy in the United States is discussed historically and in terms of how critical theory led to the development of critical pedagogy as a means for teaching that promotes democratic consciousness.

The contributions of key theorists, John Dewey, Herbert Marcuse, Jurgen Habermas, and Paulo Freire were identified to show the progression of reasoning that has promoted education for democracy. Critical theory was then connected to the expectations of critical pedagogy. The praxis of critical theory includes the following: learning that emphasizes student ability to evaluate the logic and claims of a text, use of questioning and discussion to challenge the dominant ideology, developing habits of reflection to recognize one's own understanding, and

developing skills that promote democratic participation or efforts leading to social transformation.

Several pedagogues were then discussed. The arguments of Marcuse (1978) and West (2004) were presented to show how critical literacy, using literature as art, can demonstrate democratic consciousness through discourse. The writing of Davis (2012) and hooks (2003) was presented to discuss the importance of critical literacy for addressing issues of race. Finally, the International Baccalaureate diploma program's Approaches to Teaching and Approaches to Learning (ibo.org) were explained as an example praxis for including critical literacy in secondary education for the purpose of promoting a democratic consciousness in students.

The literature review demonstrated the variety of critical literacy methods used in classroom settings. The majority of studies discussed shared the findings of research conducted with secondary students, while a few studies focused on adult learners or middle school students. The literature included some articles that were reports regarding benefits or challenges to using critical literacy. The research provides examples of critical literacy praxis for increasing student close reading skills (Locke & Cleary 2011; Simmons, 2016; Wilson, 2014), recognition of authorial perspective (Collin & Reich, 2015; Dyches, 2018; Locke & Cleary, 2011; Soares & Wood, 2010), strengthening student identity and agency (Chang, 2013; Cleary & Locke, 2011; Epstein & Gist, 2013; Pennell, 2019; Ralfe, 2009; Stovall, 2006) and promoting greater awareness of privilege and the ability of students to take a stand against injustice (Dyches, 2018; Janks, 2013).

This chapter provides evidence that pedagogic approaches for teaching democratic consciousness are multifaceted. I have indicated the key claims of critical theory and provided an explanation for why a pedagogy for supporting democracy is necessary if freedom and equality

are to be actualized. Finally, I have shared research findings that exemplify how critical literacy provides a variety of methods for supporting student learning that develops a democratic consciousness.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The pronoun “we” is simple yet ambiguous. When James Madison chose the pronoun *we* to begin the social contract that created a revised government for the new and vulnerable United States of America, the realization of Enlightenment ideals became firmly grounded in North America. Arguably, the influence of written text is proven most powerfully in the preamble to the US Constitution. It is a document that propelled Western civilization in a new direction as the concept of government based on the will of the people was established. To guarantee that the people understand their role in their own governance, public education was instituted.

Philosopher and education theorist John Dewey’s perspective boils down to the contention that there is no democracy without education or education without democracy (Dewey, 1916/2004). Currently, political, economic, and social conditions in the United States and around the world require that the wealthiest, most technologically advanced nation take action for the benefit of the common, global good. Improvements in democratic participation can begin with public education maintaining an intentional focus on teaching for a democratic consciousness.

#### **Problem Statement**

I studied how teaching methods in public education are applied specifically for the development of a democratic consciousness because the quality of life on Earth is affected by the stability of democracy in the United States. Following the Cold War, national reforms in education emphasized college and career readiness. The 1996 National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future published the report “What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future” that promoted changes in public education for more stringent training for teachers, more demanding measures of academic achievement, and career preparation (Bullough, Burbank, Gess-Newsome, Kauchak & Kennedy, 1998). The 1996 document focused on teaching standards



and learning standards; however, in the early 2000s, the No Child Left Behind Act focused on student test scores in core subjects (Klein, 2015). The most common testing focused on math, reading and writing without attention to citizenship or the role of the individual in a democracy.

The role of public education as the means for maintaining or improving the workforce has arguably outweighed its role as the guardian of democracy in America. However, an emphasis on improving social justice and the quality of life for all is the main concern of critical theorists, and critical literacy reinforces the benefits of democratic society. Thus, I investigated how critical pedagogy can be purposive in teaching for a conceptual understanding of democracy and an awareness of how critical literacy skills can be used for democratic participation. Specifically, I used the IB Approaches to Teaching and Learning to discover the extent to which this methodology enhances student awareness of democracy as action based. I evaluated my instruction based on student understanding and skill development that demonstrated a democratic consciousness.

### **Research Questions**

The research question for this study was: *To what extent do critical literacy teaching methods, as implemented with the International Baccalaureate's Approaches to Teaching and Learning, develop students' democratic consciousness and their skills for participatory democracy.* Supporting this umbrella question, I examined how critical literacy methods add to the skills needed to be participants in a democratic society. The attributes of critical pedagogy include language analysis, literary criticism, questioning of the text and the author's intent, reflection on one's own understanding, along with oral and written communication skills; thus, my sub-questions further asked:

- To what extent does my teaching of language analysis techniques, such as critical discourse analysis and the application of literary theories for interpretation, demonstrably affect my students' recognition of authorial intent and the manipulation of meaning?
- To what extent does my facilitation of Socratic dialogue affect my students' ability to question and articulate an independent perspective on social issues that originate in the assigned text and connect to students' lived experiences?
- To what extent does my teaching that develops formal written and oral communication skills affect my students' ability to act for social change or improvement?
- To what extent does my instruction for reflection affect my students' democratic consciousness?

These sub-questions maintained a unit-to-unit focus on my teaching methods that consistently use critical literacy skills. The topics related to democracy in each work of literature were different and each author's writing style is different. My expectation was that students would learn, relearn, or reinforce the literary analysis methods and literary criticism perspectives that promoted their ability to read, write, question, and respond to the texts. The formative and summative assessments in each cycle were designed to create the student data that I then analyzed to determine the effectiveness of my instruction. Most importantly, each cycle was meant to allow me time to reflect on which critical literacy strategies were working or not working as I taught the novels *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948/2003), *The Samurai's Garden* (1994), and the non-fiction book *Enrique's Journey* (Nazario, 2013).

### **Purpose of the Study**

I examined the development, in my own students, of a conceptual understanding of democracy over three consecutive units of study. Each unit was centered on a text that raised

issues related to governance, the effects of culture on social behaviors and political voice, rule of law and the effects of prejudice on justice, the differences between civil and legal rights, and the significance of citizenship. In response to my instructional methods, I monitored their understanding of these issues by observing and examining their critical literacy skill development. Their ability to articulate what they thought and understood, as well as what concepts they were grappling with was demonstrated in their formative work and summative assessments. Assignments were designed to increase their conceptual understanding of democracy and to foster their interest in and ability to participate in democratic actions, such as the letters they wrote to elected officials. My critical action research plan used an iterative process that allowed students to learn, demonstrate, reflect, and improve their reading, questioning, and speaking skills.

### **Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem**

Critical theory challenges the ideology of the dominant power group whose beliefs and practices negatively impact others (Brookfield, 2006). Critical pedagogy has been influenced primarily by the writing of Paulo Freire (1970) whose seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is referenced by scholars and educators such as Henry Giroux, bell hooks, and Stephen Brookfield. The ability of students to recognize their own agency and the importance of individual voice within a democracy are key to Freire's pedagogy. Developing student voice and student self-awareness of having a role in shaping one's reality are objectives of critical literacy. When students understand how individual voice can add to the societal discussion of governance, when they become aware of their own position on issues and feel secure in expressing their perspective and interests, then they are utilizing a democratic consciousness.

Theorists and studies describe critical literacy as teaching practices that develops specific

skills to promote a student's ability to question and challenge the dominant ideology. For example, the use of pamphlets, one-one-one dialogue, and public rallies, showed the willingness of African American students, along with white members of Students for Democratic Society (SDS), to support racial justice and curriculum change. Their efforts demonstrated democratic participation based on critical literacy. Their actions led to the Free Speech Movement at UC Berkeley in the early 1960s (Kitchell, Griffin, Selver & Most, 1990).

The ability to write, to feel confident in questioning social and political traditions that are discriminatory, and to read and analyze documents that express injustice are the skills critical pedagogy develops. High school students can be taught to sharpen their reading skills by using different forms of literary criticism that allow them to recognize how writers use language to shape meaning. Close reading also allows readers to position themselves in response to the ideas within a text. Means for guiding student evaluation of writing include simple observation of specific diction, syntax, and literary techniques to tease out deeper meaning. Specific literacy teaching methods for guiding student analysis of a text include the systemic functional linguistics (SFL), critical discourse analysis (DCA), or Ciardiello's (2004) five themes to evaluate an author's language choices and their effects (Dyches, 2018; Janks, 2013; Locke & Cleary, 2011; Pennell, 2019; Simmons, 2016; Stovall, 2006). My critical action research design includes teaching new historical literary criticism, structural literary criticism, and critical discourse analysis (CDA) as language analysis methods.

In each instructional cycle, critical discourse analysis was taught along with a type of literary criticism. As mentioned in chapter one, literary criticism is an approach to reading language arts that focuses on a specific perspective. My study first introduced historical context to examine how the time period in which the author wrote affected what was written, and new

historical criticism presented a perspective on the time period identified and described within the text itself. We read biographic information about the authors and historical background explanations of the time periods for the setting of each work. The second type of criticism I introduced was structural. Structural criticism considers the structure of the text itself and how the structure shapes the meaning of the literature (Eagleton, 1983). In the first novel studied, *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Paton, 1948/2003), I guided the students in learning about historical context for racism in South Africa and for applying new historical criticism. In class and in online discussions we discussed the language of the embedded letters and speeches in the text; we focused on how the epistolary additions affected the students' understanding of the time period and the issues of justice in the novel.

With the second novel, *The Samurai's Garden* (Tsukiyama, 1994), instruction began by revisiting new historical criticism, and based on the effectiveness of the teaching methods in the first cycle I revised my teaching strategies. For *The Samurai's Garden*, I introduced and guided students to apply structural criticism. Making connections to the prior novel, we discussed how letter's affect the perspective and tone of narration. *The Samurai's Garden* is written entirely in epistolary form; thus, it was essential that students understood how letter-writing as a narrative form affects a reader's relationship with the content of the text. The ability to recognize Tsukiyama's use of epistolary form was supported by lessons focused on structural criticism and the critical discourse analysis worksheets I created.

Another method of critical literacy used in this study was the Socratic seminar. Students were taught to participate in discussion of a text by questioning an author's intent and style choices. Students were taught to prepare for seminars. They first read and annotated the text. The type of annotation work completed was based on the type of criticism being applied and or the

language analysis completed on a specific text passage. Students wrote questions prior to coming to a seminar. During the in-class Socratic seminars, half the students were part of an oral conversation and half the students wrote comments and question in response to the discussion as they listened. During online discussions, all students were able to post questions. Students who participated in the classroom were able to articulate what they found interesting or confusing; they were able to question word choice or character development or share a personal response to a specific passage. They asked the other students if their responses were similar or different. Additionally, observations regarding point of view lead to questions regarding perspective limitations. Questions that I raised included changes in the colloquial meaning of words over time and use of characterization to critique social issues. Additionally, I presented questions regarding the range of ethnic voices presented by the writers being studied. The role of identity as a topic has been a common issue for critical theorists and critical literacy researchers when discussing voice (Brookfield, 2006; Dyches, 2018; Freire, 1970; Locke & Cleary, 2011; Simmons, 2016; Wilson, 2014). Intertextuality, comparing treatment of ideas or topics between and across different texts and media, is another method of critical literacy that promotes student analysis. Multiple materials providing information on the same topic can promote student recognition of how writers affect meaning and how different forms of expression can enhance or manipulate a reader's understanding. Examples of these texts include poetry, drama, prose fiction or non-fiction, advertising, social media, and film (Chung & Kirby, 2009; Davis, 2010; Locke & Cleary, 2011).

Critical literacy includes praxis expectations for teaching and learning objectives for students (Allen, Hancock, Starker-Glass & Lewis, 2017). The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program includes critical literacy expectations within its comprehensive educational

framework. The IBO educational plan identifies approaches to teaching and approaches to learning with explanations of each. In the published explanation of the Approaches to Teaching and Learning, IB lists specific praxis actions and demonstrable student skills that promote the traits IB considers valuable for all students: knowledgeable, thinker, reflective, caring, risk taker, balanced, communicator, open minded, inquisitive, principled (Approaches to Teaching and Learning, 2015). Arguably, these traits exemplify critical theory in practice. The academic success of IB students in college and university work has, in fact, been documented, but there is a scarcity of information regarding the specific effects of critical literacy skills implemented by the IB Approaches to Teaching and Approaches to Learning on high school student consciousness for democratic participation.

### **Research Design**

Among the different qualitative research designs, action research is meant to promote constant improvement in one's own teaching practices (Schmuck, 2006). The theoretical work of action research is written to guide further change and improvement and critical action research adds the goals of critical theory that are relevant to my goal of improving teaching that develops student democratic consciousness. The creation of action research is credited to Kurt Lewin who developed an iterative process of information gathering and reflection in the 1940s (Mills, 2014). There are a few types of action research, but they all focus on how educators improve their craft and assume responsibility for their professional growth (Mills, 2014). Critical action research emerges from critical theory and seeks to develop teaching that promotes enlightenment and increases student awareness of social injustice; it is committed to promoting an understanding of democratic participation for social change (Mills, 2014). These objectives align with critical

pedagogy and the critical theory goal of educating for social improvement. Critical action research can be used to examine the effectiveness of specific teaching methods.

This research design worked well with my interest in the connection between literacy skills and actions necessary for democratic participation in society. As a teacher-researcher, my goal was to better understand the efficacy of my own pedagogy in relation to my students' development of a democratic consciousness; thus, critical action research was an appropriate research design. My critical action research plan was designed to implement language analysis methods and literary criticism approaches, gather data, reflect on the data, and revise my teaching methods over three consecutive units of study.

Mezirow (1991) described the development of human knowledge as a process of schema growth, or the expansion of knowledge of a specific topic, through experiences that build or add to one's existing understanding of a given topic. The lessons introducing the critical discourse analysis method (CDA) built on what the students already knew about grammar and syntax, and the lessons on literary criticism built on what the students already knew about literary devices that shape the meaning of prose and poetry. The new lessons included a CDA worksheet and a document analysis worksheet. The CDA worksheet was designed to demonstrate and practice student coding or identification of words and phrases that shape text meaning. The use of critical discourse analysis skills was meant to increase student recognition of an author's use of informal or formal language, the positive or negative language that conveys setting or situation, and the reader's sense of connection to her or his own experiences (Fairclough, 1995). In the original research design, I intended to use a systemic functional linguistics (SFL) worksheet to demonstrate and prompt practice identifying the elements of register: who is speaking and to whom, the tonal and situational context created in the writing, and the themes and cohesive



devices (Schleppegrell, 2004). However, due to the shift from classroom instruction to online instruction I decided that more time to focus on improving the critical discourse analysis skills using the CDA worksheet and to not add a second type of language analysis. After using the CDA worksheet with passages I chose for the students in cycle one, students were asked to choose passages from the texts to code and then discuss in their weekly journal work during cycle two. The students were asked to consider writing that related to an attribute of democracy.

In the third cycle, students chose the articles they read to understand different refugee situations, and the document analysis worksheets guided them in identifying how specific words and clauses affected their understanding of different refugee crises. My qualitative study aimed to include lessons that examined attributes of democracy and democratic participation in consecutive works of fictional and non-fiction literature. The three-cycle process was meant to develop a strong understanding of democracy both conceptually and as a way of participating in civic society.

I monitored the effects of my instruction by assessing the acquisition and development of my students' critical literacy skills. Monitoring included observation and evaluation of what students demonstrated in their reading analysis, reflections, discussions, questioning, and their different forms of written and oral assessments that were meant to fostering democratic participation.

I worked with high school freshmen specifically because they have the greatest opportunity for growth over time. I considered my instruction to be a starting point for the students' use of critical literary methods. The application of literary criticism and critical discourse analysis was completely new to these students. Thus, I acquired authentic responses to

my teaching methods and learned about my instruction through the iterative critical action research cycles.

I built on the case study work explained by researchers in several of the articles discussed in the literature review (Dyches, 2018; Locke & Cleary, 2011; Simmons, 2016). Their results inspired me to plan, observe, and analyze how different critical literacy lessons could reinforce and enhance student understanding of democracy, when they are used intentionally while studying different works of core literature. The research findings in the articles reviewed were either focused on a single unit of study (Dyches, 2018) or on skill implementation and development (Locke & Cleary, 2011; Simmons, 2016). My research took a step beyond what these studies accomplished; I developed my students' conceptual understanding of democracy over time, while teaching students to use and improve several critical literacy skills. I added to and adapted these specific units of study in the pre-baccalaureate curriculum because I have taught these works of literature before. Also, these works include attributes of democracy that connect to democratic issues with which these students had some previous understanding and that related to current national or global concerns.

The selection of critical action research was ideal because it is an iterative design. My study included data drawn from both my work as an instructor and my students' work as they learned and reflected on their own development. Additionally, this design specifically focused on justice and individual agency for social improvement. Thus, critical action research met the multiple components in the demands of my research questions.

### **Research Participants**

The data sources for this study were students in my three baccalaureate-prep, grade 9 English language arts classes during the 2019-2020 academic year.

The school site for this study is an International Baccalaureate (IB) School; it offers the 2-year diploma program for juniors and seniors. Most students who participate in the IB program begin by applying to the school for admission to this program and begin in the pre-baccalaureate (PB) classes that introduce the skills and assessments that are used to measure success in earning the diploma. International mindedness is a core value of the International Baccalaureate Organization, and the development of good citizenship locally and globally is also an aim of the IBO (IBO, 2019).

In 2019 the new curriculum for IB higher level literature course was published (IB Language, 2019). Each IB core course is a 2-year curriculum, meaning that the first examination cycle for this new curriculum will take place during May or November of 2021; all IB exams occur per subject course on the same date per hemisphere in either May (Northern hemisphere) or November (Southern hemisphere). Students may take individual IB exams, per subject area, but the IB diploma program is designed to be a well-rounded curriculum in preparation for university studies and for global citizenship. Most colleges and universities offer one semester or one year of credit for passing an IB content exam, and many universities accept IB diploma students as entering with sophomore standing. The web page “Recognition of IB programmes” ([ibo.org](http://ibo.org)) provides information regarding recognition of successful completion of IB exams at schools around the globe. Thus, passing an IB subject exam or earning an IB diploma is very advantageous for the college bound high school student. All IB teachers of literature need to be trained on the new curriculum before teaching the content so that the students who begin the curriculum during 2019 are being prepared for the demands of the new assessments. I attended training in March 2019, with the aim of working with other pre-baccalaureate (PB) English teachers to start introducing the new curriculum assessment components beginning in the fall of

2019.

The connection between my interest in democracy and teaching critical literacy in the IB program is based on a new assessment that requires students to examine a global issue using two different works of literature. One of the required global issues for consideration is “politics, power, and justice” (IB Language, 2019, p. 57). This consideration aligns with my personal concern for improvement in teaching democratic consciousness in public schools. A concern for teaching civic engagement is broadly recognized as a significant topic in public education (Litvinov, 2019). Thus, this research contributes to the body of knowledge regarding teaching for democratic participation.

By adopting critical literacy teaching methods that align with the expectations of the International Baccalaureate’s Approaches to Teaching and Learning and by using the critical action research design, I gathered data that identified the effects of the Approaches to Teaching and Learning that specifically connect to developing students’ democratic consciousness. I gathered student work that responded to lessons that followed and allowed for reflection upon the Approaches to Teaching and Learning over three iterative units. During these units the students learned about several aspects of democracy, they compared democracy to other forms of government, and examined issues of citizenship and human rights (IB Language A: Literature Guide, 2019). Data from the study included lesson plans, my reflections on instruction, student formative and summative work, and student reflections about their conceptual understanding of democracy and interest in democratic participation.

At the study site school, during the 2019-2020 academic year, there were four total sections of baccalaureate-prep grade 9 English; I taught three of the sections or 77 of 100 students. My colleague and I used the same summative assessments that aligned with the IB

diploma program assessments. The day-to-day formative instruction in our classes was unique to our teaching; however, in each of the three PB courses I taught, I implement the same lessons and methods consistently. For this study, all students in my classes received the same instruction and all student work was gathered and assessed. However, based on student and parent agreement to participate in the study, only the student work of those participants with informed consent was included in the research. Table 1, below, indicates the teaching and learning methods and the evaluation pieces that all students experienced. The units of study were based on two historical fiction novels, *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Paton, 1948/2003), *The Samurai's Garden* (Tsukiyama, 1994) and the non-fiction work, *Enrique's Journey* (Nazario, 2013).

Table 1. Teaching and Learning Methods and Assessment per Cycle

Book Study/Literacy Approach	Discourse Approaches	Guided Practice Approaches
<i>Skill area: reading</i> Instruction: how to use CDA, close reading, structural, historical and new/historical literary criticism Critical literacy reading strategies	<i>Skill area: discourse</i> Instruction: facilitating group discussion regarding use of Critical Discourse Analysis, and literary criticism Socratic seminar participation	<i>Skill area: application</i> Instruction: CDA practice, literary criticism notes and student samples of analysis application Critical literacy for student voice in seminars and reflections
Questioning authorial intent including diction choices	Use of discourse regarding text and language questions	Student connection to positionality in text compared to own position in the world.
Questioning writing style or structure	CDA worksheets, and Socratic questions	Student choice of sources for research work; creative assignments, character letters
Research for enhanced understanding of social issue/s presented in core text	Student-planned delivery of information synthesized from individual and collaborative research	Student choice regarding point of view: challenging ideas in text or authorial choices. Per unit written reflection of learning strengths and weaknesses, goal setting.
<b>Assessment</b> Written commentary of literary analysis: <i>Cry, the Beloved Country</i> Formal letter to an elected official regarding a social issue: <i>The Samurai's Garden</i> Media presentation taking a position on a human rights concern regarding immigration or international refugee: <i>Enrique's Journey</i>	<b>Assessment</b> In-class or online discussion (Socratic seminars) of themes and representations of social issues. Creative projects based on individual and collaborative analysis and research.	<b>Assessment</b> Individual organization and presentation of grade defense using self-selected examples of reading for understanding and analysis, writing, speaking, and understanding of democratic participation.

## Instrumentation

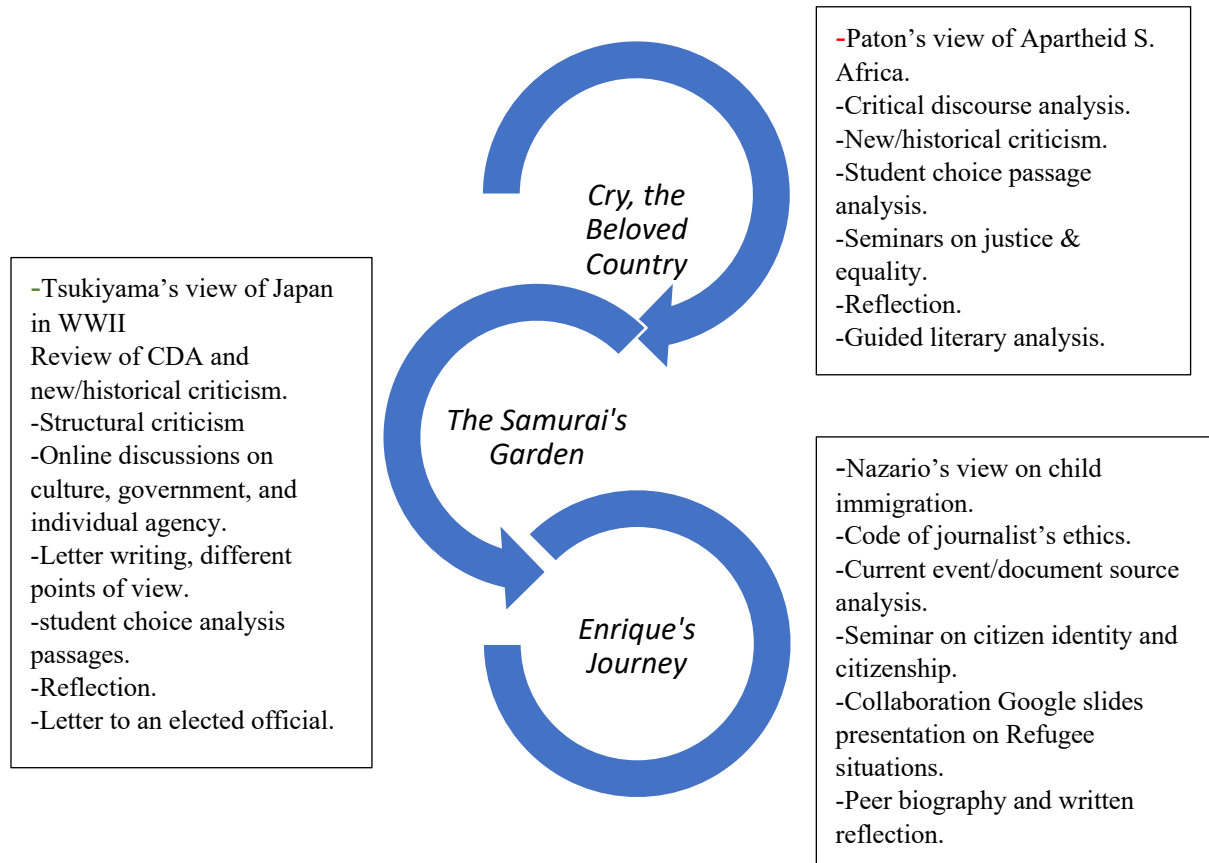
As a teacher-researcher in this critical action research project, the primary research instruments were my teaching methods to meet the demands of critical literacy, as outlined by the IB Approaches to Teaching and Learning. The unit and lesson plans, accompanied by my reflections on effectiveness, were part of the data informing this study and thus functioned as an instrument. Other instruments were student reflections, formative work, and unit assessments.

In each unit there was an introduction to the author and lessons on one form of literary analysis and, or criticism. Students had opportunities to choose text passages for analysis, and each unit included Socratic seminars or online discussions in which students questioned issues of democracy and examined the impact of authorial choice on how meaning is created in the text. In response to criticism assignments and seminars, students wrote reflections regarding changes in their understanding of democracy and democratic ideals. I wrote a daily log that included my impressions of student responses to the lessons. The students' questioning and peer interactions were the focus of my attention during their Socratic seminar participation.

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) instruction and historical criticism instruction was modified for cycles two and three based on the results of the first iterative cycle. As shown in Figure 1, the CDA work and historical criticism were introduced in cycle one and applied in the second cycle. The CDA skills were modified in cycle three and applied as part of document analysis for non-fiction text. The critical discourse analysis used with both fiction and non-fiction and the literary criticism approaches relate to the research subquestions one and two directly. Subquestion one identifies the instruction of analysis and criticism, and sub-question two identifies the use of student questioning based on the student's understanding of the literature. Inquiry was demonstrated in the Socratic seminar questions that students wrote and in completion of their CDA worksheets. Research sub-questions three and four connected to each cycle's summative assessments. The plan anticipated that students would demonstrate their recognition of democratic concepts in their written reflections. Each cycle included reflection writing, and some students addressed how the skills and content learned affected their understanding of democratic participation for social improvement. The critical discourse analysis

method was also used in cycle three; thus, all the data from cycles one and two lead to adjustments and changes in my teaching during cycle three.

Figure 1. Critical Action Research Cycles



### Critical Action Research Cycles

The literary selections for this study were the result of four considerations:

- 1) literature that thematically includes issues of power, governance, and individual agency; 2) literature that introduces positionality (where the reader is situated in space and time); a perspective different from the students who were situated in the Pacific Northwest of the United States; 3) literature that has compelling genre attributes that students would recognize and



evaluate as having an effect on the text's meaning; 4) literature that introduces themes, ideas, and literary features that will be further developed in the IB curriculum as students continue in the program.

**Cycle One: *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Paton, 1948/2003)**

This novel is set in South Africa just before the formal implementation of apartheid. The segregation of natives and Whites of Afrikaner and British heritage is described, and the significance of prejudicial effects of racism are presented through the perspectives of two fathers, one native and one White, each of whom loses a son. The novel features parallel construction, use of epistolary form, intense multi-sensory imagery, and literary and historical allusions. Paton won the Nobel Prize for literature and became a highly regarded politician in South Africa. Study of this novel lays the groundwork for the later studies of race-based literature in grades 10-12, the U.S. Civil Right Movement in IB History of the Americas grade 11, and the history of Apartheid in IB World History 12.

During this unit, students were introduced to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a means to identify language that focuses on issues of power, oppression, social norms, and individual options related to expression and action. Also, students were introduced to new historical criticism as a form of literary analysis used to interpret allusions to historical realities within a work of fiction. My instruction of CDA was aimed at demonstrating analysis of specific passages that emphasize a perspective on a critical discourse issue. For example, one key passage is a letter, embedded in the novel's text, written by the lawyer-son of the White landowner whose farm is situated on a hill above the native village that is home to the protagonist. The letter presents an argument regarding White society's mistreatment of natives. The letter contends that White society cannot complain about problems among the natives without providing the natives

with the means to address the differences between White social expectations and the practices of the now-limited tribes.

This passage was the focus of one of the online discussions; it provides a strong example of the use of epistolary form. Although I originally planned to use the passage in class to model annotation work, due to the COVID 19 switch to online learning, the only modeling of text annotations I was able to do in the classroom focused on the description of the protagonist's wife, who is not named, and on a section of dialogue in which a native priest in Johannesburg describes the native tribes as broken. Using a projector, I demonstrated my annotation process using a few lines at a time to focus on key diction, phrases, and clauses. Then I had the students try the next few lines. I then showed them my work for the same lines, and we discussed the results of their work and my work.

The example work I did with the students provided an introduction to the CDA worksheet. In each of my PB 9 English classes, in Socratic seminars and in online discussions we addressed how Paton's writing developed characterization and voice. The CDA worksheets provided practice for analyzing how other literary devices, besides those specific to CDA—such as figures of speech—affected the students' impressions of justice and democracy. Moreover, the annotation of specific passages expressing the point of view of native South Africans was then contrasted with passages that expressed perspectives on justice and democracy presented by voices representing White political and social power. As a result, the native conceptions of justice, community, and authority were examined, and evidence of the students' understanding was shared during Socratic seminars and online discussions. Each week, students chose a passage that they found important to the development of different perspectives in the novel and wrote questions for the Socratic seminars. In class during the first two weeks of study, the

students selected and annotated their passages and shared their findings. For weeks three and four, the beginning of online learning, students completed their passage annotations, and some shared their observations in the online discussions.

The historical criticism lessons included use of academic search engines available through the research site school's library website. The search engines allowed students the opportunity to locate information that clarified the historical significance of people, places, and events relevant to South Africa or specifically mentioned in *Cry, the Beloved Country*. In the visual history assignment, students explained their new understanding of specific topics and correctly cited their sources using MLA format. This historical connection assignment was completed at the beginning of the novel study. I anticipated that students would discover and make connections between their research and the historical details or allusion in the novel. This work prepared them to apply new historical criticism while they read the text. As they completed this work, students were also prompted to consider writing Socratic seminar questions related to their historical understanding of conditions in South Africa.

The unit plan included four Socratic seminars, one each week of the book study. Students were required to write questions and share their observations based on ideas or concepts presented in specific lines or passages of the text. These student-generated questions provided an opportunity for students to express wonder regarding authorial intent and to connect their conceptual understanding of governance and justice as presented in the text. The two in-class Socratic seminars were followed by a reflective statement. Students explained how the discussion affected their understanding of the text and their awareness or conception of democracy, justice, and the role of the individual in society. Other in-class activities included writing a timeline of South African history and planning an individual creative response to

something in the text related to something they found personally compelling or to an attribute of democracy in the text. Due to the pandemic, the finished creative responses and artist's statements were submitted online; the students were not able to make presentations of their work to their classmates.

The unit summative assessment was a Guided Literary Analysis (GLA) essay based on a passage from the novel. The student essays were assessed using the IB rubric modified for grade 9 (Appendix A). The GLA essay analyzed the significance of a single passage of literature by explaining how the language elements and literary devices in the passage add to the text's meaning. For this assessment, the prompts directed the students to analyze and explain a passage that expresses one of the perspectives regarding social or political power presented in the novel. Originally, I planned for students to identify the perspective and address how the writing affects the reader's response to the perspective expressed in the passage, but when instructional time was minimized by the online guidelines, students were asked to identify a main idea in the passage and to explain how three specific literary devices contributed to the development of the idea. The critical literacy methods taught and practiced were expected to be demonstrated in the students completed essays. The results of the Guided Literary Analysis provided data that indicated the effectiveness of the lessons practicing CDA and the extent to which students were able to draw on the historical criticism work completed to explain historical allusions in the novel. My daily log and assessment reflections for this unit impacted my teaching methods for literary criticism instruction in the next two units.

**Cycle Two: *The Samurai's Garden* (Tsukiyama, 1994)**

This novel is set in Japan in 1937. The protagonist is a young man of Chinese heritage whose family owns an import-export business that operates between Hong Kong and Japan. He

is sent to the family beach house in Tarumi, Japan because he has a case of tuberculosis. He cannot continue his college studies in mainland, nationalist China and his mother is afraid he will infect his younger sister if he stays at home in Hong Kong. The historical setting complicates his presence in Japan due to the developing war between Japan and China. He is cared for at the beach house by the long-time property caretaker who is a native Japanese man. The novel addresses differences of culture, class, custom, and the effects of governmental and social power on the beliefs and actions of the individual. The novel is written entirely in epistolary form; it is a series of journal entries by the protagonist. However, it includes letters and personal narratives of other characters as retold by the protagonist. Tsukiyama uses structure, multi-sensory imagery, cultural and historical allusions, positionality, and figurative language to shape meaning in this novel.

This work of literature introduces World War II from the Pacific theatre, which is usually less familiar to students than the war fronts in Europe. The students will study World War II from other perspectives in sophomore World History. The novel also alludes to different forms of government, as the republic of Nationalist China is under attack by the empire of Imperial Japan, and the protagonist is concerned about his family in the Chinese colony of Hong Kong under governance of the constitutional monarchy of the United Kingdom. Each of these types of government, and the on-going issues of conflicting perspectives of justice in Hong Kong will be addressed in future history classes and were related to recent and current political issues at the time of the study. Additionally, the text introduces Shinto beliefs, and presents instances of contrast between Shinto and Buddhist or Christian beliefs.

The students had been introduced to the tenets of Buddhism and Christianity in literature studied earlier in the school year, but this novel presented these belief systems in juxtaposition in

an Asian historical context. This awareness allowed for comparative discussion in the study of Asian-American fiction. Additionally, this work created a foundation for the exploration of other cultural representations that inform character thoughts and actions that students can compare to works they will study in grades 10-12.

This unit further developed student application of historical literary analysis. Based on the historical background lessons in cycle one, I decided that the students needed brief historical overviews of the political situations in China, Hong Kong and Japan. During the first week after spring break, students had access to reading material that clarified Chiang Kai-Shek's government in China, the structure of British governorship in Hong Kong, and the political and social conditions in Japan in the 1930s. The students wrote paragraph summaries for each reading. The original plan for a collaborative research assignment that investigated one cultural topic per group was revised to better accommodate online individual learning. The postcard assignment required students to conduct some research each week and include an image and a postcard message that included a quotation from a researched source. The goal of the cultural research was to increase the students' understanding of how culture affects individuals and society.

During this unit, critical discourse analysis was continued. I added a specific request that students comment on the presence of an attribute of democracy they noticed in the passage on the worksheet. During this cycle the CDA worksheets indicated that more scaffolding for grammar awareness was necessary before students could successfully discuss the effects of grammatical or linguistic components on a reader's understanding of the text. However, the CDAs were completed more thoroughly during this cycle and the positionality section of the worksheet highlighted students' personal connections to situations in the text. Also, the focus on

tone and mood allowed the students to examine how Tsukiyama's writing was intentional in her efforts to evoke an emotive or intellectual response from the reader.

To address the students' own writing for different purposes, the formative and summative writing assessments in this unit focused on the differences between informal and formal correspondence. The weekly postcard assignment introduced informal or personal correspondence. For the first two weeks of the novel study, students were also assigned to write a personal letter based on the novel. The first week of the unit, we focused on character development, descriptions of location, and references to culture. Students wrote a letter to one of the characters in the novel; the letter was required to ask questions and respond to an action or ideas expressed by the character. The letters need to include quotes from the text to clarify what was prompting their questions and responses. In week two students assumed a character identity, and as characters from the novel they responded to each other's letters from week one. In the preparation for these letters, information about tone and letter formatting were posted. Based on the tone and mood in the novel, students were asked to pay attention to how they would address the character to whom they were writing. In week two, students were reminded to consider the voice and casual or more formal tone of the character whose identity they assumed to write a response letter.

Each week students were asked to write a Friday journal entry of two paragraphs. The first paragraph explained their analysis of a one-paragraph passage from the text. They were expected to annotate the text passage first and refer to the use of specific literary devices in their writing. The second paragraph in the journal was their reflection on how their life was different due to COVID-19, or they could response to something that had happened during the week. The

journal maintained the practice of analysis work and provided a place for authentic student voice regarding the unusual circumstances we were experiencing.

Beginning in week three, the letter writing focused on formal or business letter format. The students were informed that they would be writing a formal letter of request to a public official; they would be presenting an argument for something they wanted the official to do in support of a social or community improvement. The students were asked to select a current issue involving a public space, or a different cultural issue. The plan was to discuss the importance of public spaces presented in the novel and have the students think about how a public space in our region might be improved. This was more challenging than expected due to the lack of public space interaction in the spring of 2020. During week three, the students wrote outlines of their letter. In week four they shared drafts of their letters and received peer feedback that used the same assessment rubric that was applied for grading the final draft. The letter assignment required that each student take a position on an issue regarding a public space or community issue. The goal of the assessment was to increase student understanding of the use of formal communication as one means of participating in a democracy. The final draft of the letters was their summative assessment for cycle two; it was uploaded at the end of week four. The peer draft and the final letter were assessed using the Common Core Standards argumentative writing rubric (Appendix B). For cycle two, formative data included the CDA worksheets, the weekly journal entries, Socratic seminar questions and online discussion participation, the weekly postcards, and their letters both to and as characters in the novel. This data demonstrated the effectiveness of my instruction based on student use of structural and new historical literary criticism, use of language analysis, awareness of how culture is related to social norms and its



effect on individual rights, the quality of students informal and formal writing skills, and the students' ability to use language skills for democratic participation.

**Cycle Three: *Enrique's Journey*.** (Nazario, 2013).

This is a non-fiction work that narrates the story of one minor who illegally immigrated from Guatemala to the United States in search of his mother. Nazario is a journalist; she herself is an immigrant to the U.S. who arrived with her family from Argentina. In the introduction, she contrasts her family's process with that of individual children who come to the U.S. illegally out of desperation. The introduction also explains her decision to retrace Enrique's trek, including riding railroad-car roofs through much of Mexico.

The work provided background to the plight of the children who make the dangerous journey, and it documented the challenges faced by Central Americans who aspire to live in the U.S. This text was foundational to the study that attempted to define who is an immigrant and who is a refugee. The unit of study also examined current situations regarding both immigrants and refugees. The genre focus was journalistic non-fiction. For this study I introduced the journalist's code of ethics and the five W's of journalism: who, what, where, when, and why. Students read the entire journalist code of ethics and chose the five ethical conduct practices they thought most important for explaining the lives of immigrants or refugees. This assignment was completed in the first week of the unit. Next, students read an explanation of why non-governmental organizations are often the most reliable and or current sources of information on immigrant or refugee situations (Price, Morgan & Klinkforth, 2009).

Using some of the same elements in the critical discourse analysis (CDA) worksheet, I created a new journalism review worksheet to evaluate the information provided by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHRC) and a document analysis worksheet to

evaluate the information provided by articles posted by NGOs regarding different refugee crises. I used Canvas, the school district provided educational online platform, to provide links to internationally recognized NGOs working with immigrants and refugees. After reading the introduction to the issue of immigration in *Enrique's Journey* and noting the significance of the journalists' ethics, the classes looked at immigration or refugee situations in a different region of the world each week.

The document analysis work introduced in this unit was designed to prepare the students for the document analysis process that will be developed in the sophomore World History class and then honed in the junior and senior IB history courses. The document analysis protocol is to identify the origin, purpose, content, value, and limitation(s) of a document for understanding a specific topic. In this study, I originally planned to have the students find a variety of different text, for example a state department memo, an asylum application, a birth certificate or a newspaper article. However, the newness of online learning and the need to create assignments that could be completed independently caused me to use a consistent assignment each week that focused on NGO articles rather than different types of text.

No collaborative work was completed during cycle two, but based on the success of the online discussions in both cycle two and in cycle three, I decided to try and keep the final slide presentation assessment. Students were asked to create their own groups of three to five people. They were asked to fill out a sheet that informed me who the group members were, and what refugee situation they planned to focus on for their presentation. Each group created a Google Slides presentation that explained a current refugee crisis using the five W's as the basis for the information they provided. The presentation needed to include images that were cited. Also, the presentations were required to include information that shared the story of one teenager; thus,

allowing the students to contrast their own lives with someone their age experiencing a social crisis situation. The use of Google Slides was purposeful because the presentations were shared in a Google folder that allowed the students to collaborate without the classroom. The presentations were the summative assessment for the third cycle; they were assessed using the Common Core criteria for speaking and listening (Appendix C).

The written work during this unit included a peer learner biography and an individual end of semester grade defense/reflection. During the fifth week of the unit the students met either in a Zoom session, Skype, or through facetime, and conducted peer interviews. In addition to the questions I posted regarding strengths and weaknesses as a language arts student, all students were asked to write questions they wanted to ask in the interview. From the answers given during the interview, students wrote about each other as learners. In contrast, the individual grade reflections were an opportunity for each student to explain his or her overall success as a language arts learner using references to specific assignments.

The formative data included the students' answers to the guided questions for *Enrique's Journey*, the weekly analysis worksheets, participation in the weekly online discussions, and the peer learner biography. The summative assessments included the collaborative Google Slides presentation and the individual grade defense. I had planned to have the students write a specific reflection on how their work demonstrated their democratic consciousness, but the school district guidelines for online learning and my own stress level kept me from adding another assignment to what the students needed to do at the end of the semester.

The final iterative cycle indicated the extent to which my critical literacy teaching methods facilitated the students' development of critical literacy skills and the degree to which

the students demonstrated their democratic consciousness and willingness to participate in the democratic process.

To review, the unit summative assessments collected data regarding skill development in four areas: literary analysis, informal and formal writing, questioning, oral and digital presentation skills or creative discourse. The literary analysis skills were evaluated using the IB Guided Literary Analysis rubric (IB Language Guide), modified for freshmen by only scoring against the first three levels of expectation (Appendix A). The formal argumentative writing was evaluated using the Common Core English Language Arts-Literacy, Writing 9-10.1A-E argumentative writing rubric (Appendix B). The collaborative Google Slides presentation was assessed using the criterion for Language from the Common Core English Language Arts-Literacy, Speaking and Listening 9-10.1 through 9-10.6 (Appendix C).

### **Data Collection**

The literature review articles primarily explained the results of case study research projects. The data described often included a pre unit survey, recordings, and field notes of classroom instruction (Dyches, 2018). Data also included questionnaires, interviews, observations, student work samples, recordings of student presentations and discussions, student reflections and specific critical literacy methods (Chang, 2013; Collin & Reich, 2015; Epstein & Gist, 2013; Locke & Cleary, 2011; Simmons, 2016; Soares & Wood, 2010). Student journals were used in an ethnographic study (Stovall, 2006).

There were aspects of these studies that were relevant to what I aimed to achieve; however, because I planned on observing growth of knowledge and skill over time, and with attention to student responsiveness to my teaching methods, a critical action research design was the best design structure for my study. Some of the methods I used were similar to those

described in the research articles that focused on student reading skills that aimed to recognize how author's manipulate meaning through writing choices (Dyches, 2018; Locke & Cleary, 2011; Simmons, 2016). In my research, I added to the study of how students become more attentive readers in an effort to understand how literature can be a tool for developing a democratic consciousness. My research design monitored the effects of my planning as students practiced and used reading, questioning, writing, and speaking skills. Thus, the data collected in each iteration included lesson and unit plans, my reflections, student work samples of skill practice, notes from Socratic seminars, student reflections, and student summative assessment work.

Triangulation and reflexivity added to the reliability of my study. The results of unit summative assessments were shared with my colleagues during Professional Learning Community time, and their feedback was added to my reflections on the unit's effectiveness. I made revisions to my planning at the end of each iterative cycle. The photocopied work of the students participating in the study had all personal identifying information removed and pseudonyms were used to discuss the student data. To maximize confidentiality, I secured participant student-work in locked classroom files or under encrypted computer access. My reflections per unit were written and stored electronically in a password protected file. All student data will be destroyed after 3 years.

### **Identification of Attributes**

There were several attributes in this critical action research study; they were intentionally chosen to increase my understanding of how democracy is learned. Each attribute supported critical literacy teaching methods that align with the IB Approaches to Teaching and Learning. For critical reading, the first method was critical discourse analysis (CDA) for understanding

authorial intent based on diction, syntax, and use of literary devices. Through the application of CDA students noticed how authors convey perspectives on social issues and democratic ideals. A second method that addressed reading analysis skills was the introduction of new historical and structural literary criticism. To improve the attribute of inquiry, a third instructional method was developing student questioning. Socratic seminars and online discussions demonstrated student questioning of how meaning is expressed in different media or text, questioning of the students' individual understanding of text, and student questioning of the perspective(s) shared by others. An additional attribute was reflection; both my reflections on the teaching methods used in specific lessons and the students' reflections on their own learning were essential to the research. The final attributes were student writing and speaking that demonstrated knowledge and showed skills relevant for democratic participation in society.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Action research includes several steps: identification of a practice to be improved or an issue to be addressed, data collection, analysis, reflection (Schmuck, 2006). The results of a first cycle are followed by a second cycle that includes a plan for improvement, followed by implementation, data collection, and reflection that leads to a new plan or that realizes the goal desired (Mills, 2014).

My study design was critical action research, which added an emphasis on teaching for social improvement. The objective of each cycle in my design was to improve instruction by teaching critical literacy strategies that supported student understanding of democracy and the development of a democratic consciousness. The second and third cycles included adjustments or changes to the teaching methods I used based on the data and reflections from the first cycle. I anticipated that instruction of critical discourse analysis (CDA) would need the most change or

revision. The utilization of CDA methods was a new instructional tool for me; thus, I expected to learn a great deal about my teaching from each cycle of instruction. In the planning stage, I expected that data collected in cycles one and or two would suggest deleting, revising, or expanding lessons for literary criticism, collaboration work or formative writing assignments.

The skills learned in each cycle and the content specific to each work of literature were meant to promote growth and increase conceptual understanding both within a unit and over the three-cycle process. I envisioned using several template-based, guided activities that allowed students to practice applying CDA. One change I correctly anticipated was the need to break down the CDA work to practice with smaller passages and with more immediate feedback each day.

Table. 2. Critical Literacy Methods per Cycle

Critical Literacy Skills	<i>Cry, the Beloved Country</i>	<i>The Samurai's Garden</i>	<i>Enrique's Journey</i>
Reading strategies and Literary criticism taught	Critical Discourse Analysis, and historical criticism	CDA, historical and structural analysis	CDA, and document analysis.
Questioning/discourse modeling	Critical Discourse Analysis, and historical criticism	CDA, historical, structural analysis, and journals	Socratic Seminars/ participation, questioning.
Discourse/presentation	Collaborative product connecting text to democratic ideal; creative response	Postcard products connecting text to individual agency	Google slides presentation regarding refugees
Writing	Guided literary analysis	Argumentative letter	Biography of peer learner; Grade-defense reflection statement

### Limitations of the Research Design

The delimitations for this study included my choice to work with my own PB freshmen students rather than any other segment of the IB student body at the research school site. The main objective of my research was to identify methods in my own teaching for democratic

consciousness that could be improved. Thus, working with my own students, and the decision to work with my freshmen rather than my seniors was a delimitation. I recognized that the freshmen would have further opportunities to develop their democratic consciousness if the work done in this action research design was limited in effectiveness.

Furthermore, I chose to monitor the methods that apply the IB Approaches to Teaching and Learning because these approaches aligned with critical literacy, global mindedness, and good citizenship; these were goals of the curriculum selected to enhance the understanding of democracy. Critical literacy pedagogy was also a delimitation that I chose because the intention was to develop students' sense of agency as proponents of democratic social change. The core texts for this study were also delimitations. The selection of these text was my professional decision because I believed they supported my critical action research plan that focused on elements of democracy that arise in these works of literature.

The order of the assessments was a delimitation; I arranged the formative and summative assessments to maximize time to score, give feedback, and reflect on the lessons and results, so that cycles two and three built on what was learned in cycle one. The final student assessment was the group Google Slides presentation because it was collaborative, showed synthesis of new knowledge and was quickly scored with feedback provided before the school year ended.

One of my goals was to conduct research as an instructor-researcher; therefore, a limitation was the choice to work with either seniors or freshmen, since those were the grade levels that I taught during the school year of this study. Additionally, because I teach in an IB program, the IB program's aims and objectives impacted what I taught and the methods of instruction.

The school site where the study occurred is a public high school with a traditional six-



period day bell-schedule Tuesday through Friday, and a modified six period schedule on Mondays to accommodate a 40-minute intervention period and early release for teacher Professional Learning Community (PLC) time. However, for much of the study instruction occurred online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The normal schedule had a limitation in that prolonged workflow or discussion time was not available. My ability to be an observer was limited, because I was also the instructor and must maintain whole classroom processes. As such, I had limited ability to focus on individual students or small groups within any one of the participating classes. Once the online instruction began, due to state guidelines all daily student learning was limited to 30 minutes a day and students.

The results of the research may be useful for other instructors or school sites that aim to improve the democratic consciousness of their students. The results may also be relevant for instructors or schools implementing critical literacy methods. The results of any action research study are specific to an educational situation; however, teaching for the development of democratic consciousness and teaching that uses critical pedagogy are widespread, if not global education goals. Thus, aspects of this study may be informative for many different educational interests.

### **Validation: Credibility, Dependability, and Trustworthiness**

The data for this study included my lesson plans, lesson materials I produced, student work, notes documenting student Socratic seminar discussions, and the reflective writing that I and the students completed. All completed student work was kept in a locking file cabinet in my classroom or stored electronically in password protected files. To maintain research credibility, I used Professional Learning Community (PLC) time to share the results per cycle with other IB English instructors. I shared my lesson plans and the worksheets or activities I created with my

pre-baccalaureate English colleague. Triangulation of data analysis, peer debriefing, a rich and thick description of process and results, and researcher reflections were the measures used to strengthen the credibility of the research and data.

The student work results were entered in the school district electronic gradebook, a legal document, and thus verifiable. The lesson plans were also contractually required material. The student work, including assessments that I stored electronically or submit to the state teacher evaluation system are also verifiable. By sharing and storing the feedback from my IB colleagues I created a record of the peer debriefing that informed some of the changes or adjustments per critical action research cycle. Finally, the detailed and in-depth written descriptions of each instructional cycle increased the trustworthiness of the findings.

### **Ethical Issues**

In this study, I held the dual role of classroom instructor and researcher. My priority was the welfare, confidentiality, and education of my students. My critical action research study was designed so that there were no interruptions to the normal pre-baccalaureate English 9 instruction. I created this research plan with fidelity to the PB English curriculum that is meant to prepare students for success in the IB courses junior and senior year. Conducting this study required that I increase the written reflection work I do. The goal of improving student reading and critical thinking skills was a consistent objective across all English language arts classes. However, my choice of focusing on student understanding of democracy and the development of a democratic conscious may have caused some participants to wonder about my motives for adding a focus on democracy when these books have been taught previously without this focus. Thus, when the study was initiated, and in conjunction with obtaining the informed consent documents (Appendix D), I introduced the study as an investigation of how people learn what

democracy is and why teaching for democratic consciousness is a component of public education (Dewey, 1926/2004; OSPI, 2019).

To avoid the appearance of partisanship or being propagandistic, all texts and sources that I assigned were presented as literary art, or as original journalistic accounts. One of the skills that was introduced was analysis of original documents. Introducing this to my freshmen students helped prepare them for analysis work that will be necessary beginning with sophomore world history. My written reflections on teaching document analysis and the student work that demonstrated their written analysis efforts contributed to the results of my study.

No specific outcome was required for this study; thus, based on the curriculum including school district and IB approved texts, and the exclusion of any personally revealing information, there was nothing in the study that created an ethical problem. I chose to be a public secondary educator, and to teach in an IB program. This can be construed as a bias. I was transparent in the written descriptions and reflections regarding the application of the IB Approaches to Teaching and Learning. To minimize bias, I was forthright regarding which teaching methods were used and the anticipated effect of the instruction on skill development and content understanding. I kept a reflexive research journal to document the planning and effects of the lessons. I addressed bias as I responded to student learning.

Additionally, because the study involved baccalaureate-prep students rather than students preparing for an IB exam, some of the assessment criteria were the more widely used Common Core Standards specific to grades 9-10, rather than assessment rubrics designed for upper-level IB students. While all students in the three sections of pre-baccalaureate English 9 that I taught were invited to participate, only the work of students who individually assented and whose parents signed the consent form were included in the data used for this qualitative study. All

students in these classes received the same instruction, feedback, and assessment attention regardless of their participation in the study. Most importantly, this study occurred without interrupting my professional commitment to teaching all students while maintaining a positive classroom learning environment.

It was a contractual expectation that as a teacher I worked to maintain my students' best interests, to maintain trust between my students and myself, to maintain accuracy in assessment records, to implement best practices, and to promote respect for all individuals in my classroom. Critical theory was the theoretical basis for the research methods; it emphasizes fairness, respect for individual student dignity, and equal treatment. Thus, the study was in alignment with the ethical principles established by the American Psychological Association (Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, 2017).

## Chapter 4: Presentation of the Approach

I began my teaching career in the fall of 1988 when the Cold War was still a reality. Soviet troops were still in Afghanistan, the Berlin Wall still isolated West Berlin within East Germany, and in the wake of the Contra-gate hearings, the Bill Moyers' PBS special "The Secret Government" (Budline, Clark, Levin & Pook, 1987) was a relatively new and provocative examination of how the CIA and executive operatives conducted foreign policy without Congressional oversight. On the same day in early June 1989 Deng Xiaoping sent the army's tanks to clear Tiananmen Square of protestors and Polish citizens cast their first free election votes since the end of World War II, ousting the communist party and demonstrating the momentum behind the Solidarity movement. Even today, I can see and hear my junior students in U.S. History asking me, "Ms. Quaid, what does this mean?" I remember answering, "I am not sure, but these are incredible events."

I enjoy working with teenagers because they are curious. They have many questions, and most of them are willing to learn. In my experience, many teenagers also begin working and become more interested in economics and politics once they experience the relationship between owners and employees, and the benefits of purchasing power. When I decided to focus on understanding how students develop an understanding of democracy and how they develop individual democratic consciousness, I chose to examine the effects of my teaching and how, in particular, freshmen understand and learn about democracy because they are on the cusp between being children and being part of the workforce. They are the social underlings in the high school strata; they are anxious to earn their own spending money, to share their opinions, to contribute to causes. Of course, some high school students have difficult, even dangerous living situations; they join the work force as a mean of survival. I have known such students, but in my current

assignment, and in the research study I conducted, the students I worked with lived secure middle-class lives. Thus, during the three and a half months of the study, my students were surprised, saddened, even shocked by what we studied and by events occurring around the U.S. in the spring of 2020. It was an interesting time to examine how students learn about democracy and to evaluate the extent to which the use of critical literacy strategies can be effective for developing students' individual democratic consciousness.

### **Description of the Sample**

The majestic beauty of the Pacific Northwest was the backdrop for my action research study: a mighty river and its many tributaries, snow-capped mountains, a spectrum of greens that collide in seasonal and evergreen foliage, and the noble presence of bald eagles are features of this corner of the contiguous United States. My classroom is situated in the north wing of a public high school. Inside the classroom, the east and west walls are collapsible to allow for blocked classroom instruction, but this has not been done for several years at this site. These walls are bulletin board material and posters related to the topics of study or student work were constantly displayed.

During the study and before the COVID-19 closure, the west wall had the following posters displayed: a profile image of Nobel laureate, Black novelist Toni Morrison, the famous picture of the Tiananmen man facing a Tank, a photo of Gorbachev and Reagan, a fabric flag of the *Deutsche Demokratik Republik* (East Germany). The east wall showcased student timelines of South African history; a photo of Nelson Mandela; a poster-sized photo of the Drakensburg Mountains; a small poster/photo of South African police beating native protestors with the caption "Visit South Africa, it's a riot of colour;" student-labeled maps of South Africa; and a poster advertising study abroad in Germany.

A hallway door is built into the south wall, and a projection screen hangs against the south wall. Three feet from the floor there is a counter that runs along most of the south wall, but in the middle of the wall is a built-in shelving unit with a locking cabinet at the bottom. The teacher desk faces the classroom from the south side of the room. Much of the north wall is a large window that looks out upon athletic practice fields. Below the window is the heating/cooling unit. Also on the north wall, there is a large moveable storage cabinet, a fire extinguisher and a fire alarm and an exit door.

The school media center is in this same wing as the research classroom. The media center also serves as the school's library, but it is used primarily because there are desktop computers with printing access. The media center also has tables available for group work. The media center teacher-librarian is a tremendous resource person; she provides constant learning support to teachers and students.

The daily schedule at the high school study site is organized into six, 55-minute periods. There is an optional zero period for jazz band and an additional seventh period for the IB Theory of Knowledge course required only for IB diploma candidates.

### **Participants**

Six of 19 students in third period were participants in the study, along with ten of 27 students in fourth period, and 12 of 26 students in period six. Nine of the participants were males and 18 were female. Most of the participants identify as White, four identify as Asian-American, two identify as Latinx and two identify as mixed race; one of the students is White and African-American living with a single, White mother, and the other is of Chinese parentage adopted by two White American parents.

The third period participants were very successful students overall. With one exception, their standardized reading scores were above the 80th percentile and their course work demonstrated consistently strong writing skills in terms of organization of ideas, control of sentence structure and diction choices. In the third period group, one participating student had below grade level standardized test scores for reading and often commented that the material for this class was very difficult. This student often submitted work that was incomplete; however, the incomplete work did provide an indication of the student's skill levels and areas that needed support. Overall, the third period students were effective oral communicators. They spoke with fluency; they were able to articulate ideas with grade level or above diction and with clear enunciation. Regarding oral communication, one exception in this group was a student with a diagnosed motor disability that included difficulty modulating the speed of speech or the ability to modulate and enunciate clearly.

The fourth period participants ranged in skill levels in several ways. For example, some students demonstrated high standardized reading scores while others were barely at grade level. Writing skills also ranged based on standardized results, from very high to just at grade level. Speaking skills also demonstrated differences in fluency of ideas when articulating thoughts extemporaneously. Two students had anxiety that limited their ability to speak to a group. Others were able to speak clearly and effectively but were slower at processing ideas during Socratic seminar discussion, which sometimes resulted in limited contributions to the seminar discussions. A few students were especially good at impromptu responses and were able to organize ideas quickly. This at times added to the anxiety of those students who already feared speaking, and they became less willing to respond or became nervous and spoke less cogently. The larger class size also meant that there were more speakers in each seminar group, as the



weekly seminars situated half the students in the inner seating for the oral discussion and half in the outer horseshoe of seats where students wrote responses, both questions and comments, regarding the oral discussion. Although there were etiquette expectations for oral participation, it was observed that shy students and those who needed more time to think about each topic during the conversation often limited their contributions to the discussion.

The sixth period group also displayed a range of skills. The standardized reading scores varied from on grade level to well above. The writing skills also ranged from those who had difficulty writing paragraphs without grammar errors to those whose writing demonstrated purposeful use of varying sentence types and keen diction choices. Several of these students were conscientious conversationalists, only a couple of students struggled to participate in discussions. Only one of these students indicated a lack of confidence in her reading comprehension, the other discussed a fear of not making significant contributions. In fact, this student was extremely grade conscious and, on several occasions after a Socratic seminar, wanted specific directions for how to score in the highest levels on the rubric. When I indicated that an important yet simple first step was to participate by asking a question or sharing a passage of text that the student thought was important, the student seemed disappointed that I could not provide a “just do this” list.

Overall, the sixth period group often conducted the most fluid and thoughtful discussions of the three sections. In the descriptions of the results per cycle below, the research data will be explained per critical literacy skill set without reference to the different class groups.

### **Research Methodology and Analysis**

To improve my own instruction, and ideally to contribute to literature addressing teaching that contributes to a strong democratic society, I needed a research design structure to

account for both self-evaluation and evidence of student learning. While I was interested in my students' ability to articulate their own sense of knowledge acquisition and skill development, I wanted a format for assessing the work they produced to identify growth over time. Due to these objectives, I determined that action research was the best design option. Additionally, I was specifically interested in teaching that developed democratic participation, especially individual voice in support of social change to improve society; thus, critical theory and critical literacy were relevant to my objectives. Finally, after completing a literature review examining democracy in education, critical theory, critical literacy, and instructional methods, I developed a research plan to study the effects of my own teaching and the effectiveness of the critical literacy strategies that I implemented over three curricular units.

Key to action research is the cycle of inquiry in which data is collected and analyzed to determine how effective the instructional plan has been for addressing the focus of the study (Mills, 2014; Schmuck, 2006). I decided that three cycles would be appropriate for addressing adaptations to my strategies or large changes in the plan for meeting the instructional objectives. The arguments of John Dewey (1916/2004) regarding teaching and learning as a democratic process, in which students develop or construct meaning, led me to the social constructivist theorists. Social constructivism is foundational to the International Baccalaureate Organization's (IBO's) pedagogic/andragogic approach to teaching and learning for the diploma program. The IBO draws from Vygotsky's explanation of the zone of proximal development and the importance of interaction with a more knowledgeable other to guide learning (Approaches to Teaching and Learning, IBO, 2019; Vygotsky, 1934/1997).

## Language and critical literacy

The core works of literature for cycles one and two were historical fiction, but the core literature for cycle three was journalistic non-fiction focused on global immigration and refugee situations. While novels may evoke emotions or provoke questions about a topic or time period, fiction as a genre is different from journalism. Over the course of the academic school year, defining and discussing different genres was one of the aims of the ninth-grade literature course. For the research study, I included the two historical fiction novels, *Cry, The Beloved Country* (Paton, 1948/2003), and *The Samurai's Garden* (Tsukiyama, 1994). I selected these two contemporary novels because each addresses challenges to a democracy that I knew the students would recognize and because they introduce social issues that I anticipated would be new to the students; there was a knowledge base on which to expand their understanding of several attributes of democracy.

Additionally, the novels' setting allowed for comparison and contrast when juxtaposed for richer literary dissection. Finally, the structure, location, and time period of each novel was a factor to be considered when addressing the language-choices a writer makes in shaping the meaning of his or her work. An individual's position in society was the issue that connected the three core works. Recognition of living conditions beyond one's control versus conditions one can change was the topic students identified in each cycle.

The inclusion of interactive questioning and the development of language skills was important for reinforcing learning and extending learning to new ideas and concepts. The research literature explaining critical theory and social constructivism emphasized the value of student inquiry and confidence in expressing questions based on text and one's own understanding of power in society. Thus, the components of my action research included using

core texts as the center pieces for learning, along with instruction for language analysis, student questioning and discussion, writing for different purposes, and student choice or creative means for conveying understanding.

To meet my own goals, I developed tools the students used for their analysis to examine how authors convey meaning to their readers. Based on the aims of critical discourse analysis, I designed a worksheet that prompted students to identify key words, phrases, and clauses that the author used that affect how meaning is conveyed. The critical discourse analysis (CDA) worksheet, based on a passage from a core text, also directed students to identify and explain social conditions in the passage, the tone and mood expressed, and how the author positions the reader in relation to the topic of the passage. Additionally, the CDA worksheet asked students to write questions to bring to the weekly seminar, based on lines in the passage. The classes had been introduced to Socratic seminars in the fall, and the students had worked on writing probing questions using “how” and avoiding questions that could be answered with one word responses. The CDA activity was meant to develop language skills and allow students a means of expressing their individual comprehension, interpretation, and responses to the literature. The CDA worksheet was introduced during cycle one; it was modified slightly for cycle two, and aspects of this worksheet were included in the journalism review worksheet that I developed for cycle three.

Because language components were relevant to the study of non-fiction as well as fiction, the critical discourse analysis focused on key diction, phrases, and clauses, and was maintained for evaluating the reading of journalistic writing. The new element was reading text that intends to solicit a response that promotes social change. Without my mentioning the topic of individual

choice in living conditions, I did observe that with varying degrees of clarity, my students recognized that the conditions in which one lives are not always based on individual choice. Thus, for cycle three, I created two new worksheets, one for journalism review and one for document analysis that focused their reading of current event information.

The journalism review asked them to identify language components and to identify the non-governmental organization or news agency producing the article and any perceived purpose for publishing the article. The document analysis worksheet prompted the students to identify the origin, purpose, value, and limitation of articles written by journalists or non-governmental organizations for explaining a current refugee situation. The document analysis objectives were based on expectations identified by IB for social science instruction and in teacher material produced by the U.S. National Archives. The core text for the third unit was *Enrique's Journey* (Nazario, 2013). Due to the COVID instructional time limits, only the introduction to the work was read, and the students completed guiding reading questions that focused on Nazario's explanation of why she chose her subject, her methods as a journalist, and her personal connection to the topic of immigration.

### **Critical action research**

In the first iteration or cycle, the categories of data to be examined included the critical literacy instructional strategies and three types of student work. The first type of student work was critical discourse analysis. Weekly lessons included grammar awareness to recognize parts of speech and punctuation, and sentence parsing to recognize different language components. Once the CDA worksheets were introduced, I used this as a tool that prompted students to analyze an author's writing in a specific passage of the text we were studying. The second type of student work was historical and new historical literary criticism. After an introductory lesson,

I assigned lessons or activities that demonstrated student awareness of the history relevant to the novel's setting and that demonstrated student collaborative work to indicate the students' ability to define and explain a historical topic, relevant to the novel, using cited sources. Finally, the students' questions and participation in Socratic seminars were accompanied by their follow up reflections on one idea discussed in each seminar.

From the data in this first iteration, I examined the students' understanding of the text, any patterns in their learning experience based on the critical literacy assignments, the themes or main ideas related to democracy, and results that were unexpected. The critical literacy learning that I specifically looked for included recognition of social/cultural and political power, issues of justice or injustice, and the students' ability to recognize how the author used literary devices or language components to present ideas about making society more democratic and just. (These results are summarized at the end of cycle one in Table 3.)

A note is needed here to recognize that the first iteration was interrupted at the halfway point in the unit of study of *Cry, the Beloved Country* due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, rather than four sets of weekly student work, I have two complete sets of in-class work and the work submitted during the initial phase of the distance learning experience. The state guidelines for distance learning limited per-class instructional time to 30 minutes. This time constraint presented a considerable change. Normal instructional time per class was 55 minutes, and the homework time was an average of 35 minutes a night for PB courses; thus, the half hour limit meant a loss of nearly an hour of instruction per class, per day.

To explain the weekly objectives, I made videos of myself explaining each week's instruction and posted the videos in the Canvas online learning platform provided by the school district. I hosted a Zoom discussion time each Monday for questions about the assignments or the

text. During the last two weeks of the first unit, I clarified that the second CDA worksheet, the Creative Response, and the Guided Literary Analysis (GLA) would still be required as indicated in the original unit calendar. I also indicated that there would be an optional online discussion thread activity in week three—for extra credit—because I wanted to determine how well this format would work as a substitute for a Socratic seminar. The activity did go well; thus, for week four of the unit I assigned an online discussion.

Overall, I was able to implement the unit; however, the transition to distance learning did affect the results. The summative writing assignment was still conducted, but in a modified format. Initially, I was focused on keeping the study of the novel moving and in maintaining student engagement. I noticed immediately that I felt handicapped by not being able to observe student responses to assignments. I realized that much of my decision making as to how much time to spend on different in-class assignments was based on observing the students and responding to their questions, or on allowing them time to work independently when they were experiencing work-flow momentum.

Also, the loss of visual feedback was very disorienting. Some students were proactive and sent emails asking questions, but quite a few students did not turn in work and did not respond to the initial emails I sent to check on them. By the end of March 2020, I did have contact with all but two of my students. With assistance from the freshman counselor and school psychologist, I was able to regain contact with the two students I had not heard from; neither of the two were participants in the study. The first week of April was Spring Break; this provided me time to revise the next unit in the cycle. I took the time to streamline the assignments so that students could complete them in 30-minute increments. I also needed to budget the overall expectations so that reading time was factored into the total amount of learning time for this

class. The changes for cycles two and three did not limit the critical literacy methods nor affect the study focus, but they did alter the use of peer or collaborative work and eliminated the oral participation expectations.

The state guidelines adopted during the pandemic laid out a clear goal of “do no harm,” meaning that no end of term grade would be lower than the March 17, 2020, baseline. As such, many students interpreted this as an opportunity to stop schoolwork. The state, district, and my school did remind students that staying engaged was important for further progress in their education. The pre-baccalaureate (PB) students did understand that to continue in the program it was necessary to complete each PB course, as part of a progression of skill and knowledge development. I was relieved that most of the students completed most of the assignments, even though the work was often not submitted by the posted due dates. At times, the situation was quite frustrating, and the variety of factors at play were as numerous as the different conditions each student was experiencing. Inconsistent internet access, the need to babysit younger siblings, getting a job to help with family finances, movement between parent houses and not having the needed supplies at one or the other locations, Chromebook malfunctions, distraction, and depression were among the many different reasons students expressed for not engaging in online learning.

It was during the second cycle, due to the weekly student journal assignment, that the challenges of distance versus face-to-face learning became obvious to students themselves. Their input was useful for making further adjustments during the third cycle and for influencing my thinking about the appropriate instructional methods to make the most of distance learning in the future.



## **Presentation of the Results**

The cycles of my research were grounded by the core literature in each unit of study. Each iterative unit was examined using the dialectic action research cycle, “identify an area of focus, collect data, analyze and interpret the data, develop an action plan” (Mills, 2014, p. 21). The data analyzed per cycle are identified in figures 1-3, displayed at the beginning of each cycle explanation. The pre study was based on a segue from a unit on E.B. White’s essays to the novels of historical fiction. The introduction to the study included E.B. White’s “The Meaning of Democracy” (1943/2014) statement and a journal entry in which the students explained their current understanding of democracy. The research study results are reported below per cycle and instructional strategy.

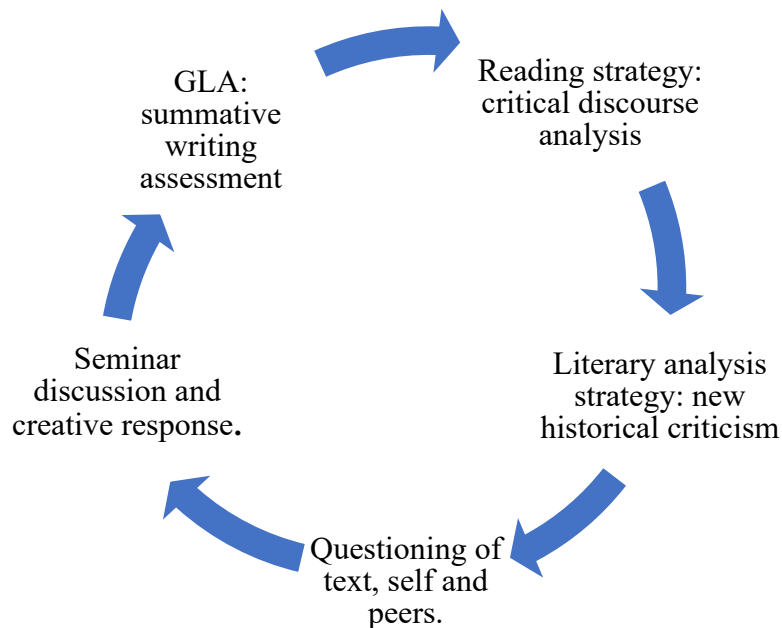
### **Cycle one: *Cry, the Beloved Country***

The next section is divided into subtopics based on the instructional methods and types of data collected in this cycle. The sections are reading strategies, literary criticism, questioning and discussion, discourse, and writing. Pseudonyms are used to identify all student work.

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Figure 2. Cycle one instructional strategies and assessments

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### Types of Data

**Reading strategies.** Critical discourse analysis examines how the diction, syntax and literary devices in written communication affect its meaning, especially regarding power and ideology. I made a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) worksheet based on the components of language explained by Fairclough (1995). After lessons using *The Writer's Craft*, (Blau, 1995) grade 9 level, we did two warm-up activities looking for individual words, and different types of clauses in passages from the novel. The students completed the first worksheet during week-one of the novel study; these were returned to them by March 11. The second worksheet was assigned on March 12 and due by March 19. However, the last day of in-class instruction was March 13. Beginning Monday, March 16 there was a good deal of confusion. While many students turned in the worksheet electronically, several were turned in late or not at all. An electronic copy was re-posted, and a second due date was set up for April 8.

In class, we completed two brief analysis exercises and one worksheet; the second

worksheet was completed as homework and submitted during the distance learning time period. As an indication of language component analysis, the CDA work samples in cycle one indicated more confusion than understanding, but in many cases, the results did demonstrate an awareness that an author's language choices shape the text's meaning. A few examples demonstrated this range in analysis skill. On the first worksheet, Freddie stated that the phrases "modify the sentences by adding prepositions," which does not make sense. Looking at the words circled on his worksheet passage, I assumed he was trying to say that the prepositional phrases modified the sentences. However, he did not clarify what effect the prepositional phrases had on the sentences marked.

Damiana correctly identified adjectival and adverbial prepositional phrases, but she did not indicate the effect of the prepositional phrases in the sentences. Although the grammar component sections of the worksheet indicated that more instruction was needed before students could parse effectively, the students did a good job identifying positionality of the reader to the text. Benny noted that Paton's writing positions the reader so that it "makes me question my position in society and whether it is good to be comfortable when others have to ride segregated over-crowded trains." The claim indicated that Benny recognized the writer's ability to create an emotive effect, and it expressed the student's empathy for those experiencing uncomfortable social conditions.

Justina stated that positionality emphasized the sense of fear that affected everyone in South Africa, but for different reasons. She stated, "in my country we don't always agree on what should be a priority, but at least we agree that people should have freedom, rights and safety. South Africa didn't seem to even have that." Therese also claimed that Paton's writing

positioned readers to understand the presence of fear, and she noted that “[a] fearful situation going on right now is the coronavirus.”

The final expectation of the worksheet was for students to write questions that they would ask during seminar. They were expected to connect their questions to lines of text in the passage. Some of the best literary analysis and evidence of critical thinking was demonstrated by student questions. In the text passage for the second worksheet, one of the characters reads aloud from the newspaper to share the article reporting a murder; Lucia asked, “why does Paton include the seemingly insignificant detail ‘the bowl of a pipe on the table was found still to be warm?’” The question indicated an interest in the use of epistolary form, and it asked about a detail that would later be recognized as foreshadowing regarding the condition in which a main character died. In response to the statement in the text that sorrow is better than fear, Desdemona asked, “Is it better for people to stay in fear or be in sorrow because of the outcome of their fear?” The question demands a clear definition of each term and suggests that the student is thinking about each emotion’s effects. Trudie asked a specific character question that had social and power-position implications: “How does Kumalo’s role as a father and a priest play into Absalom’s view of him?” This question focused on the protagonist, and it allowed for multiple lines of text to be discussed in terms of the characterization of fathers and parsons in the novel, as well as in the reader’s understanding of these roles.

Thus, while often inaccurate in knowing the type of language component, the completed CDA forms did identify awareness that the author’s language choices affected the text’s meaning, comprehension of the story, and the students’ critical thinking. Some students effectively recognized and explained social issues and Paton’s ability to present different perspectives on the racial and economic tensions in South Africa. Critical literacy was presented,

as students raised questions from the text that addressed social and political power, an author's use of language to affect the reader's perspective on different topics, and to show how fear hinders a society. While the CDA responses did not specifically mention democracy, the attributes of equality, freedom, access to opportunity, and sense of security were all brought up by the students.

**Literary criticism.** As a class we read background information about new historical criticism in Appleman (2015). There were two formative assessments to develop the student's historical background knowledge. First, they individually created historical timelines using the South African history chapter in *Rights and Protest* (Oxford, 2015). Second, in pairs the students created a "visual history collage" in a three-slide presentation that first displayed an image or images of the topic; next, it provided information explaining how the topic was relevant to South Africa in the 1940s, and a third slide provided a bibliography for visual and text sources. The goal of the assignment was to connect their timeline understanding of South Africa's history and more detailed historical and cultural information as context for discussing references to the land, laws, people, and events mentioned in the novel. These formative assignments were completed both in class and as homework: the timeline was started February 26 and due March 2, and the visual history slides were started on March 9 and due March 11, 2020.

Some of the participants did use the text to identify specific historical issues that related to critical literacy goals, and they selected text passages that examined attributes of democracy, but the ability to use history as a lens for understanding the novel was not as effective as I hoped it would be. However, there were examples of students applying the contextual history work and their own historical knowledge during the seminars. For the first seminar, a question Horatio had prepared was "How do the bus boycotts of page seventy-four relate to the bus boycotts seen in

the United States?” His question did not come up in the seminar, but it would have drawn out prior knowledge from those with an awareness of the U.S. civil rights movement—or it would have required that I add an explanation. For the second seminar, a question from Justina’s preparation was,

From the timelines we worked on, we know that there was a lot of political unrest in the 1940s (*sic*) because of the different political parties. Chapter 12 kind of alludes to that as different anonymous voices share their political views. How might the historic time of this novel and what is happening throughout South Africa affect Kumalo and Absalom’s specific situation?”

The student writing clearly connects the timeline assignment to the unique format of chapter 12, in which Paton breaks from the narrative regarding Stephen Kumalo to present pieces of conversation occurring among White South Africans in response to different issues involving native South Africans. She then directly questions the relationship between the historic time period and the events affecting the protagonist and his son. This was evidence of critical thinking. While few students articulated this type of connection in the seminars during this unit, the impact of the novel as historical fiction did leave a greater impression on many of the students than their unit assignments suggested. During the later discussions for the immigration and refugee unit, students made connections between the immediate racism and institutional injustices happening in the U.S. in realtime and the situations that Paton presented in *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

The students’ reflection on past learning was encouraging evidence of critical thinking and retrieval of learning, and as the students noted during the aftermath of George Floyd’s

murder, events in South Africa's past proved that the history of racism and injustice is a global issue.

*Questioning and discussion.* The original plan included a seminar each week to discuss that week's reading. Students were expected to write questions and provide quotations that provided the context for each question. We completed two seminars before the transition to distance learning. Although some questions asked for text clarification or focused on basic plot elements, many questions indicated student inquiry regarding democratic attributes or critical theory issues such as power and justice. A broad question submitted by Jarndyce stated, "This passage (on 109) shows the perspective of the rich white class, why do you think Paton included it in the text and what purpose does it serve?" Relating to the same chapter in the novel Fulgor wrote:

The theme of power was especially present in chapter 12 where the Europeans are complaining about losing their "Whiteness." They are really concerned about losing the power they have acquired. It is this irrational fear that causes them to view the natives as inherently "Criminal." Why do the Europeans believe they are losing their whiteness?

Both students are aware of class and racial status, but Fulgor takes a position on the topic before asking his question. The fuller explanation of the topic presents the question in a more provocative manner. While Jarndyce demonstrates awareness that the "rich white class" has a "perspective," no topic identifying a perspective is provided. In contrast, Fulgor recognizes the "theme of power," the topics of "whiteness," and "irrational fear," and a view of "the natives as inherently Criminal." The two in class seminars in March discussed the themes of power and fear as central to the tension between White South Africa and the native populations.

I did assign an online discussion week three as a voluntary activity because I wanted to observe how the format worked. The week three option convinced me that the online discussion would be a reasonable alternative for assessing student discourse. The discussion thread worked out well, as the Canvas option provided me with two different ways to read the discussion: I could read the entire stream chronologically, or I could see individual student contributions with a comment box for grading purposes. Thus, I assigned a week 4 online discussion for all students using two large groups: students with last names starting A-K and L-Z. A definite benefit of the written format was that it gave greater voice to the shy students and to those who often felt intimidated by the more fluent or opinionated speakers. A limitation was that the students were not practicing speaking skills, and some simply wrote an answer to one of the initial questions that I provided, asked a question of their own and then stopped participating.

The seminars before the closure were consistent in demonstrating reading skill differences among students. The types of oral comments and the students' use of text support identified skills suggesting distinguished, satisfactory, and struggling levels of reading comprehension. However, the post-seminar written reflections indicated that students who struggled with the reading, benefitted from hearing their peers discuss the text. Desdemona stated, "I didn't really understand the book at all until the seminar." Bernardo indicated that the first seminar helped him understand the segregation in Johannesburg. He wrote,

One main idea I took from the seminar was the idea of a government taking hard-working citizens and pushing them out of town limits because of their race. While (*sic*) the white citizens who were less hard-working were kept in the city. I think this is corrupt because as a government you should have the people working the hardest inside your city.



Bernardo rarely spoke during seminars, but his writing indicated how he was processing the social conditions presented in the text and discussed by his peers. In contrast, stronger readers expressed more sophisticated inquiries. Therese focused on the protagonist and his brother and noted,

John Kumalo enjoys Johannesburg because he is “free of the chief.” . . . Stephen Kumalo enjoys the stability and security which the village brings to him. . . I believe that this shows both brothers are trying to find a way to control their lives. John believes that this can only be reached by standing up for his social power.

Therese’s point about the two brothers wanting to control their lives addressed critical theory issues of individual will and opportunity. Therese mentioned this topic in her second seminar reflection and noted that this was a topic she was interested in that was not developed in the seminar. Unfortunately, it never did receive ample consideration in the later written discussions either. Overall, the student questions did express interest in how Paton describes and presents political, social, cultural, and economic issues.

A positive result of the discussion threads in contrast to the live seminars was evidence of more careful selection of text to support the students’ questions and comments. Throughout the school year, Dolores was a very hesitant participant in Socratic seminar discussions. Her contributions often were simple statements of agreement with the prior speaker. In the written discussion, she demonstrated comprehension and recognition of democratic attributes in the text. During the final discussion, Dolores wrote,

Justice and injustice are demonstrated in this novel by all the natives who are working hard but none of the profit is being put back into their communities. “Go to our hospital, he said, and see our people lying on the floors. They lie so close you cannot

step over them. But it is they who dig the gold. For three shilling a day” (36). This quote is talking about how even though they are the people producing the profit they don’t get paid a lot and they don’t get any benefit from it.

This comment with text support was the fullest contribution to a discussion Dolores had made all year. I think the contribution was in part due to her ability to not feel pressured by the gaze of her peers and to not feel torn between keeping up with the on-going conversation or taking the time to find the desired text support for a comment to which she wanted to respond.

Abundio regularly shared ideas in response to the comments of others. While he did not develop a habit of using text support, his contributions during the discussion thread represent consistent participation regardless of format. During the final discussion, in response to comments examining aspects of democracy in the novel, he stated, “(M)y impression of these aspects of democracy is they only work in a perfect world. . . the problem is this world isn’t perfect. Not everyone shows respect to others. This causes an imbalance in society, which is what this novel highlights.” The contribution does not identify any lines of text that demonstrate societal imbalance or disrespect. I would have liked the opportunity to use this student comment to review idealist and materialist historical theory. My questions for the students would have been, does Paton’s novel suggest that human history progresses in an attempt to reach an ideal—like democracy, or that it progresses based on the use and control of materials—such as mineral wealth that allows for industry? On paper alone, this is a complicated conceptual question. In the classroom, with access to posters, maps, and other documents, maintaining the students’ awareness of the idealist and the materialist historical theories would have allowed a means to reinforce the value of new historical criticism for understanding the novel as a work of historical fiction. In the online setting, this opportunity slipped away. It was especially frustrating because

the students were questioning Paton's references to wealth, power, and religion. Ana responded to a question about James Jarvis and pointed out that in the novel, when he meets the father of his son's murderer, he is not angry because of something he read that his son had written. Ana used a quote to support her point:

“The truth is that our civilization is not Christian; it is a tragic compound of great ideal and fearful practice, of high assurance and desperate anxiety, of loving charity and fearful clutching of possessions. Allow me a minute. . . .”(Paton 155) This greatly impacts Mr. Jarvis because it was the last thing his son wrote and he realizes that his son and him (*sic*) had very different views on things.

The students recognized that democracy and Christianity are idealistic. The students' comments also indicated that they understood that the control of wealth and resources benefitted some at the expense of others. I am left wondering whether having in person seminars would have provided an opportunity to address more effectively how these different issues interact in society. In the online discussions, ideas rose to the surface and evaporated without fuller exploration of their significance for understanding democracy. Again, as a result of the evidence, I recognized that I need to follow up online discussion with support material. Even if some (or many) never look at the information I post, it would prove my attention to the students' thinking and potentially enhance their understanding of the issues discussed.

***Discourse.*** The creative response assessment allowed students to demonstrate their understanding of a topic or idea in the novel using a format other than academic writing. The creative response assignment was initially designed to include an individual presentation. The in-class presentation was not possible; required oral communication was not an option with distance learning. However, the products submitted as individual creative pieces showed emotive affect

that was not expressed in any other student work. Students used symbolism, spacing, color, and other art principles to express their responses. Their artist's statements often provided insight that had not been conveyed in any other assignment. Two examples demonstrate different ideas in the text that stood out to the students. Ofelia explained her work based on characterization that Paton develops through instances of crime and justice in the novel:

My art piece is meant to represent the way that the lawyer took the case for god (*sic*) and that let Kumalo feel a little bit less pressure. All of the chains around his heart represent different things that are weighing Kumalo down and making it harder for him to feel peace. I decided to paint the heart more realistically to show that Kumalo is only human like the rest of us. There are shadows of bars in the back of the picture. This is meant to represent the scene where he finally met his son again. . .The key is shaped like a cross because it is meant to represent the lawyer taking the case for God. The unlocked lock and floating chain are meant to symbolize how the lawyer was able to free him from one of his many worries. . .everything is underwater to represent the overall pressure that Kumalo felt. (Appendix E )

Ofelia's work is entirely symbolic. In contrast, Hero's work is illustrative of large social issues. Hero explained her work that focused on a materialist interpretation of the novel:

This art piece was inspired by the quote about how the different races of people in South Africa were not receiving the same amount of gold when most of them were working harder to obtain the gold than those receiving the most amount of profit from it. As seen, the drawing is of a map of South Africa and the upper and lower portions show places in South Africa. . . The two sides of the picture are separated between a diagonal line which is meant to represent the inequality between the European/ white people and

other races in South Africa. . . This art piece is reflecting from the text that there is a very large imbalance of money towards people of different races and how that is affecting their lives. (Appendix F)

The students' creative responses were impressive in their range of topics and the depth of thinking the students expressed. The original plan was to display the two-dimensional work in the classroom after their formal oral presentations. The students would have benefitted from seeing each other's work. Although many of the responses were simple in comparison to the examples, the explanations expressed greater insight than was conveyed in other assignments. The results reinforced many cognitive and constructivist arguments that emphasize the need for creative expression and different forms of student voice as a means of solidifying knowledge (Caranfa, 2006; Walker, 2015).

**Writing.** Several formative writing assignments were completed during this unit. The first was a journal response to E.B. White's definition of democracy (White1934/2014). Also, after the first two seminars students completed a written reflection and included the seminar questions they had written in preparation for the seminars. This work was uploaded in Canvas, which was more useful than initially expected as it had created a habit of using the online platform for weekly work that was essential during the COVID-19 distance learning. The only collaborative work during this unit was the visual history assignment that included minimal writing. This was completed in the classroom using Google Docs, and like the seminar reflections, the process was good practice for coordinating shared work using technology prior to losing face-to-face time for completing work. The CDA worksheet, as indicated above, required passage analysis. The use of CDA worksheets was meant to develop close reading and language component awareness. Completing these worksheets was formative work leading to the more formal Guided Literary

Analysis. As planned, the GLA was the summative writing assessment.

Any GLA includes a passage to be annotated, and for this assessment there were two versions. The passages were from pages 206-207: focusing on the justice system, and 302-303, focusing on the effort to improve agricultural production on the native's land. The students had completed GLAs during first semester in the classroom rather than online. Because the GLA for *Cry, the Beloved Country* did not happen in class, I prompted the students to review their first semester GLA final, and I posted the directions and the rubric in Canvas several days before the scheduled online assessment. This material was communicated in a Canvas announcement on March 23, and the first GLAs were scheduled for March 25; this timeline was in keeping with the original unit calendar. However, based on the school district's guidelines for supporting student learning online, the first school week in April was considered a "reboot," and teachers were asked to provide students an opportunity to get caught up if they had not been engaged during the last two weeks of March. Thus, April 6-8 was set aside as time for those students who had not submitted the Creative Response and or who had not written the GLA to do so.

### **Analysis, Interpretation, and Changes based on Cycle One Results.**

In response to the first iteration, there were several instructional changes I decided to make for the next cycle. To improve student recognition of clauses and phrases I added a "grammar review" assignment to be completed before students attempted the next CDA worksheet. On YouTube, I found explanations, with examples, identifying phrases and clauses that included a video. This provided visual and auditory support to clarify how phrases and dependent clauses add to a sentence. One of the grammar support websites I found included quizzes, so I posted an optional quiz in Canvas for recognizing phrases and clauses. We continued to look at phrases and clauses in *The Samurai's Garden*. In early April I wanted to put

together an activity based on identifying these language components that I could have them complete in Zoom break out groups, but when the Zoom attendance was consistently low, I gave up on that idea. I spend more time giving specific feedback to students on their use of phrases and clauses in the weekly journals they wrote.

In comparison to grammar work before the closure, it was obvious that they were better able to focus on grammar when they worked collaboratively and were able to ask each other questions and receive immediate feedback. I realized the benefit of having had “Grammar Wednesday” on a weekly basis; the students had focused on grammar without feeling pressure because the activities had affected only their participation grade. We had looked altogether at the literary text, the grammar book examples, or student writing examples. Once the grammar work was connected to graded writing assignments the students lost confidence, guessed, or simply did not attempt to complete the grammar analysis. At the end of cycle one, I thought ahead about the third cycle unit on immigration; I intended to have the students complete work that identified phrases and clauses in their own writing AND in the non-fiction text. (I address further grammar work in the cycle three analysis.)

The student seminars, results of the Guided Literary Analysis, and the creative responses suggested that while some students connected the historical background information when they read the novel, many completed assignments during the reading of the novel without any reference back to the historical background work. This caused me to wonder if the lack of instructor supported connections, that would have been part of my in-class instruction, caused the limitation in the students’ connections between the history and events in the novel. In the classroom, in normal circumstances, I would start class by explaining specific history-to-text connections, and I would use the large pull-down maps or other media and spend some time

allowing students to share ideas. Even if students attended the Monday Zoom sessions, I was not yet skilled in screen sharing and was not prepared to share websites with relevant historical information. Thus, an important lesson for me, was to have a set of websites with maps and other background information ready to support each week's core reading. This might have fallen short of addressing all student questions, but it would have allowed me to reinforce the historical factors that provide context for the events in the novel. Also, better historical context might have increased the examination of attributes of democracy, or their limitations, as presented in the work of fiction. I am comfortable using the materials in my classroom, but I became less effective in supporting historical criticism when the shift to distance learning occurred. For the future, I need to find appropriate content online to share with students sequentially to enhance their understanding of the historical context for Paton's novel.

The results of the GLAs were mixed. My frustration resulted from not knowing how much the online format affected the students' work-either positively or negatively. There were several emails claiming the GLA was stressful and confusing. For some students, the inability to print from a Chrome book (the district provided technology tool) was an annoyance because the students wanted to print and annotate a hard copy of the passage. While several students demonstrated improved skills in one or two of the criteria on the rubric (appendix A), quite a few did less well on one or more criterion. The few students with very strong writing skills maintained their work level. An immediate lesson for me was to have students practice annotating electronically as well as on hard copy, so that an all-electronic assessment would not be an exercise in frustration.

**PLC Feedback.** In the original research plan, I intended to get collegial feedback for each cycle during Professional Learning Community meetings. As the distance learning



continued, there were few Zoom PLC sessions with my two IB-instructor colleagues. While I shared my first iteration results with them and asked for feedback, I did not receive any responses for the first iteration.

**My reflection.** For the first iteration, I primarily focused on the shift from in-class to online. I lacked strategies for addressing historical depth via online instruction and for being effective in supporting student written language skills. From the first iteration I adjusted plans for using the CDA worksheets by prefacing their analysis work with a review of language components and by including specific prompts in the worksheet section to focus the students on attributes of democracy. Also, to bolster the students' ability to connect history to the understanding of literature, I included a pre-reading assignment to clarify definitions of democracy and its attributes (Meier, 2020; Tonym, 2018), as well as historical background for the political situations in China, Hong Kong, and Japan in the 1930s. I changed the group brochure assignment into a weekly postcard assignment that required students to do individual research on an historical or cultural allusion from the novel. Thus, as the students read the second novel, they also used individual research skills, written communication, and the selection of visual information to reinforce their awareness of the historical and cultural topics. The written work continued to focus on how an author addresses historical issues, and as indicated in the research design plan, structural criticism was introduced, with a focus on the use of epistolary form and the organization of the novel by season.

Table 3. Summary of cycle one results

<i>Cry the Beloved Country</i>	Critical Literacy methods	Democratic consciousness	Improvement of Practice
Social & Cultural Power	Seminars—questions & discourse, GLA	Historical timelines, Visual history slides, Seminar reflections, Creative response	Add historical connections links to support contextual understanding.
Political Power	CDA worksheets, Seminar participation	Historical timelines, Seminar reflections, Creative response	Student lead focus on passages for discussion to reinforce meaning.
Justice/Injustice	Seminar questions, Creative response	Seminar reflections, Creative response	Historical allusions need to be shared using online visual information.
Language/Literature Awareness	CDA worksheets, GLA	CDA worksheets, GLA	Pair share/small group debrief of CDA language components.
Results: anticipated (A) and unexpected (U)	Limited ability to recognize different language components (U)	Impressive illustrations and symbolic representations of issues of justice, injustice, and power. (U)	Increase guided language support. (A) Students prefer interactive knowledge and skills checks as formative assessments; builds confidence.

### Cycle Two: *The Samurai's Garden*

The introduction of the unit included a review of new historical criticism, a map assignment, and reading that provided context to the historical situations in China, Hong Kong, and Japan in the 1930s. The map work included labeling specific locations in Asia that are mentioned in the novel. Based on the results of cycle one, I also included a review of democratic attributes, this time using instructional articles by Meier (2020) and Tomyne (2018) to initiate student thinking about democracy.

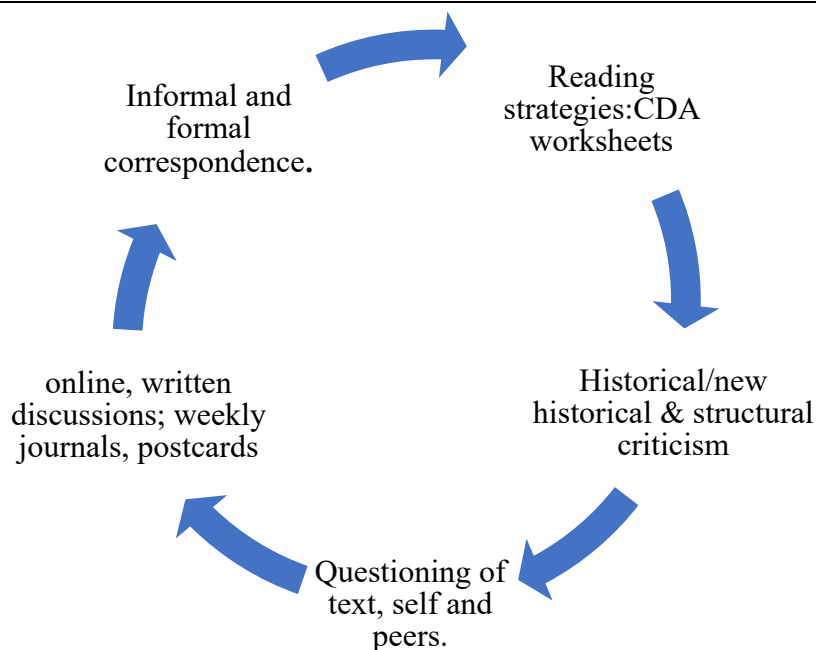
In the original plans for cycle two, I wanted the students to choose their own passages for weekly CDA analysis. After the results of cycle one, and due to the COVID-19 instructional

time limitations, I decided to alternate written language analysis work and the discussion threads so that the unit maintained some of each skill development and resulted in continuing evidence of student work using each strategy. I situated the CDA worksheets in weeks one and three—due April 17 and May 1, and the discussion threads in weeks two and four—due April 24 and May 8. To promote student thinking about the history and cultural allusions in the novel, I added a weekly postcard assignment to replace the group historical/cultural brochure assignment. This maintained some weekly research and required a brief, weekly writing assignment that demonstrated the students’ ability to connect research on a historical or social topic to the events in the novel. The postcards contributed to the development of informal correspondence as a form of writing and aligned with Common Core expectations for writing for different purposes. As planned, the summative assessment was a formal writing assignment using correspondence with an elected official and evaluated using the Common Core Rubric for Argumentative writing grades 9-10 (Appendix B).

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Figure 3. Cycle two instructional strategies and assessments

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## Types of Data

**Reading strategies.** I modified the CDA worksheet to add a prompt regarding recognition of attributes of democracy. Also, to scaffold for better language analysis, I created a grammar review lesson on phrases and clauses and linked it to an online grammar quiz. Unfortunately, few students completed the grammar work; the difference in accuracy between those students who did the review and those who did not emphasized the lack of understanding and, or, motivation to learn more about language components. The CDA worksheets did indicate that the students comprehended the text and that they noticed tone, mood, characterization, and social setting dynamics. Adding the historical criticism assignment and postcards provided different means for showing extrapolation beyond the text regarding cultural and historical-setting understanding. The students who became adept at language parsing, demonstrated that critical discourse analysis can be a good tool for enhancing student understanding of how an author's writing choices shape the reader's perception and understanding of different social issues. Beatrice's work exemplified this learning. On her first CDA worksheet she wrote the following in the box for individual word choice:

The exaggerated, scary diction used in this excerpt is used to produce the main idea that looks can be deceiving. At the beginning, when Stephen hasn't met anyone yet and doesn't know any of the people, he uses words like "gaping", "mangled", (*sic*) and even "monstrous" to describe what they looked like. However (*sic*) despite this first impression, Stephen eventually warms up to the village and starts to use words like "pleasantries", (*sic*) and "sweet" to maybe show the reader that his visit wasn't going to be as scary or terrifying as he first made it sound.

Her phrases box continued her specific focus. Beatrice wrote,

The phrase “-has been their home-“(sic) (Pages 24-25) that modifies Yamaguchi, the village, helps to support the main idea. When Matsu describes these people with more human nature, like having a home and a childhood, rather than describing them as monsters, Stephen becomes a little more enlightened. I believe he realized how harsh he had been towards how they looked and not the fact that they were just like him. Human, with feelings.

The explanation Beatrice provided clarified that the word “home” has connotative meaning to her. She translated this positive perspective to address the shift she observed in the narration that becomes more humane in its description of the lepers of Yamaguchi. In the box for clause analysis, Beatrice identified a participial phrase rather than a clause, but the ideas in her analysis represented the quality of thinking about how the author’s writing is shaping the meaning of the text. She wrote, “The clause “-all wearing monstrous masks-” (Pages 24-25) Really (sic) helps to emphasize the idea that looks can be deceiving, and that what’s on the outside can’t define what’s on the inside. A mask is a perfect example of this.” Thus, Beatrice’s language analysis maintained a focus on the idea that looks can be deceiving. I was very happy with her explanations and her careful attention to syntax components.

As was true for many students, Beatrice demonstrated inaccuracy in identifying phrases and clauses; however, I think it was more significant that she took the time to evaluate how individual words and groups of words were crafting the meaning being conveyed. The message to me was that the detective element of critical discourse analysis was valuable not because students were expert grammarians, but because they learned to recognize how language can be used to affect the readers’ understanding of what it means to be human and humane. The historical reality of individuals and groups judging each other based on appearance was certainly

a relevant issue in both novels, and it became an overwhelming topic during cycle three of the study.

**Literary criticism.** I prefaced the reading of the novel with a lesson reviewing historical criticism. In March, together in class, we had read a section from Deborah Appleman's text *Critical Encounters in Secondary English: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents* (2015), focusing on new historicism. In the introductory information for *The Samurai's Garden* that I posted online in Canvas, I reminded the students that they had a copy of this information to review. Additionally, I provided readings and guided questions regarding the historical setting and locations presented in the novel: British Hong Kong, China under Chiang Kai-Shek, and political conditions in Japan in the 1930s. I made a video of myself to introduce the novel and the main assignments; I included an explanation of the use of epistolary form, in this case a character journal. The video was posted in my weekly announcement in Canvas. In the video I asked the students to consider how the character journal could be both limiting in point of view and useful for recognizing how humans create their own filters of information. Additionally, I mentioned that the novel is organized by seasons. The use of a character journal and references to seasons and nature were topics addressed in the online discussions.

Without the physical classroom, there was not a consistent means of discussing structural and historical allusions in the novel. The journals and the postcards did show the students' ability to recognize cultural and historical topics and to comment on how the allusions added to their understanding of the text, the time period, or cultural practices. On her CDA worksheet, Damiana noted that the description of the leper village, "relates to a social issue of equality because not all people at that time saw 'lepers' as equals of actual people." And on her second CDA worksheet, when addressing the social situation in the passage, Damiana stated,

“[Yamaguchi] is an unspoken democracy, everyone agrees on everything that is done for the village.” Although Damiana did not add quotes from the passage to support her claim, Tsukimaya’s writing does suggest that the lepers in Yamaguchi all contributed to the well-being of the community as a whole.

Hero made a similar observation on the second CDA when she connected the writing to her interpretation of a democratic society: “Yamaguchi is a democracy because everyone helps each other in deciding what to do, they are free to do what they want and everyone is treated fairly and equally.” In contrast, when discussing the situation in Yamaguchi, Napoleon noticed “some elements of communism, such as the villagers sharing what they have for the good of the community.” The students are noticing the same language, yet they are applying different definitions of social/political organization. As a class, we did not address the differences between communism and democracy. Hero’s notion that democracy includes sharing goods was an interesting perspective; it was not among the attributes listed in the background reading (Tomy, 2018). The sixth attribute listed in the reading material was cooperation and compromise, which might have been what the students were referring to when they mentioned everyone helping each other and sharing goods.

While some students recognized the author’s purposeful choices in adding specific allusions, based on the work completed overall, I was not convinced the concept of historical allusions as a means of establishing context was consistently well understood. The students’ work displayed evidence that was both satisfying and discouraging, especially because several comments about becoming disinterested and unmotivated were due to the COVID-19 situation. I was frustrated by not being able to respond in person to some of the learning challenges and to situations where having materials available in the classroom might have generated more interest

in the topics being studied. To evaluate the criticism skills demonstrated in this cycle, the best evidence of student thinking was presented in the two online discussions.

***Questioning and discourse.*** Students wrote questions for each CDA worksheet, and they were asked to add questions related to the core text during each online discussion. While I also solicited questions during the Monday Zoom sessions, there were very few students who asked questions during these online meetings, and the Monday questions from students usually related to directions for assignments. The questions and responses in the discussion threads demonstrated emotive and intellectual responses to the text. There were many examples of both structural criticism comments and historical analysis within the student discussion writing.

The students had a variety of observations about Tsukiyama's use of a first-person journal, the inclusion of letters to the protagonist, and radio broadcasts updating the events of the war in China. Amy stated,

The letters and radio broadcasts add to the rising action of the plot because it adds news from both China and Hong Kong. . . King's letter adds to this tension because it says, "But as they move closer to Canton, I know that many Lingnan students are too afraid to return after the holidays" (King, 97) (*sic*). Canton is near Hong Kong, and if the Japanese are getting close to Canton, they are also getting near Hong Kong. This adds to the rising action because it is adding tension about the war. . . "It won't be long before the Japanese Army holds Canton within their grasp" (radio reporter, 101) (*sic*). The Imperial Army has been moving through and conquering many parts of China . . . this makes Stephen nervous because the closer the Army gets to Canton, the more likely they will also conquer Hong Kong . . . .

Amy recognized that the letter from King, a friend of the protagonist who is still in China, was



included in the novel to provide historical context. Amy accurately claimed that the information affects the tension in the novel. Fulgor provided another example of historical awareness that affected a student's understanding of the text. Fulgor wrote:

On page 97 Stephen finds out about the massacre in Nanking and is shocked. "I suddenly felt as if the walls were closing in on me as i (*sic*) folded up King's letter, stuffing it back into the thin envelope". (*sic*) Since he only heard the radio broadcasts about the "Noble Japanese army bravely capturing the city" the news shocks him. (*sic*) and since the reader only knows what Stephen knows, the news can come as a shock to the reader too.

Although there are many technical errors in his writing, Fulgor's explanation provided strong evidence that he recognized how Tsukiyama uses historical information to affect the text and to create an emotive effect on the reader. The use of historical allusions was a detail that consistently intrigued Fulgor. In his final journal entry, his analysis paragraph demonstrated the application of new historicism. Fulgor explained:

One section of the novel that stood out to me was when Stephen and his father are in Tokyo and find out about the Japanese army capturing Canton. Tsukiyama says "My father and I were having lunch at the time, and the news felt like an unexpected blow to the stomach. All the Japanese in the restaurant cheered to hear news of the last major Chinese port to be captured, while I struggled for air and simply couldn't say anything" (Tsukiyama 202). The contrast between Stephen and his father, and the Japanese reactions show how out of place Stephen is in Tokyo. The use of tactile imagery in "an unexpected blow to the stomach" and "struggled for air" allows the reader to understand how Stephen feels about the news. To contrast this, the Japanese start to

celebrate.

This type of student writing is gratifying to read. Fulgor identified the historical event, he included a quotation—and almost got the form correct—to support his point, and he assessed the use of tactile imagery as a literary feature that clarified the significance of the historical event for the development of the plot. I will use this paragraph as an exemplar in the future.

During the discussions, students raised questions regarding different aspects of Tsukiyama's work: representations of the war, the character's discussions of beauty, the novel's structure, uses of different imagery, the effects of setting, and first-person point of view. I noticed more students identifying and commenting on literary features during the discussions than in previous seminars. Specifically commenting on the narrative form, Juan quoted the 30 October 1937 journal entry that describes Stephen's visit to Sachi without Matsu. Juan noted, "In this quote, 'I' is used multiple times and we know Stephen's inner thoughts, but we are still unaware of what Sachi will think." Justina responded to Juan's observation regarding the first-person perspective. She wrote, "We also don't see the perspective of other characters, except for through their letters." The students demonstrated comprehension of the text, attention to each other's ideas and questions, and the ability to apply literary analysis that showed a form of criticism. Connecting historical and social issues in the novel, Amy wrote,

When Keiko tells Stephen they can no longer see each other she says, "Don't you see, nothing could ever come of our friendship now...My brother was killed at Hschowfu" (Keiko, 188) (*sic*). I think Keiko always knew that Stephen being Chinese would be an issue, but it became too much after the Chinese killed her brother. After that it was like she could no longer be around, much less associated with Chinese people.

Although he did not elaborate, Freddie's response to Amy showed some awareness of how the

writing affected the reader's understanding of the text. Freddie noted, "The war conditions affect the lives of characters in the novel by making some of the characters have a sad tone." Related to the same section of the text, when Stephen learns why his friend Keiko will not see him anymore, Ofelia responded,

I definitely think Keiko's story could have been better understood through her or her fathers (*sic*) perspective. "Keiko hesitated at first, then said quickly, 'I wont (*sic*) be able to see you anymore Stephen-san.'"(p.187). The hesitation shows that she doesn't want things to end up the way that they did. I think her situation would have been better explained through her perspective. I also think her not explaining more was an important choice by the author because it left us feeling a little bit confused like Stephen.

The students were recognizing how language was crafted to convey meaning. This was progress in literary analysis. The comments on culture and location also demonstrated the students' reflections on how the author presented the time period.

It was also significant that students noted their awareness that we had been learning about different cultures and ways of understanding life from different perspectives all year. Ofelia explained the use of nature imagery and symbolism that connected her reading of *Siddhartha*, *Cry, the Beloved Country* and *The Samurai's Garden*. Ofelia stated,

The overall theme of the story is Siddhartha's journey to find balance and reach enlightenment. He reaches enlightenment at the river. The river symbolizes the flow of time and how things are always changing. In "Cry the Beloved Country," [*sic*] nature seemed to be not as important to the story as it was for Siddhartha. However, near the end of the book, Kamalo [*sic*] needs to have the crops watered because they are so dry that no one will be able to grow any food. Then when the rain finally comes in, it

represents a new beginning and a way to grow hope for the future. Finally, for "The Samurai's Garden," [*sic*] Stephen right from the start has a very strong connection to the ocean. And Sachi's garden was necessary to the telling of her story as well.

Ofelia is making broad observations, but she is accurately referencing literary features that we had previously analyzed and discussed per novel. She made this connection within the timed online discussion. Ofelia demonstrated her recall and ability to recognize how author's choices affect their reader's understanding of a text.

The students' analytical skills prompted a range of questions. Earlier I presented Fulgor's analysis of the text passage when Stephen and his father are in a restaurant in Tokyo and news of the fall of Canton is announced. In the online discussion of that passage Damiana wrote, "Stephen and his father left because they were Chinese, what do you think would have happened to them if they stayed instead of leaving?" (*sic*) Her question personalized the historical allusion that the situation described. Tsukiyama's inclusion of Yamaguchi as representative of actual leper colonies or encampments was also discussed. Lucia wrote,

Sachi tells Stephen, "...vegetable gardens which soon grew lush in orderly rows as clean and straight as the flight of a heron...The terrible rotting smell was made bearable with fresh bandages and eucalyptus leaves" (Tsukiyama 148). Why do you think strong visual imagery of the garden (as well as a simile) and smell imagery of the village is included in this passage?

Lucia's question focused on the multisensory impression the author created, and she challenged her peers to consider the purpose for presenting the leper village of Yamaguchi so vividly.

When considering the epistolary format, Trudie wrote,

Stephen states, "There never seems to be enough time to do all the things you

want to do. I hadn't expected it to be so difficult to leave Tarumi, but just the thought of it can make my eyes begin to water" (Tsukiyama 253), do you think this was meant to engage the reader into Stephen's emotions? Or was this short entry just meant to display the array of emotions he felt and start to wrap up his journey?

Trudie was interested in Tsukiyama's intention; she observed the brevity of the entry and the emotive reference included in the text.

The questions written in the online discussions indicated that students were engaged in the story and that they were able to identify different types of literary features that affected the meaning of the text. To a greater extent than in prior seminars or discussions, the questions addressed *how* ideas were conveyed rather than simply inquiring about the ideas or situations presented.

**Writing.** The first writing assignment was a weekly journal entry with two parts: first, a paragraph discussing literary analysis of one paragraph from the weekly reading, and, second, one paragraph of personal reflection on life during the COVID-19 social isolation. During this unit, we also focused on a study of informal and formal written correspondence. One type of informal writing was the weekly postcard assignment. The informal writing also included a letter to a character in the novel and a letter written as a character to another student. Finally, the formal letter was addressed to an elected official, and it was meant to raise an issue for which the student was suggesting some action be taken.

*The weekly journals.* The weekly journals were interesting because they demonstrated which ideas in the novel stood out to the students, and the entries raised questions as to whether students were not able to complete literary analysis, or were not interested or unwilling to

explain how literary devices affected their interpretation of the text without instructor or peer support. Several students simply never used any quotes from the text but did write about a situation they found interesting. For example, Damiana was interested in how the protagonist, Stephen, responded to meeting lepers. She wrote,

From the moment Stephen saw the villagers he accepted them for who they are, he was not afraid of them but afraid for them. This relates to a social issue of equality because not all people at that time saw the 'lepers' as equals and actual people.

Damiana's explanation demonstrated comprehension of the scene and commented on the character development of the protagonist, but she did not use any specific literary analysis to support her claim. This type of work was fairly common among the students.

However, a few students, completed the weekly assignment by applying similar steps to those taken in earlier analysis assignments; they submitted much more thorough work. Therese typed a four-sentence quotation and annotated it with highlighters and colored pens to indicate repetition, idiom, syntax, metaphor, alliteration, and tone words. She included a color key at the top of her work. In her written paragraph, Therese mentioned that the quoted passage was relevant for showing Tsukiyama's use of historical situations in the novel. In her analysis paragraph, Therese wrote:

I found it extremely impactful that Tsukiyama presented this topic through Stephen's dialogue because of his emphatic tone. For example, Stephen asks, "Didn't her family even try to help her?" This use of questioning adds to my understanding of the topic because leprosy caused families to turn on one another. Therefore, the disease must have been extremely feared throughout Japan. Stephen also says, "but the words were caught

in my throat.” This idiom shows that Stephen is confident that this situation is not just, which confirms my original belief that lepers were not treated fairly.

Therese’s work was completed in a manner that demonstrated her use of prior knowledge and attention to the assignment directions. Therese showed her annotation work, then included quotes from the text to support her response to the author’s writing. She specifically identified use of dialogue, emphatic tone, and idiom as literary features or devices that affected her understanding of the text. In class, the students had completed multiple formative and summative assessments that included using a pre-made literary device key, or that required creating a key based on their analysis of a specific text passage. Thus, the request, that students annotate one paragraph or brief passage of dialogue from the weekly reading and write one paragraph of analysis using embedded quotes, was not expected to be a difficult challenge. The ability of students to discuss specific ideas or topics indicated that they understood that half of the journal entry was supposed to be about the text. The journal entries that included references to literary features, but provided no embedded quotes, were the evidence that made me wonder if many of the journal entries showed a willingness to complete the assignment, but a lack of motivation to complete analysis. An example of what I suspected to be an interest in the story but a lack of interest in completing analysis was provided by Napoleon:

On page 29, Matsu tells Stephen about how leprosy came to Tarumi 40 years ago and people that (*sic*) were infected with leprosy either killed themselves or left home and isolated themselves in the mountain village to avoid tarnishing their family’s honor.

The presence of leprosy and the societal reaction to it were very intriguing to the students. Napoleon’s willingness to include page numbers but provide no quotes was extremely frustrating for me. It proved that he knew precisely where the ideas he discussed were presented, but he was

either not willing, not interested, or did not realize that to quote and evaluate how the author conveyed the information was part of the assignment. The connection between events or situations in the plot and the historical or cultural allusions in the novel were most clearly addressed by the students in the weekly postcard assignment.

*The postcard assignment.* The postcard assignment replaced the group, collaborative brochure described in the original unit plan. As an individual iterative assignment, I did notice that some students' work improved after the first or second week, when they realized that they could see each-others' work in the shared Google Docs folder. I only asked the students to complete a peer assessment of other students' postcards at the end of the unit, because I knew that I did not have time to check on peer assessments each week. With hindsight, I realized a peer assessment process would have been beneficial to many students had we completed them more often. As mentioned above, the objectives for this assessment included practice of informal correspondence, research and source citations, use of embedded quotations, and visual connections to cultural and historical topics in the novel. Although several students did not turn in any postcards, most students completed each weekly edition with well-chosen sources and visual images. To not exceed the COVID instructional time limits, I asked that the students use at least two sources, and that one of the sources could be for their visual: the front of the postcard. I was happy that most students did consult at least two sources each week just for their content knowledge. When discussing leprosy, Susana used four different reliable sources, including an article from the U.S. National Library of Medicine. In her postcard she wrote,

Hi everyone, today I visited a leper colony in the pacific (*sic*). It reminded me of when Matsu took Stephen to visit Yamaguchi for the first time (p. 24). I learned that in 1866 a leprosy colony was founded in modern day Hawaii. It's interesting, because a cure was



discovered in the 1940s but the isolation law on that island wasn't lifted until 1965 . . .

Learning this reminded me of when Matsu told Stephen the government had other options for the lepers, but Yamaguchi is their home forever (p. 25).

The student makes a clear connection between her new knowledge and the novel. This was the simple goal. Trudie shrank her font, and consistently had a lot to share in her postcards.

Discussing *karesansui*, or rock gardens, Trudie wrote,

Hi everyone! I decided to go to Japan for the beautiful Japanese rock gardens.

Stephen says, "Matsu gestured for me to enter first. Stepping through the bamboo gate, I found myself in the garden. The sweet perfumes were immediately intoxicating. . .

(Tsukiyama p16) . . . I found "Sakuteiki" was published in the 11th century as one of the oldest garden planning manuals to date! Matsu's garden reminded me of the description of Ryōan-ji gardens . . . This week I learned how the gardens in different parts of the world aren't just for aesthetic purposes, but also a place for them to relax and practice their beliefs like meditation, or just get away from their hectic lives.

Trudie wrote with enthusiasm for her topic and she conveyed an awareness that the assignment was an opportunity to enrich her understanding of the novel and her appreciation of different cultures. Several students commented in their unit reflection that completing the postcard assignments were the most enjoyable part of the unit.

*Informal letters.* Informal letters to and as characters in the novel were the other formative writing assessments completed during this unit. As with the postcards, one writing skill that these assessments were meant to practice was the inclusion of embedded quotations, or as language arts teachers often call them "quote sandwiches." First semester I had introduced the format for including a quotation from a text in one's writing using Modern Language

Association (MLA) style guidelines, the common academic style for literature papers. The IBO does not require any one style, but requests that students know how to use at least one format correctly and consistently. At the school research site, all English classes use MLA.

Before assigning the letters, I first created charts per class to make sure I distributed the different main characters among the students. Each student's first letter was to a character. The letter was supposed to include specific quotes from the text that were the basis for the question(s) the student asked the character in the letter. Next, I added to the chart to identify which students would answer the original letters written to characters. For the second letter, each student assumed a character identity to write a letter in response to another student's first letter. After receiving the first set of letters, I informed all the students in a Canvas announcement that I would email them the letter that they needed to respond to; this was done without student names. For example, Amy wrote to the character Mrs. Chang (the protagonist's mother) in her first letter. In her second letter, Amy wrote as the character Matsu to answer a letter to student G3. Thus, after the first letters were submitted, I sent an email to Amy with student G3's letter to Matsu, and I told her to return the letter she wrote to me, but address the letter to "Student G3." This allowed me to evaluate the letter before forwarding it to student G3.

The process was certainly more convoluted than it would have been if we were in the classroom, where I could have delivered the letters using the student's classroom folders. However, there was one benefit; students often know each other's handwriting. Since the letters were typed (with one exception that was a photo of the student's handwritten letter), this kept all the work anonymous—or at least I think it did. It is possible that students discussed the letters using social media, but I did not hear that this was the case. As evidence of student learning, the letter's showed inquisitiveness and recognition of historical and social issues that are presented

in the novel. Trudie wrote to the character Pie, the protagonist's sister, and addressed the presence of tuberculosis in society and its effect on the characters' family:

Stephen mentioned that you would still see him even though he was ill, "After my illness was diagnosed, Ching tried not to let Pie get too near, but Pie refused to listen, poking her head into my room whenever she could" (Tsukiyama, 7), and this made me wonder if you were ever afraid of catching tuberculosis from Stephen? I personally would be a little afraid because tuberculosis sounds pretty severe, but I have a sibling and I know what it feels like to want to see them often.

Trudie's writing included an embedded quote to address the character trait she was curious about; although the format was not entirely correct, the question addressed the disease as something scary. Trudie's concern for being "afraid of catching tuberculosis" was juxtaposed to her empathy as a sibling who would also "want to see" her brother or sister. Trudie's writing does not analyze how Tsukiyama crafted the emotive effect she is responding to, but it made me realize a missed instructional opportunity. I could have connected the weekly journal analysis to the letter, so that the journal analysis explained how the author's writing led to the questions and understanding of a character that informed each student's letter to the character assigned. Better connections between each assignment, arguably would increase the effectiveness of the completed work as evidence of both student skill development and content knowledge. This realization was reinforced by Lucia's letter to Sachi. She brought up the significance of a garden:

I can tell that your garden is very important to you. To Stephen, you say, "...this garden has become a part of my life" (Tsukiyama, 43). Why do you decide to show your garden to Stephen? How has having a garden helped you cope with life, and would you say that a teenager like me would also benefit from having a garden?

Again, the student included a quote from the novel, but the format was not completely correct; more importantly, she addressed an interest in a social issue that was not the same as the topic for her weekly journal nor her postcard. However, Lucia's question to the character Sachi addressed the character as someone who has lived a very private life in the leper village of Yamaguchi. She asked about the garden as a coping mechanism. This was interesting, but it was not until her final postcard assignment that Lucia wrote about rock gardens. In her message she wrote:

We see in the novel that Sachi has a *karesansui* garden, as Stephen tells us, "Her garden was a mixture of beauty and sadness, the rocks and stones an illusion of movement" (Tsukiyama 43) . . . I learned that "*karesansui*" means "dry landscape" (Mrvos paragraph 3) or "dry stream bed" (Wendorf 11). I find it fascinating how the simplicity of these gardens invokes a sense of peace.

Like the result of Trudie's letter, I wondered if the depth of thinking would have been more pronounced if the topics of the assignments aligned. I contemplated: what would happen if a student's text analysis for the weekly journal focused on a topic that was then researched in the weekly postcard and became the basis for the question(s) to the character in the letter assignment? It might not have been possible to align all three, but it would be worthwhile to set up alignment between the passage for analysis and the letter to a character or for that week's postcard topic. Lucia was thinking about how the garden was conveyed in the novel as a source of solace for Sachi, and based on her research three weeks later, she expressed being fascinated by "how the simplicity of these gardens invokes a sense of peace." Overall, the informal letter writing did express student thinking about the characters and different topics in the novel. The letters to characters demonstrated interest in a variety of topics, but the letters written as a

character in response often demonstrated confusion or limited interest in the topic to be addressed. In a response to student B7, Ofelia wrote as the character Matsu. She included a quote that described Matsu's garden, but the quote was included in a manner that did not logically address a question or idea being asked of the character. Ofelia wrote,

I'm not a very open person and I don't think I would tell anyone about my visits with Sachi , "Matsu's garden whispers at you, never shouts; it leads you down a path hoping for more, as if everything is seen, yet hidden" (Tsukiyama 31). I don't feel as if anything is wrong with her either, but I know that talking about her behind her back would only bring her harm and I would never dishonour (*sic*) her with something like that.

The writing demonstrated an understanding of Matsu's character and the effect Matsu's garden has on the protagonist Stephen (the quote provided is from the protagonist's point of view), but it is not clear what question this writing was meant to answer or address because the quotation describes Matsu's garden, but the comment leading into the quote and following it suggested an inquiry about Sachi. The letters in response were often of limited value for assessing student learning or thinking about social issues because they neither adequately nor accurately addressed the questions asked in the original letter to the assigned character. Based on the results, I am not sure if the students struggled to understanding how to write from a character point of view, if they did not understand what their peer's letter was asking in the first place, or if they had not read enough of the novel to know what would be a reasonable response from the character they were supposed to portray.

The informal letter writing indicated to me that making connections between and among the students' ideas was something incredibly challenging without the classroom interactive space. Earlier, I explained the realization that I can improve the quality of the assessments I

assign by aligning how the assessments use the core text; where possible, I need to provide coordination between individual assignments. I referred to Lucia's writing about the effect of maintaining a garden as a means of solace or finding peace. This topic arose again at the end of the unit when the students wrote their formal letters to elected officials. Justina raised the issue of a community garden. Expanding on the benefits of a garden, she presents a good argument:

Public gardens would allow people of all ages to come together as a community . . . . An easy way to introduce more gardens in our city would be to establish them in neighborhoods and schools that have space. My neighborhood has a large field . . . that is not in use and gets a lot of sunlight. Neighborhood plots would make gardening more convenient since they are within walking distance. The produce could be used to help the poor in our city by being donated to a local food bank . . . According to the CDC, gardening is considered a moderate-intensity activity and can reduce the risk of disease . . . . Volunteering reduces stress and encourages social relationships with others, according to Mayo Clinic. Healthier citizens will work more effectively in their jobs, helping [the community] as a whole thrive.

The topic of a community garden, in contrast to the different types of personal gardens described in the novel, could have been the basis for a class seminar. Rock gardens and the description of Matsu's garden were discussed in the online format, but the larger topic that Justina addressed as something valuable to a community was never bandied by a whole class. The lost opportunity was a missed access point for examining attributes of democracy. If Justina had been able to share her ideas about the role of a community garden with her peers, I wonder how it might have expanded the students' conception of democratic participation.

*The formal letter to an elected official.* The formal letter to an elected official was the unit summative assessment for writing. The letters to elected officials did demonstrate that the students could develop a reasonable argument and find supporting information to bolster their position. Most students correctly wrote their letters using business letter format. The one aspect of the assignment that was new required providing recognition of a possible reason someone might oppose the student's position. Although I did demonstrate this element in the example letter that I included in the directions, a third of the students did not include any recognition of a counter argument. However, writing an argumentative essay or letter is an assessment they will need to complete again in their future English and social science classes; to have written this first attempt was a valid practice of this form of writing. Based on the Common Core rubric for argumentative writing (Appendix E), the students were still able to perform well, especially if recognition of a counter argument was the only weak or missing element in their letter.

In terms of instructional time, during the third week of the unit the students were provided material to become familiar with business/formal letter format; they were asked to choose a topic and submit a skeletal outline of a letter. They needed to show their own correctly formatted address, the date, and a possible addressee. Where the first paragraph would begin, they were supposed to write a sentence introducing their topic; finally, they needed a correctly placed closing sentiment. The next week students wrote a draft and submitted it to me in Canvas; they also shared their draft with their peer editor. As a peer editor, each student was asked to use the Common Core rubric to write comments per criterion regarding their partner's letter, and then uploaded the comments to Canvas. This process allowed me to see the peer editing work. The process worked effectively for those who used it. Unfortunately, many students ignored the feedback from their editors.

The formal letter was the assessment that I expected to most effectively demonstrate student democratic consciousness. Some students did recognize this assignment as an opportunity for democratic participation. However, other students treated it as one more requirement for earning a grade. Perhaps collaborative brainstorming might have generated different thinking about issues that could have been addressed. Maybe I expected too much. A few examples indicate the range of effort and ideas. Micaela addressed the mayor. Her focus was timely and sincere:

I am writing in regards (*sic*) to something I would like to add to the [city's] Waterfront. In your role as mayor, I am suggesting you start a process to put in a statue of nurses and doctors at the [city's] Waterfront Park to acknowledge them for all the hard work they are doing during this pandemic. The Waterfront Park is a great place to put a statue of the frontline workers because many people walk by the water, so a lot of people would see it. The frontline workers are putting their lives in danger for the community to get rid of Covid-19 for good and we need to recognize that.

Although she did not recognize any counter position, she maintained an appropriate tone and provided logical reasons for her interest. Benny also wrote to the mayor with a pandemic related topic. He wrote, "I would like to see hand sanitizer stations added to public spaces like the public library and city parks for people to clean their hands and reduce spreading of infections (*sic*) diseases." The topic was a realistic concern, but it failed to take into account the published state guidelines for any open workplaces, the fact that many public facilities were closed, and the requirements for the progressive phases of reopening. Beatrice wrote to a senator and conveyed a very passionate conviction against oil drilling. Her second paragraph stated,



First of all, continuing oil drilling in this National Wildlife Refuge could prove to be very deadly for the surrounding plants and animals. Alaska's ecological system is already starting to die off due to climate change, and continuing harmful drilling sure won't help Alaska's beautiful, majestic lands. The landscape will be taken up by clunky machinery and yelling men and women, giving off sound pollution and quite possibly air pollution as well. The entire purpose of a wildlife refuge is to give animals and people in the area a safe space to live. Helping to honor this and stop the drilling would be very beneficial for the animals and people that live there. At one point during a discussion about this oil drilling, CNN caught on camera a few conversations. Senator Maria Cantwell, the top Democrat in the energy committee, stated that: "We didn't create the Arctic coastal plain, but I can tell you this -- we cannot re-create it, what we're doing today is taking a step towards destroying it." As you can see, even senators in the energy committee are concerned.

The writing demonstrated the student's knowledge of the political nature of the topic, and was clearly supporting an environmental interest. Beatrice wrote with a definite intention to be heard. In contrast, Ana was a student with limited enthusiasm for the assignment. She wrote to the governor and stated, "I am encouraging placing a new hiking trail in one of the state parks" and then suggested it be close to the city where she resides. Although my comment on her first draft indicated that her topic was vague and that this region of the country has a considerable number of state and national parks with trails, she made no changes between her draft and her final submission. Other lackluster letters were written. The students followed the directions technically, but many fell short of demonstrating conviction for participating in the democratic process.

*The unit reflection.* The unit reflection and assignment check sheet were modified versions of the journal reflection statements the students had written at the end of the earlier units during the school year. Having the check sheet helped many students pay attention to the assignments due each week, and it seemed to help them monitor their distance learning progress. The reflections were also very telling as to the students' metacognitive processing of their own learning. Pross reflected,

I did my learning as soon as I got up and did not do anything else until I finished my assignments. Sachi's CDA went well and I am happy that I relearned the difference between phrases and clauses. The final draft of the formal letter did not go as I would have liked. I finished it and then did not turn it in and I should have double checked this check sheet to make sure I had everything. It was hard to remember if there was something due each week if it wasn't on the calender (*sic*) and it was easy to know what to do if the assignment was on the Canvas calender (*sic*). I think I need more work on my focus with my assignments. I need to focus on what I need to do to get all the points and not just some. I feel confident with my comprehension of what the books are saying and this helps me with my assignments.

Pross did submit her formal letter to the late work folder. Overall, the student writing emphasized the effects of distance learning more than content or skill. The assessment that students consistently described as enjoyable and informative was the weekly postcard work.

### **Analysis, Interpretation and Changes based on Cycle Two Results**

Three technical issues stood out at the end of cycle two: the students' inability to identify phrases and clauses, incorrect inclusion of embedded quotations, and a lack of correct parenthetical citations. I was tempted to require the students to complete more online grammar exercises and

quizzes, but I decided that this was not a useful idea. If the students did not understand the directions, they would only become frustrated and annoyed with the assignment. Based on the number of students who noted in their unit reflections that they guessed or did not know how to do the grammar portions of the CDA worksheets, I decided that more independent grammar work would be ineffective. The few students who had understood and completed the grammar lesson I added at the beginning of the unit found the work useful. The important factor was that the assignment was clear and meaningful to them, as opposed to creating more confusion.

Embedding quotations, or correctly using the quote sandwich to support a claim in one's writing, had been a problematic challenge all year. While the skill often takes time to learn, this year it seemed particularly difficult. Students did understand the value of having valid sources to support a claim, and they realized that being able to back up a position with evidence that validated a point was different than just having an opinion. Nonetheless, in their writing, the students' formatting of quoted information was not a consistent priority. To address this, I decided that a couple of suggestions from *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* (Brown, McDaniel & Roediger, 2014) were worth trying. First, I should add a few direct practice exercises as warm-up activities in the classroom, and then include low value quizzes before writing assignments to build confidence and to check accuracy. Due to time constraints I could not address these during the final weeks of the semester, but these are strategies I intend to implement next fall.

The character letters, postcards, and the summative formal letter assessment all demonstrated awareness of tone and syntax differences based on purpose. A frustrating result of the peer editing process was that few students paid attention to the feedback they received from their editor. It was heartening to notice the clarity and accuracy of many of the peer editing comments, but it was aggravating that most students ignored their peers' suggestions. Many final

drafts were the same as the draft sent to the peer editor. I want to think that his would not have happened if we had completed these assignments in classroom under supervisions. However, I drafted a plan for a final check sheet that requires a student to recognize and note their peer editor's suggestions and to indicate how they responded to the suggestions when completing their final draft. My goal was to encourage them to think about their work and why they should or should not make the suggested adjustments or changes before submitting a final copy.

The letters to elected officials were good indicators of the students' interests. Outdoor spaces were the most common topic. As examples of democratic participation, several students took the assessment seriously and expressed considerable concern for something they find to be a social issue. However, other students found the assessment to be one more weighty writing assignment. For the marginally engaged students, I thought the writing was underwhelming due to maturity and time management; however, my only proof was their unit reflective writing about the assignments they completed. The reflections were very informative regarding how the students managed their time during the distance learning and indicated which assignments they were confident completing and which they found difficult or frustrating. An epiphany for me was how much they liked the postcard assignments because these required only brief research—but could be extensive if one wanted—and allowed the students to find an image that appealed to them as a visual reference for the topic. Overall, they noted that the postcard assignment included research, creativity and was fun because they could write their postcard message in a serious, casual, or even critical tone of voice. Using a variety of skills was definitely intentional, but the different reasons for their enthusiasm were nice to read.

Earlier in the year, I regularly used excerpts from student work and projected them on the classroom screen to discuss how and why the examples met different writing and analysis

objectives. Students always asked questions and then wrote specific goals for improving their own work as a result of these in class lessons. With two exceptions, the required peer assessment assignment for the postcards and the peer edit of the formal letters, no shared work nor examples provided elicited any comments or questions from the students during the distance learning. The results indicated that I need to be prepared to integrate the use of exemplary student work in my lesson planning for distance learning if it is still the format for instruction in the future.

My greatest frustration in cycle two was the loss of oral, group communication. While I could have required attendance at Zoom sessions, based on the participation at the optional Monday sessions it was clear that the students did not find the online format a space in which they were comfortable discussing literature or asking questions. I consulted with several other IB teachers; interestingly, while the junior and senior students participated well in Zoom sessions, the freshmen and sophomores consistently did not. The collective thinking was that the older students were more confident in their discussion skills, more invested in their studies—based on signing up for IB exams and completing several required externally evaluated assessments—and were used to using technology to collaborate on projects. In contrast, the online written discussion results were quite successful in indicating the depth of student reading comprehension and insight regarding the historical and social allusions and the use of several literary devices to affect the text’s meaning. Several students noted that *The Samurai’s Garden* was their favorite work of fiction this year. Due to my general sense of frustration throughout April and early May, comments expressing the students’ enjoyment of the novel were very satisfying.

**Professional learning community.** At the end of cycle two, I did get a response from one of my colleagues from my Professional Learning Community (PLC). The comments addressed the need for a departmental, developmental approach to peer editing and a common

concern regarding student use of embedded quotations in academic writing. However, none of the feedback related to critical literacy methods related to democratic consciousness.

**My reflection.** The CDA worksheets were useful for gaining student responses to the reading, especially regarding social topics and their sense of being directly affected by the author. I have more work to do with grammar instruction, but students are noticing that attributes of democracy are written about as themes, as part of character development, and in connection with setting or location. These observations are not as common as I expected. My impression was that the students' conceptual understanding was still too connected to their sense of how the U.S. government functions politically, and not based on a conception of democracy as a multifaceted ideal.

Another result of the CDA worksheets was confirmation that guided questions are useful for prompting students to think about specific ideas or topics. For the final cycle, and considering the limited time per course under the COVID guidelines, I decided that using two different worksheets to have students think about how immigrants and refugees are treated and about how readers are provided information about the situations surrounding those groups would be the main instructional tools for the next iteration.

Table 4. Summary of cycle two results

<i>The Samurai's Garden</i>	Critical Literacy Methods	Democratic Consciousness	Improvement of Practice
Social and Cultural Power	Informal writing/postcards Journal entries on text	Discussion threads, Journal entries on text and social isolation.	Reinforce connections between paragraph analysis and other assignments.
Political Power	CDA results, historical allusion quotes in discussions.	Historical analysis assignment, discussion threads, journal entries on text.	Activity needed to connect types of political power to events and character actions in novel.
Justice / Injustice	CDA results, informal letters to and as characters, discussion questions and interactive participation.	CDA results, informal letters to and as characters, discussion questions and interactive participation, formal letters to elected officials.	Based on student interest in the role of religion on social norms and power, a lesson to examine freedom of conscience/religion as an attribute of democracy should be added.
Language and Literary analysis	CDA results, journal entries on text, correspondence writing.	Journal entries on text, formal letters to elected officials.	Correct use of embedded quotes needs more practice and examples of how to use effectively.
Results: anticipated and unexpected	Students respond favorably to the novel and willing to discuss the authors writing. (A)	The effects of COVID social isolation caused greater connections to isolation issues in the novel. (U) The role of culture on social control and power was pronounced. (U)	I did not expect the postcard assignment to be as popular as it was. Creative learning activities are greatly appreciated and have consistently demonstrated insightfulness.

**Cycle three: *Enrique's Journey*, Immigration and Refugees**

For the final unit, I added a weekly written discussion, with a Zoom option, to continue hearing (or reading) the students' questions and to provide them an opportunity for social

engagement. During this unit, I dropped the Monday informational Zoom meeting because no one had attended the May 17 meeting and only one person had attended the week before. Because I did not have a means for working with students one-on-one, I decided to try Zoom small group rooms. Although weekly Zoom meetings did not become a reality, the written online discussions went well. I planned for a final small group Zoom meeting that would include students interviewing each other regarding what they had learned during the three units that included a focus on democracy. To some extent these occurred, but half the students used the online written discussion option to conduct their interviews rather than participating in a Zoom session, and two groups used Facetime. At the end of cycle two, I wrote some questions that I wanted to have the students ask each other during the interviews, and I planned for the students to also write questions that they wanted answered at the end of the year.

The answers from the interview questions were then used to write a Peer Learner's Biography. Additionally, each student was required to write their own focused grade defense/self-assessment based on an explanation of their second semester work. They were asked to specifically mention three samples of their best work, based on different skills, and to identify an area of improvement they wanted to work on next year, based on a specific type of assignment.

For the first three weeks of the final cycle, the reading and writing the students completed focused solely on journalistic writing and the experiences of immigrants and refugees. At the beginning of week three, I introduced the two-part written assessment as a final and posted the grading criteria. I wanted them to start thinking about how the semester would wrap up. At the beginning of week four, I provided the directions for the group slide presentation that was the content final for demonstrating knowledge of a current refugee situation. I posted an example of a similar presentation. Had we been in the classroom, I would have shared the example

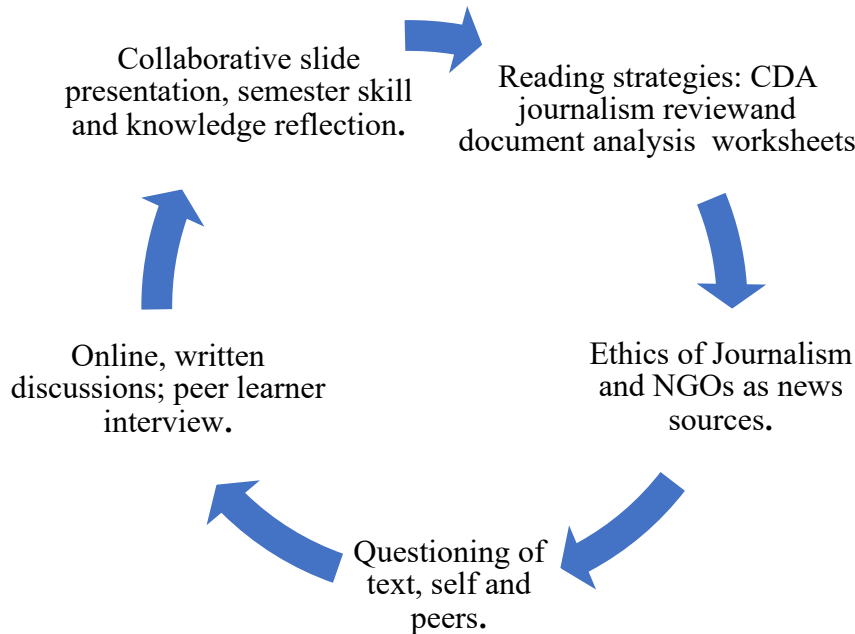


presentation with each class and identified the required components as we looked at the example together. The posted example allowed students to see a collaborative Google Slide presentation with source citations per slide, but questions about the presentation had to be answered in individual emails, which was a repetitive, time consuming process.

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Figure 4. Cycle three strategies and assessments

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### Types of data

**Reading strategies.** The methods used in this cycle were a continuation of critical discourse analysis and the introduction of document analysis for non-fiction, journalism articles. At the beginning of the unit I did provide students with a set of questions to answer as they read the introduction to *Enrique's Journey* (Nazario, 2013). I considered the students' answers to guided reading questions the best option for checking their understanding of how Nazario used the introduction to clarify her choice of topic, methods as a journalist, personal connection to

immigration, and bias regarding the empathy she creates for child immigrants. Additionally, I required the students to read an explanation of the ethics of journalism and the list of ethical expectations. The students each submitted an assignment identifying the five ethical expectations they thought were most important for articles discussing immigrants and refugees. For example, Therese opened her paragraph by stating:

A journalist dealing with people whose living conditions are unstable must put humanity above all else. Therefore, one important ethical expectation for journalists is, “Balance the public’s need for information against potential harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance or undue intrusiveness.” It may be uncomfortable for some people to share some information and journalists must respect that decision.

As a formative assessment, the assignment on journalists’ ethics informed the students of the guidelines that journalists follow; for most students, they had no idea that an established set of ethical expectations existed.

I created two new worksheets to demonstrate critical literacy skills. First, the worksheet I called a Journalistic Writing Review asked the students to evaluate the content and how the information was delivered. The students filled out this sheet each week in response to reading an article posted by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) regarding a specific situation. The journalism review worksheet asked the students to identify answers for the five W questions: who, what, where, when, why. Next, the students were asked to indicate how the UNHCR was suggesting a way to change the situation. Also, to continue our critical discourse analysis skill development, the journalism review worksheet asked the students to list the key words and phrases that impacted their understanding of the article, and to write

questions, based on diction or claims in the text. Finally, at the bottom of each UNHCR article there were links to interviews or feature stories regarding individual refugees. I asked that students choose one such article or video and write a single paragraph summary. This component of the assignment was meant to provide an indication of how an individual was coping as a refugee. The feature stories often featured teenagers, which provided them a comparative reality to consider. The second worksheet was called document analysis.

Based on the terminology used by IB for social science classes, I used the key terms “origin, purpose, content, value, and limitation” (IB History guide, IBO, 2019, p.85). The ability to recognize the validity of a source based on the authority of an author, or quality of balance in the reporting or research behind the information, is both a social science skill and a media literacy skill. To summarize or explain the main ideas shows basic comprehension, the ability to identify and explain the information that is valuable or limited in terms of improving an individual reader’s understanding of the topic demonstrates analysis. In addition to the UNHCR articles read for this unit, students were required to read an article posted by a non-governmental organization (NGO) regarding a refugee situation in the region of the world we focused on per week.

In preparation for understanding why NGOs are sources of news today, we read two articles from the Nieman Lab web site. The Nieman Journalism Lab at Harvard, in conjunction with the Annenberg School at the University of Pennsylvania, developed a series of essays that discuss why NGOs are more common sources of international news than traditional news organizations. Due to diminishing demand for print news, many traditional news organizations no longer maintain field offices. The NGOs that work directly with crisis situations use their websites to provide information about what is happening around the globe. The students read the

first article in the series, “NGOs as newsmakers: A new series on the evolving news ecosystem” (Price, Morgan & Klinkforth, 2009). Each student summarized the article in one paragraph. Next, as a pair or with two other partners, the students read one other article from the series and together they explained the key points. To show how each student contributed, I asked them to use a colored font per student. Most of the submissions included several paragraphs of alternating font that made obvious the students’ individual work. All the students who completed the foundational assignments demonstrated an understanding of the role of NGOs. Lucia, Dorateo and Damiana worked together; they read “Saving us from noise that kills: NGOs as news coordinators in a networked public sphere” (Tsui, 2009). Their first collective paragraph noted,

Non-governmental organizations are essential for informing the public because their role is to make sure that “the public does not tune out the rest of the world” (Tsui). They ensure that voices we wouldn’t normally hear in the regular news have a chance to be presented to the world, letting their story be heard. In addition, the non-governmental organizations help provide the audience with unique stories that they might not otherwise hear. Non-governmental organizations also want to “prevent voices from being drowned out, and to bring back the signal into the noise” (Tsui).

In their original submission, the first two sentences were in pink font to indicate Lucia’s work, the next sentence was in blue to indicate Dorateo’s work, and the last sentence was in purple, showing Damiana’s contribution.

The guided reading and the introduction to NGOs as news sources were successful assignments for preparing the students to think critically about the information addressing immigration and refugees. However, the results of the students’ work also proved to me that I

needed to do more to address bias. The students noted that the articles evoked empathy and presented an appeal for different types of support. However, based on the completed worksheets, the students indicated a lack of information regarding how the causes of immigration or refugee flight were being solved, and that they noticed the articles focused on how the specific organizations were helping refugees. On her journalism review worksheet for the Middle East/Asia, Lucia noted: “I know the focus is supposed to be on the refugee situation and not on the unrest in Myanmar, but I still would like to know what has caused the area to experience such turmoil.” Other students also noted that the issue of refugee causation was not always identified. Abundio quoted a text statement that violence in the Rakhine State of Myanmar was the reason for the most recent exodus, and then he asked, “why is the violence breaking out?” The UNHCR focused only on the Rohingya’s flight into Bangladesh. The worksheets demonstrated reading comprehension and the students’ ability to ask questions about the content and perspective presented.

*Literary criticism* was not addressed with a literature theory; however, language analysis was maintained using critical discourse analysis skills. Ideally, critical thinking work was completed per week with the journalism review and document analysis assignments. I expected the two weekly worksheets to be developmental in terms of the students’ understanding of the global movement of people, and the role of human rights as an issue affecting immigration and refugees; additionally, these assignments were the basis for the unit final. As mentioned above, the final was collaborative slide presentation.

The students chose their group topic for the presentation based on one of the refugee crisis situations read about over the weeks between May 17 through June 12. The only component of the slide presentation that caused some students to do additional research was the

requirement that the presentation include a case study related to a teenage refugee. The collaborative final included student-selected information, source quotations, and visuals with source citations that indicated where the students obtained the information included in the presentation slides. The use of critical discourse analysis was not directly required as a component of the presentation; however, the selection of key details or diction to create informative slides was part of the process for creating the presentations. The groups that included speaker notes to indicate the commentary that would accompany a live presentation, demonstrated the application of critical discourse analysis because they explained the use of quotes and/or their choice of statistical information from the sources cited in their presentation. I do not think that my directions adequately addressed the connection between language analysis and the information they provided on their slides. However, it did become obvious that those students who had completed the journalism reviews and document analysis assignments, with attention to the language used in the articles, were the students whose presentations effectively conveyed the call to action or sense of urgency regarding the need for global awareness that the journalists emphasized.

One group of students focused on the resilience of the refugees and a common interest in becoming educated. The presentation ended with the required story of a teen refugee, and created a sense of hopefulness:

Despite facing traffickers, mistreatment, and a dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea, Kokob and other refugees would sing during the journey to find hope. Eventually, Kokob reached Europe, was met by a UNHCR team, and declared that she wanted an education. (Desdemona, Hero, Lucia & Ofelia)

In the earlier slides the context of Kokob's story was established with statistics and details regarding the number of refugees in Europe, the types of situations they had fled, and the conditions they experienced upon arrival. Kokob was identified as a teenager fleeing without her family. The student presentation emphasized her positivity and ability to sing to encourage others and herself. The collaborative work demonstrated the students' desire to convey the horrible reality as well as possibility for helping resilient individuals. I considered the presentation empathetic and well organized evidence of the students' critical literacy skills.

Another group focused on the story of a family of four, a mother and three children who had been given asylum in Norway in 2012. The presentation used a variety of sources to explain that in 2019 the family's asylum permit was revoked. Although the parents were originally from Afghanistan, the children had been born while the parents were in Iran. The mother and her three children had fled Iran due to discrimination and Iran's lack of education for girls. None the less, when the family was deported, they were returned to Afghanistan. In his speaker notes, Horatio wrote:

According to Amnesty, "The number of Afghans returned by European countries to Afghanistan between 2015 and 2016 nearly tripled to 9,460 from 3,290" (Amnesty, 2019). This just shows that the events have never really changed, even now in 2020, people are being deported to their "home countries" that they have never been to because their permits were revoked by the government.

Horatio and his group's comments were meant to be articulated along with their slides. The specific slide for Horatio's notes showed an image of hundreds of Afghan refugees and a text box presenting News Week and Amnesty International details regarding the number of Afghan refugees being deported from Europe as a result of a recent détente. The slide show included far

more text than was appropriate for an effective presentation, but it did identify the complexity of the situation the students were trying to explain.

Although earlier lessons on effective multi-media presentations had addressed how much text is useful on a single slide and the importance of pacing the oral delivery of information to be provided, the group did not apply the guidelines. The slides and the speaker notes made evident that the students found many relevant articles regarding refugees from Afghanistan; their research included articles with pictures, they were able to find information about a specific teen and her family, and their writing indicated an interpretation that found governments increasingly less sympathetic to the plight of people from Afghanistan. By referring to being deported as “traumatizing for Taibeh and her siblings” the group chose language sympathetic to refugees. The text box on slide seven concluded “the Norwegian culture has some racist undertones.” Thus, the students were aware of language and issues of power and powerlessness in society.

***Questioning and discourse.*** Student inquiry and interaction was most evident in the online discussions. The student contributions demonstrated an impressive amount of idea sharing and the students’ willingness to grapple with situations that were disturbing and surprising to them. Beginning with the discussion of immigration within the Americas, students expressed a range of reactions to what they read. Without using the terms “white privilege” the sentiment was presented. Fulgor wrote in response to the introduction to *Enrique’s Journey* (Nazario, 2013):

While I worry about what clothes I am going to wear the next day, Carmen was worried about if her family was going to be able to eat. While I get disappointed because I missed some thing [*sic*] in a video game, Carmen is heartbroken because she



missed huge milestones in her children's lives . . . I realized just how insignificant the problems I have to deal with are, compared with the lives of refugees.

Fulgor's work expressed an honest realization, and many students confessed to a general ignorance of how difficult life is for many people around the world. Beatrice commented:

In the "UNHCR Venezuela" article, there were many quotes from families but one in particular caught my attention; "We walked for 11 days and had to sleep outside. We left because they threatened to kill us. My brother was killed... They almost killed me." (Ana, Venezuelan woman in Ecuador). This was hard to read, it sounds so unbelievably scary. I also have a brother, and the thought of losing him is unimaginable. The writings about these kinds of situations and things that the immigrants and refugees have to go through has really opened my eyes to what is going on. I knew their living situations were bad, but I had no idea they were this deathly. [*sic*]

The reality of the situations shocked many students, and it provoked their interest; they raised many questions. Benny asked, "Based on the articles we have read, what do you think is the best solution for the refugee crisis, helping the refugees or solving the issues that are causing them to leave Venezuela?" The question indicated Benny's awareness that solving the problems prompting immigration in the Americas was not being addressed in the articles that described the conditions immigrants were experiencing.

Another perspective that affected how the students were thinking about immigration was based the common characterization of the U.S. as a land of opportunity. Trudie wrote, "How do you believe the perception of refugees and immigrants in America shapes our society? How do America's social beliefs tie into other countries' perception of the American dream?" This suggested to me that Trudie was wondering about opportunities made available in the U.S.

Other students were affected by the writing that emphasized the difficult human choices immigrants have had to make. After quoting Nazario's story of a woman who came to the U.S. for a job as a nanny, Damiana wrote, "If you were in Carmen's situation, would you leave your children? Would you risk your life to go to the United States not unknowing (*sic*) if you will see your children again?" Responses to Damiana's question presented different points of view, which proved to me that students were more confident stating their personal opinions in the written discussion format. In the classroom, once someone answered a question by taking a position in response, it was common for those following up to agree rather than pose a different opinion. In this case, it appeared there was no hesitancy to state different views. Lucia stated,

If I were in her situation, especially after reading the prologue to Enrique's Journey [*sic*], I do not think I would leave my children. First of all, there is no guarantee of arriving at the United States due to the many dangers the journey presents. If I left my children and died on the journey, they would be in even greater danger of starvation than if I had stayed.

However, Ana posted an opposite position: "I would make the same choice as Carmen because ultimately you are giving your kids a better life. If I knew that going to the United States and making money would help get my kids out of poverty and help them to live a better life, I would definitely put them first." This position was reinforced by Trudie:

I think any mother that would like to feed her children and get away from poverty would see starting over in a new and what seems to be a better place a good option. It would be even worse if your child died under your care and your failure to do something for your family. Many brave immigrant single parents are trying their absolute best with what they have.

While none of the male students commented on this topic, this type of interaction indicated that the students were paying attention to each other's comments and thinking seriously about their own position on the topics.

What also stood out in the online discussion was recognition of how the writing of the articles affected their thinking about the topic. Susana noted,

The UNHCR titled, "Venezuela Situation", stated, "People continue to leave Venezuela to escape violence, insecurity and threats as well as lack of food, medicine and essential services". [*sic*] This was one of the first sentences in the article, and it really stood out because of the word choice. The word "escape", [*sic*] shows and adds to the urgency of the people seeking refuge. Escape, [*sic*] makes me think of a life or death situation that you desperately need to get away from, which is what the Venezuelans are trying to do. The words "violence, insecurity and threats", [*sic*] emphasize what the people are trying to "escape" from. This article impacted my impression of life as an immigrant or refugee.

Responding to Susana's observation, Therese wrote,

One word that also stood out to me in this article was the author's use of the word "need". [*sic*] For example, the article states, "As more and more families arrive with fewer and fewer resources, they are in immediate need of documentation, protection, shelter, food and medicine." This diction emphasizes that this is a very urgent issue that needs to be acted on as soon as possible. It also makes me realize the difference between what we actually need in life and what we want.

The discourse demonstrated the students' use of text as the basis for their comments, and it applied the use of critical discourse analysis we had been practicing throughout the study. I was

especially pleased to see this type of focused analysis in the first discussion thread for this unit; it became more common as the unit continued.

**Writing.** In the final unit, writing was assessed with the peer learner biography and individual semester reflection. I provided several questions and I asked the students to write a few questions of their own for the interviews. The directions gave the students the option of conducting a Zoom discussion, during which the students could ask each other questions and take notes on their partner's responses. I asked the students to set up their own Zoom sessions if they chose that option, so that they could record the session if they wanted to review specific answers. The second option was to use a written discussion thread, and seven groups of students preferred this method rather than a Zoom session.

The results of the peer learner biographies were informative to me. Student reactions to the immigration and refugee unit, recognition of the importance of using embedded quotes in one's writing, the theme of individual rights, and the usefulness of interactive work for learning were some of the topics. The connections between the units were often the strongest indication of the students' democratic consciousness. In writing about Claude as a learner, Beatrice wrote,

I asked how knowing what the refugees have gone through has helped shape your [*sic*] understanding of them . . . [Claude] made a relevant point to what's currently happening around us; [*sic*] "With the protests going on, it has become clear that though we live in a country that is thought to be one of the best places to live, we still have major problems that need to be solved to progress as a nation," (Claude). This being said, I completely agree. I believe he was comparing our country to others to emphasize how awful their situation and our situation is [*sic*].

Beatrice interpreted Claude's point as focusing on the "awful" situations that refugees flee, while the quote itself does not clarify what conditions in the U.S. make Claude suggest "we still have major problems." The student writer and subject are none-the-less aware that people protest or flee when societies have problems.

A different pair of students considered the role of culture in society. Ana interviewed Amy and wrote,

When I asked about the culture and lifestyles that we have studied throughout the whole year, [Amy] reminded us that, "there are many cultural differences and the differences can cause lots of problems...we'll never be able to fully experience the same lifestyles". Many of the refugee emergencies involved cultural differences.

Along with the other global issues. In The Samurai's Garden, the novel was based around the cultural and lifestyle differences, which caused the people of Japan to not fully accept the Chinese living there. Beyond that, it also caused the war between the two countries. Without the cultural diversity, a lot of the literature we have read and studied would not have been written.

Although the interview did not elaborate on cultural differences, Amy's quote and Ana's comment demonstrate the students' recognition of literature as a vehicle for understanding culture as an aspect of society. In the process of listening to each other, the students recognized their learning progress. The realization of their own growth was rewarding to read. Freddie's writing was consistently brief, but his interview with Benny added to his reflection on the semester. He noted, "Based on these answers and this semester I have learned a lot more about the world and its problems. I feel like I have a better world view, and have learned a lot of valuable information in this second semester." When he wrote his individual semester reflection,

Freddie recognized that he has room to grow in all the language arts skills: “ Some of my goals for the incoming years are to improve my oral communication skills and build some confidence to speak in seminars and to respond to others. I would also like to continue to improve my skills in writing, reading, annotating, and text analysis.” In other words, Freddie informed me that while he made progress as a literature student, he was aware that his work could improve. While Freddie’s reflection was quite general, other students’ writing provided more specific recognition of their skills strengths and weaknesses; however, the writing rarely provided new evidence of democratic consciousness. For example, Claude made the following observation: “In the reading department, the understanding of text has come quite easily to me. Because of this, I was able to attain an A on the introduction to democracy and Asian history. Though most of my skills are satisfactory, I know that I still must constantly try to find places where I struggle.” There is more specificity to this comment but not much depth in terms of self-assessment.

I did not specifically ask the students to reflect on what they learned about democracy; there were time constraints and I wanted to see whether democracy organically stood out to the students as part of their learning. However, the students did focus on their skills. Lucia wrote, “One piece of writing that I am proud of is my formal letter to the mayor . . . This is an example of some of my strongest writing, and it showed that as a writer, I am knowledgeable; the letter was compelling, well-researched, and consistent in tone.” Lucia connected her best work samples to the ten learner traits identified by IB. Being *knowledgeable* is one of the traits. Thus, rather than discuss her letter as a sign of democratic consciousness, she focused on demonstrating the IB learner traits.

The results of the student writing proved to me that I should have been more direct in asking them to reflect on their learning regarding democracy. One of the few students who did

mention democracy, did so in passing and did not explain any depth of understanding. Therese wrote: “The second *Samurai’s Garden* discussion also shows my writing ability. I included responses touching on democracy and made clear points regarding the issue of poverty in Yamaguchi. I also incorporated text-based evidence to support my ideas, which shows my ability to analyze a text.” As demonstrated in cycle two, Therese’s work exemplified detailed literary analysis and an ability to use embedded quotes in her writing to support her ideas. A better indication of how students understood democracy at the end of the study should have been required as a separate individual assignment.

### **Analysis, interpretation and insight based on Cycle three Results**

**PLC feedback.** Due to the newness of distance learning, there were no PLC meetings in June. The administration asked that we use focus on assigning consistent final assessments per course. Organizing finals and agreeing on assessment objectives was the only PLC or department work conducted. Thus, I did not receive any PLC feedback related to my study.

**My Reflection.** The students’ provided me with a mix of results to ponder. First, I realized that the materials I provided and the work I assigned on a weekly basis did not do enough to address the bias of NGOs nor the UNHCR. It was also apparent that the students should have had a lesson or two explaining the layers of the United Nations. Based on several student comments, there was not consistent familiarity with what the United Nations is nor the variety of agencies, such as the High Commission on Refugees, that work within the umbrella organization. After reading more about media literacy, I have a greater awareness of how I can incorporate lessons on bias into my instruction (Baker, 2016). I address this in Chapter five.

The slide presentations were not the best samples of media use, but they did prove that the students had read a variety of sources regarding a specific refugee situation. The students

learned a great deal about the number of people affected, the different causes for flight, and the types of assistance received. I was happy with the information learned, the earnestness with which the students explained the crises, and their ability to work together remotely to complete the presentations.

Over the weekend at the end of May and beginning of June, I had to finalize the plans for the unit and semester finals. I needed to have alignment with my PB 9 English instructor colleague, and the total time for students to complete the work had to fit into the distance learning guidelines. During the two weeks of instructional time in June, finishing the article assignments, conducting the interviews, collaborating and creating the Google Slides presentation, and writing the peer learner biography and individual self-reflection took up the half-hour per-day time-limit, and probably required more than half an hour for some students. The last week of school established Monday and Tuesday as finals preparation; Wednesday and Thursday, June 18 and 19 were considered final exam days. Students were expected to complete work in periods 1-3 on Wednesday and 4-6 on Thursday. As of June 1, the students knew that the peer learner biographies were due by the evening of June 16. The biographies were submitted in Canvas and all the collaborative presentations needed to be submitted by the evening of June 18. Mapping out the last three weeks, I became convinced that a separate reflection on democracy would be too much. Thus, I did not assign a separate end of study reflection. Perhaps I should have given students the option of writing either a skills reflection or a democratic consciousness reflection. Unfortunately, at the beginning of June, I did not recognize this hole in my research. Overall, I collected a great deal of evidence of student learning and skill development.



Table 5. Summary of cycle three results

<i>Enrique's Journey</i> /Immigrants and Refugees	Critical Literacy Methods	Democratic Consciousness	Improvement of Practice
Social and Cultural Power	Document analysis and journalism review worksheets	Worksheet questions and discussion participation	The worksheets were useful tools for examining social, cultural, . . .
Political Power	Document analysis and journalism review worksheets	Discussion threads and collaborative presentations.	and political power issues. However, they need to address bias based on the source/writer's perspective on the topic.
Justice / Injustice	Guided questions for <i>Enrique's Journey</i> . Document analysis and journalism review worksheets.	Worksheet questions, discussion participation, collaborative presentations.	A preface to reading articles from the UN HCR needs to include an overview lesson on how the UN is organized and the role of different UN groups must be understood.
Language and Literary analysis	Worksheets, peer learner biographies.	Worksheets, discussion participation, peer learner biographies.	There was growth over time, but recognizing how diction and syntax affect meaning needs constant practice; use of different medium should be included I the unit.

### Summary of Results

Critical literacy strategies were consistently utilized in my instructional effort to develop the students' democratic consciousness. Critical discourse analysis worksheets were created and revised to increase student recognition of how diction and syntax affect the meaning of a text. While the students demonstrated limited ability to recognize different language components, they did successfully explain how specific words and groups of words affected their emotional or intellectual response to the reading.

The use of new historical criticism was more effective than some of the immediate formative assessments indicated. References to events or situations in the historical novels were made during the study of immigrants of refugees that suggested the students had understood or thought about the historical details presented in the novels and connected them to current global situations. It was also clear that more consistent material to support student understanding of the historical allusions presented in the fiction was lacking in my lesson plans. However, the use of allusions was significant for the students' contextual understanding of the literature and for recognizing how political and cultural power affects society and limits individual choices in life.

Several formative writing assessments were assigned over the three cycles. Weekly seminar reflections, weekly journals that included text analysis and personal reflections on COVID-19 social isolation, informal letters using quotes from a core text, and informal postcards that included quotes from research sources demonstrated the students' developing ability to include textual analysis in their writing. The summative guided literary analysis and formal letter to an elected official were indicative of the students' organizational skills and control of their sentence fluidity and choice of diction. Some GLA essays exhibited the students' democratic consciousness, but the format of the GLA was not the best choice of assessment. The formal letter to an elected official was a successful assessment for conveying the students' democratic participation. Quite a few students wrote with a sense of social purpose and used effective argumentative skills. However, other students did not display enthusiasm or serious interest in making social improvement; the results of their letters were technically accurate, but lacked substance or conviction.

The final written assessment was a two-part reflection. First, the students interviewed each other about their learning over the past semester. Second, the students wrote individual self-

reflections to assess their skill and knowledge development as literature students. Both components provided me with useful information about the effectiveness of different instructional methods, and to some extent the peer biographies demonstrated unique insight and critical thinking about how literature teaches readers lessons about society. For reasons primarily related to the online instruction format and its time constraints, I did not assign a specific reflection for examining the students' sense of growth or change in their democratic consciousness. It would have been useful to me; however, it would have been an extra assignment at the end of an already taxing and unusual assessment period.

The best indicators of student understanding of democracy and student thinking about the attributes of democracy were in the Socratic seminars and online discussions, in the students' journal entries, and in several cases, in their artist's statements for the creative response to *Cry, the Beloved Country*. The questions they prepared or presented during these discourse sessions and their comments in response to each other provided a range of ideas, extrapolations, considerations, and personal connections to different issues presented in the core literature and journalism articles. Their honesty and inquiry in responding to the reading material and to the events they were processing based on public protests across the U.S. during these weeks, proved to me that there was much more learning occurring than my assessment rubrics and lessons plans could ever correctly identify and measure. At the end of the research collection and analysis, I am certain that I have learned far more from my student research participants than any one of them learned from my laborious planning.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **Review of the Study**

This study examined how early secondary students in a language arts class learn about democracy and democratic participation. The study aimed to understand the connection between critical pedagogy and its application through critical literacy methods as a means for developing students' democratic consciousness and skills for participatory democracy. This study was conducted in three grade 9 pre-baccalaureate English classes. The critical literacy methods used align with the Approaches to Teaching and Learning developed by the International Baccalaureate ("Approaches to Teaching," 2015).

During my career as a humanities instructor, teaching democracy in secondary social studies classes has been a consistent objective; however, using critical literacy as a method for developing democratic consciousness through the study of literature and journalism was a new challenge. Over the years, I have facilitated many inspiring Socratic seminars based on literary arts texts that voiced student epiphanies about social class, injustice, compliance, social activism, and individual agency. The motivation for this research study emerged from my concern for the condition of democracy in the U.S. today and from my curiosity about how literature could be used to spark students' thinking about democratic participation. By conducting the study, I aimed to improve my teaching practices and to become more knowledgeable as to how critical literacy can be used effectively for developing students' democratic consciousness.

Critical literacy methods used in alignment with the International Baccalaureate (IB) Approaches to Teaching and Learning did result in evidence of the students' democratic consciousness. The next section explains answers to my research study subquestions. The chapter then addresses the study's results in connection to the literature review and more recent

research regarding critical theory and critical literacy. This is followed by the implications of the study for educational theory and practice and suggestions for further research.

The main question for this research study was *to what extent do critical literacy teaching methods, as implemented with the International Baccalaureate's Approaches to Teaching and Learning, develop students' democratic consciousness and their skills for participatory democracy?* Supporting this inquiry, I sought answers to four subquestions. The attributes of critical pedagogy in my instruction included language analysis, literary criticism, questioning of the text and the author's intent, reflection on one's own understanding, along with oral and written communication skills.

### **Synthesis and Answer to Research Questions**

#### **Answers to the Research Subquestions for Cycle One.**

**Did teaching language analysis techniques and application of literary theory affect student recognition of authorial intent and manipulation of meaning?** Student recognition of language components showed some but not a sizeable or significant impact upon their understanding of the novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Paton, 1948/2003). While some students were confident and accurate in identifying language components using the critical discourse analysis CDA worksheets, many guessed when identifying phrases and clauses or did not complete the language component sections of the worksheet. For some students, awareness of new historicism, a school of literary criticism, as a lens for reading the novel facilitated their connections between the history of South Africa and the events in the novel. Understanding the history was important to some students' understanding and appreciation of events in the story, but it was not a significant factor in the students' assessed work.

**Did facilitation of Socratic dialogue affect student ability to question and articulate independent perspectives on social issues in the text or students' lived experiences?** Socratic dialogue and discussion-thread participation did demonstrate the students' abilities to articulate independent perspectives on social issues in the text and in their own experiences. The questions written in response to the passages on the CDA worksheets and the student questions written for the Socratic seminars, based on the chapters read each week, indicated that students were curious about a variety of social/cultural, political, and economic topics presented in the novel. The comments made orally, in the written responses during the Socratic seminars, and in the seminar reflections themselves, expressed connections the students made to issues of gender, race, religion, social status, and family relationships.

**Did development of formal written and oral communication affect student ability to act for social change or improvement?** The formal oral communication assessment did not happen as planned due to the switch from in-class learning to distance learning as a result of COVID-19. The formal written assessment, the Guided Literary Analysis (GLA), did not demonstrate student ability to act for social change or improvement. I recognized early on in the assessment process that the timed format and the focus on a specific passage analysis made the GLA an inappropriate means for demonstrating a student's ability to act for social change or improvement. While the passages from the novel that were analyzed in the assessment dealt with topics related to governance and social power, the students' writing varied in the quality of their ability to evaluate and explain how Paton (1948/2003) presented the topic and did not demonstrate the student's ability to act for social change. This was a poor choice of assessment on my part for examining students' ability to act for social change as an indication of democratic participation.

**Did instruction for reflection affect students' democratic consciousness?** The assigned post-Socratic seminar reflections showed some democratic consciousness. On the one hand, several students elaborated on issues of justice, racism, gender discrimination, and class discrimination in their reflections. On the other hand, the most pronounced expressions of democratic consciousness were presented in the students' creative response work. The Creative Response asked students to choose a specific passage in the text that they thought was important to their understanding or appreciation of the novel, and to create a visual, musical, or written response to the passage as a means of conveying their interpretation.

Additionally, the assignment required an artist's statement explaining how her or his work was responding to the selected passage. It was interesting that the two students who chose to write an extra chapter both focused on the character Absalom's perspective, but each was interested in a different event in the character's development. The student Benny provided a perspective supporting native crime as the result of white oppression and peer pressure. His purpose indicated Benny's awareness of using literature as a means of addressing injustice. Two other examples were especially insightful; one discussed the use of symbolic imagery to express the sense of pressure the student interpreted the protagonist to be feeling in response to his son's incarceration, the other explained the use of a split image to convey the division in South African society that oppressed the native miners while privileging the white mine owners. (Images in Appendix E and F.)

### **Answers to Research Subquestions for Cycle Two**

**Did teaching language analysis techniques and application of literary theory affect student recognition of authorial intent and manipulation of meaning?** Samples of student work did prove recognition of how the author used different literary devices to affect the

meaning of *The Samurai's Garden* (Tsukiyama, 1994). While not all students demonstrated the same level of language component recognition, most students did identify specific diction and syntax that they explained as relevant for their understanding of the passage. A few students' work displayed detailed awareness of the author's language usage.

**Did facilitation of Socratic dialogue affect ability to question and articulate independent perspective on social issues in text or students' lived experiences?** For the online discussions, I posted three questions and asked each student to respond to one, using text support. The students were also required to post a question of their own and respond to two of their peer's questions. The two online discussions during this cycle were interesting because the responses included more consideration of peer questions than had been the case in the in-class seminars. The students often waited for me to ask questions in the classroom rather than asking their own questions. Online, students posted a variety of questions that connected issues in the novel to issues relevant to the students themselves. Racism, differences in culture, and concern for family were the topics that promoted the most engaging student-initiated discussion. Also, to a greater degree than in earlier Socratic seminars, the students were more consistent in their inclusion of quotations that provided context for their questions.

**Did development of formal written and oral communications affect the students' ability to act for social change or improvement?** The students' oral communication skills were not affected during this unit. However, the students' formal written correspondence skills were demonstrated. In the letters to an elected official, most students wrote clearly and had a relevant topic regarding social improvement. A few students wrote with definite conviction regarding their topic and showed an understanding of their chosen issue based on research and recognition of a possible counter arguments. The formal letters were evidence of student democratic



consciousness; however, the letters were not consistent examples of critical theory based persuasive writing. Justina's letter regarding the values of a community garden prompted an epiphany. I had not considered adding a service learning component to this unit, but Justina's letter was a powerful reminder that service-learning opportunities would be an ideal instructional methods for promoting student democratic participation. This was an area for improvement in my instruction; however, I felt some frustration knowing that this was not something I would be able to address during the pandemic.

**Did instruction for reflection affect students' democratic consciousness?** The weekly paragraphs, which reflected on student life during social isolation, consistently expressed student awareness of the pandemic's effect on life at that time. Some students' writing conveyed a sense of fearfulness regarding the disease, and others expressed a combination of annoyance but understanding of the public health need for patience as we remained in isolation. In the text analysis section of the student journals, the role of culture and the media—radio and newspapers—was identified as affecting character patriotism and sense of loyalty. While reading *The Samurai's Garden*, the students also noticed that patriotism that turns into nationalism can be dangerous. Several students pointed out the character Matsu's comment about Japan being like a girl who thinks too much of herself as a means for letting the protagonist know that not all Japanese are excited about the war. Students also commented on Tsukiyama's inclusion of radio announcements that demonstrated how propaganda made the Japanese hungry for news of victory in the fight against China. The specific end-of-unit reflections did express some democratic consciousness, often related to Tsukiyama's inclusion of the Yamaguchi leper colony and the character Matsu's comments about Japan's national arrogance in 1939. Reflective

thinking was most clear in the students' evaluation of the types of assignments they liked and disliked, and their overall enjoyment of the novel.

### **Answers to Research Subquestions for Cycle Three**

**Did teaching language analysis techniques and application of literary theory affect student recognition of authorial intent and manipulation of meaning?** The journalism review and document analysis worksheets demonstrated that the students noticed the diction and syntax that evoked empathy or presented a call to action. The students commented that a need for funding seemed a serious issue for the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or humanitarian organizations assisting immigrants and refugees. Several students noted that other than making a monetary donation they were not sure what they, as teenagers in the U.S., could do to help refugee situations. The articles' use of imagery and writing that expressed the fearful conditions most refugees had escaped were clearly identified and discussed in the students' work.

**Did facilitation of Socratic dialogue affect ability to question and articulate independent perspective on social issues in text or students' lived experiences?** Beginning in mid-March there were no more Socratic dialogues. In the third unit there were weekly written discussions between May 21 and June 4. The week of June 8-12 the students conducted their peer learner interviews and started their collaborative work for the final slide presentation. The online discussions mentioned violence, human rights violations, and corruption in several governments as the causes of refugee flight. The opportunity to discuss human rights as a staple of democracy was a significant concept. While discussing the introduction to *Enrique's Journey* (Nazario, 2013) several female students discussed the choice of the immigrant Carmen, who chose to leave her children to come to the U.S. and work because she could earn money to send back to her Central American home for her children's care. The student discussion revolved

around whether or not the students would make the same choice. The individual thinking regarding responsibilities and care expressed individual perspectives on this matter. Also, during this cycle, it was interesting to read comments connecting back to *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Two of the weekly discussions occurred as the protests in response to George Floyd's murder were taking place across the U.S. Students commented on racial inequality and injustice that connected current events with ideas and instances in the novel. The writing demonstrated critical literacy skills and democratic consciousness that recognized freedom to protest and assemble as means of democratic participation.

**Did development of formal written and oral communications affect the students' ability to act for social change or improvement?** No individual written work addressing social change was produced in this unit. Although there was an option for conducting a live, oral interview for the peer learner biography, very few students used the on-line video conferencing application Zoom to communicate. Those who did use Zoom to complete the interview focused on what they wanted to express about their skills and the content topics and not the use of individual voice for social change. Some students did write about human rights and cultural differences in their semester reflections and in the slide presentations, but what was communicated recognized human rights violations and did not discuss or make an appeal for any action to address social change.

**Did instruction for reflection affect students' democratic consciousness?** I missed the opportunity to ask for a reflection on democracy. With hindsight, I recognize how this could have been assigned to the research study participants as an alternative to the skill and content reflection that was the regular end of term reflection.

## Meaning of the Results in Relation to the Literature

The iterative cycles showed the efficacy of the Socratic process for voicing students' questions of text content, their own comprehension of the text, and their responses to each other. Study results also demonstrated growth in content knowledge based on student selection of informational sources and their ability to draw key details from their own research. While the lessons and student work of the first semester were not part of the research study, students used the school media center database links, as shown to them earlier in the year, to find relevant sources during each cycle of the study. This suggests that the earlier lessons on research and source validation impacted their independent effort during the research study units. Additionally, the student written assessments, both formative and summative, expressed awareness of different attributes of democracy, especially issues related to human rights and systemic injustice. Finally, the student visual and creative material: their visual history slides, creative responses, postcards, and collaborative slide presentations all demonstrated democratic participation in that the students intended their finished work to be informative to others regarding issues that promote greater cultural and social understanding—at least for their peers.

**Critical literacy.** Critical literacy methods allowed me to introduce, model, and ask students to read not just what the assigned text said, but how the authors' presented meaning in their writing. The critical literacy methods used for instructional purposes during each cycle asked students to examine the components of written language; to write for different purposes; to inquire about the text, the students' own thinking and the ideas or comments expressed by their peers, and to create representations of their response to ideas or information in the core text. In each skill area, the completed work was evidence of student recognition or thinking about attributes of democracy and the sources of power presented in the literature.

*Critical discourse analysis.* The literature review research presented several examples of secondary studies that used critical discourse methods to promote student analysis of text leading to student awareness of social injustices or sources of power (Dyches, 2018; Janks, 2013; Locke & Cleary, 2011; Simmons, 2016). The studies described different types of coding or scanning of assigned literature. In each study, students were able to express a new awareness of societal factors that affect types of injustice and sources of social/political or economic power. Similar to the results of Cleary & Locke (2011), students in my classes found it difficult to accurately identify parts of speech and grammar components in the literature; however, the participants were also similar in their recognition of examples of discrimination as injustices. Simmons (2016) indicated that student works showed “evidence of a developing critical consciousness” (p. 193) as a result of using discourse analysis. My student data produced similar results.

Furthermore, the CDA worksheets did improve analysis skills. The students became more precise or specific in explaining how an author was positioning the reader’s view or relationship with what was happening in the literature. Although some students struggled to identify language components, the ability to explain the tone, mood, use of key terms to develop an idea and to present topics of inequality were consistently addressed in the students’ work. The role of culture and status or class differences were noticed in the historical fiction. During the journalism study, the results of critical discourse skills were shown in the students use of quotes from the articles they read that identified the failure of governments to uphold human rights and the language that helped students recognize misconceptions or stereotypes in their thinking about immigrants and refugees.

More recently examined literature on critical discourse reinforces the value of critical discourse skills for promoting student awareness of stereotypes that can reinforce social

injustices (Croom, 2020; Rogers & Wetzel, 2014). Croom (2020) emphasized how an instructor's language can impact or influence student comprehension. Croom pointed out the necessity that teachers recognize how stereotypes or assumptions affect their own thinking about race. Croom's article reminded me that a brainstorming activity before reading to identify what the class thinks about locations, groups, and topics that arise in a text can help address perspectives that might limit both the instructor's and the students' ability to understand a text. The necessity of teacher training for critical literacy was also a topic of more recent literature (Sultan, Rofiuddin, Nurhadi & Priyatni, 2017). The necessity of scaffolding student analysis skills was emphasized by Cleary & Locke (2011), Dyches (2018), and Simmons (2018). The ability to read with an awareness of the writer's crafting of a text's meaning must be taught; it requires "identifying, analyzing and reflecting on the practice of domination, discrimination, and injustice found in texts" (Priyatni, 2010 in Sultan, Rofiuddin, Nurhadi & Priyatni, 2017, p. 162). This type of work was completed in each of the units in the study.

The study results support the claims that the critical literacy methods that help students develop analysis skills are vital for addressing systemic, or socially prevalent injustices and their appearance in text. The study participants' work proved their understanding of the issues, but the instruction did not do enough to promote student action to address social change.

***Questioning and seminars.*** Critical literacy methods resulted in a range of student inquiry. The Socratic seminars used during cycle one transitioned to online discussions during the weeks of distance learning. In both cases, students had opportunities to voice their own interpretation of the literature and to raise questions based on individual interest in ideas presented in the literature. Allowing student voice and providing a space for student dialogue and questioning is a key element of critical literacy (Breunig, 2005; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988;

Chorzempa & Lapidus, 2009). In each cycle of the study, the role of seminars or discussion as a dialectic experience was essential for providing a safe forum for the students to share their realization of their own privilege and to contrast their lives with the experiences of others (Giroux, 1988; Simmons, 2016; Stovall, 2006). During cycle three, in response to articles about immigration and refugee situations, students questioned why governments were corrupt, what protests can or might accomplish, and what teenagers can do to improve society. I glimpsed the democratic consciousness of many students, and I ended the school year confident that all the students had a better understanding of what democracy means than they had before the study started. The use of questioning and self-reflection are key components of critical literacy (Freire, 1970; Vygotsky, 1934/1997; Kwak, 2015). The results of the study demonstrated the students' intellectual curiosity, interest in each other's ideas, and their metacognitive ability to question their own knowledge.

*Discourse and creativity.* Among the critical theorists, Herbert Marcuse's explanation of art as a means to recognize oppression was an inspiring concept that affected the planning of each unit in the research study. Marcuse was concerned that capitalist consumerism was distracting people from recognizing their own manipulation and distracting them from social problems (Marcuse, 1964). Marcuse's arguments about art and the contentions of West (2004) in examining the power of literature to describe the human condition, inspired the inclusion of student creativity in the study. In the research literature, several studies used literary art, film, and music to encourage student thinking and questioning of social issues (Buckley-Marudas, 2015; Chung & Kerby, 2009; Janks, 2013; Locke & Cleary, 2011; Okello & Quaye, 2018; Simmons, 2016; Stovall, 2006). The research study demonstrated that student creativity in response to literary fiction exhibited greater insight regarding social justice issues in the core

literature than other skill based assessments. The impressive results of the creative responses to *Cry, The Beloved Country* (Paton, 1948/2003) in cycle one, were supported by the students' artist statements. Their ability to show understanding visually was also demonstrated in their choice of visuals for the weekly postcard assignments during *The Samurai's Garden* (Tsukiyama, 1994) in cycle two.

The online instructional limitations meant the only creative work in cycle three was connected to the collaborative presentation on a refugee situation as a form of creativity. The design format and choice of images to compliment the information in the slide presentation were not as intriguing as the earlier creative assignments, but the slide presentations did incorporate a civic purpose, even though the students' opportunity to make a live presentation for their classmates was not possible.

Recent literature discussing creativity in the classroom emphasizes the significance of student creative work in response to text and as a prompt for furthering a whole-class discussion of a text's meaning (Bean & Dinkerly-Bean, 2016; Hollenberg, 2017; Ivanchikova, 2017). The use of student creative work to extend student thinking about a text was an intended component in the initial plans for cycle one, but this did not happen with the online format. In each cycle, a finding that resulted from the students' creative work was a sense of missed opportunity for enrichment through discussion of the creative interpretations, and visual selections.

**Writing.** The formative and summative writing assignments in the study asked students to write journal entries; to write a timed essay (GLA) analyzing a specific passage of the novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*; to write an artist's statement explaining the ideas and technique used to present a response to the novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*; to write letters to and as characters in the novel *The Samurai's Garden*; to write a formal argumentative letter; to write a biography



of a peer as a learner, and to write a self-reflection defending a level of skill development based on the International Baccalaureate markbands for a literature learner. The inclusion of embedded quotes for several of these assignments linked the core text directly to the student ideas being presented. The writing included analysis that exhibited student ability to identify issues of political and cultural power, injustice and justice, and social class. The use of student selection for passages to examine in their journals and informal letters demonstrated student voice in focusing on how the author presented information (Okello & Quaye, 2018). The guided literary analysis (GLA) included student writing that addressed how race and social class are conveyed in literature. Most student results demonstrated awareness that Paton (1948/2003) used his writing to identify Eurocentric perspectives in contrast to native perspectives. This ability is an objective of critical race theory and critical literacy (Epstein & Gist, 2015; hooks, 2003; Brookfield, 2005).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

While identification of a variety of social issues were prevalent in the students' work, the study did not adequately provide a means of following up by providing avenues for action that might support social improvement as democratic participation. Areas where different types of critical literacy instruction would bolster teaching for democracy include media literacy and service learning.

**Critical Media Literacy.** An instructional goal for cycle three was the introduction of document analysis to initiate student thinking about the significance of the origin of an article, the purpose for publication of an article, and the value and limitations an article presented for understanding a specific topic. However, research during cycle three of the study indicated that student democratic consciousness can be bolstered with scaffolded lessons specifically for

critical media literacy (Baker, 2016; Cope, 2017; Rogow & Scheibe, 2012). Inclusion of critical media literacy lessons is crucial so that students are able to make informed selections when completing research; this was demonstrated by the inclusion of student online research in each cycle of the study.

There is a significant amount of literature focused on the development of student critical media literacy skills. Gregory and Higgins (2017) wrote a bibliography that discusses books related to information literacy, critical library pedagogy, and critical literacy for information professionals. A significant point that Gregory and Higgins (2017) argue is that students need instruction to use libraries meaningfully in an effort to support social justice. Librarian instruction or coordination with content-teachers is pivotal for teaching text selection and analysis. With this topic, the limitations of neoliberalism were noted as adding to “a banking model of education” (Gregory & Higgins, p. 399, 2017). This is the description used by Freire (1970) to describe a teacher driven classroom in which information is presented as truth for students to absorb without question. Critical theory promotes education that allows diverse voices and context to be heard and understood, and having specific media literacy instruction coordinated between classroom instructors and teacher-librarians is recommended (Gregory & Higgins, 2017; Baker, 2016; Rogow & Scheibe, 2011).

**Service Learning.** With student democratic participation in mind, research that connects critical literacy and service learning might be an area of investigation for monitoring the development of students’ democratic consciousness or willingness to act for social improvement. I had anticipated that the students’ letters to an elected official would demonstrate civic engagement. Overall, the results did not express the depth of interest in social improvement that I had expected. It occurred to me during the assessment of the letters that I had not included any

projects that could evolve into service learning activities. Such an extension of learning would not have been possible as an in-person activity, due to COVID-19, but providing such an option would be authentic evidence of democratic participation for social improvement. The International Baccalaureate Diploma program, in grades 11 and 12, does require that students complete service learning, but it has not been part of the pre-baccalaureate curriculum; perhaps it could be.

If there had been some type of service activity option related to immigration or refugee support in the school site's region, it might have provided an authentic means of democratic participation. This idea occurred to me as a result of Trudie's comments on the lack of human rights extended to refugees and Lucia's questioning of what a high school student could do to help immigrants. I responded to Trudie's weekly assignment by indicating that I had been the advisor for the schools' chapter of Amnesty International in the past, but that due to diminished student interest, there currently was not a chapter. Trudie indicated that she would be interested in reviving the chapter when we are able to go back to school. Research regarding student organizations that take action in response to critical literacy work or service learning that emerges from critical literacy studies is another area that could add to the literature regarding how students' democratic consciousness is developed.

### **Implication of Results for Theory and Practice**

**Critical theory.** The connection between education and democracy is embedded in U.S. history. In the 20th Century John Dewey emphasized the significance of public education as a democratic experience and essential to a democratic society (Dewey, 1916/2004; Dewey, 1938/1979). Concern for social justice based on issues such as economic and racial equality prompted variations in the writing of critical theorists who have supported education for

democratic participation, equality, and justice (Davis, 2012; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988; Habermas, 1984; hooks, 2003; Marcuse, 1964; West, 2004). This study demonstrated the ability of young secondary students to comprehend issues of economic or labor-based injustice, racial injustice, and human suffering that results from governmental instability and corruption. They expressed their understanding of these issues through the application of critical literacy strategies. The research results indicated that students can gain awareness of the limitations to democracy in practice, but the results were limited in the demonstration of student democratic participation meant to enact social change or improvement.

Based on my initial literature review, the connection between the goals of critical race theory and critical literacy methods was well established in the student work during cycles one and three. Students articulated the unequal conditions for native South Africans and white South Africans; they raised questions about Paton's comments regarding the judge's power being based on law, but that laws are written by people. The idea that the white/European people had written the unjust laws was intriguing to the student participants. The issue of unjust laws and unfair treatment based on race did resurface in cycle three and demonstrated that student learning was more substantial than superficial. Student recognition of injustice as a result of specific literacy analysis was documented in multiple formative assessments and in some of the summative assessment work.

Post-study research of critical theory literature suggests that the influence of neoliberalism and the marketization of education has emphasized competitiveness and career readiness rather than democratic participation (Simmie, 2014; Torres & Reyes, 2011). A notable concern that appears in the literature is "the opposition between democratic education and hegemonic education" (Strajn, 2014). Education that develops the ability to question sources of

power in society and to take action to make economic and political policy more just is a common theme in response to globalization that promotes benefits for the few.

The inclusion of student questioning was one of the primary strategies in the study; the student inquiry and discussion, both in the classroom and online, demonstrated the students' intellectual curiosity and their willingness to consider different perspectives for the topics being discussed. The reflections on Socratic seminar participation in cycle one, the weekly journals in cycle two, and the student writing in the peer learner biographies and semester self-assessments indicated that the students recognized changes in their own thinking as a result of the learning process. Writing that described changes in the students' understanding of other cultures and different perspectives indicated a shift in thinking that could lead to action for social change. Critical theory suggests that knowledge of the causes and effects of social conditions, confidence in questioning one's own knowledge, and the ability to evaluate the validity of sources, can promote authentic understanding of one's own effect on a specific situation (Brookfield, 2005; Freire, 1970; Kwak, 2016). The use of Socratic seminars to cultivate these skills contributed significantly to the results of the study. The participants consistently demonstrated questioning regarding cultural, economic, and political power in each cycle.

The recent review of critical theory literature reinforced my initial belief that teaching for democratic consciousness needs scaffolded support, and not just in the social studies classroom. Analysis of fiction and journalism as different genres allows students to broaden their reading skills and become adept at recognizing how different writers can enhance their readers' understanding of society and affect their readers' thinking about how society can be improved. The study results suggested that multiple strategies promote learning that is reinforced by the use

of different skills all working to increase student understanding of social power and the need for social change to create a fully functioning democracy.

**Using critical literacy instruction as practice.** The implications of this study are relevant to several areas of secondary education. While this study focused on using core literature to develop students' democratic consciousness, there was limited scaffolding in the instruction for critical media literacy. Also, the results suggest that stronger evidence of student willingness to act for social improvement might be attainable with options for service learning. Finally, the role of reflection in teaching and learning proved to be the heart of critical literacy, but the literature consulted provided limited discussion of its use by students. How reflection is used in professional development for teachers was not a focus of the study, but it is essential to action research. As a result of the study, the benefits of shared reflection were highlighted, yet the lack of consistent inclusion of shared reflection was problematic.

**Reflection in education.** The effectiveness of student reflections for reinforcing learning and developing students' democratic consciousness raised a question for further research: what is the evidence that shared reflections are being used to consistently improve teaching? It was logical to expect the professional learning community (PLC) to support this process, but there was no accountability for how the PLC time was used; thus, research regarding the implementation of PLCs for critical literacy or teaching for democracy could add to the body of knowledge regarding professional development for critical literacy.

Language arts education includes instruction of reading, writing, and oral communication; the strategies implemented in the classroom are the result of teacher choice, and arguably teacher reflection. In Freire's description of conscientização (Freire, 1970) or democratic consciousness, a key component is reflection. Action research also requires reflection

(Mills, 2017; Schmuck, 2006). Reflection is vital to the teacher-researcher's appraisal of one's own instructional efficacy. The instructional strategies of this critical action research study focused on reading, writing, questioning, and discourse; reflection was included in each strategy. Emphasis on reflection was established in the specific written reflections after the seminars in cycle one, in the artist's statement, in the weekly journals, in the unit reflection at the end of cycle two, and in the semester self-reflection at the end of cycle three. Careful assessment of the student work promoted teacher reflection on the effectiveness of each instructional strategy. Through reflection, the value of action research promotes professional growth for the teacher-researcher. To realize the value of reflection for the field of education, and for the specific work done to improve instructional practice, it needs a consistent forum to prevent improvement from being isolated.

The transition to online education forced teachers globally and nationally to function in isolation; however, it also presented the challenge of refocusing on effective instruction. The results of trial and error and reflection became universally important due to the immediate need for support using online instruction. Thus, the role of teacher reflection and the willingness to share student learning reflections is an aspect of professional development that can be part of professional learning communities. During this study, no substantive PLC work transpired. Perhaps this was due to COVID-19, but the lack of a means for accountability became obvious. The situation raised questions about how reflection is used to improve teaching and learning beyond the individual classroom across secondary education.

### **Conclusion**

The main question for this research study was *to what extent do critical literacy teaching methods, as implemented with the International Baccalaureate's Approaches to Teaching and*

*Learning, develop students' democratic consciousness and their skills for participatory democracy?*

This study specifically examined how specific teaching methods, individually and in connection to each other, affected the study participants' understanding of democracy and the development of their democratic consciousness. The implications of this study for language arts practice are specific to the use of critical literacy strategies and were framed by the International Baccalaureate's Approaches to Teaching and Learning (Approaches to Teaching and Learning, 2015). The results indicated that student inquiry and willingness to question how information is presented are strengthened through critical literacy teaching strategies. The critical discourse analysis instruction focused on how authors crafted literature, and the results exhibited an increase in the students' analysis skills. Socratic seminars and the purposeful assigning of student questions based on text and other students' comments or questions was instruction that focused on inquiry.

Furthermore, the results indicated that student questioning of their own comprehension, the purpose and ideas that authors convey, and the point of view or significance of their peers' perspectives were sharpened by these instructional practices. However, the critical literacy methods used in this study demonstrated limited effects on student writing for social change; yet, the strategies working together suggested learning beyond what was measurable using the predetermined rubrics. Thus, teaching to develop democratic consciousness proved to be a task beyond the measurement tools or rubrics identified in the research design. In seeking to teach for democratic participation, the limited opportunities for students to engage in democratic behaviors with social implications became apparent. The study results indicated that the instructional practices emphasized skill development. Intellectual growth based on content knowledge and



skill development was demonstrated by all the participants. While student work showed moments of democratic consciousness, to promote democratic participation for social change, teaching practices need to provide social application that can demonstrate student effectiveness in creating change that improves the human condition.

The process of conducting a critical action research study showed me several areas where I can improve my instructional practices. For each strategy I implemented, I discovered that my expectations needed adjustments and that I had only a conceptual understanding of what it would look like for students to demonstrate democratic participation. The critical discourse analysis (CDA) worksheet results indicated that students are able to break down language and explain how an author's writing affects their interpretation of the text. The worksheets also helped me recognize that I need to provide more scaffolding for critical discourse analysis by preparing lessons to connect specific grammar exercises to analysis of text in small doses. When instruction builds confidence in identifying language components, students are more successful in explaining how the language components express issues of power inequality, examples of oppression, and statements that convey bias. The study results showed that I rushed the students into the use of the worksheets; I am confident that the level of analysis demonstrated in the third cycle could have been achieved sooner, had my instruction leading into critical discourse analysis been more incremental and specifically connected to the grammar lessons focused on phrases and clauses.

The necessary switch from oral, classroom discussion to online written discussion threads proved that most of the students who insisted they were too shy or too intimidated to speak during seminars were sincere in describing their limited participation. I realized that several students who had not been actively engaged in the Socratic seminars had actually given up on

participating, but when they had the written option for participation, they demonstrated their textual insight and intellectual curiosity. Also, using the online discussion thread allowed every student to respond to one of the prompts I posted. Using both formats helped me understand the value of providing options for discourse participation. Although oral communication is a skill that is important for students to practice and develop, adding written discussion options within each unit of study is a valuable method for receiving input from all students. I intend to experiment with alternating oral and written discussions and using an online discussion as an alternative for some Socratic seminars. A new goal is to determine how to best include the written discussion while still having oral Socratic seminars to develop interactive speaking and extemporaneous articulation of ideas.

Student inquiry was included in the study as part of the CDA and journalism review worksheets, in preparation for the seminars and online written discussion, and in the letters to a character during cycle two. I found the results consistent with my expectation that the students' questions would demonstrate their comprehension, interest in specific topics, and indicate their curiosity in response to new ideas or unfamiliar cultural practices and historical situations. The required submission of questions for the seminars was extremely useful because many students never asked the questions they had prepared ahead of time. The questions identified common topics of interest or uncertainty about the text, and initially I was able to address these queries in class. Once distance learning began, I did not have the same ability to respond to student questions. However, in the online discussions, students posted and responded to each other's questions in greater volume than had happened during the in-class Socratic seminars. This was possible because multiple students could write their ideas simultaneously in the online format, while in the classroom the need for one-at-a-time speaking created a slower process. Thus,

another area of improvement created by the online discussion was that every student who participated had the opportunity to raise a question and respond to others, which was not always possible in the oral Socratic seminars.

The student formal letters were expected to demonstrate the students' democratic participation. As a result of the letters to elected officials I realized that I had not provided adequate prompts for assessing students' democratic participation skills. This epiphany was the result of one student's letter, and it caused me to reflect on how service learning could be a means for initiating authentic student democratic participation and social activism. The reflective process caused me to recognize that I had been functioning with a conceptual notion of wanting students to demonstrate their democratic consciousness, but I had not developed for myself a precise enough image of how this could be assessed or measured. Thus, while I was able to examine the students' identification and evaluation of attributes of democracy or injustices in the core texts, beyond letter writing, I had never clarified for myself what the demonstration of a student's democratic participation could be.

The second pedagogic issue that was exposed in my writing instruction was effectiveness in teaching students to correctly format and embed quotations in their written work. I had anticipated that the students would be able to do this correctly based on the amount of time spent earlier in the school year addressing this aspect of academic writing. What became obvious was that for many students what I had been doing was simply not working, and repeating the same lessons was not effective. Based on the writing of Brown, Roediger & McDaniel (2014), I agree that more low stakes quizzes that check on formatting can help reinforce individual skills: in this case the correct punctuation for quotations. Also, assigning individual paragraphs as formative assessments can reinforce the importance of both the correct format and the significance of an

embedded quotation for presenting a student's point. The paragraphs can be scored in-class using a peer check for correct punctuation and for relevance to the main idea being presented. Through the data analysis and reflective process, I discovered that I need to use smaller instructional tasks to develop stronger foundational skills.

The reflective requirement in the critical action research design was essential for showing me a weakness in my original plan. The strength of the study was that the summative assessments were connected to the strategies implemented and had succinct rubrics. The students were aware of the assessment expectations and could monitor their success. However, for the overall study objective of developing students' democratic consciousness and skills for participatory democracy I did not provide adequate lessons to demonstrate democratic participation.

In the third cycle, the journalism review worksheet and document analysis worksheet were beneficial for focusing the students' reading of articles on immigration and refugees. However, some students' work seemed minimally engaged in the worksheets, which suggested that they thought of the assessment as busy work rather than a guided process to help them examine how the information was being presented. The weekly discussions did help many students recognize that the worksheets prepared them to explain their understanding of each article and to question the different examples of the global refugee crisis. However, the use of the worksheets might have been more enthusiastically received if I had added a lesson to connect the assignments regarding the code of journalism ethics and the guided reading questions for *Enrique's Journey* (Nazario, 2013). A discussion of why Nazario's introduction provides transparency, about her purpose and her personal bias in discussing children who migrate, would demonstrate how all writers have a purpose and context that affect their language choices in

conveying meaning in their work. I can improve the unit by specifically addressing that being an interrogative reader is a habit of mind to be developed. I intend to work with the teacher-librarian to improve media literacy instruction by including media literacy lessons that incrementally develop analysis skills over each curriculum unit.

Overall, an important lesson I learned about my own instruction is that I sometimes jumped from an introductory lesson into more challenging skills without enough scaffolding to bolster student understanding and, or confidence in completing the next assessment. To some degree this was a result of losing face-to-face classroom time. Regardless of when it occurs, I need to be intentional in providing more skill-based formative assignments that develop into critical thinking assessments. Thus, before beginning discourse analysis work, I will prepare a variety of brief lessons to connect grammar exercises to critical discourse analysis assignments. Additionally, I will ask more students to read the questions they have prepared for seminars during Socratic discussions rather than asking my own questions. The online written discussions showed that students are more comfortable and confident responding to each other, and their reflections suggest that they are often too uncertain to respond to the open ended questions I tend to ask. I suspect that supporting more student-directed discussions and offering more online discussions will promote richer student-examination of the text than just scheduling oral seminars that seem too directed by the instructor. The study was extremely helpful in showing me that several of my strategies are developmentally more appropriate for older students, which makes sense considering the number of years I have taught upper classmen in comparison to my work with freshmen. The new challenge is to use the lessons learned from the data and reflections of this action research to gauge my instruction more accurately to the learning needs of freshmen.

This study bears witness to my personal and professional growth as a citizen and as a 21st century educator. Critical literacy promotes instruction that gives voice to students' intellectual curiosity and empowers students to question the levers of power in society and the need for greater human rights. The study raises questions regarding how secondary teachers are supported in providing developmentally appropriate instruction. The results of this study contribute to the body of knowledge regarding critical literacy education and instruction for developing students' democratic consciousness.

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## Appendix A

### Guided Literary Analysis rubric, modified from 0-5 level rubric for grade 9.

#### Guided Literary Analysis Paper (exam paper 1) PB 9 Versions

Paper 1 Rubric	0	1	2	3
<p><b>Criterion A: Understanding and interpretation</b>  <i>-How well does the candidate demonstrate an understanding of the text and draw reasoned conclusions from implications in it?  How well are ideas supported by references to the text?</i></p>	Does not reach standard	<p>The response demonstrates little understanding of the literal meaning of the text.</p> <p>References to the text are infrequent or are rarely appropriate.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates some understanding of the literal meaning of the text.</p> <p>References to the text are at times appropriate.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates an understanding of the literal meaning of the text. There is a satisfactory interpretation of some implications of the text.</p> <p>References to the text are generally relevant and mostly support the candidate's ideas.</p>
<p><b>Criterion B: Analysis and Evaluation</b>  <i>-To what extent does the candidate analyse and evaluate how textual features and/or other authorial choices shape meaning?</i></p>	Does not reach standard	<p>The response is descriptive and/or demonstrates little relevant analysis of textual features and/or authorial choices.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates some appropriate analysis of textual features and/or authorial choices but is reliant on description.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates a generally appropriate analysis of textual features and/or authorial choices.</p>
<p><b>Criterion C: Organization and Development</b>  <i>-How well organized, coherent and focused is the presentation of ideas?</i></p>	Does not reach standard	<p>Little organization is apparent in the presentation of ideas.</p> <p>No discernible focus is apparent in the analysis.</p>	<p>Some organization is apparent in the presentation of ideas.</p> <p>There is little focus in the analysis.</p>	<p>The presentation of ideas is adequately organized in a generally coherent manner.</p> <p>There is some focus in the analysis.</p>
<p><b>Criterion D: Language</b>  <i>-How clear, varied and accurate is the language?  -How appropriate is the choice of register and style? ("Register" refers, in this context, to the candidate's use of elements such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and terminology appropriate to the analysis.)</i></p>	Does not reach standard	<p>Language is rarely clear and appropriate; there are many errors in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction and little sense of register and style.</p>	<p>Language is sometimes clear and carefully chosen; grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction are fairly accurate, although errors and inconsistencies are apparent; the register and style are to some extent appropriate to the task.</p>	<p>Language is clear and carefully chosen, with an adequate degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction despite some lapses; register and style are mostly appropriate to the task.</p>

## Appendix B

### Common Core Standard Criterion for Argumentative Writing

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.A

Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.B

Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.C

Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.D

Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.E

Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

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## Appendix C

### English Language Arts Standards “Speaking and Listening” grades 9-10.

#### Comprehension and Collaboration

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.B

Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

#### Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.5

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.6

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.



## Appendix D.

### CONSENT FORM

**Research Study Title:** The use of Critical Literacy Methods to Teach for Democratic Consciousness

**Principal Investigator:** Tavia Quaid

**Research Institution:** Concordia University

**Faculty Advisor:** Jerry McGuire

#### **Purpose and what you will be doing:**

The purpose of this research study is to understand how high school students learn to participate in democracy and how they understand the role of the individual in supporting social justice. Thus, as a secondary educator, I want to know how critical pedagogy affects high school students' democratic consciousness. I plan to examine how my instruction, using critical literacy teaching methods affects my students' development of a conceptual understanding of democracy over three consecutive units of study. I intend to monitor how I teach critical literacy skill development as a means for fostering democratic participation and the effects of this instruction for students' democratic consciousness.

I am inviting all the students in my ninth grade English classes to participate. I anticipate that about half of the students will volunteer to participate with their parent's consent. No one will be paid to participate, and all personal information will be removed from student work included in the study. Each participant will be given a pseudonym and only I will know the actual identities connected to the work included in the study.

There will be a parent information night in February 2020. I need to know which students have parental consent and who individually assent to participate by the end February 2020.

Participants in the study will complete same work that non-participants complete. There is nothing different or unique for participation. During this study, all students will learn two specific forms of critical literary analysis and two types of literary criticism that help to read, write, question, and speak about ideas and attributes of democracy.

#### **Risks:**

All systematic research that includes human subjects requires a risk assessment. There are no anticipated risks to anyone's well-being in this study. To protect individual's personal information, precautions will be taken to maximize confidentiality of student work that will be used as data for this study. I will substitute student names and any other personally identifying information with a code (a pseudonym) that only I will know. Then, when I or anyone else looks at the data, none of the data will have a student name or personally identifying information. I

will not identify individual participants in any publication or report. Students' personal information will be kept private at all times. Participating student names and/or any other personally identifying information be kept in secure (locked) files.

Study-related materials will be kept securely for 3 years from the close of the study and will then be destroyed.

**Benefits:**

This research will increase student awareness of democratic ideals and ideally it will promote national and global citizenship. The research will add to the body of knowledge regarding the effects of critical literacy and the use of four forms of critical literary analysis relevant for democratic consciousness. Specifically, students will learn and practice systemic functional linguistics, critical discourse analysis, new historicism literary criticism and structural literary criticism. The results are potentially relevant to schools or organizations focusing on democratic participation and critical literacy skills.

**Confidentiality:**

This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if a student were to tell me abuse or neglect that raises serious concern for the student's immediate health and safety. Teachers are mandatory reporters of abuse, thus information suggesting abuse or neglect would have to be shared with administration.

**Right to Withdraw:**

Student participation is greatly appreciated, but I acknowledge that some students may not be interested or that some parents may not be inclined to permit their student's participation. Students are free at any point to choose not to continue participation in the study. The work for the class will still be the same. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating.

**Contact Information:**

Parents will receive a copy of this consent form, and students will receive a corresponding assent form. Both forms must be signed for the student to participate in the study. If you have questions you can talk to or write to me as principal investigator, at email [tavia.quaid@vansd.org](mailto:tavia.quaid@vansd.org). If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email [obranch@cu-portland.edu](mailto:obranch@cu-portland.edu) or call 503-493-6390).

**Your Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

---

Participant Name

---

Date

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

---

Investigator Name

---

Date

---

Investigator Signature

---

Date



Investigator: Tavia Quaid email: [\[tavia13@icloud.com\]](mailto:tavia13@icloud.com)  
c/o: Professor Jerry McGuire  
Concordia University – Portland  
2811 NE Holman Street  
Portland, Oregon 97211

**Appendix E**  
**Artistic Response by Ofelia**



**Appendix F**

**Artistic Response by Hero**



## **Appendix G:**

### **Statement of Original Work**

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

#### **Statement of academic integrity.**

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

#### **Explanations:**

##### ***What does “fraudulent” mean?***

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

##### ***What is “unauthorized” assistance?***

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

## Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*



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Digital Signature

Tavia Quaid

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Name (Typed)

5 September 2020

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Date

