

Teaching Project and Readings:

Reading to Write: Using Online Reader's Notebooks in a 5th Grade Classroom

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Unit Plan

Introduction

Inspiring a love of reading is the goal of every English teacher. Unfortunately, for too many of our students that goal is not a reality. In Igniting a Passion for Reading: Successful Strategies for Building Lifetime Readers, Steven Layne states, “We have many kids leaving our schools without having truly experienced a book in an aesthetic and powerful way. We have kids who’ve yet to have a book inspire them to take action. We have young people who haven’t *wondered* nearly enough...about anything!”

As a 5th grade teacher, my students read a lot and write a lot, but I realized there was a missing piece in our curriculum. Were my students wondering about their reading, the reading they do on their own? I can tell a parent what a student is reading and how quickly they progress through book by looking at reading charts and other documentation, but where was the evidence of what my students were thinking about these books? With our class study novels we have discussions, study questions, literature circles, and essays, but a way for them to express thoughts and ideas about independent reading didn’t exist yet.

I began looking at the reading workshop model for ideas. In the reader’s workshop, students are led through guided instruction in strategies for better comprehension. A key component of this method is the reader’s notebook. It is here where students could respond to literature and reflect on their thinking as they read. I felt this was the strategy I was looking for in my classroom. Being a teacher comfortable with technology, I could help but think of how I could update the traditional reader’s notebook into a living digital form.

In “Electronic Reading Workshop: Beyond Books With New Literacies and Instructional Technologies” Lotta Larson states, “Much like traditional literature response journals, blogs

provide opportunities to record and share innermost thoughts and feelings regarding the reading experience. In addition, blogs have the potential to transform the traditional literature response journal by incorporating multimodal features such as hyperlinks to Web destinations, digital documents, photographs, video files, music, and voice recordings.” With these thoughts in mind, I began my work on constructing and implementing a digital reader’s notebook into my class curriculum.

Participants

Kentucky Country Day School is an independent school in Louisville, Kentucky. The school has over 900 students in grades JK-12. KCD supports a rigorous academic program as well as a strong offering in fine arts, extra-curricular activities, and athletics. It is located on an 85-acre campus in eastern Jefferson County.

KCD has a strong commitment to technology integration. The Upper School has had a laptop program for the past eight years and the school is considering a 1:1 initiative in the Middle School for next year. Currently, there is a computer lab and two laptop carts available for classroom use in the Middle School.

KCD has a increasingly diverse population of students. The middle school currently has over 300 students with 32% self-identifying as students of color. The students involved in this project were from two sections of 5th grade Language Arts. One class was comprised of 18 students (11 boys and 7 girls) and the other class was comprised of 20 (9 boys and 11 girls). The class of 18 is comprised of many high ability students, many of whom are also in the accelerated Math class. One student has an accommodation plan for ADHD. The class of 20 is of average ability, but also has a greater percentage of students with accommodations and learning issues.

In this class, four students have accommodations plans for issues including ADHD, anxiety, attention, working memory deficiencies, and dysgraphia.

KCD has a rotating block schedule in the Middle School. Classes on Mondays and Fridays meet for a 90 minute block and on Tuesday, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, classes are 65 minutes. Language Arts section 1 typically met in the mornings, and Language Arts section 3 typically met in the afternoons.

The organization of the classroom is typical of most classrooms in the school. Student seating is comprised of two rows of tables with each row containing three tables. Three students are able to sit at each table. Three stand alone desks are located in the back of the room for additional seating and there is some open space with for students to use during independent reading or group activities. My desk is located in the back of the room and bookshelves line the back windows and wall and a corner of the front of the room. The front has two large dry erase boards and a SmartBoard mounted near the door. A ceiling mounted projector can connect to a laptop at the front of the room. For this teaching project, students worked mostly in the classroom using netbooks from a laptop cart.

The primary purpose of this project was to create the opportunity for my students to write and reflect on their independent reading using a reader's notebook. I also wanted to incorporate technology by making the notebooks digital. There were several reasons for this. First, digital notebooks can easily be shared between the students and myself and do not involve the need for additional materials. Middle schoolers have enough organizational challenges and I did not wish to give them something else to carry back and forth between their lockers and the classroom. Additionally, because I have more than one section of students, my room does not have adequate space to store numerous notebooks or binders permanently. Another reason I was drawn towards

a digital reader's notebook was that not only would I be able to view and comment on students' writing, but in time it would allow students to partner and perhaps share their notebooks with each other. Lastly, the digital notebook could become an artifact of student learning that would be accessible beyond this class year. It could easily be made part of an e-portfolio and follow students as part of their academic progress. The growth reflected in the responses could also be used for reflective writing exercises at the end of the year or evidence of learning that could be shared at parent-teacher or student-led conferences.

Due to our middle school adopting Google Apps for Education this year, the scaffolding necessary to make this project possible was in place. Using Google Docs made sense for many reasons. It was something we already had access to and was familiar to students. It has excellent and easy to use collaborative features and, of course, it is free! Before the unit began, students had Google accounts created by the technology staff and had used them for work in their Science class. That teacher taught students how to sign in to accounts, create a new document, share documents to others, and other basics of navigating Google Docs.

In addition, my students were already familiar with writing about our classroom literature. During the first part of the year, they met in literature circles weekly to discuss our class study novel, Wrinker by Jerry Spinelli, and to share written assignments based on their assigned roles in the group. During our independent reading project called Battle of the Books, students also wrote and answered questions about the books they were reading. Each set of questions were turned in to me and corrections needed to be made before they could be approved to go on to the next book. This gave my students familiarity with the process of writing and feedback and was a good foundation to moving on to the type of writing and response the reader's notebook could generate.

Curriculum Map

The primary goal of this unit is to give students a way to record their thinking during and after independent reading. By giving student strategies for improving their reading comprehension, a mechanism for recording their choices and preferences, and a way to document goals and progress, the goal is that reading will become a more active process. Students will have a way to practice metacognitive reflection in a way that is meaningful and authentic. By writing about what does and doesn't interest them, engaging in conversations about those preferences, and documenting their progress through the unit, students will have a stronger sense of what reading means to them.

Each lesson plan details the objectives and skills being taught and also lists the methods of assessment. The primary skills reinforced throughout the unit are reading comprehension and analysis, comparison, and paragraph writing. The primary methods of assessment are observation and reading of shared responses. In this unit, I have not moved on to individual feedback, but intend to use the commenting features in Google Docs for that purpose. I intend to use a modified version of the rubric given in Aimee Buckner's book Notebook Connections: Strategies for the Reader's Notebook. Her rubric evaluates reader's notebooks on four criteria: Volume and Variety, Thoughtfulness, Organization, and Frequency. Although it is outside of the scope of these lessons, I plan to use the rubric to have students self-assess their journals before I assess them. As Buckner did in her classroom, I plan to evaluate the reader's notebooks for a grade once students have completed four or five journal responses.

Lesson Plans

LESSON ONE

Objectives

- Students will understand the purpose of Reader's Notebooks
- Students will learn how to create a new document from a template in Google Docs, share it with someone, and navigate a document using bookmark links

Skills

- Complete log on process to Google Docs
- Share document with others

Teaching Points

- Talk to students about keeping a Reader's Notebook. Explain for what it will be used and when they will be using it (daily for next few days, then weekly). Walk students through the document and the two sections: *My Toolkit* and *My Writing*.
- Have students sign on to Google accounts. Show students how to open template gallery and create a copy of the Reader's Notebook template. Instruct them to save it with the title "Reader's Notebook_Name" and share it with me.
- Have students practice navigating the document (jump to beginning, jump to end, jump to section).

Assessment

- Observation of log in process and navigation
- Verification of sharing reader's notebook

LESSON TWO

Objectives

- Students will review the use and organization of their Reader's Notebooks
- Students will learn how to identify books by genre
- Students will learn how to evaluate whether a book is Easy, Just Right, or Challenging reading for them
- Students will record their recent reading history and evaluate the challenge level of each of their books.

Skills

- Identify a book's genre
- Evaluate personal reading level for each independent reading book

Teaching Points

- Have student open their Reader's Notebooks. Review the organization of the document (My Toolkit and My Writing).
- Read together the sections "Guidelines for your Reader's Notebook," "Genre List," and "E/JR/C: Finding Books That 'Fit.'" Discuss in particular how students will use the genre codes when completing their Reading Charts.
- Allow students time to complete the Reading Chart with books they have read so far this year. Remind them to consult the Genre List to find the codes for each book. Also encourage students to start adding book to the "Books on Deck" section. Tell them they should try to have at least two books on this list that they would be interested in reading. They can move books to the Reading Chart once they have started them.

Assessment

- Discussion
- Observation of reading chart completion

- Questions about future reading choices (books “on deck”)

LESSON THREE

Objectives

- Students will write first journal entry about their lives as readers
- Students will learn how to format journal entries

Skills

- Write paragraph response to a journal prompt
- Include topic sentence, supporting reasons, and conclusion

Teaching Points

- Have students open up their reader's notebooks and scroll down to the journal entry section.
- Look at the format of the sample journal entry and discuss the length and detail expected in entries. After discussing, have students delete the sample entry and type in the current date and the prompt, "Describe what is true for you as a reader."
- Discuss what is true for me as a reader and lead students in a discussion on what is true for them. For example, I shared with students about ten facts about my reading habits and preferences. Some of them included that I like to read, I enjoy the genres of historical fiction and fantasy, I read more in the summer than during the school year, I like to set goals for myself (ex. in high school I wanted to read 100 books in one year and I did), growing up I had a long bus ride to school and read about an hour a day, and more.
- Have students respond in their journals to the prompt. Walk around the classroom and give feedback to students as they write, prompting them to other ways of thinking about their reading history and habits.

Assessment

- Discussion
- Observation of writing process
- Paragraph writing

LESSON FOUR

Objectives

- Students will learn about books “on deck” and think about future reading plans

Skills

- Evaluate reading preferences
- List books to be read in future

Teaching Points

- Have students open up their reader's notebooks and scroll down to the reading chart and books “on deck” section.
- Discuss with students that soon we will be finishing the Battle of the Books and they will be able to read books of their own choice. Have them reflect on their journal entry on what's true for the as readers and then discuss ways can find new books to read. Share that these might come from recommendations from friends, books they have heard about or seen in the library, or have seen other students reading. They also can think about other books from authors they enjoy or books that fit their favorite genres.
- Have students add books to their on deck list they have thought about reading. Each student should add at least two books to their “on deck” list.
- Encourage them to also update their reading chart with books they are currently reading or have completed.

Assessment

- Discussion
- Observation of reading chart completion for books “on deck”

LESSON FIVE

Objectives

- Students will write a journal entry comparing two books they have read

Skills

- Write paragraph response to a journal prompt
- Include topic sentence, supporting reasons, and conclusion
- Compare novels and identify similarities
- Develop reading comprehension, interpretation, and analysis skills

Teaching Points

- Have students open up their reader's notebooks and scroll down to the journal entry section.
- Ask students to think about their current independent reading book. What similarities do they see between it and something they have read in the past? Are the settings or characters similar in any way? Do they see any other points of comparison between the books? After discussing these questions, have students type the following question into their journal, "How is the book you are reading like another book you have read? Which do you like better?"
- When ready, students should scroll down to the journal entry and begin writing. Remind them to date their entries and be sure to list the question above their responses.

Assessment

- Discussion
- Observation of writing process
- Paragraph writing

LESSON SIX

Objectives

- Students will choose their own writing prompt and write a journal entry

Skills

- Write paragraph response to a journal prompt
- Include topic sentence, supporting reasons, and conclusion
- Develop reading comprehension, interpretation, and analysis skills

Teaching Points

- Have students open up their reader's notebooks and scroll down to the 'Your Choice' writing prompt page.
- Instruct the students that may choose any of the writing prompts listed under Fiction Prompts to answer in their journal. They may use a book recently finished or their current book to answer the question. Discuss with them that depending on where they are in their current book, some questions may be more appropriate than others. For example, "Describe your favorite part" might be a better question to use if they are further along in a book.
- When ready, students should scroll down to the journal entry and begin writing. Remind them to date their entries and be sure to list the question above their responses.

Assessment

- Discussion
- Observation of writing process
- Paragraph writing

Instructional Tools

There were several instructional tools used in this unit. Students needed access to computers or laptops connected to the Internet. They also needed to have access to Google Apps for Education accounts in order to access the Reader's Notebook template in Google Docs, save their own document, and share it with the teacher. This would also allow the teacher to read and respond to student comments.

I searched for a digital version of a Reader's Notebook to use with this project and could not find one, so I created my own using Google Docs. The Reader's Notebook I created combines ideas from several sources and many of my own. The document is organized into two sections, *My Toolkit* and *My Writing*. The toolkit section contains a variety of information to help students think about their reading. There is a guidelines page that is patterned after those listed in the Fountas and Pinnell reader's notebook by Heineman. There is also an explanation of finding an "easy, challenging, and just right" book that borrows from ReadingTogether.org tips for parents. The writing prompts for fiction and nonfiction were part of Laura Candler's free resources for teachers implementing reading response journals. Other resources in the notebook were recreated based on materials I already used, for example, the genre list, or were created expressly for this project.

Reflection

When I initially began thinking about this project, my focus was rather broad. I knew that I wanted to incorporate reading and writing about reading into the project and I also knew I wanted to take advantage of technology and embed 21st Century skills.

In submitting my teaching project proposal and as I began to read, I listed several outcomes I wanted to achieve. I shared that I wanted students to:

- Make peer-to-peer book recommendations
- Write reviews of books they have read and publish on class website
- Keep a journal about their reading choices

I probably thought of several more objective in addition to those! What I found in planning the lessons is that I needed to simplify if I wanted to meet my most important objective, having the students write about their reading.

Some of the purposeful decisions I made were to use Google Docs as the platform for the reader's notebooks. I struggled at first to decide how to structure the notebooks. There is so much information and I found many different ways teachers have organized reader's notebooks. I decided that I wanted to divide our notebooks into two parts, one with resources and one with each student's personal writing. One of the challenges was that I needed to have everything organized in the template just right before the first lesson because once the students copied the template, if there was a mistake, there would be forty documents to correct instead of just one. As Murphy's Law would dictate, I did find an organizational issue that I couldn't leave and did have to go back through all the notebooks to correct it for students.

The first few lessons I feel were almost pre-teaching what I needed students to know. Before we could get to the writing, the logistics of setting up and using the reader's notebooks

needed to be addressed. By the third lesson, we were finally able to begin writing and the important work began.

The course materials were very useful to me in planning the lessons. As I have stated, Aimee Buckner's Notebook Connections was invaluable. It provided the lesson I used for our first journal prompt and gave me language I could use when explaining to students the purpose of what we were doing.

The lessons in this unit only cover about three weeks of our classwork, but I intend to use the reader's notebook in my classroom through the end of the year. With their third entry under their belts, students are becoming used to the process. I was mindful of what Buckner, Candler, and others mention about frequency of writing. It is a fine balance between writing too infrequently where students lack the continuity to improve their skills, and writing too frequently where they become burned out and tired of writing. I have opted to make writing in the notebooks a weekly activity. I have been able to reserve one of the laptop carts every Wednesday until the end of the school year. My students know this and I think it won't be long before Wednesdays become known as Notebook Day!

I do have a challenge ahead of me. I have realized that the writing section of the notebooks is tricky to get to because it is at the end of the document. It is clear to me that the writing portion should be moved to the top, especially since it will become more difficult to navigate as the documents grow longer. I am considering if a Google Site might be better suited to this need. If journals could be entered on a blog page and the resource information could be on a static page, that might be easier to navigate.

I have also considered whether there is another way to share the toolkit information with students. Currently, everyone's toolkit exists in separate documents and if I wanted to add a new

page of strategies, I would need to place it in each student's notebook. I would like to explore some way to share that information with students where it could be dynamically updated, but still linked to their individual notebooks. This will probably be something I continue to explore over the summer if I decide to continue the reader's notebooks next year.

Appendix

Reader's Notebook Pages 1 - 4

<p>Name _____ Class Section _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Reader's Notebook</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;">  <p>My Toolkit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines for your Reader's Notebook • Strategies Used by Proficient Readers • The Importance of Vocabulary • E/J/R/C: Finding Books That "Fit" • Your Choice Prompts • Genre List </div> <div style="width: 45%;">  <p>My Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Reading Chart • Books "On Deck" • Journal • My Vocabulary Finds </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Jump to the Beginning</i> 1 <i>Jump to the End</i></p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Guidelines for your Reader's Notebook</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select books that you think you will enjoy and abandon books that aren't working for you after you have given them a chance. • Write thoughtful responses to your reading. Be sure to give examples from the text to support your opinions. • Start each entry with the date. Give the book information when you write (title and author). • Do your best work!  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Jump to the Beginning</i> 2 <i>Jump to the End</i></p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">Strategies Used by Proficient Readers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making connections between prior knowledge and the text • Asking questions • Visualizing • Drawing inferences • Determining important ideas • Synthesizing information • Repairing understanding  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Jump to the Beginning</i> 3 <i>Jump to the End</i></p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">The Importance of Vocabulary</p> <p>"The difference between the right word and the almost-right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning-bug." —Mark Twain</p> <p>"We do think in words, and the fewer words we know, the more restricted our thoughts. As our vocabulary expands, so does our power to think." —Madeleine L'Engle</p> <p>One of the key differences between a poor reader and a strong reader is VOCABULARY. Good readers tend to read a lot and have larger vocabularies, where as weaker readers tend to read less and have smaller vocabularies. Consider this...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a 5th grade student reads ONE hour each day for 5 days a week, he or she will encounter approximately 2,250,000 words in reading over a school year! • If just 5% of these words are new or unknown, that means he or she will encounter about 112,500 unknown words. • If that student learns just 5% of these unknown words, then he or she will learn at least 5,625 new words each year from just reading! <p>Here are some strategies to use when you encounter an unfamiliar word.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use context clues to help you figure out what a word means. • Use your knowledge of word parts (prefixes, suffixes, root words) to construct a meaning. • Draw on knowledge of word origins from other languages (ex. Latin or Spanish meanings) for clues to possible meanings. • Write the word down or highlight it. Use a dictionary or thesaurus to check the meaning. • Don't hesitate to ask someone what a word means. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Jump to the Beginning</i> 4 <i>Jump to the End</i></p>

Reader's Notebook - Student Responses

Riya, 5th grader

11/1/11

Describe what is true for you as a reader.

I love to read! My favorite genre is fantasy and especially the Harry Potter series. I learned to read at a very young age when I was almost 4 and sometimes when I got sick I would start reading my favorite book called Go Dogs Go!! I have a few habits and one of the many habits I have is to always create reading logs on the computer and update them nightly. Now my language arts teacher introduced us to reading-rewards where I can track my reading. I have recently evolved into Skunk and my goal is to be an Alien 4 by the end of the year. I also want to have at least 100,000 RR miles by the end of the year. I really want to read the Hunger Games Trilogy Set because I have heard a lot of people talking about it. Reading is my most powerful hobby and I love it. I read for at least 1 hour and thirty minutes each night. I probably couldn't live without books....or candy!

Will, 5th grader

11/1/11

describe what is true for you as a reader.

I have always liked reading.the person that got me into reading was my sister.she got me reading because she always read and i was jealous because I could not read because I was 3.I have always liked fiction historical fiction and action! I love action because when i read them i can never let the book down!I always like it when i get to read historical fiction because i like learning about old times.love reading

Reader's Notebook - Student Responses

Michael, 5th grader

11-1-11

Describe what is true for you as a reader.

I don't like reading that much. If I had to make the choice I would choose action books. My favorite book is probably the book I'm reading now Arogon. My habits are to never read in the car because I get car sick. I don't have any goals in reading. As you can tell I'm not a big reader.

Reader's Notebook - Student Responses

Jack, 5th grader

11-9-11

How is the book you are reading like another you have read? Which do you like better?

The book I am reading right now is The Devil's Arithmetic. The book I have already read is Dead Man in Indian Creek. I so far am liking Then Devil's Arithmetic. The book The Devil's Arithmetic is like Dead Man in Indian Creek because they are both like mystery books. In both of the books you do not know what is going to happen next. You think you know what is going to happen but you really do not know what is going to happen to the characters in the story. That is how they are both like mysteries.

Rachel, 5th grade

11/9/11

How is the book you are reading relate to another book you have already read?

The book I am reading right now is called Radiance. It is how a girl crosses the bridge to the afterlife. This book is similar to The Hunger Games when Katniss explains everything from her point of view. In the book that I am currently reading explains humor and funny thoughts from the main characters point of view. I love action and adventure with a touch of humor that makes it fun to read. The reasons they are similar is because both authors are able to make some moments hilarious, some moments sad and heart wrenching, and some times mysterious and action packed that keeps your butt at the edge of your seat. I haven't finished my book but I hope to read the sequel too!

Reader's Notebook - Student Responses

Judith, 5th grader

11-9-11

How is the book you are reading like another you have read. Which do you like better?

The book I am reading currently is called 13 Treasures. It is very similar to the series Fable Haven.

These are the ways it is similar:

1. The main character is a girl who can see fairies
2. They have a boy friend with whom they have adventures
3. They live in their grandmother's house
4. They both have dangerous woods in the backyard
5. A witch lives in the woods
6. Both the houses have secret rooms and passages
7. One of the main characters drinks a potion to see fairies
8. A friend of the grandmother catches fairies
9. In the beginning of the book the grandparent doesn't seem to like the granddaughter but when the major event happens the grandparent is nicer

I like the book 13 Treasures better than Fable Haven. I like it better because the plot is more involved.

Reader's Notebook - Student Responses

Grace, 5th grader

11/30/11

Describe your favorite part of the fiction book.

My favorite part of The Hunger Games was when Pita and Katniss win the Hunger Games. The part has them celebrating then medicine from everywhere spreads in to the arena for Pita who came down with a fever and everything is wrong. The part of this part is when it isn't announced but from a readers stand point Pita and Katniss are in full love mode. They are on TV being interviewed the interviewer asked about their relationship and then they are just full on in love and they are kissing for the camera. That is my favorite part of a fictional book.

Tommy, 5th grader

11/30/2011

Tell about what happened in the story.

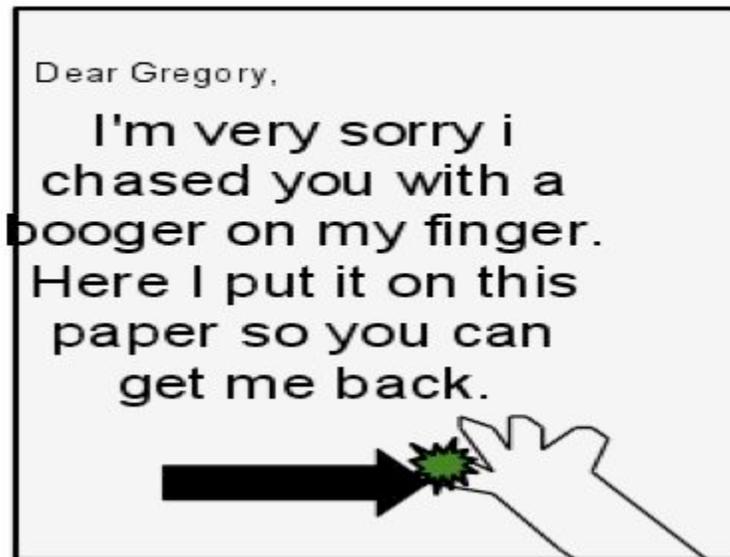
The book I am reading is Ranger's Apprentice The Lost stories. It is mainly about two rangers who travel around the country. This one is about a bunch of stories that were not in the books. The two Rangers are Halt and Will. The beginning of the book is about how he was an orphan. His parents got killed in battle. Then Halt took him to the country he lived in. The story I like most was that they have a wedding and a Genovasan assassins tried to kill the Princess of the country. The story I am reading now is about a wolf who lost his leg in a bear trap. That's all I know.

Reader's Notebeook - Student Responses

Daisy, 5th grader

11/30/11

Draw a picture related to your book.



References

Buckner, A. (2009). *Notebook Connections: Strategies for the Reader's Notebook*. [Kindle edition] Stenhouse Publishers.

In her book, Aimee Buckner gives practical information on exactly how to implement a reader's notebook in the classroom. Each chapter has a strategy lesson to help students connect with their reading on a deeper level.

Buckner discusses how in her teaching practice, students were often able to dialogue about their reading in a much deeper way than was reflected in their writing. Integrating a reader's notebook into her classroom allowed Buckner to help her students transfer that thinking about their reading to their writing about their reading. She states "It's giving time to develop their strategies for reading and comprehension and learning to use them automatically." It also allowed her students to document their thinking and growth and use the written page as a place to explore ideas.

The strategies are introduced as teacher-guided lessons in fourteen areas:

- What I Know to Be True About Reading
- What Keeps You Reading?
- History of a Reader
- Finding the Spark
- Leaning In
- Reread to Lift a Line
- Writing Connections
- The Fab Five
- Summarizing
- Favorite Authors
- Connotations
- Theme
- Character Connections
- Lifting a Prompt

The appendix section has several charts and planners to help teachers develop their own thinking on how a reader's notebook will be used in the classroom. There are also various rubrics that can be adapted and used for assessment of student notebooks and individual responses.

Larson, L. C. (2008). Electronic reading workshop: Beyond books with new literacies and instructional technologies. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 52(2), 121-121-131. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.msu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/216919806?accountid=12598>

In this article, L. C. Larson explores how a reading workshop can be done electronically by changing the mediums of each of the traditional elements of the program. She allowed her undergraduate preservice teachers to experience an online reading workshop in small groups and reflect on how they felt about each activity and whether the technology changed the process for them.

A traditional reading workshop is comprised of four common components according to Larson: literature selection, literature response journals, literature conversations, and project response options. The electronic reading workshop (ERW) also used the same components, but took advantage of “new literacies” to integrate technology into the teaching and learning. For the literature selection, her students were introduced to the concept of e-books and all downloaded a copy of House of Tailors by Patricia Reilly Giff from an online book store. Students expressed anxiety about interacting with an e-text, and although opinions varied on the preference of e-texts over traditional print, all participants rated the experience positively.

For literature response journals, Larson discussed how email, blogs, and other platforms can be used to respond to the literature. The online environment also allows for additional connections to be made through the use of hyperlinks and embedded content. In her course, the participants used Microsoft Word to keep a digital journal which was submitted to evaluation

half-way through the course and again at the end. She was able to use the commenting features of the word processing software to interact with the students' responses and give feedback.

Literature conversations were done through a threaded message board, which was familiar to many of the participants. The asynchronous nature of the discussions allowed group members time to reflect before responding and as the thread grew, discussion became more natural and rich.

Lastly, Larson commented how the nature of the new literacies available through technology use opened new possibilities for the type of projects that could be done. The participants in the ERW created virtual guides to the novel, digital oral histories, podcasts, and web quests.

Larson, L. C. (2009). Reader response meets new literacies: Empowering readers in online learning communities. *The Reading Teacher*, 62(8), 638-638-648. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.msu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/203282383?accountid=12598>

In this article, L. C. Larson researches how online learning communities can enhance reading workshop programs. As a researcher and participant-observer, Larson made a semester long case study of a fifth grade social studies class. She recorded data on all students in the class, but made special study of 10 students selected by the teacher as communicative, hard-working, but diverse in backgrounds, reading levels, and technology skills.

To tie in with the U.S. history curriculum in use, the teacher Mrs. Stitt selects two historical fiction novels to be the basis of the online learning community. Students were divided into several groups and read either Bud, Not Buddy or The Watsons Go to Birmingham both by Christopher Paul Curtis. Larson provided technical support and helped teach mini-lessons to address emerging issues during the reading workshop.

Students read e-book versions of the novels, so both their reading and responding were all done electronically. They used electronic response journals to record their thoughts and feelings while reading and participated in discussions with other students on message boards.

Larson found that writing prompts (both teacher and student-generated) fell into five categories: experiential prompts, aesthetic prompts, cognitive prompts, interpretive prompts, and clarification prompts. Students interacted in meaningful and varied ways and a supportive community developed. They used the message board forum not only to seek information and clarification, but also to share their thinking about the two novels. The transcripts and statistical

information gathered supported the observations that students were engaging deeply with the texts and through discussions seeing multiple perspectives. The research also supported that the online learning communities promoted socially constructed learning. They could share their prior knowledge and come to group understandings of the texts. The asynchronous format of the discussions allowed everyone to share when ready and allowed students less inclined to talk in face-to-face meetings the opportunity to be heard.

Layne, S. (2009). *Igniting a Passion for Reading: Successful Strategies for Building Lifetime Readers*. [Kindle edition] Stenhouse Publishers.

In Igniting a Passion for Reading: Success Strategies for Building Lifetime Readers,

Steven Layne makes a case for the need to infusing adolescent readers with a motivation to read.

Layne argues that an overlooked problem in reading instruction isn't the illiterate student, but the aliterate student. These are the children who can read, but choose not to read. They are disengaged and often don't see reading as something interesting. Citing data from the 2007 report by the National Endowment for the Arts *To Read or Not to Read*, Layne states that as a nation we have more readers that can read and don't than can't read at all, yet that is not where the attention or resources have been focused. Igniting A Passion for Reading is a call-to-action for teachers on how to light a fire in the readers, and nonreaders, in our classrooms.

Each chapter is introduced by a successful middle grades author, including Margaret Peterson Haddix, Neal Shusterman, Sharon Draper, and others, and highlights a different strategy for engaging students in literature. In the chapter, Coaches Who Know Their Players Win More Games, Layne describes how reading interest surveys can be used to find out what students like and then how teachers can use that information to connect students to the right books. Another chapter focuses on how book discussions can create a social dimension to reading and motivate kids to read books they might not have normally selected for themselves.

An appendix section includes information for teachers on finding the best Children's and YA literature through publishing newsletters, professional journals, and online blogs and review sites. The appendix also contains several forms teachers can use to collect interest information about their readers and self-assessment forms that can be used by students to gauge their own progress.

Reading Response Journals Made Easy - www.lauracandler.com. (2011). Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMC4eRRwCYE&feature=youtube_gdata_player

In this video, teacher Laura Candler shares how she uses reader response journals with literature in her classroom. Candler shares two types of reader responses journals and gives instructions on how teachers can adapt the project to whatever type of reading is going on in their classrooms. Explanation is given on how to use response journals for a single book and how to implement a response journal that can be used with several books.

From her website (<http://www.lauracandler.com/strategies/readingworkshop.php>), teachers can download the printables used in this video. The most important is the cover page on which she has created prompts to help guide student thinking. The inside front cover of the journals has prompts related to fiction and the inside back cover has prompts related to nonfiction. Candler shares that depending on the structure of the activity, teachers can allow students to choose and respond to whichever prompts they wish or can assign specific prompts to a group.

In discussing a class study of Chasing Vermeer, Candler shared several of the writing response prompts used. Students kept a running list of character traits that could be shared during discussion time. The response journals also allowed students to record their thinking before and after a group meeting. When discussing the prompt "What is Art?" Candler shared how one student's thinking broadened after her group discussion and she was able to write more in her second response after sharing with her literature circle group.

Units of Study for Reading: Structures of Reading Workshops. (2010). Retrieved from

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgN2WUMW6zM&feature=youtube_gdata_player

In this video produced by Heinemann, author Lucy Calkins explains the structure of a traditional reading workshop in an elementary or middle grades class. For teachers unfamiliar with the reading workshop, the video highlights the characteristics of a typical workshop and explains the objectives of each component. For reading workshops to be effective, Calkins stresses that they should be simple and predictable. As the routine of the workshop becomes familiar, students can immerse themselves into the task of reading. The simplicity of the structure allows students to spend dedicated time on independent reading and thinking and also allows for partner and small group interactions.

The teacher's role is not to be idle during the student reading time. The teacher begins each workshop with a mini-lesson or teaching point that should give students instruction on a particular reading strategy. When students begin their independent reading, the teacher circulates and conferences with individual students on what they are reading and thinking and works with small groups to help guide the use of reading strategies. Calkins describes and demonstrates with footage from an actual reading workshop how a mid-workshop teaching point can be used to briefly draw students back to the strategy that was introduced at the beginning of class and highlight what the teacher seen students doing as she moved about the room. The end of the lesson returns to the teaching point again and gives the teacher an opportunity to share what she or he has seen and also extend the strategy and provide students with further tips to try when reading. Students are at this point encouraged to work with a partner and later a group to share what they have been reading and thinking during the workshop session.

Hicks, T. (2009). *The Digital Writing Workshop* (1st ed.). [Kindle edition] Heinemann.

In The Digital Writing Workshop, Troy Hicks shares how technology and new literacies can transform a writing workshop.

Hicks shares his extensive experience with helping students deepen their writing knowledge and his facility with new literacies to help teachers see the benefits of infusing 21st century skills into the writing process. He does not argue for technology use as a way of doing something old. Rather, he sees the transformative power of these new literacies to change the writing process. As he states in Ch. 1, “When we simply bring a traditional mind-set to literacy practices, and not a mind-set that understands new literacies into the process of digital writing, we cannot make the substantive changes to our teaching that need to happen in order to embrace the full potential of collaborative and design that digital writing offers.”

In each chapter, Hicks gives examples of what digital writing looks like and raises questions that must be considered as teachers begin to adopt these learning structures. For example, when students work collaborative on a piece of text, who is the writer? Old models of assessment must also change with the format of the writing. Hicks also discusses how the very nature and context of the Internet changes the relationship students have with the text, their peers, and others. As Hick states, “when students are writing for real audiences and purposes, there are real reactions and consequences for them as writers (sometimes positive, sometimes negative).” When your audience is possibly the world, how does that change what you say and how you say it?

In addition to the traditional elements of writing, teachers must also consider how to teach and evaluate students for the standards of the digital world. Information is shared on

copyright and fair use, privacy, and many other areas that must be considered when embarking on a digital writing workshop.

Foremost in his book, Hicks argues that the writing and not the technology must always be foremost. He states, "If we engage students in the real writing task and we use technology in such a way that it complements their innate need to find purposes and audiences for their work, we can have them engaged in a digital writing process that focuses first on the writer, then on the writing, and lastly on the technology."

Reference Analysis

The references I chose for this paper served varied purposes. Some provided background information related to the reader's workshop model and how it is traditionally structured. Others provided source material that was used to create the Reader's Notebook template in Google Docs. Other references helped support the theoretical goals of this unit by providing information about the importance of reading and ways to engage students in literature.

The most practical and helpful of all my references is Aimee Buckner's book, Notebook Connections: Strategies for the Reader's Notebook. It is an extremely practical guide and walks teachers through the goals and purposes of a reader's notebooks and provides units of instruction. Most helpfully, it also shared actual student writing which provided a model to guide teachers in their own classroom implementation.

Although Steven Layne's book Igniting a Passion for Reading: Successfully Strategies for Building Lifetime Readers did not mention reader's notebooks at all, it was very useful for other reasons. So much of what we do in the English classroom is persuasion. We are cheerleaders for literature and often are cheering to a rather apathetic crowd. Layne provided great ideas for motivating students to *want* to read. When you help a student connect to the right book, it's like flipping a switch. Suddenly, a unengaged and perhaps unmotivated student is interested and enjoying reading. Layne used great metaphors, such as the coach and player. When the teacher, the coach, knows what interests her students, or players, you can use that information to find something the student would be interested in reading. I often tell my students that if you tell me you don't like to read, I will say you just haven't found the right book. Layne's ideas, like the Golden Recommendation Bookshelf, are definitely going to appear in my classroom. The final connection from this book is that great readers can become great writers.

The quality of the responses in the reader's notebooks will only be as good as the engagement and interest of my readers.

I found several excellent articles by Lotta Larson and feel a strong connection to her work. Her focus on how new literacies can be used to motivate learners and provide new ways of communication is fascinating. Several of her articles deal with social aspects of digital writing, which is something I did not delve into with this project, but is definitely an interest of mine. My students have been using a discussion board I set up in August to continue a running dialogue about books. With no input from me, they are asking and answering questions, discussing what they like about particular books, making recommendations, and sometimes even arguing about the literature. It's great! I don't know if I would get the same activity if I made it an assignment to participate, but as Larson shares in her work, the message board medium is familiar to our students and engaging. Often it is the quiet students who are most willing to share and I hope those interactions will find their way into the reader's notebook responses.

Some of the resources I used were videos. Heinemann produced an excellent video with reading workshop guru Lucy Calkins that provided a useful foundation for me. Not having previous experience with a reader's workshop, the video explicitly showed what happens in a traditional workshop, from the teacher's mini-lessons and work, to the individual discussions between students. Laura Candler's video was also helpful because it shared a different way reader's notebooks can be used. Candler uses what she calls reading response journals and provided helpful templates and links on her website to the resources she discussed in the video. Her fiction and nonfiction writing prompts were incorporated into my Reader's Notebook template.