CREATING AND REPRESENTING INTERTEXTUAL CONNECTIONS TO SELF-SELECTED PAIRED TEXTS: A POETIC INQUIRY

WILLIAM BINTZ AND LISA CIERCIERSKI

ABSTRACT

This article describes an instructional strategy developed to integrate reading and writing. This strategy invites students to use reading, writing poetry, and illustrating as tools to represent intertextual connections to self-selected paired text. It identifies poetic inquiry as the research methodology, discusses intertextuality, and provides a rationale for this instructional strategy. It also shares a brief overview of paired text, discusses poetry as a useful and flexible literary tool for responding to self-selected paired text, and describes different theoretical perspectives on response to literature, highlighting one perspective that underpins this instructional strategy. Samples of student writing that resulted from using this strategy in the classroom are shared. Lessons learned and a lasting thought are provided.

Keywords: intertextuality, poetry, reading, writing, illustrating, inquiry

As a middle grades English/Language Arts teacher and a reading teacher, I want students to read and write in engaging and meaningful ways. I also want my teaching to reflect Common Core State Standards, especially those that require students to make connections between two or more texts. Now, I teach reading and writing separately. I want to integrate, not separate, reading and writing

-8th grade English/Language Arts and Reading teacher

We often collaborate with middle grades and high school English Language Arts and reading teachers. They always often remind us that teaching is a rewarding, but challenging profession. They work hard to find practical solutions to complex problems. This 8th grade teacher is no exception.

Here, we describe a classroom-based, inquiry project on an instructional strategy that we developed in response to this teacher's wish to integrate reading and writing. This strategy

invited students to use reading, writing poetry, and illustrating as tools to create and represent intertextual connections to self-selected paired text.

We begin by describing poetic inquiry as the research methodology used in this inquiry. Next, we discuss intertextuality and provide a theoretical rationale for using this instructional strategy in the classroom. Then, we share a brief overview of paired text and discuss poetry as a useful and flexible literary tool for responding to self-selected paired text. We also share different theoretical perspectives on response to literature, highlighting one perspective that undergirds this instructional strategy, and share samples of writing that resulted from using this strategy in the classroom. We end with lessons learned and a lasting thought.

POETIC INQUIRY

Poetic inquiry was used as the research methodology in this inquiry. This methodology has many definitions. Here, we used the definition of poetic inquiry as a phenomenologicallyinspired form of qualitative research approach in the social sciences that uses poetry in some way as a component of an inquiry project (Owlton, 2018).

Poetic inquiry is not a new form of qualitative research methodology. In the professional literature references to poetic inquiry as a methodology date back at least 70 years (James, 2017) and is based on many tenets (Galvin & Prendergast, 2015). This qualitative inquiry project was based on three of these tenets, namely, that poetry has much potential in the context of inquiry
(Pendergast, 2009), poetry is a valuable way to collect, analyze, and represent data (Prendergast, Leggo, & Sameshima, 2009), and poetry can be used as an analytical approach as well as a representational form in qualitative work and a form of inquiry (Butler-Kisber & Stewart, 2009).

Poetic inquiry is used by qualitative researchers in three ways: researcher voiced poems, participant voiced poems, and literature voiced poems (Prendergast, 2009). Researcher voiced poems are interpretive, expressive poems written by the researcher based on data collected in field notes, journal entries, reflective notes, etc. Participant voiced poems are interpretive, expressive poems written by a participant based on formal and informal interview transcripts between the researcher and participant. Literature voiced poems are interpretive, expressive poems written by the participant in response to literature.

Literature voiced poems was the methodology used in this inquiry for several reasons. As an arts-based methodology, it invites researchers to use a variety of methods and non-traditional texts to collect, analyze, and represent data. For example, arts-based educational researchers use mediums such as photography, video, art, dance, prose, and poetry to represent data. The rationale is that "a plurality of methods can cast a wider net, catch more, put us in the web of a truly productive artful science" (Brady, 2009).

Moreover, poetry was used as a written response to literature, in this instance paired text, for several reasons. Writing is an important component of any research inquiry, and yet "poetry has been largely ignored in educational research" (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2003, p. 14). Poetry is a form of writing and representation that can create new ways of seeing and understanding (Eisner, 1997), and poetry can "surprise both ourselves and our audiences with new possibilities" (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2003, p. 37). As Cahnmann-Taylor (2003) states, "Just as the microscope and camera have allowed different ways for us to see what would otherwise be invisible, so too poetry and prose are different mediums that give rise to ways of saying what might not otherwise be expressed" (p. 35).

In sum, poetic inquiry is the study of written poetry. Here, we studied original poetry that was composed by students to represent the intertextual connections they made from self-selected paired text. We share one student's complete booklet of poems to illustrate the variety of poems that was characteristic of all students' booklets.

Intertextuality

Intertextuality means "to weave together" (King-Shaver, 2005, p. 1) and refers to relationships, or "the juxtaposition" (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 305) between different texts. These relationships are based on the notion that "no literary text is written in a vacuum" (Orr, 1986, p. 814). Rather, every text is interwoven with other texts, or as Bakhtin (1986) states, "all texts are tinted with echoes and reverberations of other texts" (p. 91).

Intertextuality, or the more commonly used phrase *making connections*, is grounded in both national and state standards. In Texas, intertextuality is reflected in two important Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) Standards for English Language Arts and Reading. These standards include: (1) make connections to personal experiences, ideas in other texts, and society with adult assistance, and (2) make inferences and use evidence to support understanding with adult assistance (TEKS, 2017).

Teachers can develop and implement a variety of research-based instructional strategies to put these two standards, and many others like them, into action in the classroom. Fortunately, many instructional strategies have already been developed to help students make intertextual connections across texts in meaningful and engaging ways (Bintz, 2015). Three of the most popular strategies are making text to self, text-to-text, and text to world connections (Harvey &
Goudvis, 2017; see also, 2007). Another strategy is developing and implementing paired text.

PAIRED TEXT

Paired text are two texts that are conceptually related in some way, e.g. topic, theme, genre, etc. It builds on the notion that "learning is seeing patterns that connect" (Bateson, 1979,

p. 11) and "reading is making connections between the books readers are currently reading and their past experiences" (Harste & Short, with Burke, 1988, p. 358). Paired text invites teachers to put intertextuality into action. They help readers "develop both an expectation for connections and strategies and for making the search for connections more productive and wide ranging" (Short & Harste, with Burke, 1996, p. 537). Making connections between texts and representing those connections with poetry are two ways readers can respond to literature.

Poetry as Literary Tool and Flexible Genre

Historically, teachers, especially English/language arts teachers, have students read poetry, but also "write from poetry, write about poetry, and write poems themselves" (Somers, 1999, p. 125). Writing from poetry is when students use poems as starting points for writing personal reflections and formal papers. Writing about poetry is when students use poems to examine and critique genres and specific poems. Writing poetry is when students use models and patterns to write their own poems.

Poetry is a powerful literary tool. It makes an art form out of ordinary language (Brady, 2009, xii). It has "potential for sharpening oral communication, building vocabulary, facilitating closer readings of texts, and improving writing skills" (Eva-Wood, 2008, p. 564). Poetry is also a flexible genre across grade levels and content areas.

In this inquiry, we used poetry as a data source and viewed it as "a unique and vital way to express and learn" (Vincent, 2018, p. 64).

Response to Literature

Like poetry, reader response theory has a rich literary history. This history describes different theoretical relationships between a reader and a literary work. In this inquiry we used a transactional theory of reader response (Rosenblatt, 1995).

This theory of reader response depicts the relationship between reader and text as a transaction. A transactional perspective views reading as a process in which the reader and text influence each other. This perspective views reading as "an event, a transaction involving a particular reader, a particular text, occurring at a particular time and in a particular context in which the meaning does not reside ready-made in the text or in the reader, but happens during a transaction between reader and text" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 4). Until transaction occurs, a text "remains merely ink-spots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 24).

Rosenblatt (1995) described the transactional relationship between a reader and a text as the reader's stance. Since readers transact with texts for different purposes, a reader's stance can fall along a continuum. At one end of the continuum is efferent reading. This is informational reading. The term *efferent* refers to the reader's stance that focuses primarily on obtaining, or carrying away, information from a text. In this stance the reader spends much attention on obtaining public, generally shared meanings, and less on privately felt aspects from a text. For example, efferent reading can be used to understand how a blood vessel carries blood to and away from the heart, reading a city map to locate a particular museum, an instructional manual for fixing a computer bug, and a professional guide for rewiring an electrical circuit.

On the other end of the continuum is aesthetic reading. This is experiential reading. The term *aesthetic* refers to the reader's stance that engages in the experience of reading itself. In aesthetic reading the reader's attention is "centered directly on what s/he is living through during her/his relationship with that particular text" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 25). Reading happens only in the reader's mind. It does not take place on the page, on the screen, or in the text, but in the *act* of reading.

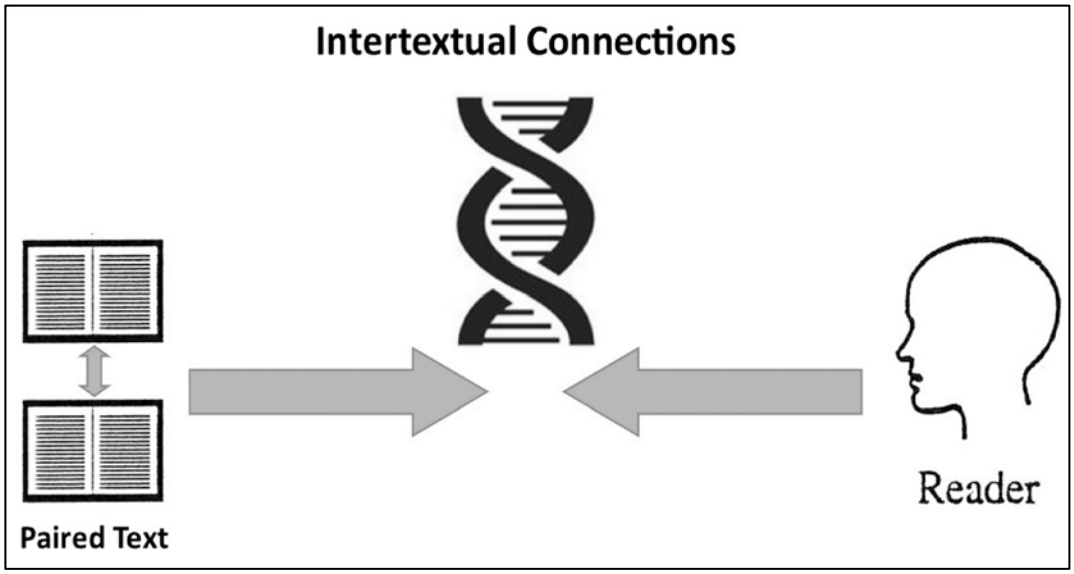
A transactional view of reader response posits that different transactions between readers and texts at different times, under different circumstances, and for different purposes may produce different interpretations. It also posits that a transaction is an event over time and a reader's stance may shift back and forth many times during any act of reading. The stance depends on why the reader is reading and what the reader aims to get out of the reading, e.g. gain information or create an aesthetic experience. The *poem* represents the result of the transaction, that is, it's what happens when the text is brought into the reader's mind and the words begin to function symbolically, evoking, in the transaction, images, emotions, and concepts.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY

We developed an instructional strategy to integrate intertextuality with selected CCSS and paired text and situate it within a modified version of a transactional view of reader response.

Typically, a transactional view of reader response depicts a single reader transacting with a single text. Figure 1 illustrates a modified version of this transactional view. This version depicts a single reader (on the right), but shows the reader transacting, not with a single text, but with a paired text (on the left). An image similar to a double helix appears in the middle. The large, curved, and interweaving lines on the helix represent each text in the paired text. The horizontal lines inside the helix represent the intertextual connections the reader creates with the paired text. The instructional strategy used in this inquiry was based on this modified version of a transactional view of reader response. This strategy invited students to select and read a paired text, create intertextual connections across texts, and represent these connections by writing and illustrating poetry.

Figure 1. Modified Version of Transactional View



RESEARCHERS' BACKGROUNDS

We both teach graduate courses in literacy education at different universities: one in the Midwest and the other in the Northeast. Our courses focus on intertextuality and instructional strategies to integrate reading and writing across the curriculum. Recently, we invited students, all of whom are practicing teachers, K-12, to experience this instructional strategy. Conceptually, we wanted students to experience intertextual thinking and learning. Instructionally, we wanted them to select a paired text, create intertextual connections, explore different poetry formats, and write and illustrate a booklet of original poems that represented the connections. Ultimately, we wanted students to experience this instructional strategy so that they, in turn, could use this same strategy with their own students when asking them to read and write poetry with paired texts.

We organized and implemented the instructional strategy in a series of interrelated reading, writing, and learning experiences. First, we read aloud *R is for Rhyme* (Young,

2010), an alphabet book consisting of a collection of illustrated poems with a variety of poetic formats, terms, and techniques, and invited students to consider using some of these to write their own poems. We also developed and shared a text set on different poetic formats across the curriculum (see Table 1).

Table 1

Different Poetic Formats

The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere
Troy Thompson's Excellent Poetry Book
Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices
I am Phoenix: Poems for Two Voices In Flanders Fields Why Explore?
Edgar Allan Poe's Pie: Math Puzzlers in Classic Poems
The House
Doodle Dandies: Poems that Take Shape
A World of Wonders
Birds on a Wire
One Leaf Rides the Wind
A Wreath for Emmett Till
Math Talk: Mathematical Ideas in Poems for Two Voices
Science Verse
Summer: An alphabet Acrostic
Before Morning
Sciencepalooza: A Collection of Science Poetry for Primary and Intermediate Students
When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer
R is for Rhyme: A poetry Alphabet

Next, we organized students in small groups and invited them to read through different texts. While reading, we invited them to record notes about poetic forms that appealed to

them. Then, we invited students to think about a content area they find challenging and develop a paired text in that content area. We wanted to transition students to integrate reading and writing and shared the following:

> Select a paired text from a content area that is appealing or challenging to you. During and/or after reading, jot down connections you found between the texts. Consider each connection a topic for a potential poem. Then, select different poetic formats that appeal to you, one for each connection. For example, you may want to write and illustrate a haiku for one connection, a ballad for another, a cinquain for yet another, and so forth. Submit your original and illustrated poetry in a booklet. Decide which poems from your booklet you wish to share with the whole class.

As a culminating experience, we invited students to share their paired text and read aloud to the class one or more poems from their booklet. We also invited them to write personal reflections about the experience and the thinking behind their actual creations.

Writing Samples

In this section we share selected poems for one student's booklet. Each poem focuses on a connection the student made from a self-selected paired text: *Red: A Crayon's Story* (Hall, 2015) and *The Noisy Paint Box: The Colors and Sounds of Kandinsky's Abstract Art* (Rosenstock, 2014).

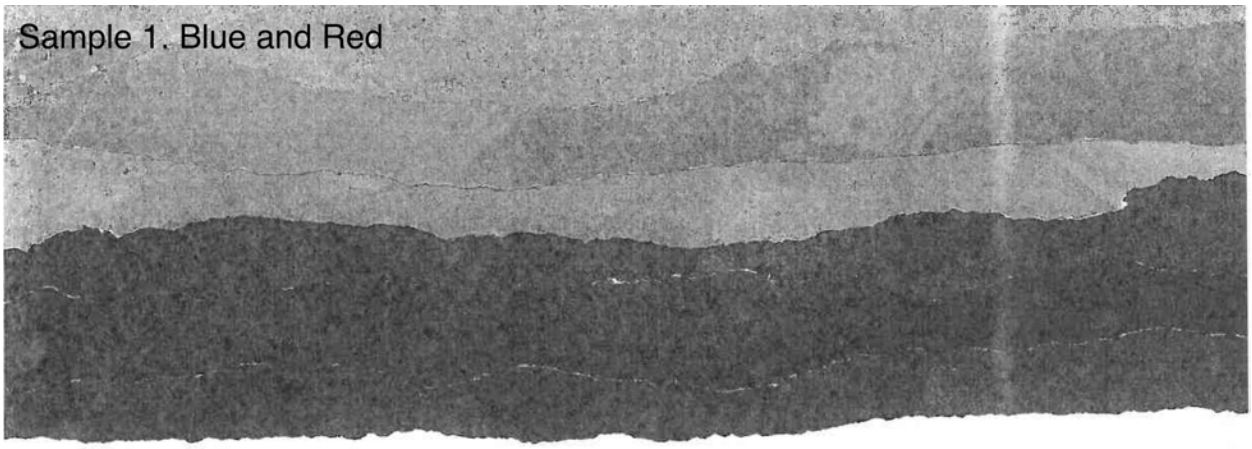
Red is a colorful story about a blue crayon with an identity crisis. The blue crayon is erroneously labeled "red." The blue crayon was unable to be red like the label everyone could see. A teacher, mother, and scissors try to help with his identity, but it remains miserable. Finally, a new friend provides a different perspective and red discovers its real identity, something readers have known all along. It's blue!

The Noisy Paint Box is the story of the life and times of Vasily Kandinsky, one of the first painters of abstract art. An intriguing facet about Kandinsky is that he had a harmless genetic condition called *synesthesia*. This condition allows people to hear colors, see music, taste words, or smell numbers. Because others knew he was different, Kandinsky struggled to be an authentic self throughout his life.

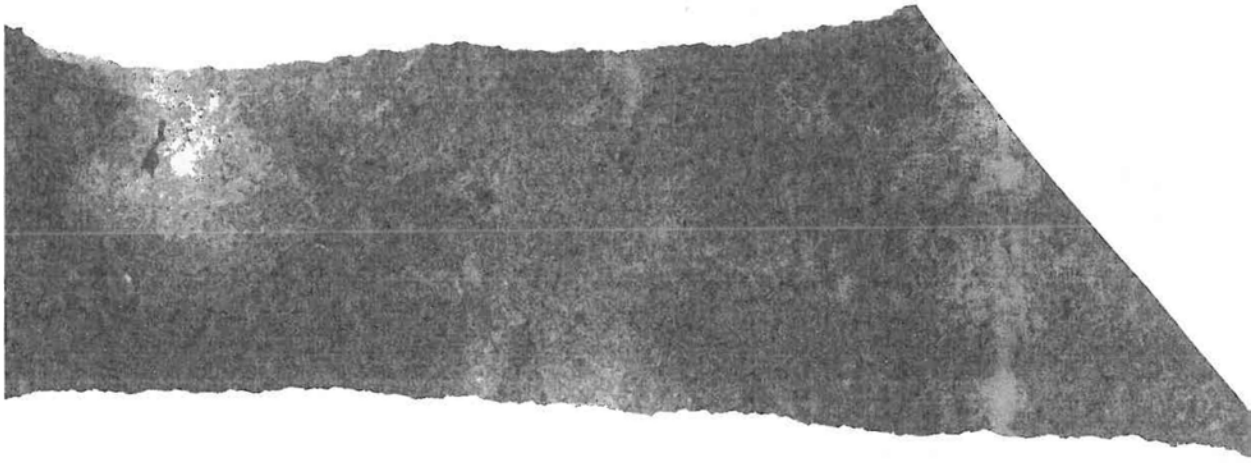
Sample 1 illustrates an untitled diamante poem that focused on the connection of being your authentic self. A diamante is a seven-line poem resembling a diamond. It can, but does not have to, rhyme. It is often used to describe two opposite topics (www.familyfriendpoems.com).

The structure for a traditional diamante is the following:

Line 1:	1 word (subject/noun)
Line 2:	2 adjectives that describe line 1
Line 3:	3 –ing words that relate to line 1
Line 4:	4 nouns (first 2 relate to line 1, last 2 relate to line 7-if author is writing about opposite topics)
Line 5:	3 –ing words that relate to line 7
Line 6:	2 adjectives that describe line 7
Line 7:	1 word (subject/noun)



BLUE
BRILLIANT EFFORTLESS
FUNCTIONING INSPIRING DARING
BUT WHEN ASKED TO BE SOMETHING ITS NOT
TYING FAILING LACKING
OBVIOUS SUPERFICIAL
RED



Compared to the traditional definition and structure, this poem is a modified diamante. It contrasts the colors, blue and red, and is shaped in the form of a diamond. Line 4, however, does not consist of 4 nouns; it consists of eight words, only one of which is a noun, and functions as a transition to contrast the brilliance of blue to the superficiality of red, or contrasting the authentic self (blue) to the inauthentic self (red). The author stated:

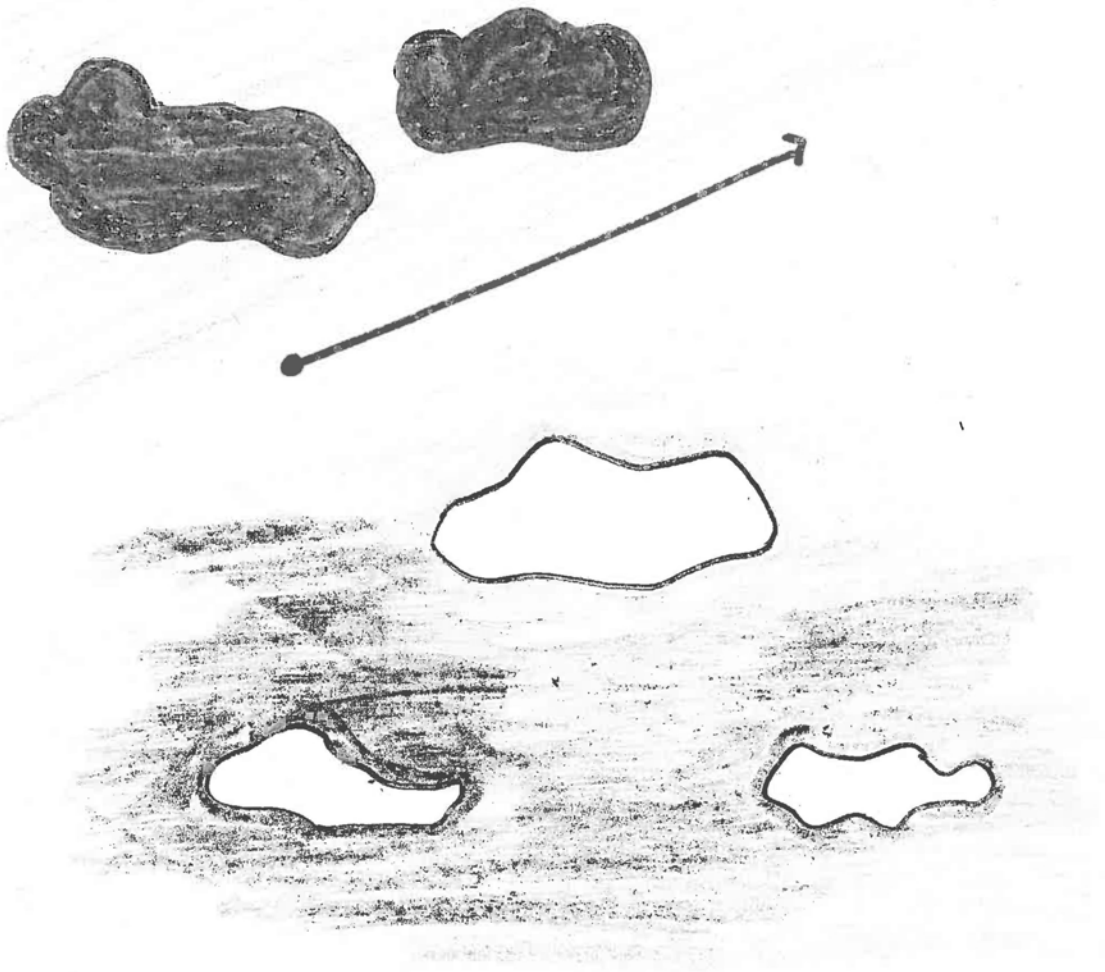
> My diamante poem contrasts blue and red in relation to Hall's story about the blue crayon that was labeled incorrectly. The crayon was unable, no matter how hard it tried, to be red like the label everyone could see. When someone came along and allowed the crayon to be blue, even encouraged it to be blue, then suddenly it was able to shine and others noticed what they didn't before when they were trying to force it to be less than its authentic self. I called red 'obvious' facetiously because that's all anyone saw even though that was only the wrapper.

Sample 2 illustrates a doublet entitled "Red to Sky" and focuses on the connection of transformation. The format of a doublet is to make a list of words that change, one letter at a time, to make a different word. The doublet is written one word under another to make a word ladder. The poem is then written around this word ladder. The first and last words of the word ladder are usually the title (Young, 2010).

Sample 2. Red to Sky

Red to Sky

red won't always work
without a rad -ical shift to a world where periods
can be a starting point, like a ray,
we will say, "It can't be done like that."
And our sky will always be flushed ruby and scarlet
-instead of ever
azure, indigo, cyan, or cobalt



"Red to Sky" is consistent with the structure of a doublet. It contains a word ladder, starting with red, then rad, ray, say, and ending with sky. The words change one letter at a time to make a new word, e.g. red to rad, etc. The first word, red, and the last word, sky, are in the title. The author integrates and contrasts literacy and mathematics concepts into the doublet. From a literacy perspective, periods denote a stopping point, e.g. a specific punctuation mark placed at the end of a sentence to indicate the completion of an idea. From a mathematics perspective, a ray is a line with one end. It starts at a certain point and extends infinitely in one direction. When periods are viewed as rays, they become, not stopping points, but starting points to build worlds reflected in authentic colors. The author explained:

> My doublet poem is about the literal transformation of the word red to the word sky, but it is also a figurative transformation of the 'red' crayon as it changed in others' eyes to a beautiful blue when allowed to color the sky. It's like suddenly it was seen for what it was instead of what it was not. In the same way, a period can be seen as an ending, like when used in a sentence, but if renamed as a point, then it can be the beginning of a ray. Transformation from a stopping place to a starting place simply by choosing to rename and view it differently.

Sample 3 illustrates a limerick (untitled) and focuses on the connection of exploring your own reality. A limerick is a five-line, humorous poem that follows a rhyme scheme of AABBA (www.familyfriendpoems.com). The structure for a traditional limerick is the following:

Line 1:	7-10 syllables
Line 2:	7-10 syllables
Line 3:	5-7 syllables

Line 4: 5-7 syllables

Line 5: 7-10 syllables

Sample 3. Untitled Limerick

There once was a boy who was bored
To follow the norm he abhorred
He thought, "What's the big deal?"
To me THIS is what's real
New ideas must be explored!

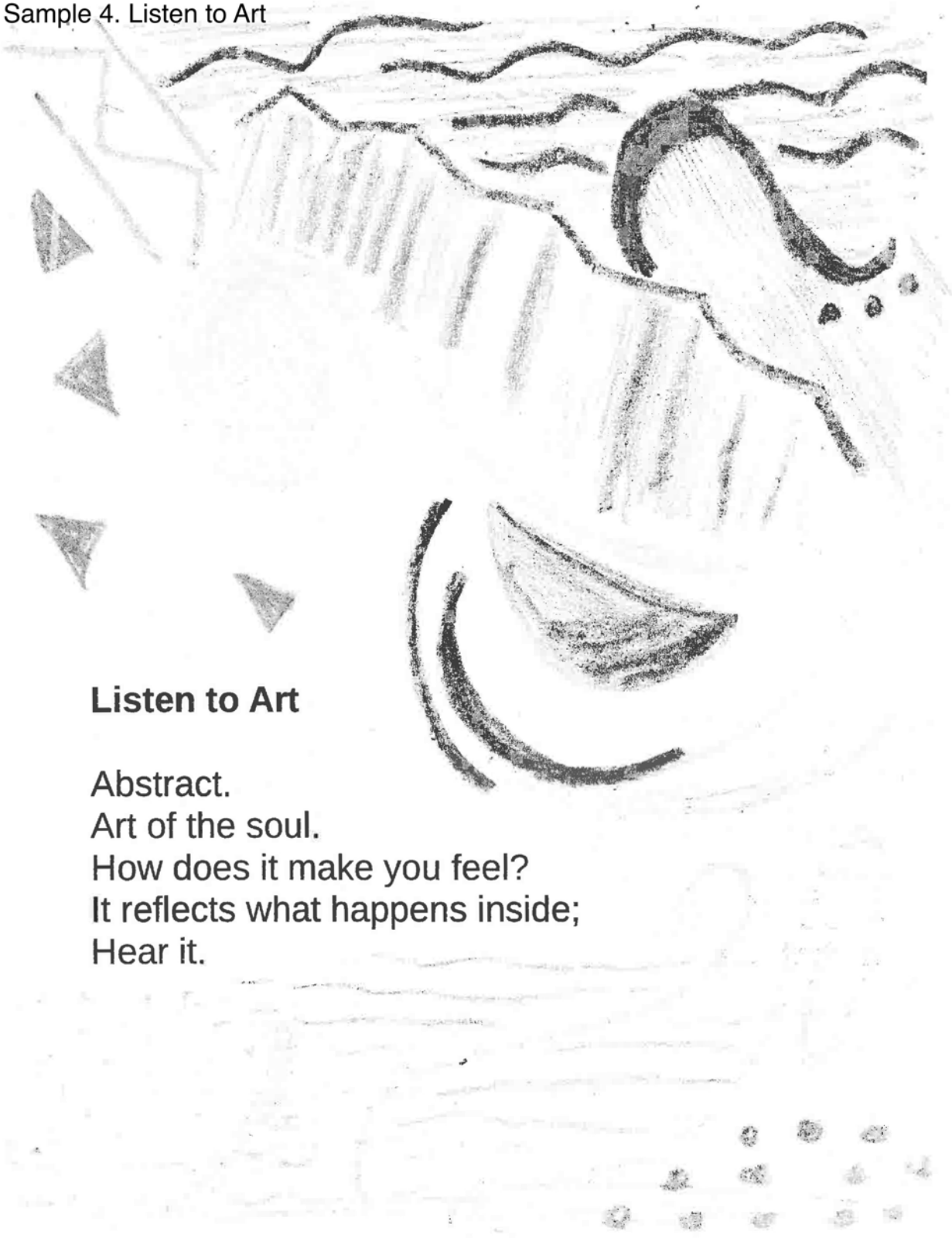
Sample 3 is consistent with the traditional structure for a limerick. It is a humorous poem about what Kandinsky might have felt like being a little boy, living normally from his point of view but being seen abnormally by others because there was little awareness of and knowledge about synesthesia at the time. It is also a challenge for readers to explore new ideas. The author said,

> This limerick is a silly way to Kandinsky's story. It also has a sort of moral or prompting explore your own reality, don't settle for what is. It makes light of the monotony of always doing things the same way and is an encouragement to the reader to try new things. Kandinsky created a whole new art movement and style, abstract art.

Sample 4 illustrates a cinquain entitled "Listen to Art" and focuses on the connection of inside is what counts. A cinquain is a 5-line poem that follows a particular format. It can vary depend on whether the poem is based on word or syllable count or parts of speech. The format for a syllable count cinquain is the following:

Line 1:	1-2 syllables
Line 2:	2-4 syllables
Line 3:	3-6 syllables
Line 4:	4-8 syllables
Line 5:	2 syllables

Sample 4. Listen to Art



"Listen to Art" is consistent with a syllable count cinquain. It focuses on the connection that inside is what counts. What's inside is important to understand abstract art and the reading process. Background knowledge and personal experience allow the viewer of art and the reader of text to really listen and understand. Just hear it. The author explained,

> My poem is primarily talking about the way to understand abstract art. It's sort of the same way we read literature. We bring our own experience and feelings into the creation. For each of us it may be different. This poem also hints to the blue crayon being inside the red wrapper. The most beautiful things that it could do were a result of the inside, not the outside.

Lessons Learned

In this article, we shared one student booklet because it was representative of all student booklets in this project. We learned several lessons across all student booklets. One lesson was that students genuinely valued this experience. They found this strategy an engaging, creative, an open-ended opportunity to represent their thinking and learning. One stated:

> I really enjoyed representing my learning in this creative format. I spent much time thinking through the connections I was creating and how I would represent them in writing. My thinking was divergent. I felt like there were so many connections between my paired set. There were color connections, the process of finding yourself connections, ways to look at outside influences and what is normal or desired connections, and ultimately how they all connect as a commentary on beauty. People are inspired to work and learn and grow when they are given permission to be truly themselves.

Another stated:

> This experience taught me much about myself as a reader and writer and teacher of reading and writing. I never realized how many connections can

be made across two texts and how powerful poetry can be to express those connections.

Another lesson involved the element of surprise. Smith (1998) noted that when students are meaningfully engaged in learning experiences, they often learn more than they expect to learn. This happened with students. One stated:

> I was reluctant at the start. I don't consider myself a poet or artist and had some hesitation about delving into those two areas. In the end I was amazed at how thought-provoking this experience was. I enjoyed it immensely and found that writing poetry deepened my thinking between the texts. Writing poetry evoked emotions and made me sensitive to the fact that I had to choose words carefully. This led me to really think about what I was trying to say about the connections. It is one thing to make connections; it's another thing to expand on connections through writing poetry.

Still another lesson involved students' taking inquiry stances and asking new questions. Inquiry is messy and often filled with tensions (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2014). Asking new questions is a good way to explore tensions and invites thinking differently. Students used this experience to think differently about current tensions with their own teaching. One stated:

> I started reflecting on this paired text experience both as a graduate student and as a middle school teacher. I found myself asking new questions. What if we diagnose students like the crayon or Kandinsky as having a learning deficiency when in reality we are failing to see their intelligence? Students have different aptitudes and abilities in things that often go unrecognized, underutilized, and underdeveloped. School calls certain students successful because it caters to a certain set of valued skills.

We learned that making intertextual connections is not a static, but a generative process. Making connections generate other connections. One stated:

> This experience allowed me to analyze a paired text in more ways than I ever would have before. I found myself making endless connections between the books. I made connections to themes, connections with illustrations, and connections with characters. I look at books very differently than I did before.

Finally, we learned that paired texts invite readers to make connections that are not only generative, but also see connections as opportunities to do research. For example, when it came to the paired text, students did not treat each text equally. They created intertextual connections but saw different potentials from each connection. Some connections reflected aesthetic responses, while others reflected efferent responses. One student intentionally selected a paired text that included one fiction text and one nonfiction text. This student saw one connection as an opportunity to do research and represent findings from the research in a specific poetic format.

She stated:

> I liked using a fiction and informational book for my paired text. It gave me an opportunity to do research on one of my connections. I used my research to write a Ghazal.

This student saw potentials for taking both aesthetic and efferent stances in the same experience. Although a transactional view situates reader response along a continuum of two extremes, ranging from aesthetic at one end of the continuum and efferent at the other, much reading falls into the middle of the continuum with the reader responding to cognitive as well as emotive aspects (Roen & Karolides, 2005). Here, students did the same. They took both efferent and aesthetic stances on paired text and wrote poetry based on each of these stances.

LASTING THOUGHT

We believe that it is important for readers at all grade levels and across all content areas to respond to texts in a variety of ways, e.g. language, art, music, dance, drama, tableaux, improvisation, etc. Here, our aim was to invite and support students to use poetry as a literary form to respond to self-selected paired text. Specifically, students selected a paired text and read for the purpose to create intertextual connections and used specific poetic formats to represent connections they made.

Students were actively engaged and intellectually involved throughout this project. They spent time thinking critically and creatively, taking both aesthetic and efferent stances, creating generative intertextual connections, and inquiring and asking questions.

We hope this article helps teachers start new conversations and ask new questions about other engaging and creative instructional strategies to help students make intertextual responses to text.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

William P. Bintz, PhD, is a professor in Literacy Education in the Department of Teaching, Leadership, and Curriculum Studies at Kent State University. He has taught high school English/Language Arts in Chicago, Illinois, and middle school English/Language Arts in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico and Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. He earned his Ph.D. in reading education at Indiana University. Prior to joining the faculty at Kent State, he was a Visiting Lecturer at the Armidale College of Advanced Education in Armidale, Australia, as well as an assistant professor at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky, James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and the University of Kentucky in Lexington, Kentucky. His personal experiences and professional interests include literacy across the curriculum, K-12, collaborative teacher research, interdisciplinary curriculum, and using award-winning literature as "Way-In" and "Stay-In" literature to create and sustain student interest in content area topics where no interest currently exists. Currently, his professional interest is the use of *crossover icturebooks* in grades K-12.

Lisa Ciercierski, PhD, is an assistant professor of language and literacy education at Penn State Behrend, as well as the director for the PennLake National Writing Project. She earned her PhD in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus on literacy from Kent State University. Dr. Ciecierski's research interests include intertextuality, meaningful writing, and utilizing authentic literature both within and across the curriculum.