Reading comprehension across different genres: An action research study

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is often a forgotten skill in secondary classrooms. Teachers of older students assign readings of different styles and levels, but don't teach the skills necessary to process different kinds of texts. This study examined which strategies are effective in giving students the skills necessary to read for understanding by answering the question: what strategies can be used in order to improve students reading comprehension across different genres? Data was collected from six low-performing tenth grade students via observations in the classroom, student testing, and student feedback. Data showed small improvements overall and that genre had an effect on the success of the different comprehension strategies. Overall, the process seemed worthwhile because the students became both more successful and more confident in their abilities.

Introduction and Research Question

Working at a so-called advanced school, the Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School, does not mean that all of the students necessarily meet that description. In fact, it is quite the opposite in many cases. We are a public school and cannot deny children based on ability. Despite that, we often treat these children as if they are little professors. This involves advanced material, much of which is written at a high level. Some of our teachers have discovered that while students may be capable of understanding the broad concepts through teacher explanation, many miss important information because they cannot adequately read and understand the written material they receive in class. Reading comprehension for our middle and high school students, therefore, is a skill that must be addressed.

The crux of the problem is that students are not learning about strategies they can apply to texts in order to better understand them. Research agrees that students are lacking a foundation in reading comprehension and that much of the fault lies within poorly prepared teachers. Greenleaf and Hinchman (2009) took a look at the literacy abilities of adolescent students and were shocked at the poor results. Although through giving pre-assessments to students they found that many students were fluent, meaning they could read the words and understand the basic meaning of a passage, they found that the ability to break down a text for different layers of meaning, examining arguments, and reading extended passages from more difficult primary sources was still missing. Their findings suggest that measures, such as personalized instruction and reading strategies, are necessary for students missing the foundation of reading comprehension.

The ability of teachers to teach reading comprehension is also a huge piece in this puzzle. Parris and Block (2007) found that many teachers at the secondary level are unprepared to

instruct their adolescent students in reading comprehension strategies. They are prepared to teach higher-level skills such as finding meanings and connections, but not the basic abilities, such as reading fluency or building vocabulary from context clues, which are necessary to allow the students to get to that level. Secondary teachers, even those of English Language Arts, are not given training in the teaching of reading. The authors also make the bold argument that teachers of all secondary subjects "must also be willing to view themselves as literacy teachers" (593). We agree that reading comprehension is not an issue in English class alone, as our struggling readers show difficulties with the different styles of writing that appear in their different subjects. Research justifies our feelings in the belief that all teachers should have the ability to assist and teach reading comprehension skills in various reading genres.

With this research and our own experiences in mind, we developed our research question: What strategies can be used in order to improve students reading comprehension across various reading genres? This question is difficult to answer because there are a plethora of different strategies and programs available for improving reading comprehension. However, all students learn differently, therefore a one-size-fits-all strategy will likely not be found. Even so, we were confident that we could discover a variety of strategies that work for many students. We believed that when those strategies were taught in context, followed by when students understood how to select which strategy would fit best for them at a particular assignment, then students would be able to improve in their reading comprehension skills.

<div align="center">Problem Statement and Rationale</div>

One of the most important skills students need to leave school with is the ability to read a variety of material and comprehend it. In adulthood, as well as in school, people are faced with everything from fiction and non-fiction texts, to product instructions, to newspaper clippings and

magazine articles. All types of literature require that the reader have reading comprehension strategies they can employ to understand what it is they are reading. In middle and high school, few teachers instruct their students in how to read. As a result, students struggle with difficult texts as they try to apply the few strategies they remember regardless of whether they are reading a novel, a science lab, a history textbook, or a math equation. While some strategies, such as previewing the text or paraphrasing, lend themselves to decoding many different modes of writing, many strategies are content specific, such as creating a timeline of events for a history class. Our focus is on more general strategies that students will be able to apply in a number of situations.

By identifying a variety of strategies that can be used across the content areas the entire school benefits. It allows students to become life-long learners as they make connections text-to-self, text-to-text, or text-to-world connections. Allington (2006) reports that most classrooms focus on mundane tasks such as those that "emphasize copying, remembering, and reciting." This kind of teaching and learning does not allow students to make meaning; rather it asks students to remember and regurgitate what the teachers said. Education's true focus is to create autonomous thinkers. That can only happen when students are able to read material and then access a variety of strategies in order to understand the material. Teaching students a variety of reading comprehension strategies that can be applied across the content areas will allow students to be independent thinkers who create meaning, thereby fulfilling the true intent of education.

Literature Review

There is a wealth of information available about reading comprehension, both studies that question why students struggle with it and countless resources sharing strategies to help teachers combat the issue. This literature review will discuss the problem and look at changes schools

can implement. Classroom strategies to improve comprehension, and those that can be used before, during, and after reading are included will also be reviewed.

<center>*What's Missing in Secondary Schools?*</center>

Middle and high school teachers, even those of language arts and literature, often don't consider it their job to teach students how to read. The assumption is that those skills are taught in primary school and that the students should now be able to use them to acquire advanced knowledge in different content areas (Parris and Block, 2007). Knipper and Duggan declare content teachers are required to have a "repertoire of writing-to-learn instructional strategies in order to strengthen students' comprehension of the content" (2006). There is evidence present in research: of Ness' (2007) forty hours in secondary school classrooms, only eighty-two minutes was spent teaching adolescent students skills and strategies necessary to process the texts specific to each course. Additionally, instruction methods she saw were basics such as questions and answers and did not lead to higher order thinking and understanding. Ness strongly suggests that both teachers and schools increase their ability to support students in this manner by teaching teachers how to incorporate literacy instruction and by making use of literacy specialists to support on a day-to-day basis. The argument is that subject teachers should help their students be able to read and write in an appropriate and helpful manner for that subject.

Along with the change in instruction from elementary to secondary school, there is also a change in reading material. Moje (2009) describes this change and uses it to emphasize why specific reading instruction is necessary in upper grades. While elementary texts are heavily structured and designed so students read for understanding, many secondary teachers use primary documents, news articles, and other texts written for adults. Moje argues that students are not equipped with the skills and strategies necessary to properly dissect the documents their

teachers provide. She reminds teachers that they should carefully examine any reading material they distribute, so they are able to guide the students through it appropriately. Students and teachers need to be aware of both context and text structure. Context includes not only understanding origins and purposes of texts, which are important strategies that teachers should include in instruction, but also the context in which young people interpret and react to a text. This can alter understanding and needs to be considered by the teachers who select texts. Overall, Moje's arguments help to remind teachers that there is much to consider when assigning reading to their adolescent students.

A common theme in reading comprehension research is the role of the subject teacher in supporting students. According to Parris and Block (2007), effective literacy teachers can be found in all subject areas and show specific qualities that help them increase understanding among their students. They emphasize the importance of teacher cooperation and contend that an increase of "highly effective literacy teachers can help adolescents and our profession as a whole." The authors' eight domains of exemplary qualities most notably require teachers to be well-educated and informed though advanced degrees, professional development, and a deep knowledge base. Successful teachers are also open to different teaching methods and are willing to take extra steps to see student success. These same teachers are excellent classroom managers while maintaining a good relationship with their students. These ideas are seconded by the results at Buckhorn High School (Gewertz, 2009), a high school that turned around their state test scores in just a few years. Their success in increasing student test scores and ability seem to be based on the fact that teachers took on the challenge of increased comprehension instruction, despite skepticism among non-English teachers. Without school-wide support, improvements in secondary level comprehension could be difficult.

Strategies for Increasing Reading Comprehension

Vocabulary is a key element to comprehension. Without understanding the words they read, a student's chances of gaining full understanding of a text is slim (McPherson, 2007). Carnine and Carnine (2004) make this point especially clear with science texts. They assert that vocabulary must be taught overtly before a unit or reading is assigned. This involves daily practice and pre- and post-testing. For science, the authors stress the importance of Greek and Latin words build upon roots, suffixes, and prefixes. Students need to be taught the meanings of the most common affixes so that they can use them in future units to decode words on their own. McPherson (2007) also sets goals for what students should gain from learning vocabulary. These include teaching students to sequence and classify. Sequencing can be taught through visualization and the creation of charts that sort words into appropriate locations, such as beginning-middle-end. Classifying also uses the visual clues of a Venn diagram. Through these arguments, it is clear that vocabulary strategies require a great deal of teacher guidance and involvement, but are important enough to be a priority.

Understanding the purpose of a text and a purpose for reading should be considered throughout the reading process (Moje, 2009; Massey & Heafner, 2004). Massey and Heafner describe the kinds of teacher-led purposes that guide student reading. By giving students a question to answer or opinion to form based on the reading, students are able to guide themselves to deeper level of understanding than an unguided read-through may provide. A guided focus can also help struggling readers focus on the details that are important rather than becoming overwhelmed by a text. Students can discover a purpose for reading on their own by previewing a text (Moje, 2009). Previewing allows students to get a sense of a text and possibly pick which other reading strategies they will implement during and after the actual reading. When

previewing the text, students scan the structure of the text, read any caption and viewing charts, graphs, or pictures, as well as reading over any questions that may follow the text. Previewing methods can also include K-W-L charts and graphic organizers. Using these, students can discover the structure of the text, which will help them understand how better to read it. Moje also reminds teachers that methods like the K-W-L do exactly what the name implies: allows a class to discover what knowledge they already have, and what they hope to learn through reading the text. With these ideas in mind, students can later focus attention to the information they are missing.

While learning vocabulary before reading a text builds knowledge, another helpful pre-reading tool is accessing prior knowledge (Massey & Heafner, 2004). Students do this naturally when they are familiar with a vocabulary word presented in class. They use the word and its meaning to help build their understanding of new material. Massey and Heafner stress the importance of making connections. Being able to connect the actions and implications of different historical events can lead to deeper questioning and understanding. Moje and Speyer (2009) stress the importance of building background knowledge prior to beginning reading any text. They break background knowledge into six categories: semantic, mathematical, historical, geographical, discursive, and pragmatic. Classroom activities geared towards accessing prior knowledge can be as simple as word association lists. By brainstorming, students can begin making connections, another important comprehension goal. The Texas Reading Initiative (2002) asserts that research has established that student background knowledge is critical to student understanding of higher-level concepts. The extent of student background knowledge determines how well they are able to understand what they read.

Strategies that students employ during the reading process are extremely important for their reading comprehension. All students need instruction in how to employ effecting reading strategies as they read. According to Gajria, Jitendra, Sood, and Sack (2007) one of the greatest differences between a student comprehending a passage and the student simply completing reading the passage is their ability to monitor their progress. There are many students who would benefit from an indiscreet reminder of specific reading strategies to use, such as monitoring their reading. Students with learning disabilities, in particular, do not display monitoring skills (Bos, Anders, Filip & Jaffe, 1989). There are several strategies that students can use to monitor their reading. One way is the use of self-monitoring response sheets. During this process students identify key elements of the story, such as the main character, the setting, the main idea of the story, the conflict, and how the conflict is resolved (Crabtree, Alber-Morgan, & Konrad, 2010).

Another helpful strategy for students to use in order to improve reading comprehension is visualization. Visualization is the process of "making mental images of a text as a way to understand processes or events that are encountered during reading" (Texas Reading Initiative 2002). It is being shown a visual representation of the text, or the process of creating a mental picture of the text as you read. Visualization is intended as a method to supplement reading of the text. It should be used every time the reader is introduced to something they are not familiar with (Moje & Speyer, 2008). For example, if the students were beginning a unit of study on the medieval time period, they would benefit from having pictures of castles, knights, and homes of that age supplementing the text they are reading about it. This also allows students to make text to world connections as students enter into the world of what they are reading (Simon, 2008).

Many students benefit from the use of graphic organizers to help them make sense of a piece of literature. There are many types of graphic organizers such as semantic organizers,

cognitive maps, both with and without a mnemonic device, and framed outlines (Kim, Vaughn, Wanzek, and Wei, 2004). Kim et al.'s research reports that semantic organizers slightly improve student understanding while cognitive maps work better when created by the students. The largest growth was from framed outlines where students demonstrated a positive outcome (2004). Another useful graphic organizer is story-mapping. "Story-map instruction focuses primarily on characters, time, place, problem, goal, action, and outcome" (Stagliano & Boon, 2009). According to Stagliano and Boon's research, story mapping improves reading comprehension for upper elementary, middle, and high school students with learning disabilities (2009).

Summarizing and paraphrasing are two similar reading strategies that students need to be able to employ in order to be successful readers. Summarizing and paraphrasing require students to think about what they read and restate it. Both paraphrasing and summarizing are used either during reading or after reading. When students summarize, they identify important information from the text (Texas Reading Institute, 2002) and write it in their own words. Knipper and Duggan suggest having students write out summaries on index cards at the end of every class (2006). This increases student understanding as well as creates a review tool students can use later on. Paraphrasing is simpler for students because students do not have to select only important information. According to Kletzien's research, when students paraphrase they make connections with prior knowledge to "access what is already known about the topic and to use words that are part of the reader's knowledge" (2009). The RAP strategy, recommended by Dieker and Little, is a paraphrasing strategy where students read a paragraph, then ask what the main idea of the passage is, and finally identify the main idea and put it in their own words (2005). Allington, in his book *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers*, asserts that

developing a student's ability to summarize is the most necessary of all reading strategies (2006).

Students must be taught how to summarize and paraphrase rather than be told what to summarize

or paraphrase (Moje & Speye, 2008).

Summary

Jacques Barzun declares that "no subject of study is more important than reading . . . all

other intellectual powers depend on it" (quoted in Schmoker, 2006). Successful reading requires

students being taught to use reading strategies before, during, and after reading a text. Reading

comprehension goes far beyond the English classroom. Heidi Hayes Jacobs, in her book *Active*

Literacy Across the Curriculum states, "Each teacher—at every grade level, in every subject—

needs to embrace the notion that he or she is a language teacher" (2006). The research presented

above agrees that teaching students multiple strategies and teaching them how and when to apply

those strategies will increase student reading comprehension across all subject areas.

Study Design

We completed this study by using teacher action research. Andrew Johnson (2008)

defines action research as "a systematic inquiry into one's own practice" where one studies "a

real school or classroom situation to understand and improve the quality of actions or

instructions." This research method is conducted by the teacher/researcher who views his/her

own teaching and the students' progress as it happens in a purposeful environment by evaluating

qualitative research. Because the teacher is the researcher as well, it is easy to control the

environment and isolate the individual area of focus. Action research uses a five step process:

identifying a problem, deciding what data should be collected and how to collect it, collecting

and analyzing data, describing how the findings can be used and applied, and sharing the

findings and plan for action with others (Johnson, 2008). Using teacher action research was best

option for this research because it is a systematic way to real answers in a classroom. It does not just follow ideas others have theorized about, but it practices real research in action.

Plan for Triangulation

Our three types of data collection instruments work together to create a full picture of student understanding. The bulk of our data comes students' assessment—the tests that our participants take after learning specific reading strategies. Supplementing that are student surveys that ask students about their reading strategy use and Mike's reflective observation of his students' progress during the data collection period. Our proposal initially called for formal observation, but we found that the informal reflection was a more practical option based on scheduling and class composition. Examples of each tool can be seen in Appendices A, B, C, and D. In addition, the post-survey that was added on to supplement teacher observation can be seen in Appendix E. Figure 1 shows the relationship between the three categories of data collection instruments.

Figure 1 - Plan for Triangulation

Student Self-Analysis

Student Assessment

Teacher Observation
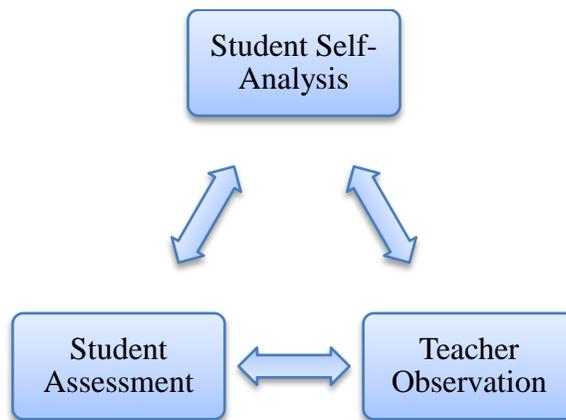
Participants

In a change from our initial proposal of studying both seventh and tenth grade students, participants consisted exclusively six tenth grade students from Mike's "prehonors," or college preparatory level class. It is the lowest distinction currently available at AMSA. As a charter

school, students and their families choose to attend. As the Advanced Math and Science Academy, we teach many extremely proficient students looking for a greater challenge than most public schools offer. Those challenges are available, but not all of the students who choose to attend the school are advanced, or even at grade level. While there are levels of difficulty, most of the curriculum expectations apply to all students, so teachers put a great deal of effort into adaptation and differentiation. When Mike met this particular class in the fall, he found that most were below grade level, and several were in danger of failing the high-stakes tenth grade MCAS for reading comprehension. This class offered the most needed opportunity to provide help to the students who need it the most. The small sample size also allowed us to collect more data and analyze it more thoroughly.

Data Collection

Instruments & Procedures

   Student self-analysis.

       As a preliminary data tool, two groups of students participated in a reading habits survey (Appendix A). Administered after reading a passage (Appendix F for 7th grade students and Appendix G for 10th grade students), the survey asks students to identify which, if any, reading comprehension strategies they employed while reading the text. Our hope was to discover if any of our students use these techniques naturally before time was spent explicitly teaching them. Students participating in the survey were both our eventual study participants, Mike's six tenth graders, but also 71 of Caitlyn's seventh grade students. With these extra participants, we received a varied view of the techniques of a wide variety of reading styles and levels. By understanding which strategies many students use without instruction, we may be better able to form a plan for introducing strategies on future implementations of this teaching plan, though we did not use this data to form the procedures for the actual research study.

Administration of the student self-analysis was integrated into regular lessons, with no prior discussion of reading comprehension strategies.   Seventh grade students read a New York Times article entitled "Into a Packing Box, Not Stuff, But Souls," (Appendix F) as part of a discussion tool for a personal writing assignment. The article was fairly difficult for seventh graders, and likely required some strategic reading for most of the students. After reading individually, each student took the survey and responded whether they though they used any of the listed strategies. Classes were not briefed on the reading strategies, though the teachers would explain a strategy if asked. They were also asked to describe in writing how they used two of the strategies they selected. Mike followed the same process with Coleridge's classic, *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Appendix G).

Student assessment.

The primary source of data, student assessment, was collected by administering past MCAS tests (Appendix C) for grade ten reading comprehension. This process involved only Mike's six-member tenth grade class. The past tests used were from 2005-2010. After struggling a bit with test reliability in our pilot study—the textbook we used had at least one question so poorly written that every student and teacher answered it incorrectly—we thought that MCAS tests would provide a reliable and consistent testing tool. Since they are created as a decisive assessment on which high school graduation is dependent, we felt confident that these tests had been fully evaluated for grade level appropriateness, accuracy, and clarity. The participating students will also be taking the MCAS this spring, so working with the tests also provides important review and practice to help them pass. In addition, three teacher-created reading comprehension tests on the novel *Frankenstein* (Appendix D) were given during the unit following the main data collection period.

The reading comprehension MCAS is divided into different text selections with accompanying comprehension questions. The passages are comprised of a combination of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and/or drama. The questions are each connected to the Massachusetts Curriculum Standards in English Language Arts. These distinctions helped us to view our data more specifically based on genre such by determining if a student increased his or her comprehension of poetry. Additionally, we could observe specific skills such as the standard of "understanding a text." Using multiple text excerpts of different topics and genres also prevents students from being fatigued or frustrated by a certain topic—something that could have easily happened if all testing had been about a novel or other long piece of writing.

The main data collection procedures revolved around teaching reading comprehension strategies to our main participants, and then testing them to look for improvement in comprehension. In order to better understand any future improvements of the students, the first test administered was a control test in order to measure the students' aptitude without any formal instruction in the reading comprehension strategies. Mike then began introducing the strategies one at a time, covering a new strategy every other day or so. In the order they were presented, the core reading strategies we focused on are previewing the text, visualizing, rereading, and creating textual connections.   As Mike taught the additional strategies, he reviewed the ones taught in previous lessons. For example, the day students learned and were tested on rereading, they also briefing reviewed previewing and visualization. Therefore, much of our data shows student performance with the ability to use several reading comprehension strategies at once.

Mike followed the same general procedure for introducing each strategy. He began each lesson by introducing and explaining the tool. Using an MCAS passage, Mike demonstrated how to effectively use it. Next, members of the class read the passage aloud, with the others

following along. After reading, students began answering the accompanying questions. They

worked on them individually, and then the class shared their responses to find the correct answer.

Mike had the students share some of their thought processes about finding the answer, asking

questions like "How did you know that was the answer," in order to have the student explain

how he or she used the text, and possibly the reading strategy, to find the correct response. This

guided practice was not included in the data. Mike used frequent checks for understanding as the

class went through the questions together to help keep everyone focused on the thinking process.

After the group lesson, the class was given a new test to read and answer individually. They

were given instruction to use the strategy and a short review and reminders of the previous

strategies.

　　　　Teacher observation.

　　　　Our third instrument was a teacher observation and reflection. Each day, Mike would

observe the student's attitude toward the assessments, and the intent was to complete an

observation checklist (Appendix B), but that did not come to fruition. Though we had thought

the teacher reflection piece would be a good balance in our research, implementation became

difficult because of additional stressors and commitments during Mike's day. We instead used

Mike's memories of lessons, which were sometimes a general mood, other times quotations of

what students had said that stuck with him. Because this part of our data collection failed to be as

reliable as documented notes, a student reflection was administered after the next unit of

literature, *Frankenstein*, was completed; this took place over a four week period following the

original instruction and data collection period. This survey (Appendix E) asked students to

identify whether they believed the strategies were helpful when completing the MCAS questions

as well as whether they used any of the strategies when reading *Frankenstein*. While specific

teacher input would have been interesting, the unexpected opportunity for student feedback also proved valuable.

Analysis

The student self-analysis survey which was given before any teaching and compiling of data was sorted by each question pertaining to our research and included the student response that they use a particular reading strategy. Tally marks were made for each student response, and then a percentage of students who responded in each particular way was calculated. Following that, a pie chart was made to give visual representation to the result.

The student assessment data was collected and graded, then the information was put into an excel spreadsheet. Each spreadsheet was identified with the strategy used. Within the spreadsheet, there was a heading of what was thought to be pertinent information: the title of the MCAS section (i.e. Skunk Man) followed by the genre of the excerpt (i.e. Non-fiction) and the year it was on the MCAS (i.e. 2005). Under those headings, there are columns for each of the following: Category as defined in Massachusetts State Standards (whether reading and literature or language), Description (the specific state standard the question is based on), the correct answer, the question number on the MCAS, and then one column for each student with their answer given. If an answer was incorrect it was highlighted in yellow. This was repeated for each of the 27 MCAS excerpts.

The set up of the original data sheet was not conducive to analyzing the data, so changes were made. The new spreadsheet had four columns to identify each strategy employed. Those strategies were given a number code (1 for previewing, 2 for visualization, 3 for rereading, and 4 for making textual connections). When a strategy was taught and then assessed (or previously taught and therefore used) an x was inserted into the box to indicate such. The next column

identified the ELA curriculum standard as defined by the Massachusetts State Standards. The following column identified the reading genre of the excerpt. The following six columns were for the student responses. Each box was left blank unless the answer was incorrect. If an answer was incorrect, an x was inserted in the box.

Creating the new spreadsheet in this way allowed us to sort by various things. We created several spreadsheets that were sorted by the specific strategy we wanted to see. We had one spreadsheet for each of the following: no strategy used, previewing, visualization, rereading, making textual connections, and a post test. Only data that pertained to those specific strategies were inserted. Data was compiled using formulas in Microsoft Excel and then put into graphs (Appendix H). We decided we wanted to see more of a breakdown so we created spreadsheets that were sorted by the individual genre used and sub-divided by each strategy (Appendix I). We then put this data into graphs as well. Upon further analysis, we decided to isolate each strategy further, ignoring previous strategies taught to see what the correlation was.

Data from the post-survey that took place of teacher observation was gathered in an excel spreadsheet according to student responses. The student reflection data from the MCAS assessment was sorted by strategy and included the student response as either: very helpful, helpful, a little helpful, not helpful, or useless. Tally marks were made for each student response, and then a percentage of students who responded in a particular way was calculated. Following that, a pie chart was made to give visual representation to the result (Appendix J). Student responses to their reading of *Frankenstein* were sorted by strategy used and included the student responses of either always, sometimes, or never used this strategy. Tally marks were made for each student response, and then a percentage of students who responded in that way was

calculated. A pie chart was again used to give visual representation to the results (Appendix K).

Together, this data provided student perceptions of the tools we had measured and observed.

<center>Findings</center>

The results of the pre-teaching survey showed that students were fairly comfortable with

the concept of some of the reading strategies. We have no way to know how well the students

understood the meanings, or how effectively they were used, but 71 of 77 students reported using

at least one comprehension strategy to get through their readings. Visualization was the most

common strategy, with 61% of students reporting using it. Previewing has the lowest

participation with only 9% of students previewing the text before reading. Rereading and textual

connections findings were mixed, with 36% and 42% of students applying them respectively.

These results showed us that students need direct instruction on how to use tools like previewing

and rereading, with which they were unfamiliar.

The data from our student assessment, as seen in Figure 2, reveals that student reading

comprehension increased when they used at least one reading strategy. Student growth was

roughly 3.5% higher for each strategy than the initial pre-test where no strategies had yet been

introduced. The results do not distinguish which reading strategy works best for students;

however, based on student post-survey, students indicated that visualization and making textual

connection made the biggest difference. We found the student opinions odd considering that the

assessment used were previous MCAS tests, which have questions that frequently refer back to

the passage, which means previewing and rereading should be the most effective strategies.

These results do not indicate whether students used the strategies taught prior to the assessment

being given, but there is a positive correlation between the strategies and the gain in

performance. The post-test category was included to show how student growth continued beyond

the initial study. Students were not directed to use specific strategies in their literature unit on

Frankenstein, of which the post-test assessed student comprehension. One weakness we found in

our study is that we cannot determine with accuracy how any specific strategy, other than

previewing, affected student outcome. Students had learned previewing before they learned

about visualization, so it cannot be determined how much they used previewing during

assessment of their use of visualization. In future work, we would teach strategies in isolation to

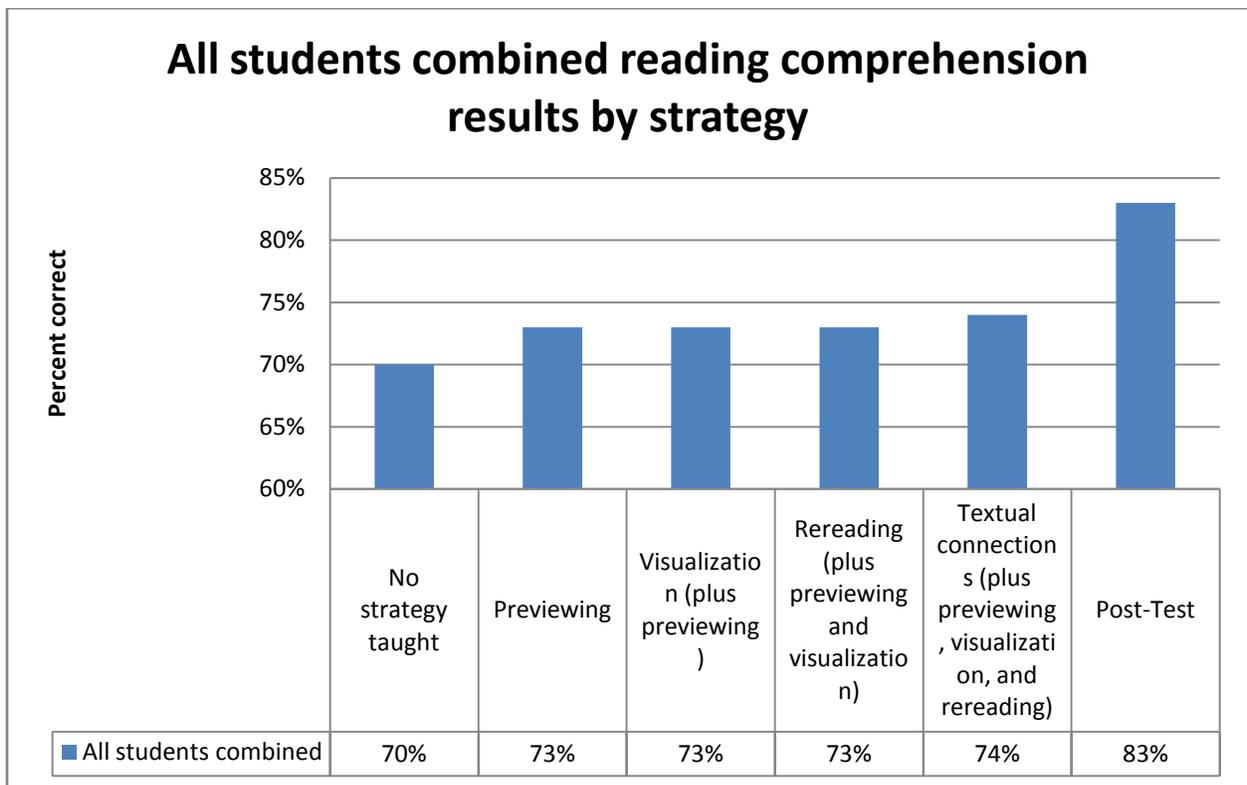different groups and use larger samples to assure more accurate results.

All students combined reading comprehension results by strategy

	No strategy taught	Previewing	Visualization (plus previewing)	Rereading (plus previewing and visualization)	Textual connections (plus previewing, visualization, and rereading)	Post-Test
All students combined	70%	73%	73%	73%	74%	83%

Figure 2

When we separated the data by genre and included data from all strategies taught, data

was very clear. Figure 3 shows a large gain was made in student comprehension of fiction from

69% correct prior to students learning strategies to 76% when they had been taught a reading

strategy. This is a positive correlation showing that the use of reading strategies increases student

performance in fiction. Student comprehension increased in non-fiction as well. Poetry,

surprisingly to us, decreased. While the graph shows a 1% decrease, the actual difference is only

.1% (64.4% with strategies and 64.5% without strategies). Nonetheless, the slightly negative

correlation shows that the reading strategies students were taught did not increase their
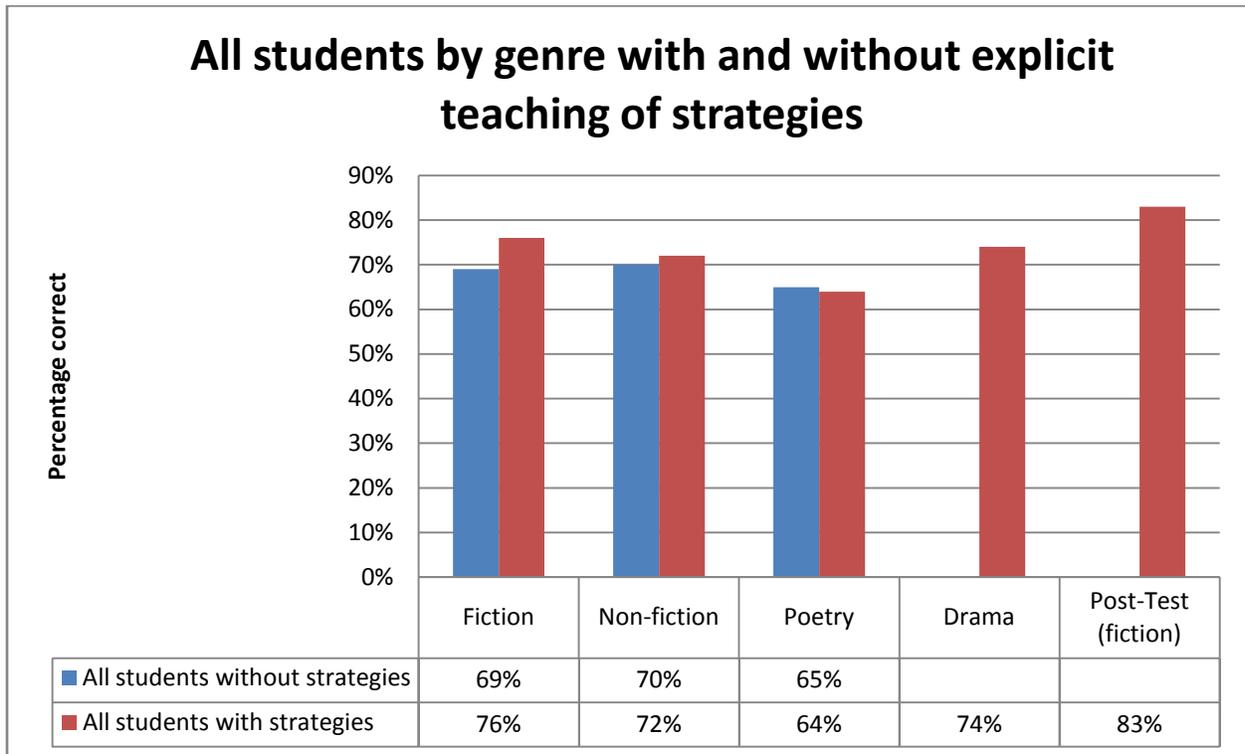
comprehension of reading poetry.

All students by genre with and without explicit teaching of strategies

	Fiction	Non-fiction	Poetry	Drama	Post-Test (fiction)
■ All students without strategies	69%	70%	65%		
■ All students with strategies	76%	72%	64%	74%	83%

Figure 4 shows interesting information we discovered when looking at a few individual

students. Large gains were seen in fiction for these three students. Taking into account their

post-test as well, which was also fiction, Student 2 scored an 81% on the post test, while Student

3 and Student 6 scored 87% respectively. Overall, this shows a growth of 29% for Student 2,

37% for Student 3, and 37% for Student 6. In terms of grades, those numbers take students from

Fs to Bs, an enormous gain. Interestingly in non-fiction, considering all students combined

gained 2% in non-fiction, these three students scores all decreased by between five and six

percent after learning and applying reading comprehension strategies. This may be due to the

sample before strategies were taught consisting of only nine non-fiction questions. A larger sample is needed in order to see more clear results. However, this negative correlation does show that these strategies are insignificant at best with non-fiction text. The poetry results showed little correlation between the strategies taught and comprehension results. While two students showed slight gains, one student showed a significant decrease. The initial sample before teaching these strategies, however, was only eight questions, and again, this is too small a sample to make a definitive claim. The overall results for all students showed little correlation between strategies taught and comprehension score change, however, so we conclude these strategies do not impact poetry in a statistically significant manner.

Individual student breakdown by genre with and without explicit strategy instruction

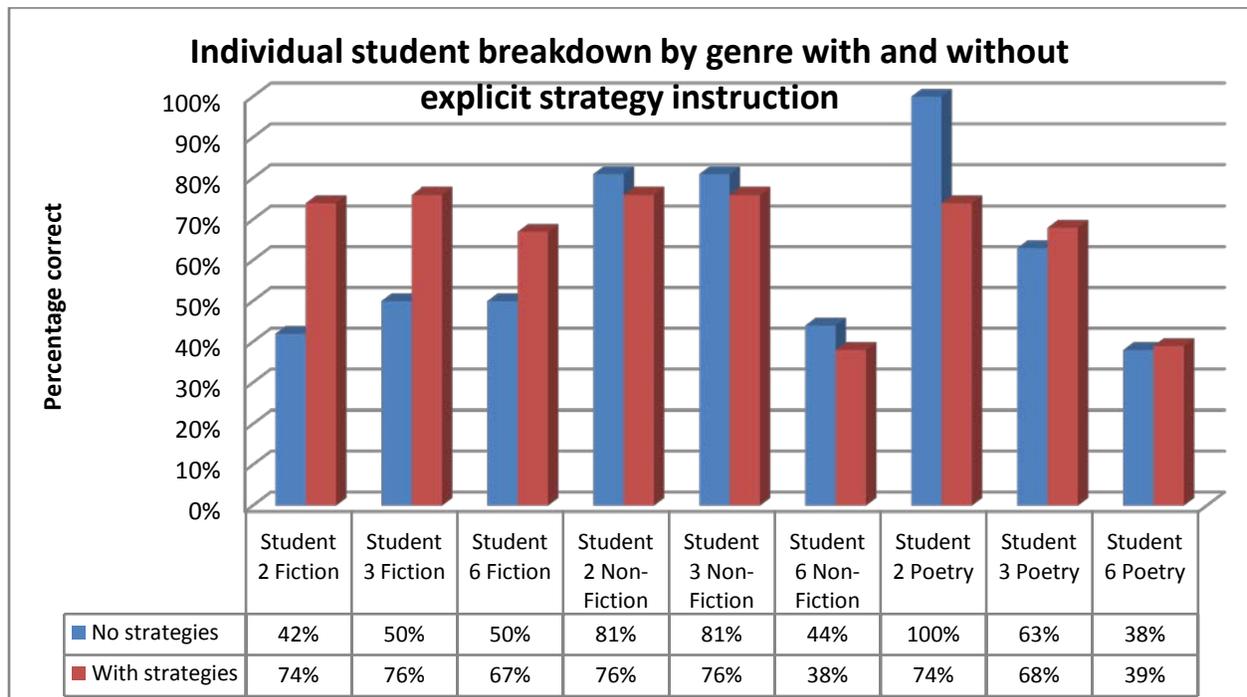|	Student 2 Fiction	Student 3 Fiction	Student 6 Fiction	Student 2 Non-Fiction	Student 3 Non-Fiction	Student 6 Non-Fiction	Student 2 Poetry	Student 3 Poetry	Student 6 Poetry
No strategies	42%	50%	50%	81%	81%	44%	100%	63%	38%
With strategies	74%	76%	67%	76%	76%	38%	74%	68%	39%

Figure 4

Based on anecdotal teacher observation and the student post-survey, teaching reading strategies contributes positively to student motivation. During the student assessment, students exhibited confidence when taking the assessments. While students had noted in discussions, they have dreaded MCAS in the past, they felt they now had the tools to succeed. Mike heard

comments like, "These are easy now" often. A pie chart of the post-survey about strategies used

during MCAS assessments (Appendix J), indicates students identified previewing the text as

helpful 50% of the time, a little helpful 17% of the time, and not helpful 33% of the time.

Students identified visualization as very helpful 67% of the time, and helpful 33% of the time.

Students identified rereading the text as very helpful 33% of the time, helpful 17% of the time, a

little helpful 33% of the time, and not helpful 17% of the time. Students identified making

textual connections very helpful 17% of the time, helpful 50% of the time, a little helpful 17% of

the time, and not helpful 17% of the time.

Students were also asked whether they always, sometimes, or never used the strategies

they learned within their next unit of study, the reading of the novel Frankenstein. Though they

were not told to do so, all six of the students used at least two of the strategies, while three

students used each strategy at least some of the time. Appendix K shows the most used strategies

were visualization, where 50% of the students used it all of the time and 50% of the students

used it some of the time. Rereading and making textual connections were used by 33% of the

students all of the time, while 50% used it some of the time. Previewing the text was not used as

much, only used by 66% of the students some of the time and never by the other 33%, because

students felt there was not as much to preview.

The students' post-survey results verify the student assessment results of the post-test.

Scores on all three assessments were above a C level for all students. In addition, students

reported to enjoying reading the text, while they reported that, in most cases, they had not

actually read a single book last year or any of the past years. The reason they read, they reported,

was because they enjoyed the book and the class discussions about the book. The teacher

observation, however, was that students displayed confidence in their understanding at a much higher level that earlier in the year.

<div align="center">Implications</div>

There are many ways our teaching will change as a result of our research. One thing we will both do is insert explicit instruction in reading strategies into our current curriculum. We will find places where we can teach a specific strategy naturally. Mike has inserted explicit reading strategy instruction in the beginning of the 10th grade low level English course prior to reading any difficult text. It will then be reviewed frequently throughout the year. Caitlyn will teach previewing and rereading in the context of MCAS, and will also teach other reading strategies prior to beginning each literature unit of study.

The most exciting part of our research was not quantitative. The students who were part of this study gained so much confidence in their own reading ability that they want to read. They have since repeatedly asked Mike when they get to start the next novel. They all read the entire book of *Frankenstein* as their test results indicate. By starting the year with reading strategy instruction and showing the students how well they can do when they know how to do it, we believe it will increase student confidence and motivation as has been the outcome with these students.

Our school is among the top 10 schools in the state in MCAS performance every year, with each grade having between 95-98% of students scoring proficient or advanced in ELA. However, the data indicates that by implementing the teaching of these strategies our scores will improve. Therefore we are going to introduce teachers in our school from all departments to these (and additional) strategies for reading comprehension. Our data indicates that there is at least some gain by some students across the three genres we tested. It stands to reason, therefore,

that matching strategies with subjects where they will be most effective will be beneficial for all

students.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Student Reading Habits Survey

Name: _____   Period: _____

Reading Habits Survey

Place a check in the box next to each of the following comprehension strategies you use when reading. Then explain how you used each one you indicated by using details of the reading assignment in your description.

I tried the following strategies when I read:

[ ]I **previewed** the piece of writing to understand it better before I read.

[ ]I tried to find the **main idea** of the text.

[ ] I tried to understand the **purpose** of the text.

[ ] I **asked myself questions** about things I'd like to know more about.

[ ] I **made connections** between the text and myself, another text, or the world.

[ ]I **re-read** the text.

[ ] I **slowed down** when the passage became more difficult.

[ ]I **defined key words** in the passage so I could better understand the passage as a whole.

Strategy:

How you used it:

Strategy:

How you use it:

Strategy:

How you used it:

Appendix B

Sample of Teacher Checklist

Student Name:						
Skill	**Dates Observed**					
Paraphrase a detail						
Summarize the main idea of a passage						
Make a text to self/text/world connection						
Ask a question that furthers discussion at a deeper level						
Understand the purpose of the reading						
Infer meaning of a passage						

Appendix C

MCAS Tests

Reading Comprehension

In the novel by Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist is an orphan in nineteenth-century England who is a "ward of the state" because he has no one to support him. Mr. Bumble, a minor official or "beadle," wants Oliver to work for Mr. Gamfield, a chimney sweep. In this excerpt, Mr. Bumble takes Oliver to court to get the approval of the local officials. Read the excerpt from Oliver Twist *and answer the questions that follow.*

from OLIVER TWIST
by Charles Dickens

1   'Now, Oliver, my dear, come to the gentleman.' As Mr Bumble said this, he put on a grim and threatening look, and added, in a low voice, 'Mind what I told you, you young rascal!'

2   Oliver stared innocently in Mr Bumble's face at this somewhat contradictory style of address; but that gentleman prevented his offering any remark thereupon, by leading him at once into an adjoining room, the door of which was open. It was a large room, with a great window; and behind a desk, sat two old gentlemen with powdered heads, one of whom was reading the newspaper, while the other was perusing, with the aid of a pair of tortoise-shell spectacles, a small piece of parchment which lay before him. Mr Limbkins was standing in front of the desk on one side; and Mr Gamfield, with a partially washed face, on the other; while two or three bluff-looking men, in top-boots, were lounging about.

3   The old gentleman with the spectacles gradually dozed off over the little bit of parchment; and there was a short pause, after Oliver had been stationed by Mr Bumble in front of the desk.

4   'This is the boy, your worship,' said Mr Bumble.

5   The old gentleman who was reading the newspaper raised his head for a moment, and pulled the other old gentleman by the sleeve; whereupon, the last-mentioned old gentleman woke up.

6   'Oh, is this the boy?' said the old gentleman.

7   'This is him, sir,' replied Mr Bumble. 'Bow to the magistrate, my dear.'

8   Oliver roused himself, and made his best obeisance. He had been wondering, with his eyes fixed on the magistrates' powder, whether all boards[1] were born with that white stuff on their heads, and were boards from thenceforth on that account.

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[1] *boards* — court officials, similar to judges

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Reading Comprehension

9   'Well,' said the old gentleman, 'I suppose he's fond of chimney-sweeping?'

10   'He doats[2] on it, your worship,' replied Bumble; giving Oliver a sly pinch, to intimate that he had better not say he didn't.

11   'And he *will* be a sweep, will he?' inquired the old gentleman.

12   'If we was to bind him to any other trade tomorrow, he'd run away simultaneous, your worship,' replied Bumble.

13   'And this man that's to be his master — you, sir — you'll treat him well, and feed him, and do all that sort of thing, — will you?' said the old gentleman.

14   'When I says I will, I means I will,' replied Mr Gamfield doggedly.

15   'You're a rough speaker, my friend, but you look an honest, open-hearted man,' said the old gentleman: turning his spectacles in the direction of the candidate for Oliver's premium, whose villanous countenance was a regular stamped receipt for cruelty. But the magistrate was half blind and half childish, so he couldn't reasonably be expected to discern what other people did.

16   'I hope I am, sir,' said Mr Gamfield, with an ugly leer.

17   'I have no doubt you are, my friend,' replied the old gentleman, fixing his spectacles more firmly on his nose, and looking about him for the inkstand.

18   It was the critical moment of Oliver's fate. If the inkstand had been where the old gentleman thought it was, he would have dipped his pen into it, and signed the indentures, and Oliver would have been straightway hurried off. But, as it chanced to be immediately under his nose, it followed, as a matter of course, that he looked all over his desk for it, without finding it; and happening in the course of his search to look straight before him, his gaze encountered the pale and terrified face of Oliver Twist: who, despite all the admonitory looks and pinches of Bumble, was regarding the repulsive countenance of his future master with a mingled expression of horror and fear, too palpable[3] to be mistaken, even by a half-blind magistrate.

19   The old gentleman stopped, laid down his pen, and looked from Oliver to Mr Limbkins; who attempted to take snuff with a cheerful and unconcerned aspect.

[2] *doats* — shows excessive fondness
[3] *palpable* — obvious

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Reading Comprehension

20   'My boy!' said the old gentleman, leaning over the desk. Oliver started at the sound. He might be excused for doing so, for the words were kindly said, and strange sounds frighten one. He trembled violently, and burst into tears.

21   'My boy!' said the old gentleman, 'you look pale and alarmed. What is the matter?'

22   'Stand a little away from him, Beadle,' said the other magistrate, laying aside the paper, and leaning forward with an expression of interest. 'Now, boy, tell us what's the matter: don't be afraid.'

23   Oliver fell on his knees, and clasping his hands together, prayed that they would order him back to the dark room — that they would starve him — beat him — kill him if they pleased — rather than send him away with that dreadful man.

24   'Well!' said Mr Bumble, raising his hands and eyes with most impressive solemnity, 'Well! of all the artful and designing orphans that ever I see, Oliver, you are one of the most barefacedest.'

25   'Hold your tongue, Beadle,' said the second old gentleman, when Mr Bumble had given vent to this compound adjective.

26   'I beg your worship's pardon,' said Mr Bumble, incredulous of his having heard aright. 'Did your worship speak to me?'

27   'Yes. Hold your tongue.'

28   Mr Bumble was stupefied with astonishment. A beadle ordered to hold his tongue! A moral revolution!

29   The old gentleman in the tortoise-shell spectacles looked at his companion; he nodded significantly.

30   'We refuse to sanction these indentures,' said the old gentleman, tossing aside the piece of parchment as he spoke.

31   'I hope,' stammered Mr Limbkins: 'I hope the magistrates will not form the opinion that the authorities have been guilty of any improper conduct, on the unsupported testimony of a mere child.'

32   'The magistrates are not called upon to pronounce any opinion on the matter,' said the second old gentleman sharply. 'Take the boy back to the workhouse, and treat him kindly. He seems to want it.'

33   That same evening, the gentleman in the white waistcoat most positively and decidedly affirmed, not only that Oliver would be hung, but that he would be drawn and quartered into the bargain. Mr Bumble shook his head with gloomy mystery, and said he wished he might come to good; whereunto Mr Gamfield replied, that he wished he might come to him; which, although he agreed with the beadle in most matters, would seem to be a wish of a totally opposite description.

34   The next morning, the public were once more informed that Oliver Twist was again To Let, and that five pounds would be paid to anybody who would take possession of him.

In the public domain.

Reading Comprehension

19 Based on paragraphs 1 and 2, why is Mr. Bumble's style of address "contradictory"?

A. Mr. Bumble calls Oliver "my dear," yet ignores him.

B. Mr. Bumble calls Oliver "my dear," yet intimidates him.

C. Mr. Bumble calls Oliver "my dear," yet tells him to bow.

D. Mr. Bumble calls Oliver "my dear," yet asks him questions.

20 What is the **main** way in which paragraph 2 is important to the excerpt?

A. It signals a turning point in the action.

B. It sets the scene for the action to follow.

C. It explains why Oliver is meeting the men.

D. It reveals how Oliver feels about the events.

21 What does the exchange between Bumble and the old gentleman in paragraphs 9–12 reveal?

A. Oliver's enthusiasm impresses them.

B. Oliver's welfare is important to them.

C. Oliver has little control over his fate.

D. Oliver has ambitious goals for his life.

22 According to paragraphs 18 and 19, what causes the old gentleman to hesitate before signing the indentures?

A. Oliver begs for help.

B. Bumble changes his mind.

C. He wants to see Gamfield's reaction.

D. He sees Oliver's frightened expression.

Reading Comprehension

23 In paragraph 22, what is the **most likely** reason the magistrate asks Bumble to "stand a little away" from Oliver?

A. He hopes to encourage Bumble to leave.

B. He fears Bumble and Gamfield will get in a fight.

C. He wants to hear Oliver's response more clearly.

D. He suspects Bumble will try to influence Oliver's response.

24 What does paragraph 34 **mainly** suggest about Oliver's future?

A. His reputation will suffer.

B. His rescue will be temporary.

C. He will be forgiven by Bumble.

D. He will become friends with Gamfield.

25 Which of the following words from paragraphs 7 and 8 is the **best** context clue to discover the meaning of *obeisance* in paragraph 8?

A. "bow"

B. "roused"

C. "wondering"

D. "fixed"

26 What does the word *admonitory* in paragraph 18 show about Bumble's actions?

A. He is cursing Oliver.

B. He is warning Oliver.

C. He is thanking Oliver.

D. He is encouraging Oliver.

English Language Arts
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE: SESSION 1

DIRECTIONS
This session contains three reading selections with sixteen multiple-choice questions and two open-response questions. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

Many people will never come face-to-face with a skunk because skunks and people tend to avoid one another. However, for one scientist who studies skunks, their spray is not a factor. Jerry Dragoo is a skunk's best friend, doing whatever he can to help the species. Read more about this remarkable scientist in "Skunk Man," and answer the questions that follow.

Skunk Man

JERRY DRAGOO IS UNIQUELY
QUALIFIED FOR HIS STINKY JOB

BY STEVE KEMPER

1   THE FIRST TIME I MEET JERRY DRAGOO, he doesn't stink. That will change, but at the moment, sitting in his office at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, he seems like just another assistant professor of biology dressed in jeans and cowboy boots. Except that his Western belt buckle, instead of displaying the usual turquoise or embossed-silver design, depicts a spotted skunk standing on its forelegs.

2   The buckle signifies Dragoo's passion. He studies skunks; his research has changed science's view of them. He rescues, rehabilitates and relocates skunks. He responds to half a dozen e-mails every day from all over the country asking about skunks. (Question: "My pet skunk tears up the carpet. What should I do?" Answer: "Put down tile. Skunks are diggers.") When Dragoo goes home at night, he lives with skunks—four in his backyard, three in his house. All of them are fully loaded, and they occasionally discharge their weapons in the living room. "My wife has a problem with that," Dragoo admits.

3   Though skunks are one of the most recognizable animals in America, the field of skunk studies is not crowded. Notwithstanding such beloved cartoon and film characters as Pepe Le Pew and Flower (Bambi's friend), real skunks do not show up on any favorite-critter lists. Yet in the 1800s and early 1900s, skunk fur was prized by clothiers and was often marketed as "Alaskan sable."

4   Jerry Dragoo is genetically outfitted for intimacy with skunks. Now 40, he remembers the day he discovered his fated field of study. As an undergraduate, he was drawn to the mustelids, the carnivorous weasel family that includes badgers, otters, minks and wolverines. "Small ferocious animals," he says. "I liked that, being kind of small myself." The mustelids also included a mild-mannered oddball (a description that also fits Dragoo), the skunk.

5   When a professor asked Dragoo to research spotted skunks, he was a little disappointed. After capturing his first one in a wire live trap, he sat there making field notes. When he rose abruptly, he felt a drizzle. He looked up. No clouds. He looked down

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and saw oily yellow spots on his notes. Olfactory data. He sniffed tentatively, but didn't smell anything. "And I thought, 'Why do skunks have such a bad name?' But three days later, when I came back to school, they kicked me out of the building." Dragoo, it turns out, has almost no sense of smell. He found his calling and has pursued it ever since.

6   Soon after arriving at Fort Hays State University in Kansas, where he got his master's degree in biology, he skinned a road-killed skunk. The department chairman quickly got wind of it and phoned in his reaction: "You will not skin skunks in this building." Dragoo got the same indignant order shortly after starting work on his doctorate at Texas A & M, where he studied, among other things, hog-nosed skunks. By then he was fearless. Instead of collecting his research animals with traps, he was running them down and grabbing their tails, with predictable consequences.

7   "People ask how many times I've been sprayed, and I tell them six or seven." He pauses. "Per animal." Not long ago a hooded skunk nailed him nine times in less than ten seconds, a feat that filled him with admiration. Do his colleagues find him hard to work with? "I've heard that," he deadpans.[1] He has been kicked out of meetings, shunned in public places and evicted from apartments. "If people smell a skunk and I'm around," he says, "I get blamed. Most of the time I'm guilty. But not every time," he adds, his tail up a little.

A NEW BRANCH ON THE TREE
. . .

8   Dragoo's major contribution to skunk studies stems from his work as an evolutionary biologist. He's interested in the genetic differences and similarities among related species, which helps explain how they are related. In the early 1990s, he began sequencing particular genes in skunks and other mustelids to see how the subfamilies overlapped.

9   "But I couldn't get the skunks to group with the mustelids," he says. Assuming that he had done something wrong, Dragoo started over but got the same results. That's when he realized that at some point millions of years ago, North American skunks (striped, hooded, spotted and hog-nosed) and the Asian stink badger had branched off from the tree of life to form their own distinct family.

10   A new family classification is rare, so Dragoo's 1997 paper, coauthored by Rodney Honeycutt of Texas A & M, created a stir. Says Don Wilson, senior scientist and curator of mammals at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History: "The molecular evidence is pretty convincing."

11   Now Dragoo is applying for funding to study the ecology of rabies in skunks. Skunks are a major carrier of the disease, but Dragoo says animal-control officers and homeowners are more frightened of them than they need to be, since not all skunks are rabid and rabies is treatable. This spells big trouble for many innocent animals. Dragoo cites a baby skunk that some children found in their yard and spent time petting before he was called. The local animal-control officer then insisted that Dragoo turn it over to be killed and tested for rabies. The results were negative.

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[1] *deadpans* — says something without expression or emotion

BE PATIENT, THEY'LL LEAVE

12   Each year between May and September, when adult female skunks and their litters forage widely, Dragoo gets calls from homeowners who want to know how to get rid of them. He has heard of people trying mothballs, loud music, or rags soaked in ammonia to encourage skunks to leave. But he tries to convince callers to be patient, because skunks are fun to watch, they won't spray unless they feel threatened (and even then they usually try to escape first), they eat lots of mice and bugs, and they usually move on.

13   When nuisance skunks are trapped, injured or orphaned, Dragoo is often asked to get them. He drives the captured animals to his house in Tijeras—his station wagon carries an unmistakable tang—and puts them in one of the large holding cages in his backyard. He and his profoundly tolerant wife, Gwen, who is the head veterinary technician at the Albuquerque Biological Park, fatten young animals for a month or two on fruit, vegetables, eggs, tuna, a little dog and cat food, yogurt, cheese, an occasional frozen mouse, cereal, tomato hornworms, moths and June bugs that stray into the house, and anything else that comes to hand. Skunks, to state the obvious, are omnivores, though they do draw the line at lima beans.

14   When independence day rolls around, Dragoo lets the animals go in the nearby Cibola National Forest. But first they must be caught. "Hi, kids!" Dragoo says. "Who wants to be first?" He grabs one by the tail and puts it in a pet carrier. The cage's other resident runs from Dragoo, sometimes hissing or charging forward, then stamping its front feet. As Dragoo closes in, this striper whirls and squirts. Bull's-eye! But Dragoo, unfazed, grabs it by the tail and stuffs it into the carrier. "I'm happy when they spray me," he says, "because that means they have some fear of humans."

15   He captures the last two without incident. En route to the forest, the skunks are silent and, more important, odorless. Dragoo is neither. "You stink," Gwen says amiably. The smell coming off him, acrid[2] and almost palpable,[3] contains a hint of horseradish. Gwen says it reminds her of gasoline. Dragoo grins and says, "Rose petals."

. . .

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[2] *acrid* — having a sharp pungent taste or smell
[3] *palpable* — discernible by touch; tangible

1 What is this article **mainly** about?

A. the consequences of getting too close to a skunk

B. the unpleasant smell of a skunk's spray

C. the rehabilitation and release of sick or injured skunks

D. the dedication of a researcher to skunks

2 Which of the following **best** summarizes paragraph 1?

A. Jerry Dragoo appears to be an ordinary person.

B. Jerry Dragoo collects turquoise and silver belt buckles.

C. Assistant professors usually wear western clothing in New Mexico.

D. Biology professors often display unusual behavior.

Read the sentences from paragraph 7 in the box below.

> "If people smell a skunk and I'm around," he says, "I get blamed. Most of the time I'm guilty. But not every time," he adds, his tail up a little.

3 What is the author implying?

A. Dragoo likes skunks because he shares similar behaviors with them.

B. Skunks in the wild become irritated very easily.

C. Dragoo feels a bit annoyed when he is unjustly blamed for unpleasant odors.

D. People react like skunks when they are threatened.

4 According to the article, in what way is Jerry Dragoo uniquely suited for his job?

A. He studied mustelids as an undergraduate.

B. He enjoys having skunks as pets.

C. He has a very limited sense of smell.

D. He is an evolutionary biologist.

5 According to the article, what is Professor Dragoo's most important accomplishment?

A. He has persuaded people to be more tolerant of skunks.

B. He has reclassified skunks into their own genetic family.

C. He has rescued many skunks in urban environments.

D. He has begun to study the ecology of rabies in skunks.

6 In the article, why is Gwen Dragoo described as "profoundly tolerant"?

A. She is head veterinary technician at the Albuquerque Biological Park.

B. She helps feed many injured and orphaned animals.

C. She helps Dragoo release the skunks in the Cibola National Forest.

D. She endures the odor of the skunks in her house and on her husband.

7 Which of the following **best** describes the mood of the article?

A. sad

B. dull

C. lighthearted

D. peaceful

8 In the article, what is the purpose of the words and sentences that the author puts in parentheses?

A. to define terms and words

B. to emphasize certain ideas

C. to explain a difficult concept

D. to provide more information

English Language Arts
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE: SESSION 3

DIRECTIONS
This session contains two reading selections with eleven multiple-choice questions and one open-response question. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

Poet Anne Sexton writes about feeding gulls in her poem "Torn Down from Glory Daily." Read the poem to find out her observations on the experience and answer the questions that follow.

TORN DOWN FROM GLORY DAILY

All day we watched the gulls
striking the top of the sky
and riding the blown roller coaster.
Up there
5   godding[1] the whole blue world
and shrieking at a snip of land.

Now, like children,
we climb down humps of rock
with a bag of dinner rolls,
10 left over,
and spread them gently on a stone,
leaving six crusts for an early king.

A single watcher comes hawking in,
rides the current round its hunger
15 and hangs
carved in silk
until it throbs up suddenly,
out, and one inch over water;

to come again
20 smoothing over the slap tide.
To come bringing its flock, like a city
of wings that fall from the air.
They wait, each like a wooden decoy[2]
or soft like a pigeon or

25 a sweet snug duck:
until one moves, moves that dart-beak
breaking over. It has the bread.
The world is full of them,
a world of beasts
30 thrusting for one rock.

---

[1] *godding* — a participle suggesting a god-like presence
[2] *decoy* — a living or artificial animal used to lure animals into a trap

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Just four scoop out the bread
and go swinging over Gloucester[3]
to the top of the sky.
Oh see how
35   they cushion their fishy bellies
with a brother's crumb.

—Anne Sexton

---

[3] *Gloucester* — a town on the Massachusetts coast

29 Read lines 1–3 in the box below.

> All day we watched the gulls
> striking the top of the sky
> and riding the blown roller coaster.

What image do the lines **most likely** suggest?

A. gulls bobbing on the waves

B. gulls being carried by wind currents

C. gulls chasing people on the beach

D. gulls diving into the ocean

30 Which of the following is the **best** summary of stanza 2?

A. The speaker and others put leftover bread out for the gulls.

B. A group of children sits on some rocks at the beach and eats rolls.

C. A mother and her children take a bag of bread to the beach.

D. A family picnicking at the beach sits on the rocks.

31 In stanza 4, what is the effect of the metaphor "city of wings"?

A. It indicates gulls living in an urban area.

B. It suggests a large number of gulls in a group.

C. It emphasizes the gulls' power and strength.

D. It points out the competitiveness of the gulls.

32 Read lines 34–36 in the box below.

> Oh see how
> they cushion their fishy bellies
> with a brother's crumb.

What do the lines **most likely** suggest?

A. The gulls have to compete with each other to survive.

B. The gulls float on the water to look for fish.

C. The gulls use the bread to make their nests.

D. The gulls search for food with their families.

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Appendix D

Frankenstein Tests

Name: _____   Period_____
Frankenstein Test Letters – Ch. 10   Mr. Lubawski

Letter I
1. Where is Robert Walton voyage heading?
        A. Iceland
        B. South Pole
        C. North Pole
        D. America

2. What does Robert Walton want to discover the secret to?
    A. Gravity
    B. The magnetic pole
    C. Fire
    D. Life

Letter II
3. What is it that Robert Walton tells Margaret he desires most?
        A. A friend
        B. Pizza
        C. Fame
        D. Success

Letter IV
4. What did Robert Walton and his crew perceive about ½ a mile in the distance while their ship was surrounded by ice before the fog set in?
        A. A large figure on a sled being pulled by dogs
        B. The North Pole
        C. A huge whale breech out of the water
        D. Nothing. There was too much fog

5. What did Walton's men see the next morning beside their ship after the fog lifted?
        A. Hundreds of dead penguins
        B. Pirates surrounding their ship
        C. A man on a sled with one remaining dog
        D. They were back in Archangel where they started

6. What is Robert Walton going to write down that he believes Margaret will enjoy reading?
        A. His innermost thoughts
        B. A detailed account of his journey
        C. All the pranks they pull on their journey
        D. The man's story

Chapter One

7. What did Victor's mother get from the poor peasant woman?

        A. A little girl (Elizabeth)

        B. Scarlet Fever

        C. Vegetables

        D. A black eye

8. What gift did Victor's mother give him?

        A. A toy gun

        B. Her cold

        C. Books about Alchemy

        D. Elizabeth

Chapter Two

9. What field of study does Victor originally want to learn?

        A. Chemistry

        B. Math

        C. Natural philosophy (metaphysics, the physical sciences of the world)

        D. Magic

10. What did Victor see happen to the oak tree which sparked an interest in him?

        A. It grew to over 100 feet high

        B. Lightening hit it

        C. It's leaves fell in the fall

        D. Nothing

Chapter Three

11. How did Victor's mother die?

        A. Scarlet Fever

        B. Malaria

        C. Bubonic Plague

        D. The monster killed her

12. What was her dying wish for both Victor and Elizabeth?

        A. To avenge her death

        B. To get married to each other

        C. To protect William

        D. To never forget her

Chapter Four

13. After Victor learned all he could of natural philosophy and chemistry, what area of study did he turn his attention to?

A. Human physiology (anatomy)
B. Pediatrics
C. Metaphysics
D. Psychology

14. What was Victor able to do that had never been done before?
    A. "Bestow animation upon lifeless matter"
    B. "Make a gigantic being that would call him master"
    C. "Get a suntan"
    D. "Find the true nature of lightening"

15. What unfortunate thing did Victor realize after his discovery?
    A. Lightening cannot be harnessed
    B. You can get sunburn if you are outside too much
    C. His being didn't like him
    D. He did not know how he did it

16. What "gigantic" project did Victor begin on next?
    A. To restore his family name
    B. Bring his mother back to life
    C. To make an 8 foot human-like creature
    D. Earning his doctorate degree

17. How many times, while working on his project, did Victor visit his family?
    A. Every other weekend
    B. Once per month
    C. Once
    D. Never

Chapter Five

18. What happened one dreary night in November around 1 A.M.?
    A. He dreamt of Elizabeth (thought of her as more than a friend)
    B. His creature came to life
    C. He was kicked out of school
    D. He was arrested for grave robbing

19. Frankenstein initially describes his creature as _____.
    A. abominable
    B. beautiful
    C. monstrous
    D. a mirror image of himself

20. Victor said "but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream had vanished…
    A. and I realized the significance of my creation."
    B. and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart."

C. and I fell into a deep sleep."
D. and I became a God."

21. What was Victor's dream about?
    A. Kissing Elizabeth, she turns into his dead mother
    B. Marrying Elizabeth
    C. He brought a monster into this world
    D. He killed his whole family

22. What did he wake up to find?
    A. The monster ran away
    B. The monster never came to life
    C. The whole experiment was a dream
    D. The monster staring at him, muttering an inarticulate sound, reaching out his hand

23. What is Victor's reaction to the monster?
    A. He called campus security
    B. He ran away from it, abandoned it
    C. He attacked it
    D. He embraced it as his "son"

24. Who came to Ingolstadt?
    A. Elizabeth
    B. Victor's father
    C. Henry Clerval
    D. Earnest, Victor's brother

Chapter Six
25. When Victor awakens, who has written him a letter?
    A. Elizabeth
    B. Victor's father
    C. Henry Clerval
    D. Earnest, Victor's brother

26. Why was that person concerned about Victor?
    A. Victor had been mean to his family the month before
    B. Victor was missing for a long time
    C. Victor had been very ill
    D. They worry about Victor constantly.

Chapter Seven
27. Victor receives a letter from his father, telling him that young William was murdered. Who does Victor believe killed William?
    A. Justine
    B. Elizabeth

C. Earnest

D. His monster

28. Who does Ernest tell Victor has been accused of killing William?

A. Justine

B. Elizabeth

C. Himself (Victor)

D. His monster

Chapter Eight

29. What was the verdict of the trial?

A. Guilty

B. Not guilty

C. Mistrial

D. Hung jury

30. Who dies at the end of the chapter?

A. Justine

B. Elizabeth

C. Earnest

D. Victor's father

Chapter Nine

31. What did Victor contemplate doing while out on the lake?

A. Suicide

B. The cosmos (stars)

C. His future with Elizabeth

D. Quitting school

32. Why does Victor want to see the monster again?

A. To kill it and get revenge

B. To apologize for abandoning it

C. To ask if he killed William

D. To ask him to kill Justine

33. Which of the following places did Victor **not** go to cope with the despair (sadness) he feels?

A. Geneva

B. Arve

C. Chamounix

D. Mont Blanc

Chapter Ten

34. Who did Victor see at Mont Blanc?

A. Elizabeth

B. His father

C. The monster

D. Henry Clerval

35. The monster says, "I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend." What theme of Frankenstein is this an example of?
    A. Over-reaching the bounds of science
    B. Nature vs. Nurture
    C. Defining humanity
    D. Scientific exploration

36. What did the monster ask Frankenstein to do?
    A. Make him a companion
    B. Forgive him for killing William
    C. Listen to his story
    D. Kill him

Open Response: Answer the following prompt in proper open response format on the answer sheet. Use support from the text to justify your answer. (You may NOT use the book). –4 points

37. Is Victor to blame for William and/or Justine's death?

Name: _____   Period_____
Frankenstein Test Letters – Ch. 10   Mr. Lubawski

Chapter Eleven
1. What is the reaction of the first person the monster sees (they are in a hut)?
        A. He runs away
        B. He attacks the monster with a fish
        C. He attacks the monster with a hairbrush
        D. He invites the monster to dinner

2. How did the people react when the monster entered the village?
        A. They welcomed him and had a feast
        B. They mistook him for a monster
        C. They screamed, fled, or attacked him with rocks
        D. They called in the army to force him out

3. Where did the monster find shelter?
        A. He stole a tent from a family that ran away
        B. He found a shack attached to a cottage
        C. In the forest far away from people
        D. He found an abandoned cottage out of the way of people

4. What were the names of the people in the cottage attached to the monster's dwelling?
        A. Old De Lacey, Felipe, and Sophia
        B. Old MacDonald, Ronald, and Red
        C. Michael, Tito, and Latoya
        D. Old De Lacey, Felix and Agatha

Chapter Twelve
5. How would you describe the situation of the family when the monster first saw them?
        A. poor
        B. over-joyed
        C. terrified
        D. cautious

6. What task did the monster do for the cottagers?
        A. Brought them food
        B. Brought them firewood
        C. Cleared the brush in their garden
        D. Nothing

7. At the end of this chapter, the monster's mood changes. What is his outlook on life at this point?
    A. Miserable
    B. Forlorn
    C. Contemplative
    D. Hopeful

Chapter Thirteen
8. Who shows up at the cottage unexpectedly?
    A. The monster
    B. Safie
    C. The Turk
    D. The police

9. How are the monster's language skills able to rapidly improve?
    A. He finds a grammar book to teach him
    B. He listens to the lessons they are teaching Safie
    C. He reads Paradise Lost
    D. He enrolls in a French as a second language course

10. What did the monster realize he was?
    A. One of a kind
    B. Alone
    C. Abandoned
    D. A monster

11. At the end of this chapter, the monster asks a question of himself. What is that question?
    A. Am I evil?
    B. Who's my daddy?
    C. What was I?
    D. Is happiness possible for me?

Chapter Fourteen
12. How did Safie and Felix meet for the first time?
    A. They "bumped" into each other at the market
    B. Felix saw Safie while he was planning to break her father out of prison
    C. Felix and Safie's parents arranged a marriage between them
    D. Felix defended Safie from a man who was attacking her

13. What evidence does the monster have to show the truth of his story?
    A. Letters written by Safie and Felix
    B. The marriage certificate of Safie and Felix
    C. None, he tells Victor to trust him
    D. None, but he gives Victor the family's address

14. Why did the cottagers (De Lacey, Agatha, and Felix) end up living in Germany?
    A. They followed the monster to Germany
    B. They were exiled from England
    C. They were exiled from France
    D. They were looking for Safie

15. What did the Turk send Felix to show his appreciation?
    A. Nothing
    B. Safie, his daughter
    C. A thank you note
    D. Money

16. What was the Turk supposed to send Felix, but failed to send?
    A. Nothing
    B. Safie, his daughter
    C. A thank you note
    D. Money

Chapter Fifteen
17. What two "people" did the monster compare himself to?
    A. Victor and Frankenstein
    B. Victor and Adam
    C. Victor and Satan
    D. Adam and Satan

18. To whom did the monster discover himself to?
    A. Felix
    B. Safie
    C. Old De Lacey
    D. Agatha

19. How did the monster's encounter with the cottagers end?
    A. Felix beat him with a stick
    B. Old De Lacey turned him away because he was a monster
    C. The monster decided not to discover himself, and just left
    D. The monster got angry and killed the whole family

Chapter Sixteen
20. When the monster returned to his shack, what did he hear Felix explaining?
    A. He called the National Guard (which Victor's brother Ernest was a part of)
    B. The family was moving (thereby abandoning the monster)
    C. He had gathered neighbors and they were going to hunt the monster
    D. He made a mistake and they need to find the monster to help him

21. What happened after the monster saved the little girl from drowning?
      A. The little girl thanked him for saving her life
      B. The little girl's father thanked him for saving her life
      C. The monster tried to resuscitate her but failed and she died
      D. The little girl's father tore her away from the monster and shot him in the shoulder.

22. Why was the monster hoping to kidnap a child (who ended up being William)?
      A. He wanted a son
      B. He thought he could train a child not to be afraid of him
      C. He was desperate for a friend and William was the first person he saw
      D. He wanted to punish Victor

23. What made the monster lose his temper and kill William?
      A. William called him names and threatened the monster with his father
      B. The monster realized he could never be friends with a child
      C. The monster wanted to know what it felt life to exterminate life
      D. William attacked him with his slingshot

24. What did the monster tell Frankenstein he must do for him?
      A. Create another monster, a female, as hideous as himself
      B. Create another monster, a male, to be his companion
      C. Create another monster, a child, that he could raise
      D. Create a whole race of monsters so they could punish humanity

Chapter Seventeen
25. What does the monster promise he will do if Victor makes him a companion?
      A. Kill Victor's friends and family
      B. Be peaceful and live out his days at the North Pole
      C. Be peaceful and move to South America to eat bananas
      D. Proclaim Justine's innocence and his guilt for killing William

26. Did Victor agree to make the monster a companion?
      A. Yes
      B. No
      C. He didn't answer. He said he would think about it
      D. Yes, but Victor plans on using the new monster to kill the old monster

Open Response: Answer the following prompt in proper open response format on the answer sheet. Use support from the text to justify your answer. (You may NOT use the book). –4 points

27. On at least three separate occasions, people have mistakenly thought the monster was trying to do harm to them or others. Explain how repeated mistakes on the part of those the monster was trying to reach out to have caused him to feel rejected by society.

Name: _____   Period_____

Frankenstein Test Ch.18-Epilogue   Mr. Lubawski

Chapter Eighteen
1. Who does Victor's father ask him to marry?
        A. Justine
        B. Mary
        C. Death
        D. Elizabeth

2. Why does Victor momentarily decline his father's request?
        A. He doesn't love her
        B. He has to make another monster first
        C. She's his sister
        D. He has sworn a life of isolation

3. Victor and Clerval's personalities can be compared to:
        A. Two sides of a coin
        B. A half full glass of water
        C. An eclipse
        D. All of the above

Chapter Nineteen
4. In what country does Victor "put together" his new monster?
        A. Scotland
        B. Ireland
        C. England
        D. Norway

5. What are Victor's feelings during the process of putting together the monster?
        A. Anxious to finish and disgusted with the process
        B. Anxious to finish and excited to see if the two monsters get along
        C. Hopeful that the monster will finally leave him alone
        D. Excited to finish so he could marry Elizabeth and move to Australia

Chapter Twenty
6. For what two reasons are Victor unwilling to complete finish the female monster?
        A. He forgets how to instill life and he doesn't want to tell the monster that
        B. It hasn't promised to be peaceful and the two monsters might not get along
        C. It hasn't promised to be peaceful and the two monsters might have babies
        D. The two monsters might not get along so the monster might kill Victor for revenge

7. What did Victor do to the female monster?
        A. Abandoned it before he gave it life
        B. Made it uglier than his first monster
        C. Gave it a weak heart so it would die very soon
        D. Tore it apart piece by piece

8. What does the monster vow to do to get revenge on Victor?
        A. Kill Victor on his wedding night
        B. Kill Elizabeth on Victor's wedding night
        C. Be with Victor on his wedding night to get revenge
        D. Kill everyone Victor loves

9. When Victor drifts on his boat, what country does he wake up in?
        A. Scotland
        B. Ireland
        C. England
        D. Norway

10. What "problem" does Victor encounter upon arriving on land?
        A. He doesn't know where he is
        B. The monster has followed him
        C. He is being accused of murder
        D. He is being accused of being a terrorist

Chapter Twenty-One
11. Who was the person that Victor was charged with murdering?
        A. Henry Clerval
        B. Ernest Frankenstein
        C. Elizabeth
        D. the female monster

12. Who comes to visit Victor in prison?
        A. Elizabeth
        B. Henry
        C. his father
        D. Ernest

13. Does Victor believe his is responsible for the death of the person he was charged with killing?
        A. Yes, because he believes the monster killed them, and he made the monster
        B. Yes, because he remembers doing it
        C. No, because he believes the monster killed them
        D. No, because he isn't a killer

Chapter Twenty-Two

14. After Elizabeth and Victor are married, what is Elizabeth's mood?
    A. Nervous about Victor's secret that he has promised to tell her
    B. Heartbroken because she doesn't love Victor
    C. Excited to start a family
    D. Disappointed because Victor seems different than in his youth

Chapter Twenty-Three

15. What happened on Victor and Elizabeth's wedding night?
    A. Victor and the monster got in a huge fight
    B. Elizabeth was murdered
    C. Victor was murdered
    D. Elizabeth tells Victor she doesn't love him and abandons him

16. Who does Victor go to for help?
    A. His father
    B. Elizabeth's birth mother
    C. A judge
    D. The police

17. What does Victor dedicate his life to doing?
    A. Winning Elizabeth back
    B. Bringing Elizabeth back to life
    C. Paying for his mistakes
    D. Killing the monster

Chapter Twenty-Four

18. While Victor was at the graveyard he vows revenge against the monster. What does he hear immediately following his declaration?
    A. Elizabeth's voice
    B. The monster laugh
    C. Police sirens
    D. The monster shout, "Come and get me"

19. Which one of the following things did the monster NOT leave for Victor as Victor chased him?
    A. Food
    B. Directions to follow
    C. False clues
    D. Mocking words

20. Where is the last place that Victor chases the monster?
    A. The icy seas of the north
    B. England
    C. South America
    D. The warm seas of the Mediterranean

Epilogue
21. After Victor dies, who does Walton find mourning over Victor's body?
      A. Walton's first mate
      B. The monster
      C. His crew
      D. No one, Victor is all alone

22. What are the monster's plans for the future now that Victor is dead?
      A. To go back to England and try to be accepted as a human
      B. To go north and kill himself, build a funeral pyre and ascend it
      C. To go back to England and turn himself in for the murders of William, Justine,
      Clerval, Elizabeth, and Victor.
      D. To join Walton's crew, then become a sailor.

Open Response: Answer the following prompt in proper open response format on the answer sheet. Use support from the text to justify your answer. (You may NOT use the book). –4 points

23. At the end of the book the monster says he hates himself more than anyone ever could. He is the most miserable creature that has ever existed and the worst punishment he could receive is to continue living alone and isolated. Using open response format, justify (give reasons to support) the monster's claim that he is the most miserable creature ever to exist.

Appendix E

Student Post-Survey

Thinking back to the MCAS prep we did, we learned four reading strategies, previewing the text, visualization, rereading, and making textual connections. Please indicate below whether you found those strategies helped you improve in your ability to answer the reading comprehension questions.

Previewing the text:

very helpful   *helpful*   *a little helpful*   *not helpful*   *useless*

Visualization:

very helpful   *helpful*   *a little helpful*   *not helpful*   *useless*

Rereading:

very helpful   *helpful*   *a little helpful*   *not helpful*   *useless*

Making connections to the text:

very helpful   *helpful*   *a little helpful*   *not helpful*   *useless*

Thinking back to the reading of Frankenstein, which reading strategies did you use while reading? Place an A for Always, S for Sometimes, or N for Never

[____] Previewing the text before I read.

[____] Visualizing the text as I read.

[____] Rereading the text when needed.

[____] Making connections between the text and myself, other texts, and the world

How much of each section did you read prior to the test? If possible, be exact (i.e. all but one or two chapter most of the time).

All   *Most*   *Some*   *Little*   *None*

Describe your mood while reading Frankenstein, as well as your feeling about the quizzes or tests that were given.

Was this school reading experience different from those in the past? Why or why not?

Appendix F

Pre-Reading Survey Text – Grade 7

Out of a Packing Box, Not Stuff, but Souls

By LINDSEY CRITTENDEN

I WAS initiated young into the cult of clutter. Opening a drawer in my childhood kitchen meant finding birthday cards sticky from a leaking pen, a recipe for moussaka never made, bits of yarn and a Hot Wheels car missing a door. Occasionally, my mother attempted organization by topic (Vacation Ideas, Children's Vaccinations, Restaurants to Try), but she never got hanging files, so the folders slipped and slid over one another. Dad had a secretary at work to organize his papers, and at home he directed seasonal weekend purges that inevitably threw Barbies out with the bath water.

Ellen Weinstein

Years later, my mother continued to reprimand him for discarding my Malibu Skipper and Francie. She didn't care about the potential "fortune he'd thrown away," as she put it; it was the principle of the matter. How could he have tossed his daughter's *dolls*? After all, she had kept her favorite, circa 1934: a porcelain creature with patches of scratchy woolen hair and hinged joints that made her heavy limbs flop creepily against my skin when I picked her up.

I'd be different, I vowed. And I was. Once I was living on my own, I favored a streamlined Scandinavian aesthetic, relegating clutter to the past, to my childhood bedroom with its Charlie the Tuna lamp and dusty seashells. And yet my vow was based — however unconsciously — on the knowledge that those items would stay with Mom and Dad, who would always be there.

And then, a year ago, I bought my first home. On moving day I stood at the top of the stairs to direct the flow of boxes and furniture, most of which I'd acquired during 20 years of apartment living but much of which I'd inherited from my parents, who had both died during the past few years. By 4 p.m. I was toasting the view of San Francisco Bay with a glass of wine and fantasizing about which object would go where. I imagined unpacking and arranging as the most intentional and pleasing of tasks, in which I would lovingly place each treasure in just the right spot. Finally, after two decades of rentals, I had a place that was all mine, to do with as I pleased.

But first, I had a deadline for a book. The boxes would have to wait. I cleared enough space for a laptop and a cup of coffee and a pathway to the bed, shower and stove, and got to work.

For two months, I lived in the present, happily, productively, eight to nine hours a day. The boxes served as background, neither impediment nor distraction, just something I'd turn to in time. I made my deadline and went away for a few weeks.

When I returned, the boxes were still there. But now they gave off the stink of Sisyphean obligation. Waking in the morning to the prospect of unpacking, I'd feel torpor drape over me like a lead apron. I'd lift an item — a teacup, a needlepoint pillow reading "This Mess Is a Place" — and aimlessly wander the room before placing it back in the box. In my parents' cupboards, three generations of teacups had felt earned, necessary, part of the past I wanted to keep. But now they felt like more than I knew what to do with.

One day I turned to Photos & Stuff, six boxes labeled in my father's chicken scratch. I reached for the box cutter, but the cardboard was so soft that the flaps almost fell apart in my hands as I started sneezing from the dust. These were *old* boxes, the contents in no particular order.

The year of my birth seemed as good an organizational device as any, so I made two piles, Before 1961 and After 1961, and draped a Hefty bag over a chair for trash. Most decisions came easily. I didn't need two pictures of blurry pink bougainvillea against a whitewashed wall, or 10 shots of my nephew with his chubby fist in his first birthday cake. But the accumulated glimpses — Mom's smile, Dad's eyes crinkled in laughter — added up and, after 10 minutes, I was worn out.

I was halfway through a roll from a trip my parents had taken to Grand Teton National Park in 1995, flinging scenic vista after scenic vista into the Hefty bag, when my hand stopped. A shot of a wooden chapel on the edge of a field glorious with lupine. I recognized the scene from a moment of family lore: in 1970 my brother, then 3, had walked into that empty chapel to recite the Lord's Prayer without prompt. He'd died in 1994, the year before Mom returned to the spot and took the photo.

I wasn't just the person deciding which pile it went into; I was the only person alive who understood why it had been taken in the first place. If I threw it away, I was throwing away layers of emotion and association and identity. And if I kept it, well what then? The clutter of my childhood had never gone away; it had just been packed up to land smack-dab in my present, where I had to deal with it alone. Sure, I'd bought the place and chosen the paint colors and the fabric to reupholster dad's favorite chairs, but suddenly, untenably, my space no longer felt all mine. I threw the Hefty bag in the trash and shoved the Photos & Stuff back in the hall closet.

A week later my friend Eva came over, and we pulled everything out of the hall closet, including Photos & Stuff (as well as a television remote I'd given up for gone and 40 years of Christmas ornaments and the backpack found in my brother's car after he died). With Eva at my side, I opened a box with curiosity more than dread and handed her my brother's obituary, my parents' wedding invitation.

"Your brother was so handsome," she said. I reached in again, lifting out a manila folder on which Mom had written my name; in it, she'd kept every clipping from every reading I'd ever given. And then my fingers brushed something furry: the needlepoint pillow reading "This Mess Is a Place." I must have stashed it here that day I found it. Now I recalled it hanging from a cabinet door in my childhood kitchen. I held it up, making a face.

Eva met my eyes. She too had lost both parents. She too was the only surviving child.

"I have my father's polyester pajamas," she said. "I can't bear to throw them out, but what are you supposed to do with blue polyester pajamas? They were the last thing he wore before he went to the hospital."

I looked around the room as if for the first time. Not the way I saw it when the real estate broker showed it to me, but with the boxes finally cleared away. My mother would never see how good her farm table looked on my new rug, but there it sat. My father had never climbed the stairs to exclaim, "This is wonderful, honey," although I'd heard his voice say that many times. My brother would never stand by my side on the deck, pointing at the north tower of the Golden Gate Bridge and explaining just how he made it to the top.

"Come to Colorado next summer," Eva said. She and her husband had recently bought an adobe farmhouse in the mountains. "Bring your photos. I've got my mother's. We'll go through them. We'll tell each other the stories."

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Appendix G

Pre-Reading Survey Text – Grade 10

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Part I

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
`By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
Mayst hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand,
"There was a ship," quoth he.
`Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'
Eftsoons his hand dropped he.

He holds him with his glittering eye -
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

"The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon -"
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

"And now the storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And foward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken -
The ice was all between.

Appendix H

Student comprehension results by strategy across all genres
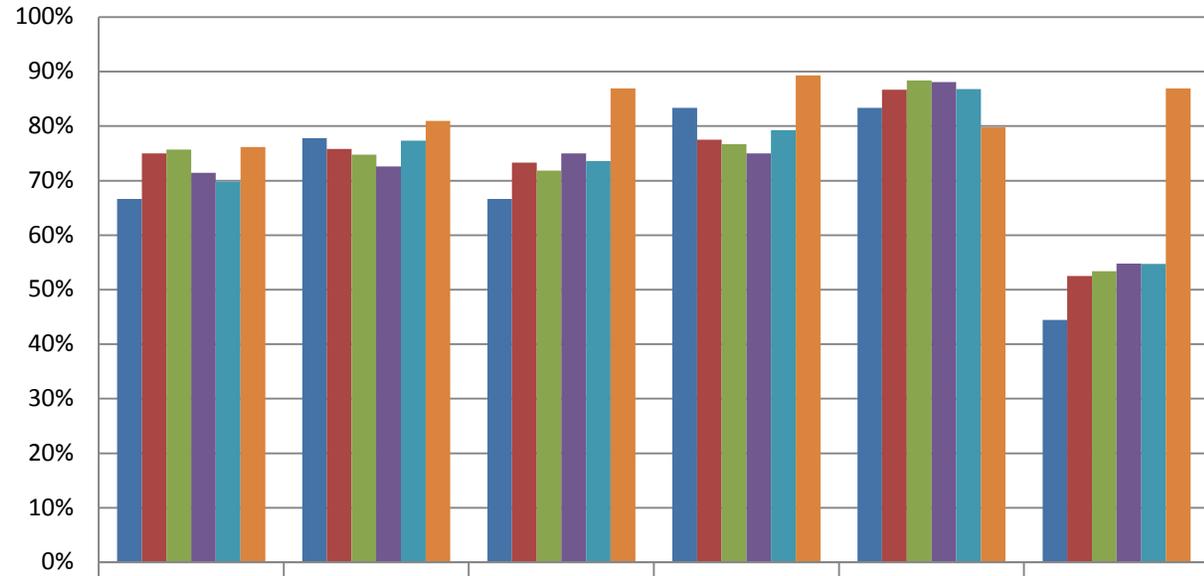
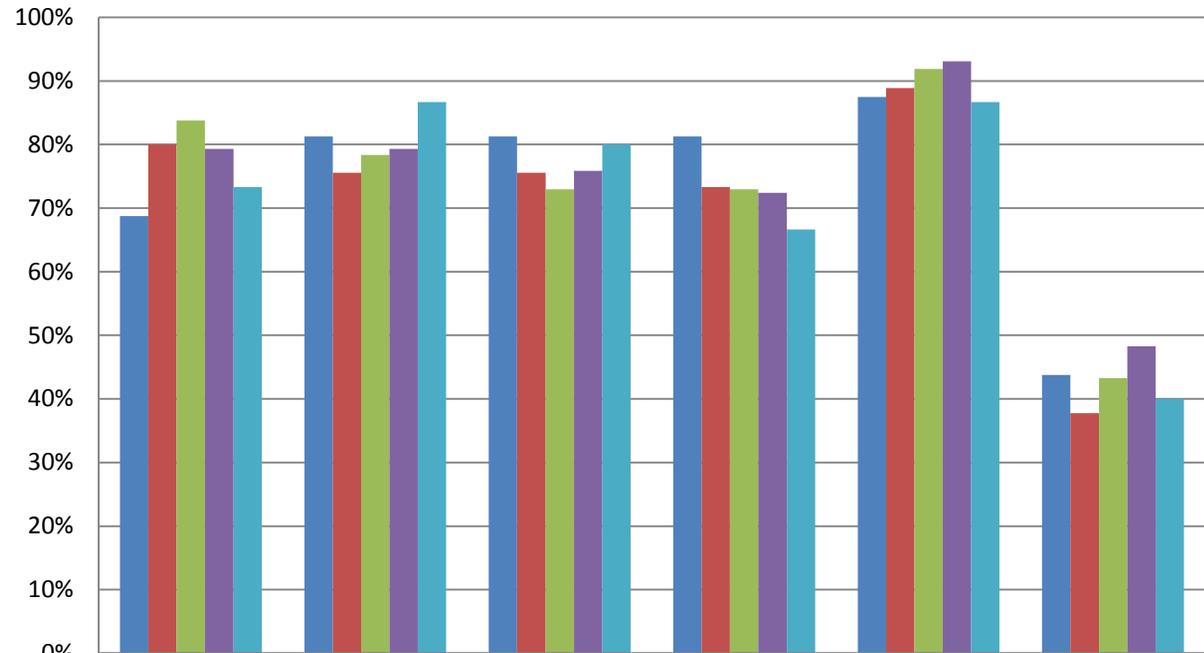|	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6
No strategy taught	67%	78%	67%	83%	83%	44%
Previewing	75%	76%	73%	78%	87%	53%
Visualization (plus previewing)	76%	75%	72%	77%	88%	53%
Rereading (plus previewing and visualization)	71%	73%	75%	75%	88%	55%
Textual connections (plus previewing, visualization, and rereading)	70%	77%	74%	79%	87%	55%
Post-Test	76%	81%	87%	89%	80%	87%

Appendix I

Reading comprehension results by strategy in Fiction (taking into account previous strategies taught)
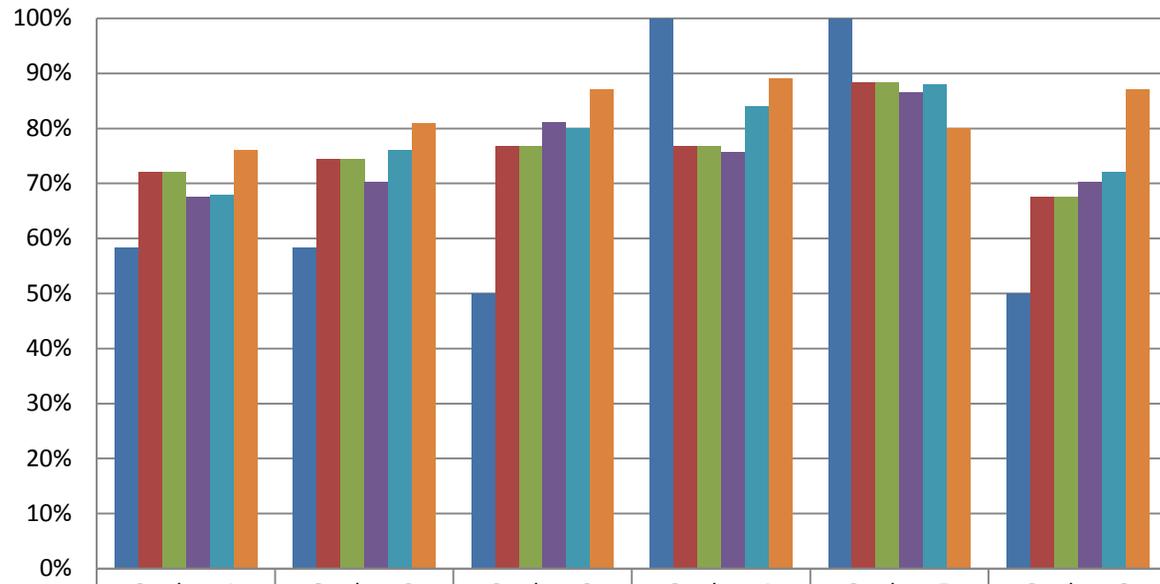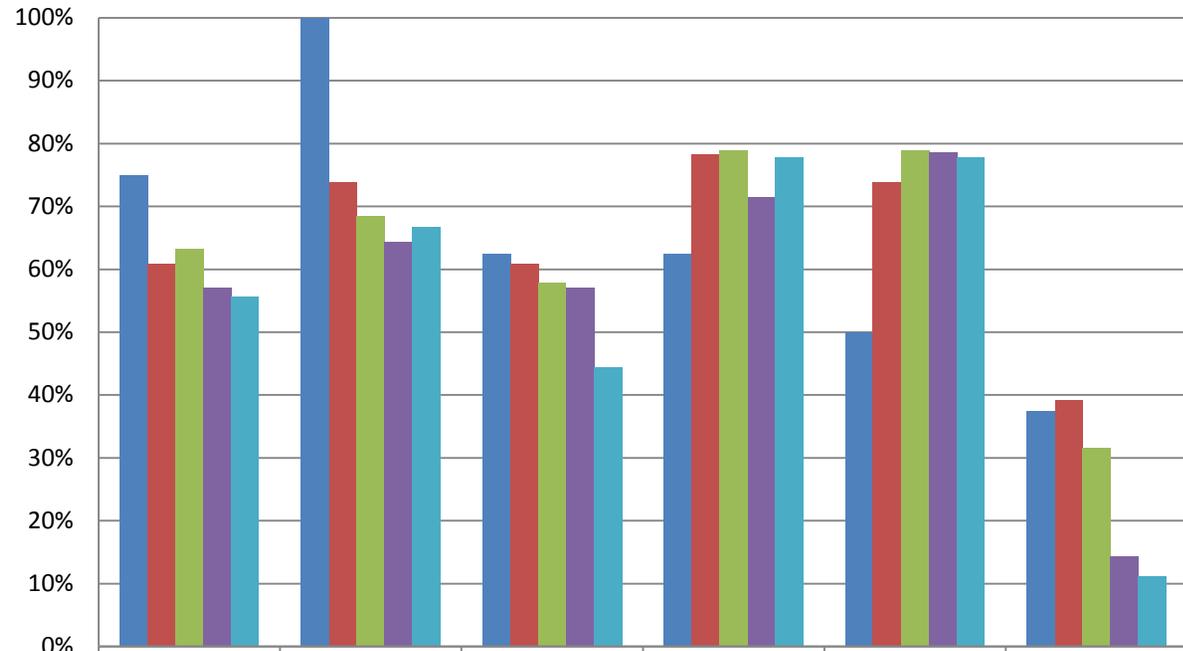

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6
No strategy taught	58%	58%	50%	100%	100%	50%
Previewing	72%	74%	77%	77%	88%	67%
Visualization (plus previewing)	72%	74%	77%	77%	88%	67%
Rereading (plus previewing and visualization)	68%	70%	81%	76%	86%	70%
Textual connections (plus previewing, visualization, and rereading)	68%	76%	80%	84%	88%	72%
Post-Test (Frankenstein)	76%	81%	87%	89%	80%	87%

Reading comprehension results by strategy in Non-Fiction (taking into account previous strategies taught)

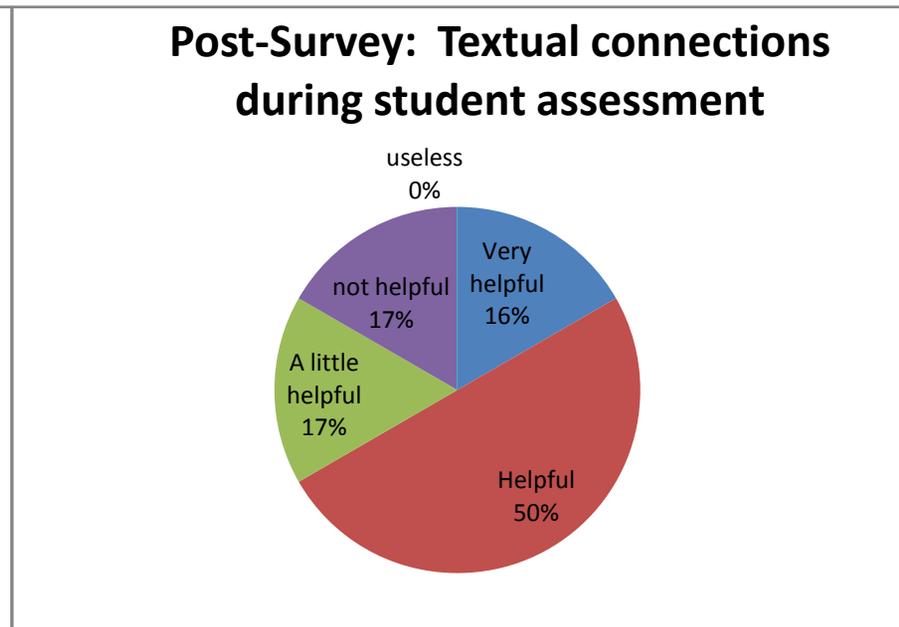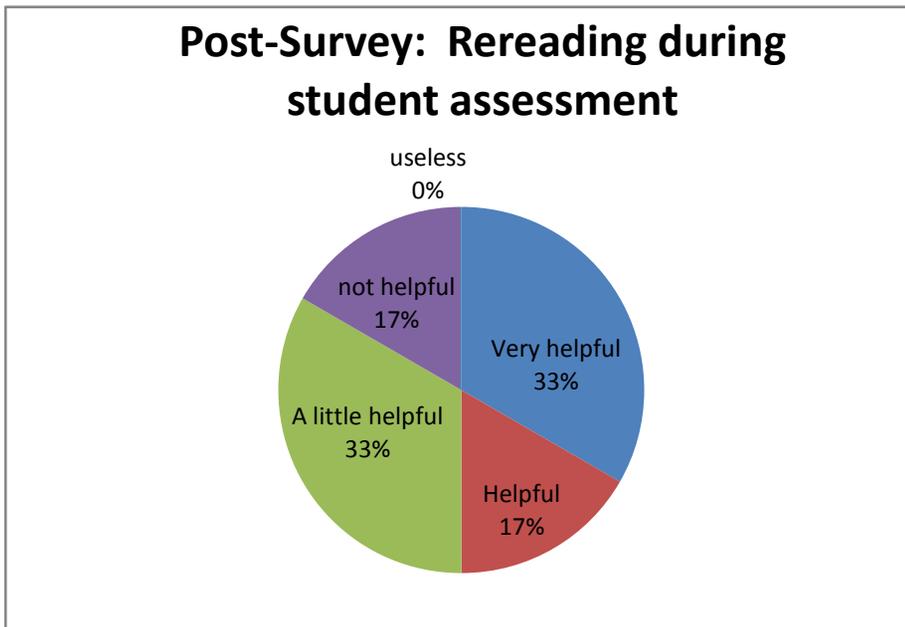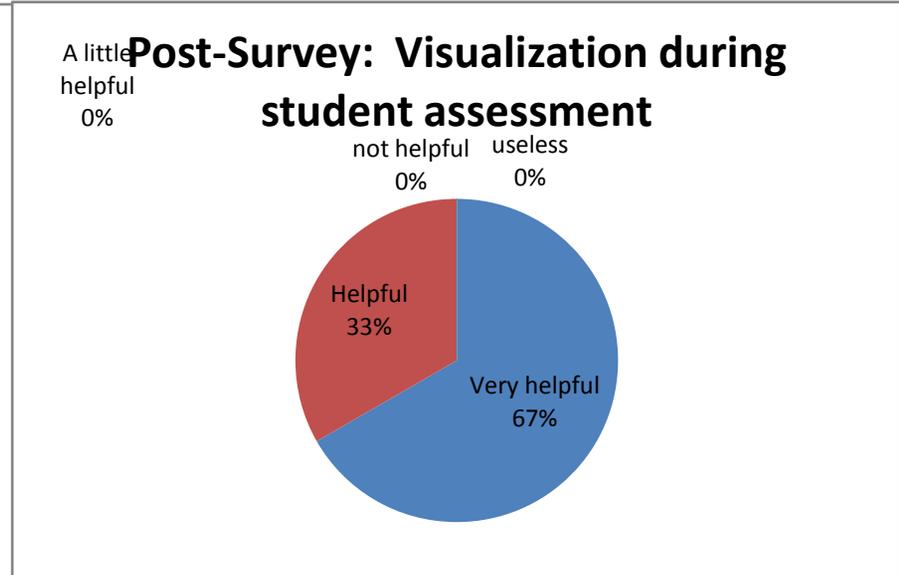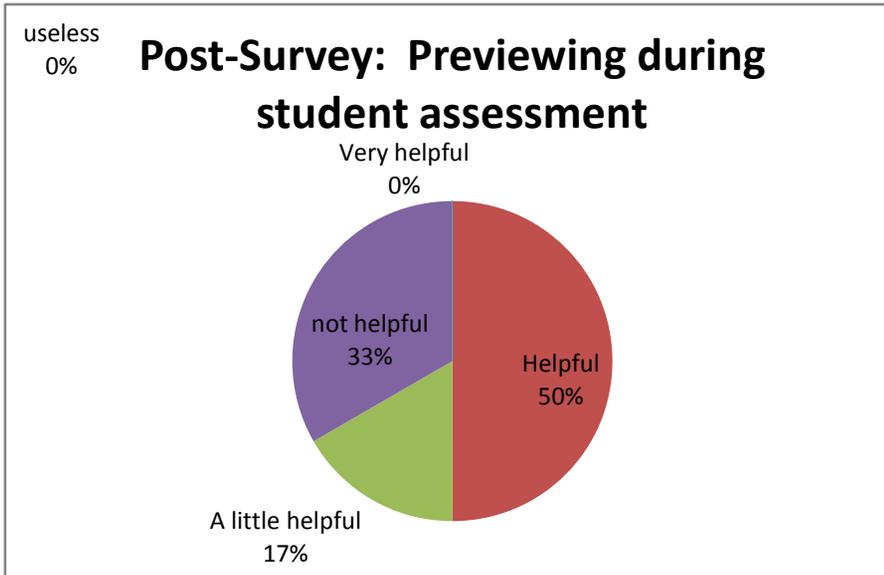|	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6
No strategy taught	69%	81%	81%	81%	88%	44%
Previewing	80%	76%	76%	73%	89%	38%
Visualization (plus previewing)	84%	78%	73%	73%	92%	43%
Rereading (plus previewing and visualization)	79%	79%	76%	72%	93%	48%
Textual connections (plus previewing, visualization, rereading)	73%	87%	80%	67%	87%	40%

Reading comprehension results by strategy in Poetry (taking into account previous strategies taught)

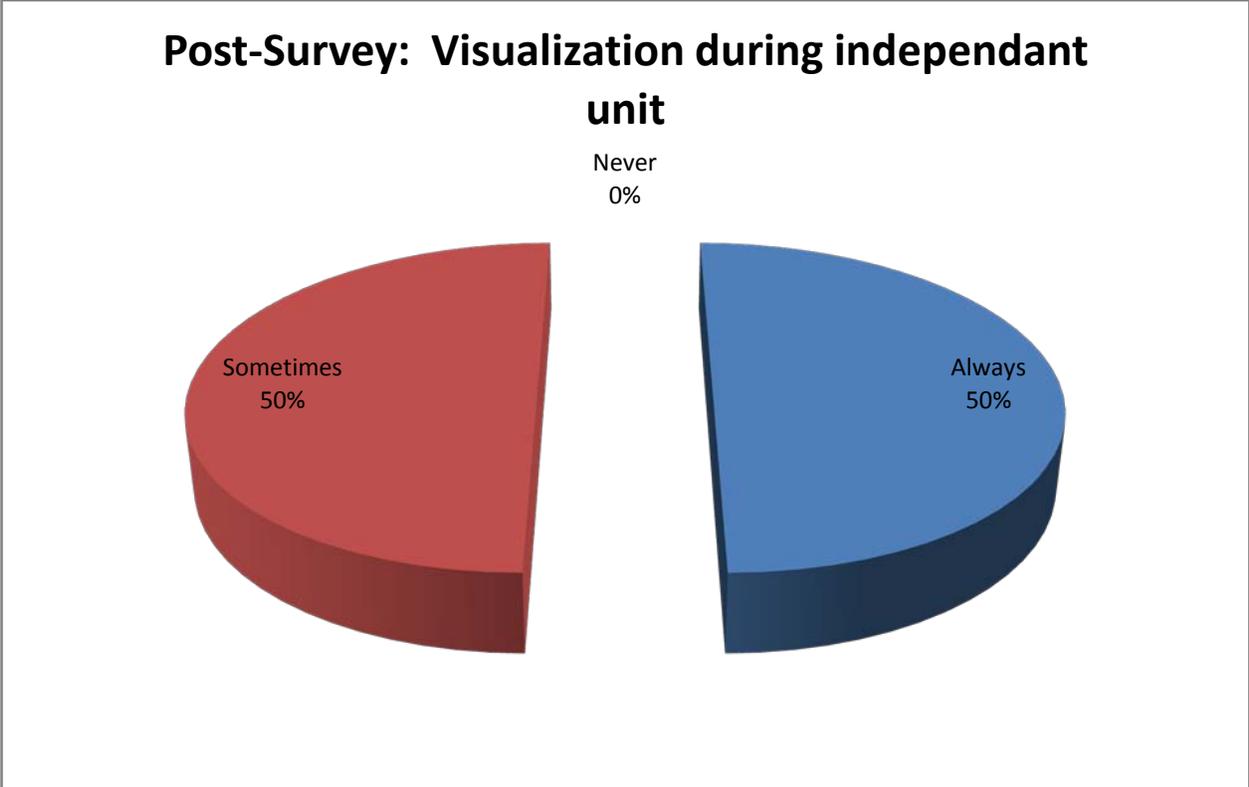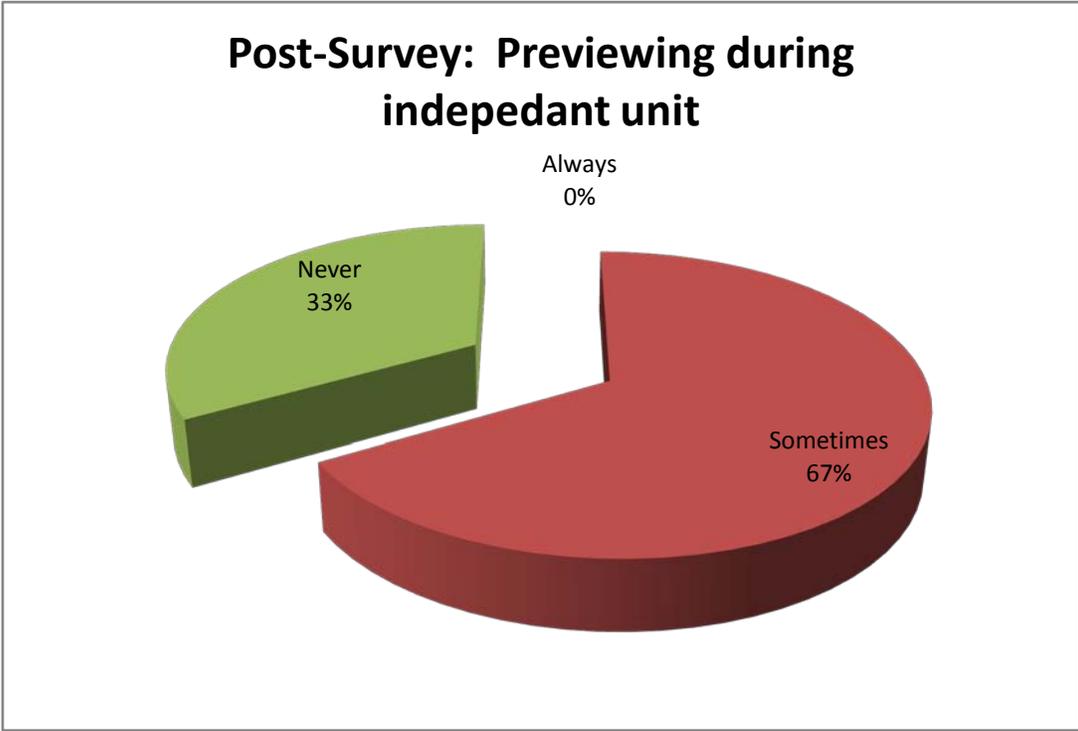|	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6
■ No strategy taught	75%	100%	63%	63%	50%	38%
■ Previewing	61%	74%	61%	78%	74%	39%
■ Visualization (plus previewing)	63%	68%	58%	79%	79%	32%
■ Rereading (plus previewing and visualization)	57%	64%	57%	71%	79%	14%
■ Textual connections (plus previewing, visualization, and rereading)	56%	67%	44%	78%	78%	11%

Appendix J

Post-Survey MCAS Data

Post-Survey: Previewing during student assessment

useless 0%
Very helpful 0%
not helpful 33%
Helpful 50%
A little helpful 17%

Post-Survey: Visualization during student assessment

A little helpful 0%
not helpful 0%
useless 0%
Helpful 33%
Very helpful 67%

Post-Survey: Rereading during student assessment

useless 0%
not helpful 17%
Very helpful 33%
A little helpful 33%
Helpful 17%

Post-Survey: Textual connections during student assessment

useless 0%
Very helpful 16%
not helpful 17%
A little helpful 17%
Helpful 50%

Appendix K

Post-Survey Frankenstein Data

Post-Survey: Previewing during independant unit

Always
0%

Never
33%

Sometimes
67%

Post-Survey: Visualization during independant unit

Never
0%

Sometimes
50%

Always
50%

Post-Survey: Rereading during independant unit

Never
17%

Always
33%

Sometimes
50%
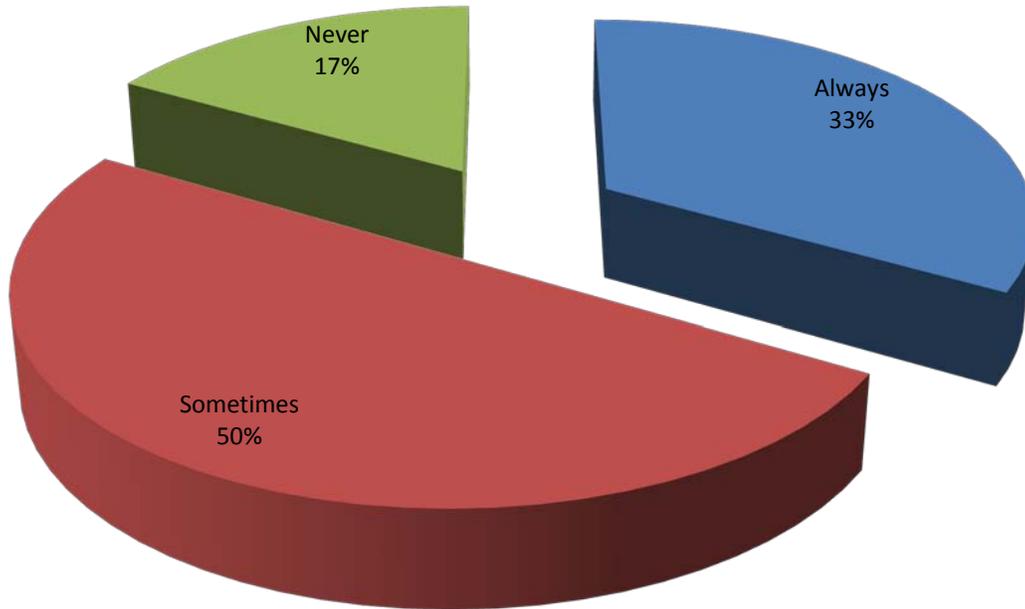
Post-Survey: Making Textual Connections during independant unit

Never
17%

Always
33%

Sometimes
50%