

Fiction Reader:

A Case Study Documenting the Impact Reading Fiction has on One Child's Literacy

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### Abstract

This qualitative research case study explores the impact that fiction reading has had on one 10 year-old child's literacy experience and learning. The Common Core State Standards have been adopted across the United States; the Standards prescribe educational milestones for each grade level, K-12. Literature and informational texts are represented throughout the State Standards for English Language Arts. The purpose of this study is to explore and observe one elementary-level student's interactions with literary, fiction texts, in order to learn about the impact fiction reading has had on the child's literacy experience. Within this qualitative research study, I inform elementary-level instruction and educate teachers on the implications of using fiction texts in the classroom. As a result of the triangulation of my data collection with peer reviewed research, I was able to find that the reading of fiction has impacted my focus learner in three unique ways. The three found themes translated to my research findings: fiction is used to teach lessons and morals, fiction is read for pleasure, and fiction is used to aid story sequencing and comprehension.

*Keywords:* fiction, common core, literacy, classroom impact

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### **Introduction**

Since the United States' inception and adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Language Arts, the shift toward student analysis of informational text has been an emphasis in elementary school classrooms (Pennington, Obenchain, & Brock, 2014).

Elementary level classrooms across the country have been striving to incorporate more informational texts into curriculum, appealing to the Common Core State Standards' push toward "authentic" reading of disciplinary, informational text (Pennington, Obenchain, & Brock, 2014).

As a result of the recent educational shift toward informational and non-fiction text, have the use of fiction text become diluted at the elementary level of public education? In what ways do fiction texts influence the literacy experiences and learning of its readers?

### **Problem Statement**

As a result of the United States' adoption of the Common Core State Standards, public school classrooms throughout the country have become influenced by the demand of informational texts. Informational text is defined as writing that exists for the primary purpose of conveying information regarding the natural and social world (Maloch & Bomer, 2013). The problem is that English teachers and administrators see the increased emphasis on informational text as the devaluing of fiction work; novels that use class time are being put on the backburner (Alsup, 2013). Many teachers and researchers have questioned the repercussions of the increased use of informational texts in the classroom and the devaluing of fiction (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012). Although the CCSS stresses that fiction and nonfiction texts are represented equally throughout the standards, Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012) state

“...there is an implicit sharpening of focus on nonfiction” (p. 28). Within the early pages of the Common Core State Standards, the National Assessment of Educational Process recommends that by twelfth grade, students should be reading 30% literary texts and 70% informational texts (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012). The demand for informational text instruction is on the incline, regardless of the CCSS’ firm positionality that informational and literary texts are equally represented throughout the Language Arts standards.

While studying the research available regarding the high demand for informational texts, I continually found evidence supporting the positive impact that reading fiction has on its participants; readers of fiction exhibit a high degree of comprehension success (Topping, 2015), readers of fiction are highly engaged with text, both fiction and non, and experience high concentration while reading (Towey, 2001), and readers of fiction experience pleasure while reading (Damber, 2011). In response to the research available, regarding fiction’s impact on its readers, I have formulated the belief that students who read fiction experience a high level of text comprehension and exhibit the ability to sustain involvement with all text, for prolonged periods of time.

The reading of literary fiction texts is important; fiction texts are complex and foster brain development in the frontal lobes, which allows the reader to deepen and enrich oneself (Alsup, 2013). Research has found that fiction can be an effective vehicle for learning disciplinary content (Marsh, Butler, & Umanath, 2012). I believe that fiction has a strong influence on student learners; readers of fiction demonstrate traits of empathy and exhibit an increased ability to relate with others (Alsup, 2013). Although the Common Core State Standards address literary text, I believe that the clear impact of fiction work is being overlooked in public schools across The United States of America.

**Rationale**

Setting in at the end of primary school, research has identified that there is a declining trend of reading motivation among students (De Naeghel & Keer, 2013). Research has found that motivation is linked to higher engagement and increased reading performance from participants (De Naeghel & Keer, 2013). Due to this lack of reading motivation, starting at the end of primary school, students fight an uphill battle to stay engaged while reading, which directly correlates to students' literacy learning and experiences. In summation, students who struggle with an intrinsic motivation to read will inadvertently struggle with engagement, literacy performance, and academic achievement.

Reading fiction in the classroom has been referred to as the “heartbeat” of classroom life (Damber, 2011). Fiction helps to create a shared bond among classroom students; reading fiction creates a community of learners who bond with one another over like experiences and emotions (Damber, 2011). I believe that readers of fiction engage with text for extended periods of time, and maintain focus and concentration over the course of lengthy reading sessions and activities, in and out of the classroom environment. Therefore, as a result of this study, I explored the impact of student involvement with fiction work, in response to the CCSS' increased emphasis on teaching informational text. Through the illumination of the literacy advantages, and disadvantages, that an avid fiction reader has had, as a result of reading fiction in and out of the classroom, I explored how fiction texts have impacted one child's literacy experience and learning.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore how one child's literacy has been impacted by his involvement with fiction texts. The case study was conducted with one

elementary level student, who was considered, by himself, his parents, and his educators, to be an avid fiction reader. Through this case study, I observed and assessed how one child experiences and learns literacy, as a result of his interactions with fiction text. Through the observation of one student's interactions with fiction texts, coupled with assessment opportunities and anecdotal notes, I gained understanding of how reading fiction impacts elementary level learners. I explored one fiction reader's interactions with texts, reading motivations, academic reading level, and beliefs about reading, to learn more about the role that fiction plays in the literacy process.

### **Research Question**

Through the investigation of this case study, I explored the research question, what is the impact that reading fiction has on one child's literacy experiences? Through the use of my own qualitative research, in the form of a case study, I explored one child's literacy experiences and learning, to discover the benefits and detriments that reading fiction texts have on its participants. I explored peer-reviewed research, surrounding the implications and results of the classroom adoption of the Common Core State Standards at the elementary level, to identify in what ways the CCSS: English Language Arts supports continued fiction immersion, to gain insight as to whether or not the CCSS devalues fiction instruction.

### **Literature Review**

The implementation of fiction texts in the classroom as a tool to engage, motivate, and instruct, is not a new phenomenon. Critically analyzing educational research, over the course of the last fifteen years, has allowed me to compile a theoretical framework of ideas and implications surrounding the impact that fiction texts have on literacy learning and achievement. In addition to the exploration and analysis of educational studies over the past fifteen years

regarding the impact of fiction, I investigated the Common Core State Standards to gain insight into its addressed value of fiction work through the elementary level.

### **Fiction Engages and Motivates**

Fiction has been found to fuel student engagement in and out of the classroom. As a result of a 2011 study of over 1,000 nine year-old students in Sweden, fiction was found to instill a shared frame of reference to those students who participated in reading fiction texts (Damber, 2011). Damber (2011) states, that through shared reading of fiction texts, classroom participants develop a bond with one another. Using novels in the classroom to supplement and support content area curriculum has been shown to “electrify” students (Gareis, Allard, & Saindon, 2009). According to Cook and Dinkins (2015), students have been shown to engage with text when the content is related to popular culture. Cook and Dinkins (2015) state that when popular culture is of interest to a reader, the likelihood of engagement is increased. In terms of popular culture, reading plays and acting out dramatic performances, in school, has been shown to elevate student engagement in the classroom (De Naeghel & Van Keer, 2013). When reading fiction texts which have a story element, the visual aspect of one’s brain is activated; visualization of dramatics in texts allows for a reader to engage and focus (Newkirk, 2015). By studying over one-thousand fifth grade students throughout Belgium, De Naeghel and Van Keer (2013) found that students preferred reading fiction text to any other genre. Not only are fiction texts engaging to readers, they are also pleasurable.

In addition to the research supporting fiction text as a means of engaging students, student motivation has also been linked to the reading of fiction texts. Damber (2011) found that students, and parents of students, enjoyed doing homework assignments that involved reading fiction works. As a result of De Naeghel and Van Keer’s (2013) study of over one-thousand fifth

grade students, fiction was found to motivate children to read, particularly when reading for recreational purposes. Towey's (2001) research, regarding fiction's impact in the classroom, illuminated the discovery that students were more motivated to read independently when they self-selected fiction texts. In addition to Towey's (2001) research regarding self-selected text, Wilhelm (2015) found that teachers need to grant more respect to student choice; choice is what allows students to read for pleasure, which Wilhelm considers necessary for cultivating life-long readers. Wilhelm (2015) suggests that when given the choice, students will read what they "need" on a human, developmental, and psychological level (p. 20); Wilhelm's research states that students will intrinsically choose literacy works that are appropriate to their developmental stage, which fuels literacy learning and experience.

### **Fiction Promotes Academic Achievement and Comprehension**

In addition to fiction's use as a tool to engage and motivate students to participate in literacy activities, research regarding fiction in the classroom has linked academic achievement to the reading of fiction. Novels, when chosen carefully and paired with an appropriate timeline, have been shown to dramatically increase student involvement with text and conceptual understanding, when compared to the reading of traditional textbooks (Gareis, Allard, & Saindon, 2009). Novels have not been suggested to replace textbooks completely; when chosen appropriately, novels provide authentic instruction which stimulates intensive and extensive literacy skills (Gareis, Allard, & Saindon, 2009). Towey (2001) states that "flow," the state of high concentration when reading, is attributed to a self-directed sense of well-being; as a result of reading fiction, readers become immersed and highly invested in the text that is being read. According to Towey's (2001) study, readers of fiction were found to engage in flow on a more regular basis, than that of readers of non-fiction counterparts. Towey (2001) suggests that when

flow is initiated, as a result of reading fiction, reading skills and techniques are intensified. As a result of reading fiction text, vocabulary development among students has been found to increase due to word identification and text deciphering (Cook & Dinkins, 2015). Reading fiction has been found to increase student critical thinking, analytical writing, and close reading (Alsup, 2013).

Fiction texts are beneficial to students learning curricular content such as science (Cook & Dinkins, 2015). Popular culture fiction texts leverage the exploration of scientific phenomenon; a book about zombies can prompt a discussion on viral outbreaks (Cook & Dinkins, 2015). Cook and Dinkins (2015) suggest that scientific messages are likely to be instilled in students through the reading of popular fiction texts. Marsh, Butler, & Umanath (2012) found that when correct facts are embedded within fictional texts, students demonstrate a vast understanding of said facts. Using fiction in the classroom helps students to visualize content, stimulate discussion, and initiate empathetic perspective talk (Marsh, Butler, & Umanath, 2012).

As a result of using fiction texts in the classroom, as an aid to instruction, student comprehension has been shown to elevate over that of non-fiction genres (Topping, 2015). Topping (2015) found that through the study of the Accelerated Reading (AR) software, students who read difficult fiction texts obtained a higher degree of comprehension success than that of similarly leveled, non-fiction counterparts. Through Topping's (2015) research of over 150,000 children across 967 schools, children were found able to read high leveled fiction text with higher comprehension and interest than any other genre. When reading fiction, students have been shown to experience time loss and high psychological states of concentration (Towey, 2001). In addition to time loss and high levels of concentration, Towey (2001) also found that

self-selected fiction reading to be the most powerful tool for initiating student concentration, while reading. Narrative texts, which have a plot and exhibit a sequence of events, have been found to keep readers present and concentrated (Newkirk, 2015).

Fiction texts, such as graphic novels, have been shown to stimulate discussion and thinking skills, resulting in greater story comprehension (Jennings, Rule, & Zanden, 2014). Text and image integration into fiction work results in high levels of student comprehension, due to illustration aided story telling (Jennings, Rule, & Zanden, 2014). When coupled with motivation and interest, providing and encouraging the reading of different forms of literature in the classroom, ultimately improves students' understanding text (Jennings, Rule, & Zanden, 2014). Fiction texts, which are both motivating and interesting, have been linked to student comprehension success.

### **The Common Core & Fiction**

The implementation of the Common Core State Standards has outlined notable shifts toward nonfiction text (Zapata & Maloch, 2014). Nonfiction is divided into five categories: informational texts, concept books, procedural texts, biographs, and reference materials; the primary purpose of the five categories of nonfiction text is to convey information regarding the natural and social worlds (Zapata & Maloch, 2014). The Common Core State Standards do not provide or include a required reading list within its set English Language Arts standards (National Governors Association). The CCSS stresses that the standards for English Language Arts represent a fifty-fifty balance between content-rich nonfiction and literary reading from kindergarten to grade five (National Governors Association). Regardless of the CCSS' adherence to a perceived even split, between nonfiction and literary reading, there seems to be an uncertainty regarding the intended purpose of fiction in the classroom.

In terms of the Common Core's adherence to fiction text, referred to as "literary" reading by the CCSS, personal connections to text are not considered to be pivotal in constructing meaning, and are to be limited (Pennell, 2014). The CCSS claims that constructing meaning from fiction text is rightfully overlooked; personal connections should not influence the construction of meaning (Pennell, 2014). As argued by Pennell (2014), the construction of meaning *should* be aided by emotion. Fiction texts have been found to invoke emotion and expand imagination (Stutler, 2011). Emotional, intellectual, and imaginal thinking are the basis for which creative intelligence is fostered (Stutler, 2011); the Common Core State Standards' neglect of student emotion, when reading, is hindering creative intelligence.

### **Summary**

As a result of my critical literature review, I have found that fiction texts allow for students to connect course content authentically and engagingly. Fiction has been shown to immerse students in literacy by accessing interest and motivation. In addition to motivating and engaging students, fiction texts have been found to increase academic achievement and general text comprehension. The implementation of fiction in the classroom can be used as supplemental teaching aids or tools to enrich curricular content. Through the analysis of peer-reviewed research regarding the Common Core State Standards, I have found that the CCSS does not emphasize or acknowledge all fiction values, including fiction's benefit toward the construction of meaning. Despite the found research detailing the positive impact that fiction texts have in the classroom, the Common Core State Standards neglect the complete value of reading fiction.

### **Methods**

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore how one child's literacy has been impacted by his involvement with fiction texts. Throughout my research, I address the question,

what is the impact that reading fiction has on one child's literacy experiences? Regarding how fiction readers engage in literacy practices at the elementary level, I analyzed one fourth grade student's literacy identity, experience, and learning, through the implementation of anecdotal notes, interview, work sample collection, as well as the conduction of reading and comprehension assessments. As a result of my data collection and analysis, I determined the impact that reading fiction texts have had on one fourth grade child's literacy experience and learning. In conjunction with collecting and analyzing data surrounding my focus learner's literacy achievement, learning, and identity, I collected data to supplement my study rationale, addressing the concern that the CCSS for ELA does not accurately account for the impact of literary text.

### **Participant**

My research study participant was selected based on the following criteria: the young boy is an avid fiction reader, at the elementary level, and immersed in the Common Core curriculum. Sam (pseudonym), the young boy selected for the study, is a known fiction and literary reader, as described by family members, educators, and him. Sam is currently in grade four, in a rural elementary school, in Western New York. According to Sam's adult sister, the nine year-old boy under study, enjoys pleasure reading fiction novels on a regular basis. The purpose of my work with Sam was to explore the role in which fiction texts have impacted the child's literacy experience and learning.

### **Setting**

Data collection was conducted at a local, public, library which promoted literate behavior and provided ample varieties of fiction texts. Interview, assessment, as well as anecdotal notes, were conducted on a one-on-one basis between Sam and me. Data collection took place in quiet

settings, where outside distractions were limited and controlled, as well as loud settings, where other's voices could be heard. Sam and I met three times over the course of the six week duration of the research study.

### **Positionality as Teacher-Researcher**

My qualifications as a teacher-researcher include a background in Childhood Inclusive Education, as well as an undergraduate degree in Interdisciplinary Arts for Children. I obtained my undergraduate degree in the spring of 2014 from The State University College at Brockport, New York. I am certified, by the state of New York, in childhood education and students with disabilities, birth through grade 6 and I am currently seeking certification in literacy education, birth through grade 12. I am completing course work for my Master of Science in Education degree, at the College at Brockport, in literacy education. My undergraduate and graduate work has allowed me to teach in several elementary schools, including rural, suburban, and urban settings.

I am employed by a local, suburban school district, as a district substitute teacher in the county where I reside. As a district substitute, I have access to a variety of unique classrooms, from kindergarten to grade 6, across five suburban elementary schools. Sam attends a school district outside of the one that I am employed by. I was motivated to conduct this case study to learn more about the impact that reading fiction has on student learners, in and out of the classroom. I intend to use the conclusions and implications gained from this research study to enlighten and enrich colleagues and educators on the impact that reading fiction texts have on student learners.

As the researcher of this study, I acted as an interviewer, facilitator, assessment administrator, and participant observer. I conducted a one-on-one interview with the child,

administering a reading assessment, and facilitated on-demand reading and writing opportunities. As a participant observer, I took several anecdotal notes and reflected on formal and informal observations. I was positioned as both an outside observer and facilitator over the course of my study.

### **Data Collection**

The data collected throughout the case study provided me with the understanding of how one fiction reader's motivations, feelings, and achievements have been impacted from the reading of fiction texts. In order to discover the impact that reading fiction has on one child's literacy experience and learning, I conducted a reading interview (appendix A), benchmark reading assessment and running record (appendix B), as well as ongoing anecdotal notes (appendix C), in which I recorded observations throughout the study and compared findings to relevant, peer-reviewed, research. The reading interview was intended to determine Sam's interests and feelings toward reading, in addition to reading motivations. I used the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012) to assess Sam's oral reading and story comprehension, in order to identify the ways in which fiction has impacted Sam's literacy experience and learning. The purpose of the anecdotal notes, taken throughout the research study, was for me to make observations regarding the student's behavior and how his interactions with fiction texts compared to relevant research.

### **Methodology**

The Fountas and Pinnell Reading Interview (appendix A) was conducted at the beginning of the research study; the interview was designed to identify feelings, interests, and motivations regarding reading. The findings obtained through the reading interview were compared to formal observations and relevant research. The Benchmark Assessment System (appendix B)

was used to inform my understanding of Sam's literacy achievement to further influence my observations and research. The assessment was conducted early on in the investigation, on our second meeting. The Benchmark Assessment System was administered in the form of a running record, coupled with comprehension checks and prompts. Anecdotal notes were conducted for every meeting that Sam and I had; I reminded the student that the notes were for my records only, and were not to be seen by anyone else. Sam was reassured throughout the data collection process that his involvement in the case study did not affect his academic standing at school, and that his efforts were to be used to inform other teachers. I collected student artifacts related to reading and writing English Language Arts activities, when applicable, throughout the course of the case study. Through Sam's involvement with fiction text, I explored student literacy performance and achievement, engagement, and identity. By referencing peer-reviewed research on the impact of fiction on literacy development, I was able to compare and further identify and investigate the impact fiction has on its readers.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is the reliability, credibility, and transferability of one's study (Creswell & Clark, 2015). Strategies outlined throughout Clark & Creswell's (2015) *Understanding Research* were used to inform data collection and procedures. My research design meets the criteria for trustworthiness because I cited peer-reviewed and academic research, in addition to collaborating with peers to academically audit and critically review my progress and work. I asked classmates and colleagues to fact check my accuracy and suggest edits. My data was triangulated through the use of multiple data-collection methods and sources; interviewing, assessing, artifact collecting, and anecdotal observing were constantly compared throughout my

research study. Research was conducted in an ethical, unbiased manner; I remained open to findings and used research, and colleague feedback, to support claims and implications.

### **Procedure**

My focus learner, Sam, and I met three times over the course of six weeks, to explore the interactions, feelings, achievements, and motivations that Sam engaged in, as a result of reading fiction texts. Each instance that Sam and I met spanned roughly one hour in time; my aim was not to overwhelm or overwork the child, simply to gather appropriate and meaningful data samples. The three meetings were hosted in the same location, a local public library. Sam and I routinely worked in the children's section of the library, in close proximity to the young-adult novels; I did not want to limit or hinder Sam's text selection by inadvertently constricting his available book choices. Being the only member of the research team, the sessions were conducted with Sam and me, although his adult sister was present in the library for each session of the investigation.

I conducted a Fountas and Pinnell Reading Interview (appendix A) and running record, with corresponding comprehension prompts, through the implementation of the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (appendix B). Anecdotal notes (appendix C) were conducted for each meeting, while I collected student work samples, both pre-created and on-demand. After collecting the data from the three work sessions that I had with Sam, I prepared, explored, coded, and developed themes, with the intent to establish and validate findings (Clark & Creswell, 2015). As a result of my data analysis, I was able to further develop implications regarding the impact reading fiction has had on one child's literacy.

The first session of data collection was conducted without interruption. Sam and I had been acquainted, prior to the start of the first data collection session, resulting in a positive and

comfortable work environment exhibited by both parties. I began by prompting Sam with informal questions regarding his school life, his social interests, and his feelings regarding the participation in my research investigation. After establishing a rapport with the fourth grade student, I began to prompt him with questions provided within the Fountas and Pinnell Reading Interview (appendix A). I asked one question at a time, prompting Sam to expand on answers when applicable, while I conducted additional anecdotal notes on a separate recording sheet. Throughout the interview process, I took note of Sam's behavior, which may have been relevant to Sam's interactions with fiction texts. I took note of Sam's habit of revisiting interview questions; on several occasions Sam would not have an answer to a question, however, he was able to talk about, and answer, past questions later on in the interview.

Two weeks later, for the second session of data collection, I evaluated Sam's oral reading and text comprehension using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System and running record (appendix B), where Sam was prompted to orally read the leveled fiction text *The New Girl*. The fiction text was selected based on Sam's reading level, which was identified prior to the investigation, through conversation with his sister, who is a practicing teacher. Sam engaged in the reading of the fiction text, while I recorded miscues related to omissions and insertions of text, corresponding to meaning, syntax, and visual cues, on the running record. This activity took place in almost complete silence in the public library; there were no outside distractions on this particular day. Upon Sam's completion of the oral reading, I prompted him with questions, outlined by Fountas and Pinnell. Fluency was calculated, as well as student reading rate in words per minute and oral reading accuracy. Key understanding and comprehension of the text was established through conversation prompts, dictated verbatim by the questions provided by Fountas and Pinnell. Anecdotal notes were recorded as Sam

participated in the benchmark assessment; most of my notes were transcribed from the assessment prompts, related to how questions were answered and what I noticed while oral reading was taking place.

On our third and final meeting, I took anecdotal notes on how Sam engaged with text, both choice and non-choice texts. I prompted Sam to take his time and find a book in the library that he wanted to read. Sam returned a few minutes later, to our meeting area, with the fiction novel *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Old School* (Kinney, 2015). I asked Sam if he would read the book for me, either in his head, or orally; Sam opted to read the book in his head. I took note of Sam's behavior and interactions with the text, highlighting heightened text attention, despite background noise from talking children within earshot. After taking note of Sam's interactions with his self-selected fiction text, I provided him with a non-fiction biography text to read. I recorded Sam's interactions with the new text, taking note of what I saw, and what I found different from the fiction work. Sam skipped through the book regularly, over the course of the three sustained minutes of reading; Sam appeared to be disinterested and distracted. Through anecdotal notes, I acknowledged the differences between the readings of the two works; Sam was observed to be more engrossed with text that was not only fiction, but self-selected. During both readings, there was background noise in the library; however, Sam appeared more concentrated while reading the self-selected *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

Based on my data collection and observations of the three research sessions with Sam, I prepared, explored, coded, and developed themes surrounding my central research question. My themes were layered throughout the minor implications of the events and settings for which the data was collected. Data collection environments, as well as prompted tasks, were factored into my theme development and validation.

## **Analysis**

### **Preparing the Data**

After the collection of all data samples, I first transcribed my Fountas and Pinnell interview conversation into electronic format, highlighting points of interest and identifying reoccurring replies and commonalities among responses, made by the child. Clark and Creswell (2015) describe transcription of data as the process by which interviews and field notes are typed into electronic text. The interview that took place, between Sam and me, was transcribed verbatim. I transcribed the three anecdotal note sheets (appendix C) that I recorded, over the course of the six week investigation. Anecdotal notes were typed up into one electronic document, where I grouped commonalities and reoccurring themes, while identifying and labeling the dates for each event. The results of the running record, and comprehension analysis, obtained through the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (appendix B), were transcribed electronically. Student responses and achievements, in terms of student read words per minute of a fiction text, systematic miscue analysis, and comprehension successes, were recorded and saved for data exploration.

### **Exploring the Data**

The exploration of data allowed me to make further sense of the themes and commonalities that were reoccurring throughout my data collection methodology. After the transcription of my data in the preparation phase, I read through all of my notes and data points, making note of ideas and connections to research. I recorded my own thoughts and notes within the electronic documents of all of my transcribed data, as a means of organizing and systematically accounting for my ideas and theories. Although I had been marking similarities

between data points and tracking my thinking throughout the preparation and exploration phases, I began to code all of my gathered information as a means to interpret my data.

### **Coding the Data**

Coding is defined as the way in which researchers identify pieces of data and text, to formulate and establish a central phenomenon (Clark & Creswell, 2015). My data was coded using colored, electronic, highlights which grouped and bracketed similar themes and reoccurring topics, based on literacy and fiction. I used green highlights throughout my electronically transcribed data to indicate student feelings toward reading. Red highlights were used to indicate student engagement factors and motivators. Blue highlights were used to indicate student performance and achievement, which were obtained mostly through the benchmark assessment and student work samples. My data coding was influenced by my literature review, however, I remained an open investigator by being conscious of new themes and outlier occurrences. After highlighting my coded and transcribed data, I printed my information and handwrote plus (+) and minus (-) signs next to notes and data points to indicate positive engagements and benefits with fiction text (indicated by the plus sign) and negative engagements and deterrents related to fiction text interactions (indicated by the minus sign). Coded data was used to support theme exploration and discovery.

### **Data Excerpts & Themes**

As a result of my data analysis, through preparation, exploration, and coding of my collected data, I was able to rationalize and support the development of my three central themes. As defined by Clark and Creswell (2015), a theme is a major idea that represents larger patterns that have emerged from data collection. As a result of coded data, I was able to identify themes, or patterns of ideas, that were found throughout my several sources of qualitative data (Clark &

Creswell, 2015). Using my main research question as a guide to formulate my themes, I was able to identify three unique ideas that were reoccurring throughout my interview, assessment, anecdotal notes, and student collected work samples. The research question, what is the impact that reading fiction has on one child's literacy experiences, influenced the establishment of my themes. The found themes include: fiction and morality and lessons, fiction as escape and pleasure, and fiction for sequencing and story comprehension. The three themes found as a result of the data analysis support the central idea that fiction has impacted Sam's literacy experiences.

Each theme, fiction and morality and lessons, fiction as escape and pleasure, and fiction for sequencing and story comprehension is supported by drawings concluded from the data collected throughout the six week qualitative study of Sam, the fiction reader. Based on the development of said themes, I am able to support the central phenomenon regarding what impact reading fiction has had on one child's literacy.

### **Findings**

Through the use of constant comparative analysis, and data triangulation, I was able to validate my themes and establish findings. Triangulation of themes was achieved through the examination of peer reviewed research, which supported my findings and conclusions. Using an open coding method, where my themes were not preconceived or heavily influenced by research and literature, allowed me to better formulate and identify valid and reliable findings.

#### **Finding One: Sam Uses Fiction to Learn Lessons and Morals**

My first finding, in response to the developed themes that emerged as a result of my case study, is that Sam uses fiction to learn lessons and morals. I discovered this finding based on a culmination of data that I collected, explored, and coded. The Benchmark Assessment System,

running record, and reading interview were the primary indicators that Sam uses fiction to learn lessons and morals.

When I conducted the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment with Sam, I was impressed by his fluency, accuracy, and the infrequency of read miscues. Not only was I impressed with Sam's ability to read aloud, I was impressed by his retelling of the read story, and the answers he elicited based on the comprehension prompts provided by Fountas and Pinnell (2012). One of the comprehension prompts asked Sam to solve the problem that the main character faced in the read text. The main character in *The New Girl*, a "little box," as described by Fountas and Pinnell (2012), underwent several problems throughout the story. In *The New Girl*, the factious main character, Nora, was being bullied at a new school. Sam was able to empathize with Nora and put himself in her shoes; readers of fiction often exhibit high empathetic deductive reasoning (Alsup, 2013). Sam wrote down that he would "...talk to Nora and tell her everything is going to be ok and that people can be mean but it gets better." This high leveled empathetic reasoning caused me to find that Sam's relation to the story allowed for him to construct lessons and identify his unique morals. In my anecdotal notes, taken during this particular session, I noted how Sam thought that the book was sad, and that he did not like the way Nora was treated.

Sam uses fiction to learn lessons and morals, as he attributes the value of reading fiction books to "learning lessons and important things." When I conducted the Fountas and Pinnell Reading Interview with Sam, I prompted him to tell me more about the purpose of reading fiction, or story books. Sam replied that in "The Tortoise and the Hare," he learned that "it is better to go slow and finish than fast and not [finish]." Sam cites "The Tortoise and the Hare," when stating that fiction has allowed him to learn that "it does not matter how good you are at

something, if you keep trying.” Through further prompting of Sam’s understanding of fiction texts, I found that Sam enjoys learning lessons from books, and that is part of the reason why he likes to read.

### **Finding Two: Sam Uses Fiction for Pleasure**

Considering Sam reads in his spare time, and is an avid fiction reader, I was able to discover that my second finding is that Sam uses fiction for pleasure. Based on data collected, explored, and coded, from various data collection sources, I was able to discover my second finding. The reading interview, on-demand writing opportunity, and my own anecdotal notes allowed me to find that Sam reads fiction for pleasure. Sam considers himself to be a good reader and boasts that he can read “hard books” and can “finish 200 pages.” Sam acknowledges his strengths as being able to read both in his head and aloud, and that he can understand what he reads and talk about what he has read.

Through the Fountas and Pinnell Reading Interview, I prompted Sam with the question “why do you read?” Sam responded with “I read when I want time alone;” Sam went on to further clarify, that when he is reading, he does not have to talk to anyone else. When asked what he likes to read, Sam said that he likes books in series, listing titles such as *Harry Potter*, *Captain Underpants*, and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Sam also revealed that he has read several books this school year, in and out of the classroom. Sam has claimed that he reads with his parents and siblings at home, stating that he reads at home because “it is fun.” The interview prompted Sam to name two authors, Jeff Kinney and Mo Willems, both of which are fiction writers. Sam attributes his ability to recall said authors due to the fact that he enjoys the books that they have written.

When I prompted Sam to read on-demand, in which he was given choice in book selection, he chose to read *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Old School* (Kinney, 2015). Sam sustained silent, independent reading, for five minutes, despite the fact that there were children talking within earshot of our work station. While Sam silently read, I observed facial expressions, specifically smiles, and I observed Sam looking at illustrations on pages of the book. The behavior witnessed throughout the choice read validated my research regarding the power of student driven choice as well as Towey's (2001) research regarding flow and concentration. Considering Sam was able to concentrate and sustain independent reading for five minutes, I deduced that Sam was enjoying what he was reading. I attributed Sam's pleasure reading to the fact that he was not only reading a fiction text, but a choice text.

I prompted Sam to create an on-demand writing sample where he was instructed to write about his favorite book. I was not surprised when Sam began writing about *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Old School* (Kinney, 2015). Sam wrote about the plot of the fiction book and described the story of the book in several sentences, listing reasons why it is enjoyable to him. When I asked Sam why he chose to write about the novel, he replied by stating that he was currently reading the story and liked it very much. Sam enjoyed the book because he liked how the parents of the main character discussed how technology was not as common in their childhoods. Sam's interest and enjoyment in reading fiction texts is apparent to me as an observer and facilitator; Sam engages in reading fiction text willingly and for prolonged periods of time, because he enjoys the reading experience.

### **Finding Three: Sam Uses Fiction to Aid Story Comprehension**

My third, and final, finding regarding Sam's experiences with fiction text was discovered primarily through the Fountas and Pinnell Reading Interview, the Benchmark Assessment, as

well as on-demand writing. I found that Sam uses fiction to aid story comprehension and sequencing. Through my data collection, exploration, and coding, I was able to find that fiction helps Sam sequence events, and that the sequence of events, is what draws Sam to texts.

When conducting the reading interview with Sam, I posed the question “what makes a book good?” Sam responded to the question quickly and without hesitation; Sam’s response was that “the plot makes a book good.” I asked Sam to clarify further what “plot” meant to him, in which he replied that “plot is what happens in a story.” Sam’s attention to the events of a story is pivotal to his reading success; story elements are characteristic of fiction text (Alsup, 2013).

After Sam’s completion of the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System and running record, I scored and evaluated his oral and written comprehension checks. Upon evaluation of Sam’s responses, I found that two out of three of the provided prompts were scored the highest mark of three. A score of three denotes that all three questions, supplied through a prompt were answered accurately. Sam was able to complete the comprehension prompts with a high degree of accuracy, enlightening me that he was engrossed in the story and was able to understand what he had read. Although Sam was at the instructional level of reading, he was able to answer the accompanied comprehension questions with great success. The text that I asked Sam to read was not overly difficult or easy for the fourth grade child, however, he was able to achieve high scores on comprehension questions, displaying high levels of thought and rationale, supporting answers and developing further connections with the text. I attribute Sam’s understanding of the read story to the fact that the text was of interest.

During the on-demand writing sample where Sam chose to write about his favorite book, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Old School* (Kinney, 2015), he specifically chose to write about the plot. Sam wrote about particular points of interest in the novel, describing interactions that the main

character had with his parents. Sam sequenced events in order, describing how one event triggered another. Sam wrote “when Greg got on the computer his parents told him how they did not have them when they grew up.” Sam’s attention to plot and his ability to sequence events is attributed to his interest and enjoyment of fiction text. Sam’s interactions with fiction texts are helping him to increase his read comprehension and his ability to sequence events.

### **Summary of Findings**

Three major findings became evident as a result of my qualitative case study, conducted with Sam, over the course of six weeks. Through constant comparative analysis and the triangulation of my data, I found that fiction has impacted Sam in three unique ways. Sam uses fiction as a means of learning lessons and morals, Sam uses fiction as a means of escape and pleasure, and Sam uses fiction to aid his text comprehension and narrative sequencing. The impact that reading fiction has had on Sam can be used to aid United States educators who seek opportunities to incorporate fiction text in the classroom.

### **Conclusions**

Clark and Creswell (2015) define conclusion as the interpretation of results, in which the answers to research questions are provided. The conclusions that I made, as a result of this study, are in-line with my research question, what is the impact that reading fiction has on one child’s literacy experiences? The impact that reading fiction has had on one child’s literacy experiences is that fiction aids text comprehension and fiction is engaging.

#### **Fiction Aids Text Comprehension**

My first conclusion is that reading fiction allows students to make sense of text. This conclusion was made as a result of my findings with Sam, based on his ability to sequence plot, identify main ideas, and provide empathetic solutions to textual problems. Sam’s high

comprehension success during the Benchmark Assessment was a main catalyst to this conclusion. When Sam is reading fiction text, he understands what he is reading. Sam is engrossed while reading fiction and sustains independent reading for prolonged periods of time. Sam is able to write about what he has read and provide solutions to fictional situations.

### **Fiction is Engaging**

My second conclusion is that fiction is engaging to students. This conclusion was developed as a result of my case study findings; Sam uses fiction as pleasure, and Sam reads fiction to learn lessons. Sam specifically addresses how he has heightened awareness when reading fiction text, as he attributes reading fiction to learning lessons. When given the choice, Sam will choose to read a fiction text, and states how he reads stories for pleasure, at home with his family. Research supports that fiction texts are engaging to readers (De Naeghel & Van Keer, 2013). The findings illuminated from my case study with Sam support research based evidence that fiction is engaging. Sam is able to sustain silent and independent reading of fiction and cites reading fiction as a way to escape and obtain time “alone.”

### **Implications**

As a result of my study, I was able to develop several implications that are not only applicable to Sam’s scenario, but are transferable to students elsewhere. The implications that I developed include, coupling fiction with curriculum, providing students with choice when appropriate, and providing access to fiction texts in the classroom, readily available for students to read.

#### **Couple Fiction with Curriculum**

Research has found that coupling fiction with curricular content allows for increased comprehension and academic success (Cook & Dinkins, 2015). Additionally, reading novels in

the classroom, when appropriate, have been found to increase conceptual understanding, when compared to the traditional textbooks (Gareis, Allard, & Saindon, 2009). Considering fiction has been shown to fuel comprehension, academic success, and conceptual understanding, I argue that by coupling fiction with curricular content, students can increase their literacy achievement. Students who are interested in what they are reading are more likely to become engaged with the text (Cook & Dinkins, 2015). Teachers and educators need to incorporate fiction work into their curricular content, so that students can become further engaged in what they are learning about.

### **Provide Students Choice**

When given the choice, students will read what they need on a developmental level (Wilhelm, 2015). Sam's engagement with text was a result of his opportunity to choose what he wanted to read. In the classroom, teachers and educators need to allow students the opportunity and time to choose what they desire to read. Sam was able to engage in reading activities for longer time periods when he was provided the chance to choose his own reading material. Providing students with the opportunity to choose their own texts is not always practical in the classroom setting, but should be implemented as much as possible. Research supports that reader choice is pivotal to developing high performance and increase motivation of students (Bang-Jensen, 2010). Choice is associated with control; when a student feels that they are in control of their own learning, academic engagement becomes elevated (Bang-Jensen, 2010).

### **Provide Access to Fiction Text**

My third, and final, implication as a result of my qualitative case study is that teachers need to provide students with access to fiction texts. Supplying fiction materials in the classroom is a beneficial step to increasing student willingness to read. Availability of fictional resources in the classroom will provide students with the opportunity to read. My case study

took place in a library, where several literary genres and subgenres were present. Graphic novels that incorporate visuals and imagery, embedded in text, have been shown to stimulate thinking skills and increase text comprehension (Jennings, Rule, & Zanden, 2014).

### **Limitations**

Limitations are defined as weaknesses or problems within a study that provide opportunities for future researchers to engage in further study, if they choose to replicate or conduct a similar investigation (Clark & Creswell, 2015). My case study was limited to one fourth grade student, in one rural elementary school, in one area of the United States. Considering my study was only conducted with one child, my sample size likely impacted my findings; no two children respond identically in the realm of education, therefore I would expect different themes to emerge when different students are studied. My study was also limited by the time frame in which it was conducted; considering I was only allotted six weeks to engage in research, it was difficult to assess and study my focus learner thoroughly. Although I did obtain a wide variety of data samples, with more time, more results may have been illuminated.

Considering my case study focused on the impact that fiction texts have on student learners, I did not research the impact of non-fiction genres. Comparing fiction and non-fiction was not the goal of my case study, however, similar themes and findings may be shared by the two categories of text. The limitations in my research allow for future studies to be conducted, in which research can be inspired and supported by the weaknesses and problems of my case study.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Due to the limitations of my case study, I am able to suggest several recommendations that can be made for future research regarding the topic of fiction, and its impact on student

literacy. The classification of literary fiction can be divided in several subgenres, including historical fiction, science fiction, as well mystery fiction and suspense fiction. Based on the vast array of fiction works, further research can be gathered to determine the impact that different subgenres have on students' literacy experience and learning. The research study that I conducted with my focus learner represented a very broad definition of fiction, which was defined as stories created by imagination, not based on facts (Sageng, Fossheim, & Larsen, 2012). How does reading historical fiction impact student literacy learning? Additionally, how do fiction and non-fiction genres compare, and in what ways do they impact student literacy experience and learning?

Additionally, I would be interested to see how students at different grade levels respond to fiction, and in what way first and twelfth graders are impacted by reading fiction. I would expect that the case study, which I conducted with fourth grader Sam, likely produced findings unique to the fourth grade, and elementary level of education. The National Assessment of Educational Process recommends educators to be using 70% informational text in the classroom, in grade twelve (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012); would changing the percentage of informational texts read at twelfth grade yield different results in student academic achievement?

### **Closing**

Informational texts are texts that convey information surrounding the natural and social world (Maloch & Bomer, 2013). Due to the increased emphasis placed on teaching informational texts, teachers and administrators have devalued the impact that fiction texts have in the classroom (Alsup, 2013). Although, educators are questioning the repercussions of the increased emphasis on informational text, the pressure to adhere to the Common Core State Standards is felt across the United States of America (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012).

In an effort to illuminate the impact and value that reading fiction has in the classroom, through a qualitative research case study, I discovered three findings which carry implications to elementary classroom across the country.

What is the impact that reading fiction has on one child's literacy experiences? The impact of reading fiction is that it helps students learn lessons, it allows for pleasure reading, and fiction aids comprehension and story sequencing. Although there are limitations to my research, which provide opportunities for further research, the findings illuminated through this case study have been triangulated with past and present research studies. Based on the conclusions and implications gathered as a result of my study, teachers across the country can become more mindful of the impact that reading fiction has in the classroom, and may adjust and differentiate their instruction accordingly. The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts allows for literary fiction instruction, it is the job of the educator to know the value of fiction, and couple its instruction throughout the school day.

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# Reading Interview

**Description** Students answer questions about their reading attitudes, interests and habits.

**You Need** ▶ Reading Interview Sheet

**Why Use It** This assessment will help you learn about students' reading interests; you can use it to help them find titles they'll be interested in reading. It will also serve as a guide to how aware they are of their reading strengths and weaknesses. By looking at the interviews across the entire class, you can gauge which reading experiences would be appropriate for the whole group and which would be more appropriate for a small group or an individual.

**How to Use It**

- ▶ Administer this assessment individually by asking each question and recording the student's responses.
- ▶ You may administer the assessment to the class by handing each student a copy of the Reading Interview Sheet. If necessary, read each question aloud. Provide ample time for students to write their responses. Invite them to peruse the classroom library as a way to assist their thinking.
- ▶ If the assessment is administered to the whole class, you may wish to meet with students individually to discuss their responses.

**What to Notice**

- ▶ Whether students have a difficult time thinking of books they enjoy
- ▶ Breadth and width of students' reading experiences, including variety of topics, genres and authors
- ▶ Level of awareness of reading strengths and weaknesses

# Reading Interview Sheet

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Answer each question.

1. How many books did you read last year or so far this year? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What are the different kinds of books you have read? (Genres: realistic fiction, fantasy, biography and autobiography, historical fiction, informational books, articles) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What are your favourite genres to read? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Which were the best books you read last year or so far this year? What made these books good? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Who are two of your favourite authors and why do you like them? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your favorite poem? Why do you like it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. What do you know how to do well as a reader? What could you do better? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. What have you learnt as a reader that makes you proud? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. What have you learnt about reading fiction books? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. What have you learnt about reading non-fiction books? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ **Appendix B**  
 Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

**Recording Form**

**Part One: Oral Reading**

*Place the book in front of the student. Read the title and introduction.*

*Introduction:* Nora’s mother works in the Army and her family has to move to a new place. Read to find out what happens when Nora tries to make new friends.

<i>Summary of Scores:</i>	
Accuracy	_____
Self-correction	_____
Fluency	_____
Comprehension	_____
Writing	_____

Sources of Information Used

Page	 Start Time ____ min. ____ sec.	<i>The New Girl</i> Level O, RW: 231, E: 13	E	SC	E			SC			
					M	S	V	M	S	V	
1	“I finally made some friends here, and now we have to move again? It’s so unfair!” Nora complained to her father. “We’ve been over this, Nora,” her father said. “You should be proud of your mother. As an Army officer, she has to go where she’s needed. It’s the same for the other Army kids you know.” “I used to know other Army kids,” Nora grumbled. “Now they’re spread all over the world.” Nora didn’t like being a complainer, but she was tired of being constantly uprooted.										
<b>Subtotal</b>											

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Part One: Oral Reading *continued*

Sources of Information Used

Page	Text	E	SC	E			SC		
				M	S	V	M	S	V
2	<p>A month later, Nora walked into her new school. Her sneakers squeaked on the shiny, polished floors. She was not surprised that the other kids turned, stared, and whispered, but didn't say hello. "No one ever talks to the new girl," she told herself.</p> <p>At lunch, Nora looked around the crowded cafeteria. At every table kids were eating lunch with their special friends, talking and laughing. No kids invited Nora to sit with them. Only one girl smiled at Nora. She was sitting by herself looking lonely and nervous.</p>								
<b>Subtotal</b>									

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**Part One: Oral Reading** *continued*

Sources of Information Used

Page	Text	E	SC	E			SC		
				M	S	V	M	S	V
2 <i>cont.</i>	“She’s probably new, too,” Nora thought, so she just ignored her. Nora dreamed of being in a group of friends, just as she was in her old school.								
3	That night she told her mother about her terrible day. “Did you talk to anyone?” her mother asked. Nora shook her head. “All the kids ignored me.”								
<b>Subtotal</b>									
 <b>End Time</b> ____ min. ____ sec.									
<b>Total</b>									

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Have the student finish reading the book silently.

 <b>Accuracy Rate</b>	<b>Errors</b>	13	11-12	9-10	6-8	4-5	1-3	0
	<b>%</b>	Below 95%	95%	96%	97%	98%	99%	100%

 <b>Self-Corrections</b>	_____
--	-------

<b>Fluency Score</b>	0 1 2 3	<b>Fluency Scoring Key</b> <b>0</b> Reads primarily word-by-word with occasional but infrequent or inappropriate phrasing; no smooth or expressive interpretation, irregular pausing, and no attention to author's meaning or punctuation; no stress or inappropriate stress, and slow rate. <b>1</b> Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three- and four-word groups and some word-by-word reading; almost no smooth, expressive interpretation or pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; almost no stress or inappropriate stress, with slow rate most of the time. <b>2</b> Reads primarily in three- or four-word phrase groups; some smooth, expressive interpretation and pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; mostly appropriate stress and rate with some slowdowns. <b>3</b> Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrases or word groups; mostly smooth, expressive interpretation and pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; appropriate stress and rate with only a few slowdowns.

 <b>Reading Rate</b> <i>(Optional)</i>	End Time      ____ min. ____ sec. Start Time    ____ min. ____ sec. Total Time     ____ min. ____ sec. Total Seconds   ____  $(RW \times 60) \div \text{Total Seconds} = \text{Words Per Minute (WPM)}$ $13,860 \div \text{____} = \text{____ WPM}$
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## Part Two: Comprehension Conversation

Have a conversation with the student, noting the key understandings the student expresses. Use prompts as needed to stimulate discussion of understandings the student does not express. It is not necessary to use every prompt for each book. Score for evidence of all understandings expressed—with or without a prompt. Circle the number in the score column that reflects the level of understanding demonstrated.

*Teacher:* Talk about what happened in this story.

### Comprehension Scoring Key

- 0** Reflects **unsatisfactory** understanding of the text. Either does not respond or talks off the topic.
- 1** Reflects **limited** understanding of the text. Mentions a few facts or ideas but does not express the important information or ideas.
- 2** Reflects **satisfactory** understanding of the text. Includes important information and ideas but neglects other key understandings.
- 3** Reflects **excellent** understanding of the text. Includes almost all important information and main ideas.

Key Understandings	Prompts	Score
<p><b>Within the Text</b></p> <p>Tells 3–4 important events from the story, such as: Nora had to move to a new school; she doesn’t like leaving her school; none of the kids talked to her at the new school; her mom told her to do something herself; she made one new friend.</p> <p><i>Note any additional understandings:</i></p>	<p>What was Nora’s problem in the story?</p> <p>What happened?</p> <p>What else happened?</p> <p>How did Nora solve her problem?</p>	<p>0 1 2 3</p>
<p><b>Beyond the Text</b></p> <p>Nora was very unhappy about moving because her friends were important to her (or other reason consistent with the text).</p> <p>She acted like the other kids when she wouldn’t talk to the other new girl.</p> <p>She learned that she had to make friends if she wanted to be included.</p> <p><i>Note any additional understandings:</i></p>	<p>Why was Nora so unhappy about moving to a new place?</p> <p>How was Nora like the kids she complained about at her new school?</p> <p>How did Nora change in the story? What did she learn?</p>	<p>0 1 2 3</p>

*Continued on next page.*

**Part Two: Comprehension Conversation** *continued*

Key Understandings	Prompts	Score
<p><b>About the Text</b></p> <p>The title is good because Nora was a new girl in her school. Her friend is also a new girl and the story shows how she treated her.</p> <p>The author meant that Mom was always teaching her things with short little pieces of advice.</p> <p>You knew Nora had learned a lesson when she smiled at the new girl.</p> <p><i>Note any additional understandings:</i></p>	<p>What makes the title <u>The New Girl</u> a good one for this book? Any other reason?</p> <p>What did the author mean when she said Mom was always coming up with sayings that sounded like “bumper stickers”?</p> <p>Find the part of the story where the author showed that Nora had learned something.</p>	<p>0 1 2 3</p>

Guide to Total Score	
9-10	Excellent Comprehension
7-8	Satisfactory Comprehension
5-6	Limited Comprehension
0-4	Unsatisfactory Comprehension

Subtotal Score: \_\_\_\_\_/9

Add 1 for any additional understandings: \_\_\_\_\_/1

Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_/10

**Part Three: Writing About Reading** *(optional)*

Read the writing/drawing prompt below to the student. You can also cut the prompt on the dotted line and give it to the child. Specify the amount of time for the student to complete the task on a separate sheet of paper. (See *Assessment Guide* for more information.)

**Writing About Reading**

- 0 Reflects **no** understanding of the text.
- 1 Reflects **very limited** understanding of the text.
- 2 Reflects **partial** understanding of the text.
- 3 Reflects **excellent** understanding of the text.

-----

Write about how Nora solved her problem and what you think she will do now in her new school. You can draw a sketch to go with your writing.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Anecdotal Notes

*Fiction Reader Case Study*

Appendix C

What I Have Observed From the Subject:

Observations Compared to Literature and Research:

Future Implications Based on Observations & Research: