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Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

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Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

by

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DISSERTATION

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Dedication

I never thought it would be easy to complete this dissertation but I underestimated the sacrifice required of my family to allow me to get it done. I dedicate this dissertation to my husband and three children.

Thank you to my husband Terry Dahl for being a kind and supportive husband and never complaining about picking up my slack so I could have just a few more quiet minutes to work.

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I really do have the best family and they probably still think I am crazy.

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Dr. Don Zancanella first enchanted me back into graduate studies, even when I just thought I was offering a little support to an online library class. Through this whole journey you demonstrated to me the kind of intellectual leader I want to be. You are always patient. Your patience with ideas, allowed me to arrive at my own conclusions. You provided direction and focus and made me often realize that the simple answer is usually the best. You really are a thoughtful and intelligent man and I was blessed to have gleaned some time with you and insights from you.

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Abstract

This research study focuses on how an aesthetic reading stance with dystopian literature can aid teens in the development of historical thinking skills. My research is based on ideas from Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory and Sam Wineburg's concept and definition for historical thinking along with the UCLA Standards for Historical Thinking. Historical thinking requires students to gain factual information but also experiences. As a social studies teacher, this practitioner inquiry study created an opportunity to explore how I might position students into the intellectual mindsets of historical thinking through fictional reading in the aesthetic stance. This study provided students the opportunity to read dystopian literature in a government class. The goal was for students to experience other peoples and societies and explore what it might mean to be a citizen in any society. The written student responses demonstrated that students made connections to course content, personal experiences, and the larger social and political world. The student responses demonstrated that the fictional readings in dystopian literature became a part of their personal experiences. By creating opportunities for reading in the aesthetic stance, my students experienced the lives of citizens in different societies. This curriculum case study was my experiment with aesthetic reading experiences and whether they guided students to reach the goals of historical thinking and comparative government due to *lived through* experiences in dystopian societies. I conclude this study by drawing connections to the teaching of empathy and independent reading.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	x
Chapter One: Introduction	2
Background of the Study.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Significance of the Study	6
Research Questions.....	7
Chapter Two: Review of Literature.....	9
Transactional Theory	10
Historical Thinking.....	19
Dystopian Literature	24
Dystopian Novels for Teacher Book Talks	31
Related Research and Studies.....	34
Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods.....	39
Overview of Classroom Curriculum and Practice.....	39
Positionality and Personal Stance.....	43
Research Questions.....	45
Case Study: Curriculum as the Case	46
Categories for Coding Student Responses.....	47
Student Writing as Source of Data Collection	53
Data Analysis and Interpretation	56
Rationale and Connection to Research Questions	56
Class Context.....	57
Data Analysis.....	59
The Researcher is the Teacher.....	63
Credibility and Trustworthiness	63
Ethics and Limitations.....	64
Chapter Four: Research Findings and Data Analysis.....	66
Reading Comprehension	68
Reading Comprehension as a Textual Tool.....	70
Categorizing Responses	76
Research Questions.....	78
Findings Part One: Reader Response Writings	79
The Writing Prompt	79
Class Context.....	79
Student Responses to Book Reading	81
Text-to-Text Examples and Summary	84
Checks and Balances.....	87
View of Human Nature.....	87
Role of Social Contract.....	88
Society Loses its Grip.....	88
Text-to-Text Analysis.....	89
Text-to-Text Conclusions	90

Text-to-Text Self as an Analytical Lens	93
Text-to-Self Examples and Summaries of Response Writings	94
Laboratories for Identifying Problems of the World (<i>V for Vendetta</i>, <i>Response #4</i>).....	95
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	95
Good People Make Bad Choices (<i>Unwind</i>, <i>Response #9</i>)	96
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	96
The Fear of Death Drives Us (<i>The Road</i>, <i>Response #10</i>).....	97
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	97
Freedom or Security (<i>Little Brother</i>, <i>Response #17</i>).....	98
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	98
Decisions to Compromise, Enjoy Life, and Rebel (<i>Adoration of Jenna Fox</i>, <i>Response #25</i>).....	99
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	99
See the Promise and the Panic (<i>World War Z</i>, <i>Response #35</i>).....	100
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	101
I Would've Been Unwound (<i>Unwind</i>, <i>Response #35</i>)	101
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	102
Judging a Society We Don't Understand (<i>Unwind</i>, <i>Response #41</i>)... 	102
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	103
Opening our Eyes to Living (<i>The Circle</i>, <i>Response #42</i>)	103
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	104
Social Contracts Can Be Broken (<i>Ready Player One</i>, <i>Response #46</i>)	104
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	104
Text-to-Self Analysis and Conclusions.....	105
Text-to-World as an Analytical Lens	105
Text-to-World Examples and Summary.....	108
Fiction Creates an Exercise in Comparative Government (<i>Year 3000</i>, <i>Response #8</i>)	108
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	108
Would We Know if Our Rights Were Violated? (<i>Little Brother</i>, <i>Response #17</i>)	109
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	109

Responses to Fictional Crisis Through Comparative Government (<i>World War Z</i> , Response #26).....	109
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	110
Why Do Governments Break Down and How Do They Reform (<i>World War Z</i> , Response #32).....	110
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	111
Identify and Define “Extreme” (<i>Unwind</i> , Response #35).....	111
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	112
Dystopia as a Cautionary Tale (<i>The Circle</i> , Response #38).....	112
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	113
Segregation Hurts All Citizens (<i>When She Woke</i> , Response #40)	113
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	113
Identifying and Solving Societal Problems (<i>Unwind</i> , Response #41)	114
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	114
Treatment of Citizens Criminals (<i>When She Woke</i> , Response #44) ..	115
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	115
Slipping Into Acquiescence of Citizen and Human Rights (<i>Ready Player One</i> , Response #46)	116
Sense-making of Student Responses to Show Intersecting Themes	116
Text-to-World Analysis and Conclusions	116
Findings Part Two: Academic Essays	118
Academic Essays and Reading Comprehension Analysis	118
Academic Essays Data	126
Essay #4- The Role of Being a Citizen Within Our Society!	130
Analysis	130
Essay #6- Civil Rights	130
Analysis	131
Essay #7- Climbing over the Wall	131
Analysis	132
Essay #8- Empowerment	132
Analysis	133
Essay #9- The Issue of Participation and Personal Accountability ...	133
Analysis	134
Essay #10- The Key Roles of a Citizen	134
Analysis	135
Essay #12- Participate, Contribute, Be Educated, Otherwise You’re Not Worth It	135

Analysis	136
Essay #13- Rights and Responsibilities: The Roles of Citizens in a Society	137
Analysis	137
Essay #16- Is the Role of a Citizen Benefitting the Government or the People?	138
Analysis	138
Essay #21- The Role of a Citizen in Society	139
Analysis	140
Academic Essay Summary	140
Academic Essay Analysis	143
Academic Essay Conclusions	145
Revisiting the Research Questions	149
Final Conclusions	151
Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations	154
Overview	154
Findings and Interpretations	158
Dystopian Matters.....	160
Curriculum Case Study and the Intersecting Themes	161
Discussion.....	162
Independent Reading.....	162
Teaching Empathy	168
Future Implications	173
Impact for Changing Education	173
Researcher Reflections	179
Conclusions.....	180
Appendices	182
Appendix A: Student Response Writing Sample #1, <i>Unwind</i>	182
Appendix B: Student Response Writing Sample #2, <i>World War Z</i>	185
Appendix C: Student Response Writing Sample #3, <i>When She Woke</i>	188
Appendix D: Student Response Writing Sample #4, <i>Unwind</i>	189
Appendix E: Student Academic Essay Writing Sample #1.....	191
Appendix F: Student Academic Essay Writing Sample #2.....	193
Appendix G: Student Academic Essay Writing Sample #3	196
Appendix H: NM Social Studies Standards, Civics and Government	199
Appendix I: Government Course Syllabus.....	201
Citations	203

List of Tables

Table 1. Student Directions for Final Essay	43
Table 2. Redrawing Boundaries around Theories	48
Table 3. Justification for Dystopian Novel Focus	54
Table 4. Reader Response Writings.....	60
Table 5. Student Academic Essays	61
Table 6. Filter for Academic Essays	63
Table 7. Dystopia and Reading Comprehension Connections	82
Table 8. Intersecting Themes of Transactional Theory and Historical Thinking	117
Table 9. Academic Essays Filtered for Textual Analysis	127
Table 10. Filtered Academic Essays and Themes	129

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background of the Study

Achieving and teaching historical thinking is an elusive endeavor. Historians and teacher practitioners struggle to define or point out how students can learn that history is both knowledge and a process. In the world of reader response scholarship, however, transactional theory provides a formula for putting readers into another world. Scholars of historical thinking talk about substantive skills in a parallel manner to Louise Rosenblatt when she discusses the efferent and aesthetic stance. This study will show how these concepts overlap and merge and also demonstrate how a reader-response oriented approach, focusing on aesthetic reading of dystopian novels in the social studies classroom, can become a successful method for achieving historical thinking.. This study engaged students with reading of fiction in a social studies classroom. My current profession is library sales consultant, but I spent most of my teaching career as a social studies teacher and a high school librarian. As a sales consultant, I hear librarians and teachers ask me questions about how we can work together to redefine reading experiences for teens and I think I contributed to that conversation with this study. This study was a snapshot of how these academic concepts might work in my classroom. For this study, I immersed myself into the curriculum and the classroom. My intent was to explore and improve my own practice as a teacher, to help my students become more astute thinkers, to capitalize on the power of reading, and to see how academic theories of reading and social studies pedagogy might intersect. My study is a curriculum case study, conducted by a teacher researcher. As a curriculum case study, I wanted to show how theories from different fields might intersect in the reading activities in my classroom. In

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

my literature review and in my researcher mind, I wanted to demonstrate how the natural benefits of aesthetic reading experiences can help foster historical thinking skills. The curriculum case study outlined the ways I see these theories overlapping, but also analyzed data from student writing to illustrate how I made space for those connections to occur in my classroom. As a teacher, I used independent reading as the most effective way to position students into the aesthetic stance in my government class. As a researcher, I made meaning from the student responses by applying concepts of reading comprehension while I read and analyzed student responses. I hope this study achieved my goal as a researcher to connect the ideas of transactional theory and historical thinking and that my classroom environment supported a teacher example of how my research influenced my practice.

Teen readers engage with complex social and political issues quite frequently outside the walls of the classroom because of popular literature (Scholes, J., & Ostenson, 2013). If prioritized and validated with space and time in their days, teens become eager readers of multiple genres. One of the most popular genres read by young adults is dystopian literature (Scholes, J., & Ostenson, 2013). Dystopian literature allows readers to imagine a dysfunctional world, a world amiss, a world where something is more terribly wrong than our current world. Though dystopian literature is not new, it takes on a different significance when aimed at young readers, because it provides opportunities to shape their emerging, worldview. Dystopian literature creates natural opportunities to discuss issues of the social and political world, so can provide a bridge to the social studies curriculum. As a social studies teacher I needed to experiment with how to allow for an aesthetic reading experience and how to include reading experiences in dystopian

literature as a comparative human experience. Aesthetic reading experiences in my classroom occurred when I made a deliberate choice to allow time and space for students to read and make their own meanings. As a social studies teacher, I did not need to become a literature teaching expert. I merely aimed to provide situations for teens to engage in historical thinking and to consider the injustices of the world through lived through experiences in the aesthetic stance.

Statement of the Problem

Before this study, reading experiences for students in my classrooms were often controlled and rarely allowed students to explore other worlds and their personal responses to them. My aim with this study was to demonstrate how aesthetic reading experiences and dystopian literature can be validated in the formal curriculum and allow students to challenge their world views, understand themselves, and understand other people in different worlds. As a result of these goals, aesthetic reading became a legitimate component of my social studies curriculum. My literature review examines historical thinking, transactional theory, and dystopian literature. My study was a curriculum case study, which examined the use of independent reading of dystopian literature to engage government students in the roles and responsibilities of a citizen in comparative societies, fictional and real. The settings of dystopian books tapped into popular culture, as well as the current and background knowledge of my students. Dystopian literature provided an easily accessible place to engage students in practices and philosophies of comparative government and historical thinking. The practice of evaluating human choices, or the role of citizens in a society, and even the structure and

relationship of citizens with a government, was strengthened by utilizing these fictional worlds as an aesthetic and experiential space.

Purpose of this Study

This study connected reader response criticism, historical thinking, and dystopian literature. There is much research in each of these areas, but there is little that connects these areas and discusses the implications for independent reading or for dystopian fiction in the K-12 social studies curriculum. Through this study I added both theory and strategies to my classroom pedagogy. Utilizing dystopian literature and creating opportunities for aesthetic reading experiences offered a rewarding method for my social studies instruction to guide students to employ the skills of historical thinking. Aesthetic reading experiences created the intellectual experiences and habits for students to learn more about themselves, their world, and the social, political, and economic institutions that define their lives.

Through the lens of historical thinking and transactional theory, dystopian literature became a viable tool for my secondary curriculum. The purpose of this study was to demonstrate how dystopian literature can be an instructional tool in the social studies classroom and how the aesthetic reading stance was an avenue to meet the standards of historical thinking. By allowing readers to engage emotionally and personally, rather than with my typical content standards-based approach and my usual Government textbook, I wanted my teen readers to explore the worldviews and social and political challenges of other people through dystopian stories which illustrate the identity struggle of protagonists who fight to restore just societies. Dystopian literature for adults and young adults offered these experiences. Dystopian literature in the young adult

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

market is often criticized for missing the point of irony, typical in adult dystopian literature, since common in themes of young adult literature dystopian novels is the element of hope for changing the future (Sambell, 1996, in Waller, 2009, p.34). Possibly, the upsurge of YAL dystopian literature is due to the notion that teenagers believe they possess the power to change the world for the better. Nevertheless both adult and young adult dystopian literature became valuable tools for my classroom and significant for this study because they transported the reader to another world to consider living as a citizen in a different society.

Significance of the Study

In the end, I wanted to complete a dissertation that informed my pedagogy of reading experiences in the K-12 curriculum to capitalize on popular culture of teens and use that to catapult students into worlds outside their comfort zone. Social studies, like English classes in the K-12 curriculum, should provide opportunities for students to learn factual information in order to develop background knowledge and a strong grasp of content but, "with so much information in the curriculum framework, social studies teachers have trouble getting beyond the 'just the facts' content coverage and into higher-level, critical historical thinking" (Vogel & Virtue, 2007, p.55). In both disciplines however, factual information and recall, especially in a world of content standards and testing too often exclude experiential and emotional journeys. In my classroom, the state only measured my students' *success* as well as my teacher effectiveness based largely on student scores from a fifty-question multiple choice end of course exam. Instead of just content acquisition activities, social studies must also transport students outside their world. In order for my students to challenge their own

biases and worldviews and truly empathize with other people, in different contexts I realized that I needed to provide experiences that put them in the shoes of another person. My students needed aesthetic reading experiences to put them off-guard, allow them to step outside the judgments of their time, to empathize- even for a moment- with the world of others. My social studies students needed the aesthetic reading experience to appreciate the human decisions and contingencies of another person in the past or current society. Furthermore, the engagement, even with fictional societies, could become a legitimate practice of comparative government because dystopian literature offered a lived through experience of being a citizen in a different society. Students could explore this fictional space and ask questions about the role and responsibilities of citizens in government, without having to take additional time to also learn about a real society. As such, dystopian societies became comparative places where students came to know and experience another world. Utilizing the aesthetic stance in my social studies classroom allowed students to engage with other people and experience the processes of historical thinking through fictional worlds.

Research Questions

This research project aimed to demonstrate how the integration of dystopian literature can be not just a valuable reading experience for teen readers, but also a tool for instruction in a social studies classroom. Aesthetic reading opportunities helped students to experience the processes of historical thinking in order to analyze more critically the world they inhabit, and the world of others. Dystopian literature, with its focus on describing and portraying worlds gone bad, offered an opportunity for teen readers to experience social and political worlds, both in the dystopian setting and in their

immediate lives. My main research question was: How does an aesthetic reading stance, with dystopian literature, aid teens in the development of historical thinking skills? I also considered:

- How do teen readers respond to dystopian literature?
- How does dystopian literature support the social studies curriculum?
- What are some key components for guiding teen readers to read in an aesthetic stance?
- How can transactional theory apply to the social studies curriculum goals?

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

There are commonalities between social studies and English teachers, but as a social studies teacher, I found myself tethered to content standards and the burdens of covering information and factual, testable information. It was hard to give up time in my curriculum to allow kids to read unless there was some factual gain at the end. In my class I used the state standards and administered an end of course exam. Those items dictated specific information to impart to students and the tool of measurement was a multiple choice exam. Fortunately, I believed that social studies, history and government were much more than the accumulation of facts. As a former librarian, I also loved books and consistently looked for opportunities to create readers in my class.

I valued readers for a variety of reasons, but mostly because I think reading provides people with ideas, stories and the lived through experiences of others. When I stared down the curricular requirements of my semester government course, I knew that covering the content standards would be hard. I also knew I wanted my students to leave with experiences of being a citizen and develop new ways to think about how they fit into their world, as much as I hoped they could properly identify the Bill of Rights. In an effort to help me define how fiction created the lived through experiences for my students, I set out to research how reading complemented and even augmented my social studies course. I used my classroom curriculum and written student responses to illuminate the ways of thinking that intersected in my academic and personal journeys. I came to this study armed with experience as a social studies teacher and with knowledge of theories about historical thinking and with social studies content. I added to this the aspect of reading I think I often most neglect: the aesthetic stance. The dystopian literature became the tool for me to demonstrate how aesthetic reading experiences can

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

foster the mental capabilities of successful historical thinkers. These areas of research collided in intellectual, pedagogical, and philosophical ways for me. Since I personally knew that reading could transport me, I set out to learn how an aesthetic stance could align with, and enhance historical thinking for my students.

In this literature review, I positioned historical thinking and transactional theory as theoretical frameworks for this study. As such, I demonstrated not just an overview of each of these topics, but also how they work together to inform the pedagogical practice of my work as a social studies teacher. This literature review focused on four major areas of publication:

1. Transactional Theory of Reading (in the larger category of reader response)
2. Historical Thinking
3. Dystopian Literature
4. Dystopian novels for teacher book talks

Transactional Theory

“The task of imagination as supposal is to change our point of view: then everything looks different, and we can begin to understand” (Lee, 1983, p. 38) *describing a philosophy of history teaching*

In this section I discuss Louise Rosenblatt’s concept of the transactional theory and focus on how readers situate into what she describes as the aesthetic stance of reading. As a social studies teacher and a graduate student, I framed my study around what might happen if I allowed space for aesthetic reading experiences in my social studies classroom. As I explored my practice as a teacher, I realized the presentation of knowledge too often dominated my instruction and I lacked ideas and approaches for how to help students understand and experience the worlds of others. I believe the

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

transactional theory, especially the aesthetic stance, helped me think differently about my instruction and reading activities for my students. Transactional theory fits into the larger body of research about reader response theories. Reader response theorizes about the manner in which a reader experiences a text. The theories vary in the degree to which they value the text and/or the reader. Transactional theory values the transaction; it claims neither the text, nor the reader can stand alone, but rather, a reading experience is an inherently individualized and unique result of how a reader meets a text.

Richard Beach and Rabinowitz also observe that a reader is not just reading facts to transfer, but experiences as well. They wrote that, “to assume the role of the narrative audience, readers pretend that they accept the text world as real. They therefore ask themselves, ‘What sort of reader would I have to pretend to be- what would I have to know and believe- if I wanted to take this work of fiction as real’” (Rabinowitz, in Beach, 1993, p. 27). Social studies teachers need to remember that knowledge is created from experiences as much as facts. Reader response theory allows for a social studies teacher to allow students to engage with reading as a tool for experiential learning. Reader response theories give teachers permission to let go of space and time for facts and direct content and clear the way for experiences, reading engagement, and envisionments. As Judith Langer noticed, “if we believe that understanding changes as readers move through a text, then we must also accept what students come away with at the end of a reading are not bits of information that appeared in the text, but their final envisionments- the text-world they have constructed” (1992, p. 39). In short reader response trusts the reader to experience and learn. Reader response was used as a strategic approach that helped to draw forth for readers the experiences of other peoples and worlds.

Within the body of work of reader response, is the transactional theory of Louise Rosenblatt. As a social studies teacher, I noted how transactional theory connected to the goals of historical thinking. The Roenblatt transactional theory elaborates on the stances, or habits of mind, of a reader during a reading experience which is relevant to my study of dystopian literature and the social studies curriculum case study. Rosenblatt identifies two types of reading experiences that operate on a continuum for most readers. These two types of reading, she calls efferent and aesthetic. Efferent and aesthetic stances operate on a continuum and represent the stance of the reader, or “attitude of mind,” rather than a type of text (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 350).

Rosenblatt situates reading as an event. This event of reading takes shape partly due to the words in the text and partly due to the mind of the reader. The end experience, for the reader is partly shaped by the reader’s disposition in approaching the text. Rosenblatt describes two dispositions- the efferent and the aesthetic. According to Louise Rosenblatt (1994), during aesthetic reading “the reader’s primary concern is with what happens *during* the actual reading event...in aesthetic reading, the reader’s attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text” (pp.24-25). The aesthetic reading stance stands opposite to- yet on the same continuum- as the efferent stance. A reader engaged in the efferent reading stance is primarily concerned with the information to take from the text, or the specific information to apply to something after a reading (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.23). Aesthetic reading experience is more likely to occur when students want to enter another world. Aesthetic reading experiences allow a teacher to give students an experience with a text on the students’ terms. These reader stances are not polar-opposite options, but more like

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

two ends of a continuum, where most readers do not approach reading in an absolute efferent or aesthetic stance. Rosenblatt identifies reading as an event because “there is not necessarily only one ‘correct’ interpretation, even though a student “should be led to discover that some interpretations are more defensible than others” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.108). Therefore, not only is reading an event, for Rosenblatt, but a crucial aspect of legitimate, academic practice. As a social studies teacher, I needed to learn that I could use transactional theory as a reader strategy to help my students experience personal responses, learn more about the world, and to join academic conversations about text. The reading event creates an opportunity to gain both literary and social perspective (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.115). The crux of this event hinges on allowing readers to experience both the efferent and the aesthetic stance. A student needs both mental habits and an emotional experience with literature to encounter a meaningful reading event. In *Literature as exploration*, Rosenblatt offers an exemplar scenario to identify this reading event:

The reader approaches the text with a certain purpose, certain expectations or hypotheses that guide his choices from the residue of past experience. Meaning emerges as the reader carries on a give-and-take with the signs on the page. As the text unrolls before the reader’s eyes, the meaning made of the early words influences what comes to mind and is selected for the succeeding signs. But if these do not fit in with the meaning developed thus far, the reader may revise it to assimilate the new words or may start all over again with different expectations. For the experienced reader, much of this may go on subconsciously, but the two-way, reciprocal relation explains why meaning is not ‘in’ the text or ‘in’ the reader. Both reader and text are essential to the transactional process of making meaning (Rosenblatt, 1995, pp.26-27).

If the reader’s stance or *mental set* is focused on seeking information, needing directions for action or wanting some logical conclusions, the reader is approaching the reading event in an efferent stance, and interested in the words that can be *carried away*

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

with him after the reading experience (Rosenblatt, 1982, pp.268-269; Rosenblatt, 1994, p.25). The reader stance shifts to the other side of the continuum when we value the experience *during the reading*. During the reading, an aesthetic stance engages the reader to live through the reading and all the sounds, experiences, and details in that moment and then, “out of these ideas and feelings, a new experience, the story or poem, is shaped and lived through” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 269; Rosenblatt, 1994, p.24). Any text can be approached either way and both reading stances should be taught in schools (Rosenblatt, 1982, pp.269-271). An efferent stance is typical in modern classrooms, especially for social studies. Teachers want students to glean details and facts, so reading is primarily employed in these environments as utilitarian, rather than experiential. Though both stances are needed, social studies classrooms need a revival of the aesthetic stance. The aesthetic stance allows a reader to “pay attention to all of the elements activated within him by the text, and can develop the fusion of thought and feeling, of cognitive and affective, that constitutes the integrated sensibility” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.46). An integrated sensibility can represent, for adolescents, a shifting social and political awareness and identity. A classroom that provided reading opportunities to engage with the reading, for the sake of the experience, and not just the knowledge that can be carried away, was something I considered valid and valuable in my social studies classroom. I wanted my students to be accountable for understanding other people in other places and times through reading experiences. Rosenblatt asks for instructors to view the aesthetic and efferent not as in “opposition, a dichotomy, but a continuum between the two stances” because both reading stances provide insight into the world (Rosenblatt, 1993,

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

p.383). The aesthetic stance, however, just seemed to be in short supply in my social studies classes, when it could provide so much value.

Fifty years after publication of Rosenblatt's theories in the academic world of literary theory, several authors joined to publish a *Transactions with Literature* compilation to testify to the impact of Rosenblatt and her identification of reading as an event, or transactional experience. In a chapter devoted to positioning children and young adult literature as a part of the transactional reading event, Rudine Sims Bishop explains that, "Louise Rosenblatt forcefully reminds us that the text on the printed page is merely a potential, that only in the transaction between the reader and the text is the work of art created" (Farrell & Squire, 1963, p.8). In simple form, all of this explication of the transactional experience and how reader dispositions influence a reading event is merely an effort to identify how a reader arrives at an experience or an interpretation from a text. For Rosenblatt, in *The Reader, The Text, The Poem*, this event is an "active relationship between the reader and text" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.10). Therefore, meaning making cannot be pre-determined and exists not solely in the text or the mind of the reader, but the active experience through the linking of reader and text (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.14). For classroom teachers, this means reading is a situation, with unpredictable outcomes, where we must allow students the space to experience the text on a personal level, and at the same time, guide them to understand how to evaluate literary responses and connect to meaning in their worlds. The reading experience, in short, is an event that requires teachers to focus on the mind of the reader.

The aesthetic and efferent stances described by Rosenblatt are a part of her overall transactional theory. Rosenblatt's transactional theory is situated in the larger study of

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

reader response. Reader response arose from a group of theorists interested in how the reader played a part in the reading experience. Reader response validates the role of the reader as the source of experience, rather than believing the text is a static, unchanging written document to be encountered with universal truths by any reader. Some reader response theorists position the reader into the social and cultural context or the within the text. For Rosenblatt, reader response is about the *transaction* between the reader and the text: the place where the reader and text meet to make meaning. At its most simple, the transactional theory means Rosenblatt believes that “reading is a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p.268). And, furthermore, the text should not be valued more than the reader, for the reader also adds, through the act of reading, meaning to the text. In fact, she writes, “the physical text is simply marks on paper until a reader transacts with them. Each reader brings a unique reservoir of public and private significances, the residue of past experiences with language and texts in life situations. The transaction with the signs of the text activates a two-way, or, better, circular, stream of dynamically intermingled symbolizations which mutually reverberate and merge” (Rosenblatt, 1986, p.123). Simply put, the transactional theory is an “active relationship between reader and the text” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.10).

The transactional theory is an important approach for valuing not just the facts students draw from reading in their school experiences, but also for creating opportunities for students to internalize stories and reimagine their worlds. The transactional theory is more than just an analytical look at the behavior of the reader engaged with a text; it is a position for teachers who want to allow students to become changed by their reading

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

experiences. For Rosenblatt, the transactional theory is not just reading, but a *living through* experience created by this transaction which can continue long after the reading experience ends (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.350). The reading experience, when viewed as a transaction can generate ever-changing and organic instruction in the classroom because it is a unique experience insomuch as, “the relation between reader and text is not linear. It is a situation, an event at a particular time and place in which each element conditions the other” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.16). The transactional theory allows the teacher to let the reader live through the reading experience. Rather than focus on one particular book for all readers at one time, the reader can select their encounters through various books. In fact, “the adolescent reader needs to encounter literature for which he possesses the intellectual, emotional, and experiential equipment” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.25). In the end, it is not so much the book that matters, nor the exact facts to be derived by a set of readers, but the accumulation of experiences. Readers can experience and learn through personalized, reading transaction. As a result, the benefits of reading become individualized and lasting as the “reader may later apply insights derived during this experience to the practical historical figure; but this would involve a nonaesthetic attitude” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 31). So the transactional theory is useful as both a means and an end for a teacher. By providing experiences for young readers to live through situations of other people, in different places and times, students accumulate experiences to internalize and apply to future learning.

By utilizing both the aesthetic and efferent reading stances and regarding reading as a transactional process, teachers can provide facts and experiences in the classroom through reading. To this end, social studies teachers need to validate the reading

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

experience, and the readers in their classrooms, and be confident that the mere experience of reading about other people, in other lands, can create an opportunity for students to experience and connect on their own.

Transactional theory can be valuable to K-12 pedagogy, both within and outside of a traditional English language arts classroom. Social studies teachers can find several points of analysis and observation in this reader response theory to support the social studies classroom. Aesthetic reading experiences values the reader, and the response, acknowledging that the value derives from the ability of the reader to transport to a different world. One of the main goals of social studies teachers is to re-position students to understand events and places from the viewpoint of the other. Transactional theory can offer support to social studies teachers. Louise Rosenblatt demonstrates this potential harmony of disciplines when she writes, “the boundary between inner and outer world breaks down, and the literary work of art, as so often remarked, leads us into a new world. It becomes part of the experience which we bring to our future encounters in literature and in life” (1994, p. 21). Students can be lead to new worlds and new stances through literature in ways that the examination of factual, current and historic realities through efferent reading experiences, can never do. Reader response, in general, values the reader and the experience of reading. Iser also adds to this reader experience concept by suggesting that “indeed, it is only by leaving behind the familiar world of his own experience that the reader can truly participate in the adventure the literary text offers him” (1974, p. 388). Through this disarming of their own worldview and participation in literature through the life of another person, students begin to better understand humans and society. Bleich makes the most direct comment to social studies teachers, from reader

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

response theory, when he observes, “for me to teach literature is to teach and learn how a given work may or may not play a role in a culturally and politically situated living person” (1988, p.xiii). There is so much value in putting students into a life experience that takes them outside their immediate world and life. Even if the story is a fictional world, students can make connections to their real world and situation. If we never provide space for reader response experiences, the experience of understanding another person, in another world, time or place, is difficult to practice.

Historical Thinking

“The capacity to sympathize or to identify with the experiences of others is a most precious human attribute” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.37) *on Transactional Theory*

Historical knowledge is derived from accumulating content, or facts about history, and the ability to do history, or think like a historian. Historical knowledge is part facts and part process and experiences. One way to make tangible the concept of historical thinking is to consult the accepted, nationwide standards (UCLA Historical Thinking Standards, 1996). Historical thinking is a useful practice for learning to think more critically about people and society, in general (Timmins, Vernon, & Kinealy, 2005, p.61). Though government is not a *history* class, it is a part of the larger framework of social studies, and elements of historical thinking exist when students consider other societies, governments, or people, both current and past. When students engage in comparative government, the students use the intellectual mindsets of historical thinking. In social studies, historical thinking is valuable intellectual habits of mind for understanding other people, in different places and societies. This habit of mind allows students to think the way other people of study may think about the world but within the context of the studied inhabitants. Among those standards are themes that resonate with transactional theory.

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

The ability for a student to see life as a citizen in another society requires a degree of empathy and personal disassociation, as stated in goals outlined in the Standards of Historical Thinking. According to UCLA's Standards for Historical Thinking,

One of the defining features of historical narratives is their believable recounting of human events. Beyond that, historical narratives also have the power to disclose the intentions of the people involved, the difficulties they encountered, and the complex world in which such historical figures actually lived. To read historical stories, biographies, autobiographies, and narratives with comprehension, students must develop the ability to read imaginatively ...to take into account what the narrative reveals of the humanity of the individuals and groups involved--their motives and intentions, their values and ideas, their hopes, doubts, fears, strengths, and weaknesses. . .ability to describe the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there. . .learn to avoid "present-mindedness" by not judging the past solely in terms of the norms and values of today but taking into account the historical context in which the events unfolded (Standards of Historical Thinking, 1996, p.63).

To truly achieve the goals of historical thinking, schools need to provide opportunities for students to imagine someone else, somewhere else and temporarily suspend personal judgment. Historical thinking requires students to believe another world is real and be able to immerse themselves in that other societal and/or historical context. This exercise can be made possible by aesthetic reading practices. Aesthetic reading experiences can create real opportunities in a social studies classroom to achieve the standards of historical thinking. Aesthetic reading experiences are valuable for creating readers but are also a part of a larger process of developing habits of mind which aligns with habits needed to achieve historical thinking in the social studies classroom.

Historical thinking is elusive, which explains why there are a plethora of studies to both define the terms and to attempt to capture the skills in practice or the pedagogy that best develops it. Historical thinking, or historical reasoning, as preferred by Van Boxtel and Van Drie (2013), is not just the knowledge students learn but "an important

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

competency to develop, so that as they go on learning pupils can make productive use of their historical knowledge to interpret new information or develop deeper understanding” (p.44). Historical cognition like reader response is partly emotional and requires students to put their own lives aside and accept the premise of another world, while not rushing to judgment (Wineburg, 2001, p.22). The value of developing the propensity for historical thinking in our students means that we can, in general, “come to know others, whether they live in on the other side of the tracks or the other side of the millennium” (Wineburg, 2001, p.22). Historical thinking must be built on a foundation of historical knowledge but becomes a valuable and transferrable life skill only when it is paired with the process of learning to understand others and engage with different people in different places and times. Like the aesthetic stance of Rosenblatt, historical thinking is the intellectual practice, almost the emotional engagement, with experiences outside the individual student. The efferent stance, like the substantive aspect of historical content, is much easier to define or assess, and therefore, often dominates the instruction and assessment of our schools and classrooms. Emphasizing the process of historical thinking or creating aesthetic reading experiences are not more needed, than content or efferent reading, but they are elusive and often undervalued.

In historical thinking, like transactional theory, there is an acceptance that the students will emerge with both content and skill. Similar to Rosenblatt’s terms of efferent and aesthetic, historians talk about historical thinking as ranging from substantive to procedural. In my classroom I felt I put an emphasis on the efferent, over the aesthetic and my experience as a social studies teacher agrees with the observed tendency to cluster pedagogy around the substantive, rather than the procedural (Vogel & Virtue,

2007, p.55). Historical thinking is also dichotomous and “requires competence and ultimately a high degree of expertise in doing history” because students need both the knowledge of the past and the tools to make that knowledge meaningful (Clark, 2011, p.116; Timmins, Vernon, & Kinealy, 2005, p.61). In other words, historical knowledge is derived of both substantive and procedural constructions and activities. The substance or content of history is the substantive and the “conceptual tools needed for the study of the past as a discipline” is the procedural (Clark, 2011, p.118). As with the interplay of the efferent and the aesthetic, these concepts are ultimately useful when viewed together, but the procedural, like the aesthetic, is often under-noticed and under-utilized. One of the earliest proponents of this dualistic nature of historical thinking was Peter Lee. Lee, though wanting history teachers to be committed to knowledge, substance and content, also urged teachers of history to begin to explore the philosophical and intellectual exercises that formed historical thinking and the “doing” of history (Lee, 1983, p.48).

Historical empathy is a key concept among the skills needed to engage in the process of historical thinking. To do the process of history, rather than just accumulate factual knowledge of content, (procedural rather than substantive) historians need to be able to re-enact or get into the minds of the people of the past. In other words, they need to engage in the practice of historical empathy. This “inquiry into the thinking of historical actors, though logically impossible, can be rendered more or less feasible through historical empathy. Far from an affective achievement, empathy is a way of knowing that requires at least three conceptual tools: imagination, contextualization, and moral judgment” (Clark, 2011, p.131). Much like the mindset of readers engaged in the aesthetic stance, “historians can only imagine what it was like for predecessors if they

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

can conceive of themselves as living inside that historical period or culture, even if it is fundamentally different from their own” (Clark, 2011, p.132). To a certain extent, the opposite of historical empathy is presentism. Presentism is the “imposing of present-day values on the past” and it prevents students from viewing other people, in different places and times, as valuable and important, despite the contextual differences (Clark, 2011, p.122; Husbands & Kitson, 2010, p.74). Interestingly, Wineburg describes presentism as our psychological condition *at rest* and describes it as “a way of thinking that requires little effort and comes quite naturally” (Wineburg, 2011, p.19). Historical thinking is therefore not a process that students might engage in naturally, but an intellectual disposition that can be experienced and practiced. When Holt (1990) wrote about thinking historically, he used the skill of empathy broadly as a method for students to enter the practice of historical thinking. Through this practice students give meaning to the past by examining it with empathy and knowledge of their own immediate world. Historical thinkers can discover “the contours of other human lives in the traces those lives have left- uncovering, in the process, a history that calls for analysis, but insists on imagination” (Holt, 1990, p.45). Historical thinking requires knowledge, imagination, and the willingness and ability to understand the world of others. In probably the seminal work in the theory of teaching of historical thinking, Peter Lee dissects the definition of empathy, as it applies to historical thinking and teaching. He explains that

empathy has associations which are problematic for history, and it is often these associations which figure prominently I talk of empathy in school history: fellow-feelings, shared emotions, and even identification with some other person or group. It is frequently treated as affective rather than cognitive, and often as a somewhat mysterious power, to be set against cold logic. Its connection with understanding and explanation go largely unexplored, and it is sometimes distinguished from and sometimes conflated with imagination (Lee, 1983, p.35).

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

For Lee, empathy is multi-faceted, but not all applications of empathy are relevant to history. For historical thinking, empathy is a cognitive, not an emotional exercise. As a result, Lee determines that “empathy requires that the historian know *that* the subjects believed what they did with regard to facts and values, and *that* they felt as they did. It does not require that historians share either the beliefs or the feelings. What it does demand is that they can recognize at some level their appropriateness in their context” (Lee, 1983, p.40). Historical empathy is just one component of historical thinking, or one avenue to engage students to critically think about the past. Like aesthetic reading stances in schools, it is often forgotten or dismissed because teachers often have difficulty “pinning down a precise meaning of the concept,” and though it nets no concrete facts or absolute truths, it provides a “richer understanding of the past” and intellectually advanced historical thinking skills (Foster and Yeager, 2001, p.18). Students do not easily engage in historical thinking processes on their own, and the measurement of these skills is difficult to assess, but it remains a critical and complementary component to the fact gathering aspect of history required to gain historical knowledge.

Dystopian Literature

“Before any work can get under way the historian must know as much as possible about the society he is studying; this is not a mere prudential maxim, but indicates the fundamental point that he can put any weight upon something to be treated as evidence, the historian must know what it is. And this entails knowledge of the society which produced it- historical knowledge and the process of historical enquiry cannot be divorced.” (Lee, 1983, p.29)

“The cause of youth’s confusion and sense of futility today is often that they recognize the inadequacy of the old images and yet lack any clearly felt emotional drive toward new choices and new patterns of behavior. The quest for new images and social goals must be given sufficient emotional sanction to carry the younger generations through to a more successful solution of their problems.” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.171)

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

Rosenblatt could very well be describing the high school seniors in my current Government class. They know the *old* two party system exists and they do not want to identify with either party, but they are not ready to formulate a new, political identity. Rosenblatt was not talking about students today or students in a social studies classroom. The process for developing awareness of, and change in society, however, is the same. For Rosenblatt the emotional drive, or the internalized identification of new options for future generations, originates from a sustained engagement in aesthetic reading experiences. Students explore new opinions about how to situate themselves in the political and economic structure of the world and benefit from the opportunity to *store up* some emotional foundations through reading. This storehouse of aesthetic reading experiences might enhance the ability of students in a social studies class to form their social and political identities and situate themselves in the world.

Dystopian literature offers a direct window into a social and political world. There are hundreds of dystopian novels available for students, and it is not a new phenomenon in anyway, but no matter the age, the books contain a kernel of truth and allow readers to reflect on the maladies in current society (Liptak, 2013). Dystopian literature remains popular on the best-seller list, adult and young adult (Braid, 2015). Young adult readers demonstrate an insatiable desire to find the next dystopian title. Catapulted by the *Hunger Games*, other titles continue to offer adolescent readers a chance to see themselves as rebels in societies gone wrong (Donston-Miller, 2014). Despite the long run of dominating book publication and readers' imaginations, publishers do not expect the dystopian trend in publication to end any time soon (YPG, 2012). Dystopian fiction is not a new genre in literature, despite its current popularity. Dystopian fiction is the opposite

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

of utopian fiction; rather than describe the perfect world dystopian fiction describes the worse-case scenario of a world gone bad. Dystopian novels center on a particular social, economic, technological, environmental or world disaster creating scenario (partially from a tension present in our world today) and takes it to a magnified, logical end, if left unchecked. What kind of society might we have if global warming is unchecked? What if there was no trash system? What if an electromagnetic pulse blew out all computers and electricity? What if society was divided by race? What if poor people were left uncared for? These scenarios and experiences exist in theoretical conversations as potential possibilities in our real world as well as in the settings of many contemporary dystopian novels. These questions cannot be answered with facts and content from social studies; they require experiences and understandings of other people in other places, from other times.

By basic definition, “a dystopia is a futuristic society in which a system has been constructed to allay the ills that pervade our present, such as poverty and overpopulation. On the surface this system, through advanced technology and/or other means, appears to benefit the populace, but on closer examination citizens are worse off” (Hill, 2012, p.101). Dystopian literature fits well into the characteristics of what makes literature so pivotal to teen readers. Though dystopian fiction is not new, it manifests differently for young adult readers, for some important reasons and consequences. Dystopian literature is uniquely suited to allow for conversations that move beyond the individual teen and lead a teen reader into ponderings about other places, people, time, and worlds. Through either fictional or real world, students can practice the intellectual mindset and identify the inequities or problems of a social and political world. In fact, in my experience as a

librarian and high school teacher, teenagers are attracted to dystopian novels because they are attuned to social inequities and drawn to social justice.

According to McCallum, adolescent readers seek literary experiences that “valorize humanistic concepts of individual agency, that is the capacity to act independently in the world and of making choices about their lives offers young readers a worldview which for many is simply idealistic and unattainable.” (McCallum, 1999, p.7). Essentially, McCallum suggests that one of the main benefits of literature for young adults is its ability to allow teen readers to work out relationships between individuals and individuals and society. In a study to examine the appeal of dystopian literature to teens, Scholes determines that “dystopian novels that wrestle with deeper societal and moral issues are often well received by young minds that are developing the ability and even willingness to grapple with complex ideas” (Scholes, 2013, p.14).

The experience of reading dystopian novels allows young adult readers to recognize and become more aware of structures of society. Readers recognize the dysfunctions in the speculative society and therefore, are ready to examine their immediate world as well (Warren, 2002, p.6; Conkan, 2012, p.291; Kennon, 2005, p.48). Dystopian novels allow the reader, through the dysfunctional society, to become aware of not just the societal and economic structures gone awry, but to examine and understand the structures of their own society that influence their lives. For teen readers in particular, this can present an opportunity or a desire to join in social action: to help prevent the same tragic end in our current society. Dystopian novels ask readers to recognize structures and the role of an individual in effecting change. In fact some futuristic novels require the reader to realize that “without an understanding of the machines of late

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

capitalism and capitalism's effect on all degrees of citizenship, social change is an impossibility" (Ventura, 2011).

Dystopian literature transports readers to a different, imagined world, while allowing them to question present-day society and power structures. Dystopian books take place in the setting of a destroyed world. The source of the destruction can vary from environmental disaster to nuclear holocaust or other end-of-world scenarios, but the source of the disaster often echoes a small fear of connections to the current, real world. Carrie Hintz suggests that through this society gone awry scenario, readers learn a lesson of both hope and social action (2003, p.ix). Sampbell also believes that dystopian literature serves to "shock its readership into a realization of the urgent need for a radical revisioning of current human political and social organization" (2003, p.163). Literary theorists for young adult literature concur about the implications for dystopian literature, but emphasize the positive outcomes for teen readership. For young adult readers, the bleak future scenarios allow a teen to "rehearse the role of liberator, saving the world from the maelstrom of destruction adults have set in motion" (Hill, 2012, p.101). Through these cautionary tales, "adolescent readers can imagine a future they desire, envisioning a present that can begin to build toward that future" (Hill, 2012, p.102). Dystopian stories offer imagined futures, where quite often, a teen protagonist prevails. If a defining feature of young adult literature is identity formation, transporting teens to a world where they not only form an identity but also serve to recreate or save the larger community, then dystopian novels are logically popular among teen readers.

The dystopian setting heightens a personalized reading experience for the reader. Readers of these stories experience not only the power of personal agency, but also the

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

power of community action. In “these novels, teenaged protagonists manifest their abilities and motivation to transform their societies; they selflessly apply their agency to fight for what they believe is right” (Hill, 2012, p.113). Therefore, true to dystopian literature, readers are able to define themselves vis-à-vis power and society and through a personal journey. The reader realizes that their individual power is situated within a larger community and a community to which the reader can choose to change. In considering specific young adult dystopian titles like *The Giver*, *Uglies*, and *The Hunger Games*, teen readers “learn that through their own actions joined with the actions of other citizens, they can overcome the tyranny of the state” (Hill, 2012, p.103). Though dystopian novels for young readers still offer the coming of age story typical of that trope, these books situate it in a setting where the coming of age journey also impacts the world. Thus teen readers in this genre learn to see the world they inhabit, by contrasting it through the world they want to fiercely avoid. They learn that their individual identity can include the abilities to resist and advocate on behalf of others in their lives. In dystopian young adult fiction, teens engage with the implications of a world left to fail, but often through the eyes of a heroic, teen protagonist. This is the difference between young adult fiction and dystopian novels for adults. The protagonist guides the teen reader to not just see the inequities and the injustices, but also to craft a solution or to create a small space to keep humanity alive. This, most critics declare, is the defining difference between dystopian fictions previous to this popular emergence in the young adult space (Sambell, 2003). Partly, dystopian literature in the young adult space is an opportunity for teenagers to play with the idea that adults may create the messes of the world, but that the teen generation can find the solutions and fix it. Mostly, dystopian

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

literature, adult or young adult, offers a place for a teen to immerse themselves in world outside of her own and experience a new government and society.

When using dystopian novels in the classroom, teachers “must understand why students are fascinated with these stories, helping them find ways to think through the issues they raise. We must help them find answers to the questions they keep asking: What can I do to prevent such a world? How can we survive? How can we remain human?” (Hill, 2012, p.101). In fact, young readers can imagine the world they would want to live in, then begin to find ways to create that world” (Hill, 2012, pp.113-114). Dystopia literature for young adults offers the same opportunity for identity stories, but in a unique way to position them as people in a larger society as well. There is a hopefulness in these stories, that may not exist to the same extent as dystopian stories for adults. Particularly in dystopian young adult literature, the teen protagonist still possesses the option to fix the problems in society made by adults. Recent scholarship of dystopias and utopias positions these stories as hopeful spaces. As spaces of historical possibility, not just literature, “utopias and dystopias by definition seek to alter the social order on a fundamental, systemic level. They address root causes and offer revolutionary solutions” (Gordin, Tilley, Prakash, 2010, p.2). For all readers, dystopian novels, then, are cautionary tales; but more so for teens, they are a call to action. Teens live with their futures in front of them and a hopeful attitude that they can do more and better than the previous generations. When they engage with stories about imagined or potential futures, they engage in conversations about their future. Furthermore, when schools study dystopian novels, they not “only tap into what students are independently reading by the ream but also engage adolescents in the core of their beings at a time when they are just

beginning to envisage ways to live a meaningful life. We cannot miss the opportunity to connect our students to what is possible through the power of their freely exercised imaginations” (Hill, 2012, p.114). The power of dystopian literature is due to their power to transport readers to imagined places where teens can access these imagined and potential futures without specific content requirements or prior content knowledge of that world.

Dystopian novels for teacher book talks. My classroom library provided dystopian literature options for students, and my analysis of responses focuses on these titles. Students self-selected to read books outside of the class for the assignments, but I provided a range of dystopian novels as a baseline for student experiences and for this study. These books represented several variables in the dystopian genre. Some of these titles are classified as *young adult* and some as *adult*. Some titles neatly fit into the definition of dystopian literature, and others fall a bit outside the range. In order to meet the requirements of the assignments students read about and engaged in a dystopian society. The students made comparative analysis to the roles and responsibilities of citizens and the expectations and functions of government; dystopian books created that scenario in the most obvious way, but semi-realistic books, like *Little Brother*, could also transport readers to a place, slightly different than their own, to confront the rights they hold sacred as citizens. Since this study represented the fourth semester I carried out this project with my students, I selected these titles because they generated excitement among the students as books they enjoyed to read and opened connections to some government philosophies or concepts from the course. Students in the previous three semesters

seemed to both enjoy these titles and succeeded in making analytical connections to government from the reading experiences.

Books available for student independent reading include:

- *Across the Universe* by Beth Revis

The setting of this young adult novel takes place 300 years in the future, after the main character awakens from being cryogenically frozen and preserved. It is a dystopia, but also a murder mystery and teen love story, of sorts.

- *The Circle* by Dave Eggers

This adult dystopian story transports the reader into a world where corporations and social media dominate our lives in every aspect. A new college graduate earns her first employment at the largest, most revered social media corporation and quickly immerses herself in a world where she is constantly updated her life and checking reviews and comments of others, much to the chagrin of her parents and a childhood friend.

- *Delirium* by Lauren Oliver

In this young adult novel, the dystopian scenario premise rests on the notion that love is a disease and that the goal of society and the government is to eradicate it.

- *The Girl with all the Gifts* by M.R. Carey

In this post-apocalyptic novel, a zombie virus decimated the land and a small group of children live in a half-human, half-zombie state and are the subject of study and experimentation until the school-detention center is overrun, sending an unlikely group of allies out to save the last shreds of humanity.

- *The Knife of Never Letting Go* by Patrick Ness

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

This young adult book is the first in the Chaos Walking series, but in the story there are no females and all men are infected with a Noise germ. The dystopian novel setting is a backdrop to a coming of age story of a young man seeking to escape the troubles of being constantly bombarded with the thoughts of other people.

- *Little Brother* by Cory Doctorow

The book *Little Brother* is a young adult novel with the least dystopian elements among the books selected for analysis. It takes place in what seems to be a pretty realistic California setting. In the midst of a terrorist attack, however, citizens are required to forfeit many of their personal rights in exchange for security. In this story, teen characters find ways to circumvent and challenge these invasions into privacy and explore the reasons citizens need their rights.

- *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline

The futuristic dystopian novel for *Ready Player One* uses virtual reality and video games as the setting. The main character lives in a poor and crumbling dystopian society, but joins a video game, virtual reality competition based on trivia from the 1980s to win money and a promising future.

- *The Running Man* by Stephen King

The adult dystopian novel by Stephen King is the earliest published on the class recommended list and a frequently read and requested book by my teen, male students so I included in this study. It is a futuristic society (2025) where the world is in economic collapse and in violence. The story follows the main character through a game show, real-life quest.

- *Unwind* by Neal Shusterman

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

This young adult book is a dystopian society where abortion is illegal and parents can request their teenager to be *unwound* at the age of 15. Since life is sacred and can be recycled, teenagers who are in trouble can be sent to be *harvested* in this society so that their life continues into another. A group of escape unwinds conspires to challenge society. This the first book in a series by this author.

- *When She Woke* by Hillary Jordan

This adult dystopian novel is a society in which criminals are tagged for public citizens to notice. Citizens who commit crimes undergo skin colorization to code their crime. The main character in this novel was convicted of murder, due to having an abortion- which is illegal in this society. After a prison term, she transitions back into society by living in an institutional home with other “reds” until she can no longer accept the rules of that community.

- *World War Z* by Max Brooks

This adult dystopian novel is a post-apocalyptic tale of the world, after a zombie outbreak. The novel takes place in flashback format, after the world recovered from the zombie invasion. A reader experiences the lesson of how the world and societies fell apart, and then recovered from zombie invasion.

Related Research and Studies

As a teacher researcher, I used this study to explore my own practice. Despite an endorsement in English language arts, my teaching experience included only experience as a social studies teacher and a high school librarian. I wanted to find a way to bring the energy of pleasure reading into my social studies classroom. I wanted to see what might happen if I allowed my students time to explore dystopian literature on their own. I

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

wondered if they could become better at understanding and experiencing comparative governments and societies through independent and aesthetic reading experiences. I wanted to find a way to create reading experiences in my class, without becoming an English teacher or needing to spend instructional time on reading strategies. I decided the best way to validate the dystopian literature in my classroom was to just provide time for the students to read. Though my study was not intended to be about independent reading or any instructional reading strategy, I credit several practitioners for work that allowed me to take a thoughtful, minimalist and engaging approach to integrating dystopian fiction into my social studies class. The works of Stephen Krashen, Donalyn Miller and Kelly Gallagher demonstrate the merits and research behind providing unrestricted and unconditional time for students to read within the structured school day. Armed with their experiences, data and analysis, I embraced an independent reading approach for this study. My goal was to allow students to experience an aesthetic stance in order to achieve historical thinking.

Stephen Krashen is not only the accepted expert on independent reading he is also a prolific researcher and advocate. He offers clarity on terms that define independent reading over time, ranging from free voluntary reading to SSR and every exercise in between. In recent works, he compiled an annotated overview of research studies related to reading efficacy and strategies to demonstrate that free voluntary reading, in particular, does just as much to advance our goals of reading comprehension as any other recently touted prescriptive program (Krashen, 2011). Krashen lead me to accept that I need to allow for student self-selection and that I had a burden to provide and expect time for

engaged reading in my class. These two components of FVR will help my students to actually read and engage in a manner close to an aesthetic stance.

Kelly Gallagher is a teacher practitioner and well known in the world of English language arts teachers. His popular title, *Readicide*, demonstrates that over-teaching of literature is not only netting very little learning for students, but also creating students who avoid and dislike schools and reading (Gallagher, 2009). His work inspired me to take a minimalist approach to the dystopian novels in my class and trust that students would learn valuable insights about society, citizenship and the functions of government in our lives even without literary analysis instruction.

Donalyn Miller was a sixth grade teacher in Texas and promoted free reading for kids at a level that can best be described as a mission to awaken readers. Her book, *The Book Whisperer*, uses her classroom teaching experience to justify and prove that all students can be engaged as readers and that the key is to allow them to self-select and immerse in large number of books as a priority over teaching a single book (Miller, 2009). Her work influenced me to realize that students learn from every book experience and that the collective experiences through books guide them to as many new insights as any teacher-mandated, whole-class book. She influenced me to believe in allowing students to read a variety of titles and to challenge them to engage with more than one book. Through her work, I also find it reasonable to believe that fiction reading experiences complement a social studies education.

Research exists around the nature and reality of history education and instruction in our schools. There is a plethora of quality research and classroom case studies to try to ascertain what it means to know, teach and learn history (Stearns, Seixas, & Wineburg,

2000). Research studies on historical empathy abound and range from studies that attempt to further refine the definition and techniques that encompass the skill to examinations of pedagogical practices by current social studies teachers in aiming to help their students develop historical empathy. Researchers and educators enticed by empathy believe it holds the promise to help students become more self-aware and civically engaged (Brooks, 2009, p.231). There do not appear to be any theoretical examinations of the parallel habits of mind from aesthetic stance of transactional theory and historical empathy, or historical thinking, more generally. There does not also seem to be any research that utilizes literature or independent reading as a pedagogical tool for developing historical empathy. Though case studies around the examination of primary sources and historical fiction exist, the disposition is that these sources offer precise historical and substantive content opportunities, not necessarily procedural skills for developing historical empathy (Stripling, 2011). That is, primary sources and historical fiction offer points of historical context but there is little to suggest fiction, other than historical fiction, can serve to be a site for developing the habits of mind needed for historical empathy. When examined as a more general concept, empathy studies in education quite often use literature and children's literature as a tool, but not so much in the area of historical empathy. One research study, aimed at counteracting presentism (or the tendency to judge historical societies by the modern morals and values) by using historical empathy, or "the ability and disposition to view past lives and events through the eyes of the people who lived them," frames the study around the improved pedagogical practice of the use of timelines (Allerman & Brophy, 2003). Typically, studies by social studies teachers and academics encourage the use of primary sources

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

and actual content knowledge sources. Writing the seminal work on historical thinking, and calling for a stronger use of procedural over substantive, Peter Lee remarked, “at the moment the research raises more questions than it answers, and a great deal of theoretical and empirical work is required even before the right questions can be asked. There are obvious gaps between the general research and what would be needed in historically-oriented work, and these gaps are conceptual rather than empirical” (Lee, 1983, p.41). I hope to offer transactional theory and the aesthetic stance as a conceptual connection for historical thinking while using dystopian literature and independent reading as tools to connect these theories.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

Overview of Classroom Curriculum and Practice

This case study was a product of my work as a teacher and my inquiry as a graduate student. I immersed myself in my teaching practice, to help students become better thinkers, but wanted to explore how theories in reading and historical thinking translated into my daily practice as a teacher of social studies. Since I was doing research in my own classroom- and therefore functioning simultaneously as a teacher and a researcher- there was naturally some overlap between the ideas underlying my research and the ideas underlying my teaching. However the following discussion may help explain how I viewed and made use of particular theories. In my curriculum case study, I intended to redraw theoretical boundaries around transactional theory and historical thinking in order to demonstrate how the benefits that occur naturally in the aesthetic reading stance, become the similar qualities we hope students can develop when engaged with historical thinking. I wanted this study of research to show how the aesthetic stance provides space for students to practice the intellectual habits of mind that are required of proficient historical thinkers. As a teacher I implemented independent reading as the main activity to position students in the aesthetic stance. I selected dystopian novels as the common reading experience for all students because these stories offer an accentuated look at societies and governments that failed and where citizens need to act on behalf of themselves and others to make decisions around political, social and economic problems. I provided reader response assignments and a final essay exam for students to demonstrate the impact of the aesthetic reading experiences. As a teacher, when I read students responses, I used critical reading strategies to categorize and make meaning

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

from the student responses. As a teacher I was interested in seeing how the students comprehended their reading experiences. The comprehension strategies I used to make critical reading of my student responses allowed me to see what type of connections they made during the reading experiences as well as how they incorporated the knowledge they acquired from the reading experiences to shape their concepts about the world. Once I was able to conduct a critical reading of the students' responses as a teacher, these student written responses also became the tangible thinking I wanted to demonstrate how as a researcher, the theories of transactional theory and historical thinking intersect in my curriculum case study.

When this study commenced, it was my fourth semester teaching 12th grade Government, a semester required course in social studies in my state. For all four semesters, I used dystopian literature and a curricular approach for the focus of this study and my data collection. During the first semester I implemented some literary genre definitions and lessons, expecting to get kids into the right frame of mind to accept the dystopian novel assignment as a part of a social studies class. I found some resistance from the students and encountered challenges from them about why we spent time on reading literature in a Government class. By the third semester, I just jumped right into book talks and independent reading time and framed it as an opportunity to explore comparative governments and societies. I also simplified the gradebook requirements and assignments to two reader response writings and a final research paper. The free response writings became increasingly more interesting and descriptive and students made sophisticated and creative comparative connections about what it meant to be a citizen in a society. Something about suggesting they relate the facts of government class to their

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

experiences of being a citizen in US society, and their dystopian society, transformed into creative and critical analyses. When I required that they included experiences from real and fictional societies, students could no longer copy and paste information or facts and remain distant, but instead they became personally invested in explaining and justifying the essential rights, responsibilities and experiences that citizens in a society should value. The students began to think about the ideas and concepts of citizenship and the dystopian novels provided something close to *personal experiences* to illustrate their claims. As I started to see this project become more successful, I knew I wanted to dedicate my dissertation to understanding my process and how it impacted my students.

The curriculum for dystopian literature in Government became quite simple. I required one ten-minute independent reading session on Mondays and one twenty-minute independent reading session on Wednesdays. I required each student to read two dystopian literature books, of their choice, during the semester and submit a written response for each. The prompt for the book responses was: “describe what it is like to be a citizen in this society.” I told my students to avoid plot summaries, unless relevant to making a point and suggested that students keep the responses to around two pages of text. I dedicated no class time to teaching any literary analysis for the dystopian genre, nor did I require any literary analysis or teaching of any of the novels. I engaged in typical teaching expectations for government, with respect to content standards in the remaining class minutes. Towards the end of the semester, I provided a day for students to read and analyze academic journals that discussed themes of dystopian literature. These journals served as models for their final essay. The cumulative essay for the semester course was a research-based exploration on the themes of citizenry, where

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

students corroborated their stance about the rights and responsibilities of citizens through academic research, examples from the course content, and examples from the worlds they experienced in their dystopian literature readings as well as their democracy. For the final essay, students were allowed to make references to dystopian novels, beyond just the two they read for class. Some students read supplemental books on their own or found connections to some readings from other classes. When they connected to other classes, they often remarked to me that “they had not thought of the story that way.” The prompt for the final essay was: “What is the role of the individual citizen in a society?” The student directions for this final essay exam are included below (Table 1).

The fourth semester of this project I collected my students’ work and documented my process. I implemented this study to explore more about how this project helped me use aesthetic reading experiences to improve my students’ ability to become historical thinkers. This fourth semester utilized the lessons and approaches I created and tested in the prior three semesters. The refinement of this project for this research study duplicated my best practices, as I explored how to improve my instruction and understand the intersection of these theories.

Table 1. Student Directions for Final Essay.

Essential Question: What is the role of the individual citizen in a society?

You must be able to answer this question with specific references to your personal experiences of being a member of a democratic government as well as your experiences as a citizen in a dystopian society/government. You must back up this up with specific details/moments from US Government

1. Prepare 3 themes or areas of being a citizen that you can discuss with personal experiences or research. Potential themes to include:

- civil disobedience or protest
- exercising rights
- limiting rights
- defend rights of others
- rule of law
- treatment of criminals
- natural rights or social contract
- utilizing processes of formal government
- working “outside the system” of formal government
- protecting individual rights
- promoting public good
- participating in government
- comparative government (types, etc)

2. Qualify with personal “experiences” and specific examples of US Government- moments or features of US Government. You may cite these sources if you need to learn additional information.

For each of the themes of being a citizen, you must reference one specific example from your experiences as a citizen in a democracy and two examples of your “experiences” of a dystopian society

3. Validate through academic journal research. You must have 6-8 academic journals in your bibliography. Each of the three themes need to provide in-text citations to two academic journals. Your academic research should support your themes, not meant to provide dystopian literature analysis.

Positionality and Personal Stance

I started my teaching career as a social studies teacher, and I lived that experience for ten years before becoming a school librarian for six years and eventually returned to the social studies classroom. I worked as a sales consultant for a library resource company before returning to the social studies classroom for two years to conceive and complete this study and have returned to that role now, while I complete my writing.

When I first became a librarian, I did it because I believed in the power of teaching

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

research in the K-12 curriculum, but discovered that a whole world of informal and pleasure reading existed in the lives of my students in a powerful sense. I discovered the private passions of students for reading and realized that few teachers knew this side of their students and even fewer teachers found a way to capitalize on this zeal in the classroom. I started to notice that many students learned in both formal and informal ways and the formal world of the classroom seemed to grow further away from their influential informal worlds. Naturally, I wanted to connect those two large influences in my research study. When I discovered the transactional theory of reading, I immediately made connections to how I saw teens reacting to their personal experiences of reading, and how those reading journeys disarmed them just the right amount to sway their worldviews, in ways that standard, factual content instruction and reading rarely achieved. I came to transactional theory as a social studies teacher wanting to help students learn to understand other people, perspectives, and places. This study was my attempt to explore how I could infuse aesthetic reading experiences into social studies. If I wanted my students to know themselves or know others and to understand and empathize with other people and places, I needed to create time for reading experiences. I also wanted this study to explore what it meant for my instruction to include fiction, instead of just a textbook for reading and class learning. I was open to observing and noticing what works for teenagers and believed that intellectual practices and experiential journeys mattered as much as collecting the content and the information of standards and assessments.

My practice as a social studies teacher stood in contrast to my observations as a librarian. I offered efferent reading experiences in my social studies course, while as a

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

librarian I recognized that my avid readers more often read in the aesthetic stance. I knew my avid readers explored and observed the world and did not merely *waste* their time with books. This study made me realize that as a social studies teacher I focused too much on efferent knowledge-based instruction and efferent reading experiences and, therefore, missed opportunities to engage students as readers and observers of the world. As a result, I started putting together my research puzzle and journeys through this study. As I continued my graduate studies I found intersections with English teachers. I remain an outsider to that identity; I never taught English, but I found interesting connections to the habits of mind that should be employed in the English language arts curriculum. My desire to examine the transactional theory arose because I wanted to understand what students gained from aesthetic reading journeys. In my research, I hoped to explore the power of allowing space for creativity and imagination through independent reading experiences that could occur within my class. I hoped to lead students to more sophisticated views of the social and political world and guide them to new conclusions about the roles and responsibilities of citizens in any society. My puzzle pieces (social studies education, transactional theory and dystopian literature) fit together nicely in a study that explored the self-directed learning possibilities of teen readers.

Research Questions

How does an aesthetic reading stance, with dystopian literature, aid teens in the development of historical thinking skills? I also considered:

- How do teen readers respond to dystopian literature?
- How does dystopian literature support the social studies curriculum?

- What are some key components for guiding teen readers to read in an aesthetic stance?
- How can transactional theory apply to the social studies curriculum goals?

Case Study: Curriculum as the Case

My curriculum case study was an exploration of my practice as a teacher and my experience as a librarian, reader, and social studies teacher. This study was a way for me to explore my own practice and see how the academic theories work in my class with my students. My curriculum case study derived conclusions from my textual analysis of written student responses to dystopian literature and the students' academic essays. I accepted the explanation from McKee that in performing textual analysis on these student responses, I intended to "gather information about sense-making practices" and see how the students made sense of dystopian stories as well as their own experiences as a citizen in a society because of those experiences (McKee, 2003, p.14) My curriculum case study followed a particularistic approach to a strategy in a social studies class, with my intent of showing how an aesthetic reading experience was an instrument for engaging students in the intellectual mindset of historical thinking. This instrumental case study intended to offer insight into, and redraw generalizations, around phenomenon (Merriam, 2009, p.48).

As outlined by Barone (2011), my case study can also be described as a particularistic case study because it was centered on a particular program or phenomenon (Barone, 2011, p. 8; Merriam, 2009, p. 43). In other words, the use of free reading of dystopian literature in a government class was the focus of my research, and the student responses were the object of my observations. My classroom environment and the

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

students who inhabit the space were secondary to my focus of their written responses from their experiences with dystopian literature. As defined by Merriam, my case study focuses on a program/ policy, rather than the people (Merriam, 2009, pp.40-41). Prior to collecting data for this case study, I essentially engaged in the process of refining the curriculum and, with this case study, began at the place where I believed I had changed the conditions for learning in order to efficiently demonstrate the overlap of theories and implications for classroom teachers. All observations and work emerged from the natural setting of my classroom, but the classroom was also not the primary case or object of focus. As true with an instrumental case study, I tested this curricular approach prior to this study and began my study with an advanced focus on what I anticipated to observe and connect (Grandy, 2010). Also true to instrumental case studies, I intended “to understand a specific issue, problem or concern,” and hoped to explore and encourage the use of aesthetic reading experiences of dystopian literature as a valid tool for meeting historical thinking standards in a government course (Creswell, 2013, p.98). The written responses from students created a site of data collection to redraw the boundaries around these anticipated, overlapping theories, so that my curricular decisions, the curriculum and my student responses were the case.

Categories for Coding Student Responses

When I started the journey to find the *soul* of my social studies classroom, I never expected it to lead me to Louise Rosenblatt and the transactional theory of reading. As I learned more, I saw natural connections from Rosenblatt to the process of historical thinking, and particularly came to believe that my practice as a social studies teacher was more valuable for knowing about the aesthetic stance. The instructional goals of

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

historical thinking, as outlined in the National Standards for History, recognize both concrete and abstract concepts for classroom instruction. The themes of history resonate well with the transactional theory. I wanted this study to explain how I redrew the boundaries around these two theories because I saw how these connections improved the intellectual and emotional capacities of my students. Below I identified seven common themes in both transactional theory and historical thinking and described how the themes connect.

Table 2. Redrawing Boundaries around Theories.

Themes	Transactional Theory	Historical Thinking	My Connections
Self-understanding	“The reader, reflecting on the world of the poem or play or novel as he conceived it and on his responses to that world, can achieve a certain self-awareness, a certain perspective on his own preoccupations, his own systems of values (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.146).	<i>Historical Thinking- <u>Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation- B. Compare and Contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions by identifying likenesses and differences.</u></i> <i>Historical Thinking- <u>Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making D. Propose alternative ways of resolving the problem or dilemma and evaluate each in terms of ethical considerations (is it fair? Just?), the interest of the different people involved, and the likely consequences of each proposal.</u></i>	Aesthetic reading experiences increase the likelihood that students will learn about themselves. Students must understand the practice of understanding their own positions and biases in order to become critical thinkers in history.
Imagine	“Imagination is needed also in cognitive processes, in the process of remembering, in thinking of the past, in thinking of alternative solutions to a problem. Again, we need to	<i>Historical Thinking- <u>Standard 2: Historical Comprehension- D. Read historical narratives imaginatively. Taking into account (a) the historical context in which the event</u></i>	Imagination is required as an intellectual exercise, not just an emotional one. With imagination students can engage with a literary

	<p>see that the reader’s stance transcends the distinction between the real and the fictive” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 273).</p> <p>“Because in a democracy we need citizens with the imaginative capacity to put themselves into the place of others and see the human implications of ideas. Yet citizens must be able, as well, to think rationally and logically, and about emotionally-charged subjects” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 353)-</p>	<p><i>unfolded- the values, outlook, crises, options, and contingencies of that time and pace; and (b) what the narrative reveals of the humanity of the individuals involved- their probable motives, hopes, fears, strengths, and weaknesses.</i></p> <p><i>Historical Thinking- <u>Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation- C. Analyze historical fiction.</u> On such criteria as the accuracy of the story’s historical details and sequence of events; and the point of view or interpretation presented by the author through the words, actions and descriptions of the characters and events in the story.</i></p>	<p>world and be more effective at historical thinking, which requires them to imagine the context, problems, solutions, and human choices of the past.</p>
<p>Suspend Judgment</p>	<p>“The text is the author’s means of directing the attention of the reader. The author has looked at life from a particular angle of vision; he has selected out what he hopes will fulfill his aim, as Conrad phrased it, to make you see, to make you hear, to make you feel. The reader, concentrating his attention on the world he has evoked, feels himself freed for the time from his own preoccupation and limitations. Aware that the blueprint of this experience is the author’s text, the reader feels himself in communication with another mind, another world” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.86).</p>	<p><i>Historical Thinking- <u>Standard 2: Historical Comprehension- E. Appreciate historical perspectives.</u> The ability (a) to describe the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there, as revealed through their literature, diaries, letters, arts, artifacts, and the like; and (b) to avoid ‘present-mindedness,’ judging the past solely in terms of present-day norms and values.</i></p>	<p>The ability to suspend judgment is a natural outgrowth of the reader’s mindset when they enter the world of the story. Students must also take this same mental practice when they study the past, lest they use the values and norms of their lives to evaluate historical moments, people, and choices.</p>

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

	<p>“capacity of literary work of art to enable the reader to transcend personal limitations, whether of temperament, sex, race or culture” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.142).</p>		
Empathize	<p>“The capacity to sympathize or to identify with the experiences of others is a most precious human attribute” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 37).</p> <p>“In aesthetic reading, we respond to the very story or poem that we are evoking during the transaction with the text. In order to shape the work, we draw on our reservoir of past experience with people and the world, our past inner linkage of words and things, our past encounters with spoken or written texts. We listen to the sound of the words in the inner ear; we lend our sensations, our emotions, our sense of being alive, to the new experience, which we feel, corresponds with the text. We participate in the story, we identify with the characters, we share their conflicts and their feelings.” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p.270)</p>	<p><i>Historical Thinking- <u>Standard 2: Historical Comprehension-D and E (as listed above)</u></i></p> <p><i>Historical Thinking- <u>Standard 5: Historical Issues- Analysis and Decision-Making A. Identify problems and dilemmas confronting people in historical stories, myths, legends, and fables, and in the history of their school, community, state, nation, and the world.</u></i></p>	<p>Empathy, like imagination, is important to students as an intellectual ability, not just an emotional one. In the story and reading transaction, readers naturally empathize when they engage with the text. This same disposition must be employed to gain historical thinking so that proficient students in history can accurately evaluate human choices based on the historical context and evidence, rather than only their current lives.</p>
Adopt a Critical Stance	<p>“Curriculums and classroom methods should be evaluated in terms of whether they foster or impede and initial aesthetic transaction, and on whether they help students to savor, deepened, the lived-through experience, to recapture and reflect on it, to organize</p>	<p><i>Historical Thinking- <u>Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation-I. Challenge arguments of historical inevitability by giving examples of how different choices could have led to different consequences.</u></i></p> <p><i>Historical Thinking- <u>Standard</u></i></p>	<p>In order to allow a text to change their lives, a student must decide what influences and changes them from the experiences of the reading transaction. In historical thinking, employing the mindset</p>

	<p>their sense of it. In the light of such awareness, students can discover how the new experience, the evoked literary work, relates both to the text and to their earlier experience and assumptions; they can become self-critical and hence grow in capacity to evoke and to criticize. Centered on the personal transaction, traditional concerns-validity of interpretation, criteria of evaluation, historical perspective- can then provide frameworks for thinking about literary works of art.” (Rosenblatt, 1986, 126)</p>	<p><u>4- Historical Research Capabilities- C. Interrogate historical data by determining by whom and when it was created; testing the data source for its credibility, authority and authenticity; and detecting and evaluating bias, distortion and propaganda by omission, suppression, or invention of facts.</u></p>	<p>of a critical stance is essential for examining primary sources, and determining how their individual opinions may fit into the larger continuum of ideas, both present and past.</p>
<p>Learn and Seek Multiple Perspectives</p>	<p>“I believe it is important to counteract the implication that the literary work is only substitute or even ‘virtual’ experience and to insist that it is a unique mode of experience, an expansion of the boundaries of our own temperaments and worlds, lived through in our own persons” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.68).</p> <p>double vision... “of the reader aware not only that the text was produced by another person, but often aware also that through the text he comes into relationship with another age and another culture” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.121).</p> <p>“For years I have extolled the potentialities of literature for aiding us to understand ourselves and others, for widening our</p>	<p><u>Historical Thinking- Standard 3: Historical Analysis and interpretation- G. Consider multiple perspectives in the records of human experience by demonstrating how their differing motives, beliefs, interests, hopes, and fears influenced individual and group behaviors.</u></p> <p><u>Historical Thinking- Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making- B. Analyze the interests, values, and points of view of those involved in the dilemma or problem situation.</u></p> <p><u>Historical Thinking- Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making- D. Propose alternative ways of resolving the problem or dilemma and evaluate each in terms of ethical consideration</u></p>	<p>While engaged with the text, aesthetic readers see the story through a variety of perspectives and naturally “try on” the insights of other people. To truly gain historical thinking, students need to learn this disposition and also “try on” the viewpoints of other people in different places, times, and situations.</p>

	<p>horizons to include temperaments and cultures different from our own, for helping us to clarify our conflicts in values, for illuminating our world. I have believed, and have become increasingly convinced, that these benefits spring only from emotional and intellectual participation in evoking the work of art, through reflection on our own aesthetic experience. Precisely because every aesthetic reading of a text is a unique creation, woven out of the inner life and thought of the reader, the literary work of art can be a rich source of insight and truth.” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p.276)</p>	<p><i>(is it fair? Just?), the interest of the different people involved, and the likely consequences of each proposal.</i></p>	
<p>Embrace and Explain Complicated Narratives</p>	<p>“I argue, let us avowedly inculcate democratic values as the positive criteria for selecting among choices, whether literary or social, whether stemming from the dominant or a minority culture. Preoccupation with one or another of the many ills that call out for correction in our society and our world may lead us to neglect defense of the basic democratic freedoms that make possible any constructive remedies.” (Rosenblatt, 1982, 385)</p> <p>"In more traditional classrooms, having questions signifies that a student doesn't know (the 'right' answer) and therefore question asking is avoided by students. However, in</p>	<p><i>Historical Thinking- <u>Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation- I. Challenge arguments of historical inevitability</u> by giving examples of how different choices could have led to different consequences.</i></p> <p><i>Historical Thinking- <u>Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation- J. Hypothesize the influence of the past,</u> including both the limitations and opportunities made possible by past decisions.</i></p> <p><i>Historical Thinking- <u>Standard 4: Historical Research Capabilities- D. Marshal needed information of the time and place</u> in order to construct a story, explanation, or</i></p>	<p>Aesthetic reading experiences rarely result in simple understandings or emotions, yet readers embrace complicated narratives with pleasure. Historical thinking requires the same ability if we want students to truly live through the choices of the past and recognize contingencies that govern historical moments and people.</p>

	classrooms that support literacy understanding, it is considered a desirable behavior, indicating that students who ponder uncertainties and ambiguities and explore possibilities are behaving as <i>good</i> readers of literature." (Langer, 1992, p.44)	<i>historical narrative.</i>	
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Reader response in general validates the reader’s experience. The common goals in historical thinking and transactional theory supported my social studies instruction and my research study. The transactional theory provided an opportunity for reading experiences for social studies students for personal, emotional, and social growth. I used these overlapping themes to frame my data collection of written student responses. The main reading strategy was independent reading time with dystopian literature. The written assignments were the reader response essays and the academic essays. The curriculum for this case study was my experiment with aesthetic reading experiences and whether they guided students to reach the goals of historical thinking and comparative government due to *lived through* experiences in dystopian societies.

Student Writing as Source of Data Collection

“More recently, whole schools of literary theorists have diminished the status of literature by declaring literary texts mere artifacts of a culture, like cooking utensils and inventory records, while canonical and classic works are declared to be valuable only as cultural capital for a privileged minority, In the meantime, in the sphere of public education, assessments and policy makers who determine curriculum for public schools treat literary knowledge as information about literature and celebrate the removal of literature from classrooms in favor of ‘non-fiction’ that can be read for information” (Wilhelm and Novak, 2011, p. xiii).

I wanted my study to explore the contention that learning was solely measured by facts or testable content. Student responses were the main site of data collection. I

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

collected three types of written responses from each student. The first two sets of written responses were free response writings based on dystopian book readings. The third set of written responses was a final academic essay, where students combined themes of dystopian novels, content of government class instruction, and academic research. This study was intended for me to explore how the aesthetic reading experience provided an intellectual mindset to improve historical thinking skills. The dystopian genre connected easily to my government class because it considered the function of governments and the role of citizens. I provided the students free choice to select dystopian books, and the genre was broadly defined. I featured and promoted books that I believed help make connections to government. After three semesters of teaching with some of these titles, I selected the ones featured in the literature review for this study as books to promote to my students. These choices represented the most popular among my students and elicited some of the most interesting insights and connections to the themes and concepts of our government course. These books, also as represented in Table 3 below, provided a diversity of qualities to consider as I collected data. I did not consider this a prescriptive list or as a method to limit my class assignment or data collection. My aim with this was to partly narrow the topic of study but also ensure that the dystopian books read by students for experiences and responses represented a wide variety of variables and qualities in the dystopian genre.

Table 3. Justification for Dystopian Novel Focus.

Book Title	Original Copyright Date	Adult or Young Adult Market	Male or Female Protagonist	Dystopian Scenario or Quality
<i>Unwind</i>	2007	Young Adult	Male	Young adults can be discarded at age of 13; abortion is illegal
<i>The Circle</i>	2013	Adult	Female	Social media dominates lives; no privacy
<i>When She</i>	2011	Adult	Female	Treatment of criminals as public shaming

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

<i>Woke</i>				
<i>The Running Man</i>	1982	Adult	Male	Economic ruins and world violence
<i>The Knife of Never Letting Go</i>	2008	Young Adult	Male	Germ infection eliminates population and creates “noise” where others’ thoughts are heard.
<i>World War Z</i>	2006	Adult	Male	Zombie outbreak overwhelms world.
<i>Ready Player One</i>	2011	Young Adult	Male	Survival fight in a virtual universe.
<i>Delirium</i>	2012	Young Adult	Female	Love is considered a dangerous disease and all citizens receive a “cure” at the age of 18.
<i>Across the Universe</i>	2011	Young Adult	Female	Cryogenically frozen teens awaken 100 years in future, where civilization lives in space.
<i>Little Brother</i>	2008	Young Adult	Male	Post-terrorist attack, society loses much privacy and freedom of movement or ideas.
<i>The Girl with all the Gifts</i>	2014	Adult	Female	Most of humanity is wiped out by fungal-zombie infection. Half-infected children and teens hold the secret to a cure.

Since this curricular approach was in the fourth semester in my class as I collected data, I knew that these books offered interesting connections to some of the bigger philosophical concepts in the government curriculum and standards. As a former librarian, I used the beginning of the semester to share excitement of books with my students. I thought about what it would take to put students into an aesthetic reading stance in a social studies course. I wanted the students to look forward to the story, to want to feel like they selected the best option to interest them, and to get them excited to read something for fun. I also believed that creating a community of readers helped so I offered multiple copies of the book talked titles so students could read the same book at the same time as a friend. In addition to these titles I provided a book cart from the library and provided a whole class period dedicated to helping each kid find just the right book. I believed that allowing kids to find the right book for them was an ingredient for getting reading experiences as close to the aesthetic as possible. In my experience, that

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

came more easily if I was knowledgeable and excited about many books, knew my students, and spent time allowing students to explore. I also explained to the students that they might not like every book and but needed to learn how to make choices, without feeling like a good or bad reader because of one book experience. The final part was convincing the students that I really did want them to find a book that allowed them to experience another world and that I would not solicit plot summaries or assess them based on specific content from any one text. For this I provided time in class to read and assigned only short writing activities to elicit reader responses. I assured the students that I would not grade the reader response essays on a punitive scale, but only as completion grades. This created a way for me to see what they experienced about government in their reading experiences.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Rationale and Connection to Research Questions

Integral to my research study was the notion that historical thinking embodied and required aesthetic experiences. And through aesthetic reading experiences students might better understand their role as a citizen and engage in how it compares and contrasts with their citizenship with other people. I wanted to explore how aesthetic reading experiences and historical thinking could validate the individual learner and his experiences. For social studies, I wanted to see what might happen if a learner could become immersed in a process of self-discovery and re-imagining of the world. This curriculum case study aimed to experiment with independent reading as an instructional strategy for guiding students to meet historical thinking and government standards. As a curriculum case study, I wanted to learn how to improve my practice and to learn how I could provide

authentic citizenship experiences for as many students as possible through journeys in dystopian literature.

Class Context

The course I taught for the focus of this research study is my 12th grade government class. This course is an American government course and students take an end of course exam at the completion of the course based on the New Mexico content standards (Appendix H). With these standards and larger themes, I created a course syllabus that covered big ideas and direct facts and concepts in government (Appendix I). I begin the semester with an introduction through digital citizenship, then cover philosophical foundations that influenced the American Constitution, founding documents and political parties. From there, we studied the supreme court, social activism, voting rights, landmark Supreme Court cases, and then focused in on the 1st and 4th Amendments, New Mexico Government, and then group projects to apply all three branches of government through the lens of poverty, justice or gender. Besides the dystopian reading, the only other out-of-class requirement was a Bill of Rights research paper and presentation. The class focuses primarily on moments and facts related to being American citizens. The dystopian literature reading took place as independent reading in my class, with no direct instruction about reading the books. I provided time in class for silent reading and then continued with the normal topics and activities from my syllabus. I wanted the reading experience to provide them a place outside of their lives as American citizens so that the students could consider what they valued about their role as citizens in their society.

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

I started the semester like my normal government course for seniors in a middle-sized high school in an urban setting. This was a semester course and a graduation requirement. After about a week into the semester I introduced the project to the students. I explained to them that in our short semester, we did not have enough time to truly do comparative government, but that did not mean we needed to sacrifice the concept. Instead of learning new factual information, I suggested that fictional worlds, particularly dystopian societies, offered us a chance to make comparisons to other people, in different places or times, and that these experience might offer us some insights into understanding ourselves and our current world. I spent a day letting them brainstorm this idea, and shared books with them. I brought in a cart of books, I shared my personal collection of books, and I generally tried to get them excited about the project and make sure they understood that they must take time to pick a book they wanted to read. I explained that reading any book to please me was a bad idea and that, instead, they needed to find a book that they would enjoy that would allow them to relax and join the world. I told them to sit back, read, and enter another world and at some point, try to stop and look around and understand the people and the place and what it would be like to live there. I gave the students the semester project as a whole unit up-front, but focused on separate deadlines throughout the semester. The daily class looked much like a regular class, except I provided time for reading two times each week. Independent reading became the tool for my classroom instruction to most successfully position students into an aesthetic stance for reading, which allowed them to focus on the experiences of living in the dystopian society. The students had four assignments around this project: the book proposal writing (what they wanted to read and why) which was due in one week from the start; the first

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

reader response writing (open writing describing what they learned from the fictional society) due in five weeks from the start of the project; the second reader response writing, due ten weeks from the start of the project; and a final academic essay where the students needed to connect dystopian examples, government ideas, and academic research to prove their overall knowledge from the semester, which was due in the eighteenth and final week of the semester. The students prepared a final essay exam and were evaluated on the writing, the peer feedback, an abstract, and a class seminar on the topic.

This semester of the study I taught four sections of government class, ranging in size from eighteen to thirty-six. After the semester concluded, and I entered final grades, I collected consent forms from the newly graduated seniors, securing consent forms from twenty-three students. I separated the work of these students and made the essays anonymous before printing and analyzing the essays for this study. Each of the twenty-three students completed three essays, two reader response essays and one academic essay. For the academic essay, students reflected and used experiences from any dystopian novel, not just the two used for the reader response essays, increasing the diversity of dystopian novels for the final study.

Data Analysis

The essays served as my primary point of analysis for my study. Through open coding, I determined intersection of themes from transactional theory and historical thinking from the students' reader response writings. I clustered codes around the seven themes/categories I used to connect transactional theory and the Standards for Historical Thinking. I recorded selections from student responses that demonstrated links to

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

transactional theory and historical thinking and analyzed those responses to explain how their aesthetic experience in a dystopian world helped them to think more critically about the situation of a citizen in another society. For the reader responses where students openly reflected about one book, I analyzed all essays for connections to intersecting themes (Table 4). For the sake of simplicity, but to illustrate the quality of ideas students share, I selected ten essays for in-depth textual analysis, in order to share how students used dystopian experiences to connect to the world. For the academic essays, I analyzed all, but filtered essays and selected some for closer examination. For those essays, I was also interested in observing and noting the intersecting themes, but isolated the concept from the dystopia experience that helped the students comprehend a concept in government (Table 5). Using my experience as a teacher, I applied levels of critical reading to help me make meaning out of the student responses, in particular reading comprehension concepts outlined by Keene and Zimmerman (1997, 2007) and Keene (2010). These concepts of reading comprehension allowed me to understand what students learned from their reading experiences; both concepts are explained in detail in chapter four with the respective data sets of student responses and analysis. These lenses for critical reading allowed me to best illustrate my researcher goal of intersecting the aesthetic stance with historical thinking.

Table 4. Reader Response Writings.

	Self-Understanding	Imagine	Suspend Judgment	Empathize	Critical Stance	Perspectives	Complicated Narratives
Written Responses							
Writing 1							
Writing 2							
Writing 3							
Writing t 4							

Writing 5							
Writing 6							
Writing 7							
Writing 8							
Writing 9							
Writing 10							
Writing 11							
Writing 12							
Writing 13							
Writing 14							
Writing 15							
Writing 16							
Writing 17							
Writing 18							
Writing 19							
Writing 20							
Writing 21							
Writing 22							
Writing 23							
Writing 24							
Writing 25							
Writing 26							
Writing 27							
Writing 28							
Writing 29							
Writing 30							
Writing 31							
Writing 32							
Writing 33							
Writing 34							
Writing 35							
Writing 36							
Writing 37							
Writing 38							
Writing 39							
Writing 40							
Writing 41							
Writing 42							
Writing 43							
Writing 44							
Writing 45							
Writing 46							

Table 5. Student Academic Essays.

Essay Titled by Student	Intersecting Theme Connection	Government Concept Experienced in Dystopia used in Final Semester Essay
1		
2		
3		
4		

5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		

These categories offered a broad view of the concepts covered by all students in the study, but I wanted the filter to select some essays to highlight and examine for deeper analysis. The criteria for filtering ensured that I analyzed and used examples from essays for students who met the requirements of the project expectations and considered the books I suggested (Table 6). The essays which included evidence and examples from at least two dystopian books, met the academic research and government criteria for the assignment and connected to at least one of the featured book talk books I provided.

These essays I used for more narrative analysis (see Table 1 for assignment requirements). By looking at all the essays, I got a broad indication of the intersecting themes and experiences they highlighted from dystopian literature. But by further examining the essays of students who met all of the requirements and considered books I suggested, I explored the highest quality of student capabilities from this project, as implemented and intended by me.

Table 6. Filter for Academic Essays.

Essay Title	Dystopian Books used in student essay	Academic Essay requirement met (y/n)	Government examples from course used (y/n)	Title from Ms Dahl book talks
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

The Researcher is the Teacher

Throughout this semester, I kept a journal for field notes, observations, or ideas that occurred to me about how to best implement this curriculum. Though most of what I wanted to examine was student responses, I saw my role as a teacher and my identity as an excited reader who validates these books in a core subject, as an influence on the type of work my students produce. I think it is important to acknowledge that I embody characteristics and beliefs as a person, teacher, and reader that made this project successful and that I intended to create opportunities for students to connect ideas that they might not otherwise connect without my support and energy.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

This instrumental case study evolved from my refined, tested, and ongoing practice as an educator. This was the fourth semester of experimenting with the best

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

strategies for putting these divergent theories to work in my classroom. The setting for the data collection was the natural setting of the classroom and the data was the student, written responses, from three separate points in the semester. Students responded with open prompts to writings on two book readings and then created a final essay around the themes of citizenry, using dystopian experiences to qualify their analysis. As an instrumental case study with the curriculum as the focus, therefore, the curriculum was pre-tested and poised to demonstrate the theories and practices that can reshape generalizations about literature, reading experiences, and social studies. The student, written responses generated data about reader response from individual readers. Open coding allowed me to verify themes from several participants, across three writings, including two, open reader response writings and one academic essay writing.

Ethics and Limitations

The readers and response writers in this study were students in my class, with most of them being under the age of 18. I followed all guidelines for research clearance required of both the University of New Mexico and my school district. The student responses did not require any personal or biographical data of the individual students and the written responses were aggregated into a larger collection of responses, and then disaggregated into categories to connect to the themes of transactional theory and historical thinking. The purpose of this study was to demonstrate that the curriculum can guide students, in general, to experiences that connect them to understandings of other places and people, but the study was not intended to illuminate or describe the life or personality of any, particular student. Since I am an educator, I am also a mandatory reporter and will ensure that all legal liabilities about sensitive topics be handled as a

professional educator in a classroom. I gained permission for these participants according to the rules of the University, IRB, the school district and the parents.

Chapter Four: Research Findings and Data Analysis

This research study was my work as a teacher-practitioner to improve my practice and also my work as a researcher to frame the theories that informed my practice. From my experiences as a social studies teacher, I knew how difficult it was to position students into the correct mindset to be proficient historical thinkers. When I became a school librarian, I saw how easily students learned about the world when engaged with books of their own and wanted to find a way to make that meaningful for me if I ever returned to the classroom. By the time I returned to the social studies classroom, I encountered more research about historical thinking and the transactional theory of Rosenblatt. This research study became about examining how providing reading opportunities in the aesthetic stance created new ways for me to let students experience the habits of mind of being historical thinkers. The most striking explanation for the benefits of historical thinking came to me from Sam Wineburg (2001) when he wrote, “coming to know others, whether they live on the other side of the tracks or the other side of the millennium, requires the education of our sensibilities. This is what history, when taught well, gives us practice in doing” (24). Wineburg also explained, “history holds the potential, only partly realized, of humanizing us in ways offered by few other areas in the school curriculum. . .by tying our own stories to those who have come before us, the past becomes useful resource in our everyday life, an endless storehouse of raw materials to be shaped or bent to meet our present needs. Situating ourselves in time is a basic human need. Indeed, it is impossible to conceptualize life on the planet without doing so” (Wineburg, 2001, 5-6). In essence, historical thinking is the *doing* of history and the process of history, not the factual recall or accumulation of dates and timelines. Historical

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

thinking requires students to put themselves into someone else's shoes and accept the world and context of the person they want to understand. In order to achieve historical thinking students need to be able to suspend judgment and imagine life as another person and evaluate that person and her decisions based on the actual historical context, rather than their own morals and values of their current life and context. As a social studies teacher, I found it challenging for students to set aside their values and opinions when they considered people of the past; students have a particularly hard time understanding context. My experience showed me that the normal tools of history teachers, primary sources and historical fiction, to situate students into historical context often failed for me. The reading of primary sources was often an laborious, complex and thereby, efferent reading experience that yielded little imaginative or empathetic understanding of the author of the document. When I used historical fiction I often found I still wanted students to learn details of history and I failed to see the benefits of allowing aesthetic reading experiences to occur. For this study I wanted to demonstrate that the content of the reading is not the goal, but rather the experience of reading can become the activity that teaches students the intellectual mindsets to become proficient historical thinkers. I wanted reading experiences in my class, for this curriculum to provide *lived through experiences* so students could practice and examine what it was like to be a citizen in a society other than their own. The class I taught for this study was government, which is more social studies than historical thinking. For the majority of the course, I covered the content standards in typical fashion. For this small aspect of the course, however, I wanted to provide them time to engage with the intellectual mindsets of historical thinking because I wanted them to explore life as another person. I wanted for my

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

students to step inside other societies and explore the dysfunctions of other worlds and the choices made by people in those worlds, without judging them based on their concepts of right and wrong or without the baggage of the typical point and counterpoint debate dichotomies of most controversial issues in current events and government. I wanted the students to think about societal and government problems from an angle that required them to think like someone else, in a different place than their own. I wanted my students to practice the habits of understanding *the other* and to accumulate *lived through experiences* from dystopian worlds. Therefore, this project of aesthetic reading of dystopian literature in the government classed aligned with the mental dispositions of proficient historical thinkers.

Reading Comprehension

As I collected and analyzed student responses, I realized I needed to use a tool to categorize the responses. I chose to employ Keene and Zimmerman (1997, 2007) as a framework for this purpose.

Reading comprehension is often confined to conversations about final assessments or end of unit tests to prove students learned something, particularly, specific facts, but it is more than that. For Ellin Keene and Susan Zimmerman, reading comprehension is more accurately defined as a way to teach or as a way to allow a student to live in a reading and continually check with himself to connect meaningfully to a text. In sum, reading comprehension is an instructional tool, not just a test (Keene, 2010, 70). In fact, Keene and Zimmerman argues, “students need to spend abundant time every day reading increasingly difficult text, and they benefit from having purpose and focus for their reading, as well as the common language that the strategies provide to

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

articulate their thinking. *Nothing* should stand in the way of time to read independently” (Keene & Zimmerman, 2007, p.28). Reading comprehension, as a working tool, rather than an end assessment, allows a reader to create meaning as she reads. It also means the reader can take new experiences and information from reading and integrate it into their existing knowledge. Since my study is about how students responded to, and integrated dystopian experiences into their knowledge of government, the models developed by Keene and Zimmerman offered a strategic way to categorize student responses. The categories they developed to think about reading comprehension provided a framework for me to sort student responses, but they also aligned with the way I thought about how I should approach reading in schools. Reading comprehension strategies helped me sort and make meaning from my data, but connected strongly to why I wanted to do this study. This approach to reading comprehension resonated to the intersecting themes I created when readers engage in aesthetic reading experiences to achieve historical thinking. Keene and Zimmerman address the bigger picture of what defines reading comprehension, which provided a useful framework to me, but also a parallel philosophy about the purposes for reading strategies at all (2007, p.32-33).

In general my classroom pedagogy surrounding the dystopian reading in my class was not about reading comprehension, but I think it added to the conversation in unexpected ways. Since I am a social studies teacher, and the students read dystopian novels, it was important to note if their experiences and independent reading journeys led them to make new connections or construct new knowledge. As such, Ellen Keene and Susan Zimmerman fit my study. Besides *Mosaic of Thought* to frame my stance about reading in my classroom, I consulted their other books (and articles): *To Understand:*

New Horizons in Reading Comprehension and *Talk About Understanding: Rethinking Classroom Talk to Enhance Comprehension*. In *New Horizons*, Keene describes ways in which students, and herself as a reader, also engage in emotional reactions and develop responses based on “shared emotion and empathy with characters in fiction” (Keene, 2008, p.229). In an in-depth addition to this concept, Keene dedicates a whole chapter in *Talk about Understanding* to “Insights and empathy” and what it means to comprehend deeply in narrative text (Keene, 2012, pp. 20-29). She describes comprehension as the tools to reach deeper understanding and noted that cognitive outcomes are more about the substance of what it means to arrive at deeper understanding (Keene, 2012, p. 22). This stance on reading comprehension is about pondering the lives of others, considering other outcomes, experiencing the aesthetic, extrapolating experiences to other contexts, and experiencing a memorable and emotional response, among other things (Keene, 2012, p.23). This disposition about the value of reading deserves attention in the reading comprehension conversation. This perspective closely aligned with what I saw as the value of my study to contribute to the reading comprehension conversation as I looked at how the aesthetic stance of the transactional theory and historical thinking theories overlapped in my curricular space to create this type of reading comprehension for my students.

Reading comprehension as a textual tool. My textual analysis methodologies led me to recognize and learn more about reading comprehension, and not just reading experiences. By providing an approachable way for students to use the tools of historical thinking and comparative government, I offered reading experiences from dystopian literature as much as possible and moved them further into the continuum of an aesthetic

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

stance for reading, rather than an efferent reading experience. The intent of my study was not to make any larger points about reading comprehension, but I did want to highlight the value in defining reading comprehension as a living process that grows from student aesthetic experiences. As any classroom teacher who strives to make meaning out of student work and assess whether or not students are learning and growing, the tools provided in the field of reading comprehension allowed me to categorize student responses and make some conclusions as to how and what students learned from their reading experiences.

The reading comprehension strategies brought organization to my textual analysis. As McKee describes, textual analysis “seeks to understand the ways in which these forms of representation take place, the assumptions behind them and the kinds of sense-making about the world that they reveal” (2003, p.17). This means, additionally, that as a researcher, I must not just repeat my own interpretations, but seek to organize texts to discover what my students see as the “reasonable sense-making practices of cultures” (McKee, 2003, p.19). As I analyzed student responses, I discovered they filtered their reading experiences through connections to their own lives, the content of the course, and the larger, political world. I examined how students used reading experiences with dystopian books, and if those experiences provided a valuable mechanism for helping students understand society and government. Using reading comprehension strategies and vocabulary in my textual analysis allowed me to discover whether creating opportunities for aesthetic reading experiences with dystopian novels might position the minds of students to be more adept historical thinkers and critics of their world.

My academic journey and purpose of my study evolved because I wanted to demonstrate how transactional theory and historical thinking are theories that might intersect in a K-12 social studies classroom. Dystopian literature provided a natural vehicle to illustrate these connections because it allowed me to create space for independent reading, but it also allowed students to journey to other worlds, while still considering implications of government and society. By positioning the reading expectations as close as possible to the aesthetic end of the transactional theory continuum, I wanted students to add personal experiences of other people's lives and be able to *feel* what it is like to be a citizen in another society.

I collected and analyzed two types of student writing: reading response writings and academic essays. To help support the reading response writings, I prompted students to internalize their experiences. Later as a tool for analysis I used the strategies of text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections. When I sorted these reading responses, I used these same categories for textual analysis purposes. For the academic essays and to prompt students to make academic and cumulative knowledge connections in their final exam essays I used key reading comprehension strategies, as outlined by Ellin Keene (2010). When I sorted those academic essays, I similarly identified the reading comprehension strategies used by students to comprehend the text and their world. Ultimately, my goal of textual analysis was still to demonstrate how historical thinking and transactional theory intersected, but I needed a way to identify moments of student comprehension to see those overlaps. Using the two sets of reading comprehension strategies identified above enabled me to sort and categorize responses based on the

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

broad concept of comprehension as something that enabled students to understand reading as it related to their new knowledge and experiences.

Interestingly, my students also engaged with some practices of textual analysis. In a sense, the metacognitive tools of reading comprehension became their practice in textual analysis. The practice of sense-making from text was an important point of the curricular objectives of my class and became particularly evident in the academic essays by students. According to McKee, “how we make sense of our own lives, and of other people’s has vital implications for our own well-being and for how we treat others. At its most extreme, we can see the importance of the construction of communities of ‘we’ and ‘they’ when a sense-making practice sets up a binary between ‘we’ as human beings and ‘they’ as non-human” (2003, p.44). The written responses of my students, particularly the academic essays, were already a set of writings where the participants focused on making sense of text with the goal of making sense of themselves and the world. I liked how my students worked and how the goals of my teaching aligned with the practice of textual analysis. I realized that as I made meaning of my students’ written responses, I merely sorted their comprehension of texts, after they had already made sense of their reading experiences. Using a teaching practice intended to identify and categorize types of reading comprehension became a logical way to sort student responses. Students made connections to their personal lives, topics discussed in the class, as well as the larger world. As I categorized the responses of students’ writing, I discovered the responses fell into categories created by Ellen Keene and Susan Zimmerman, primarily in *Mosaic of Thought* (1997, 2007) to enhance teaching and conversations with students to support reading comprehension. The schema of reading comprehension was a harmonious

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

method to categorize my student data of book reading responses. For the reading responses, I analyzed student responses by the text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world criterion and for the academic essays, I analyzed responses by key strategies for reading comprehension. Keene and Zimmerman developed the concepts of text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world because they realized student readers comprehend and learn more from reading when they have developed schema to connect the “new to the known” (1997, p.45). These categories are ways students may ultimately self-monitor as readers to “relate unfamiliar text to their prior knowledge and/or personal experience” (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997, p. 55). The text-to-self category is a way for readers to comprehend the story through personal experiences that readers can make between the story and their own life (Zygouris-Coe, V. & Glass, C., 2004). The text-to-text category is a way for readers to comprehend a new story by connecting it to another story or information they read (Zygouris-Coe, V. & Glass, C., 2004). The text-to-world category aids readers to comprehend more effectively by making connections to experiences and knowledge that students gain from the larger world or media (Zygouris-Coe, V. & Glass, C., 2004). Generally these are strategies for improving comprehension or metacognitive tools so that readers can create a schema for understanding a new reading. Teachers often use these categories to create questions, to guide students to connect with a text in a variety of ways, with the goal of enhancing comprehension of the text. Keene and Zimmerman made these strategies transparent in the spirit of trying to understand what strategies might make readers more effective at comprehension during the reading process (1997, p. 71). Once I started sorting student responses, it became obvious that students did subconsciously, or consciously, make these types of connections, even without prompting

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

and that by making these connections, they demonstrated an ability to comprehend not just the story, but how the story fit into their world. Since my study set out to show how aesthetic reading experience opportunities with dystopian novels might enhance the type of thinking needed to be a successful historical thinker and observer of the world, the categories of reading comprehension brought a level of organization and clarity to my textual analysis.

My study aimed at reading, but not reading in the typical textbook, nonfiction approach of a social studies curriculum. My study aimed to explore how I teach students to explore the world and other people through reading. Reading comprehension theorists, outside of Keene and Zimmerman, also prefer to define reading comprehension as something more than proof that students acquired factual knowledge or recall from the text. Though we often think of reading comprehension as what the reader can *take away from the text*, some reading comprehension is more aimed at measuring how students can *better understand the world*. In her essay about reading comprehension Stephanie Harvey argues that “the threads of strategic thinking weave together in an intricate mental tapestry to address and solve problems. The goal is not completing and getting an A on the inferring packet. Strategy instruction is useful only insofar as it leads our kids to better understand the text, the world, and themselves so they can gain insight and even anticipate hurdles and solve pressing problems” (2011, p.16). Harvey provides space for reading comprehension to be measured not by factual recall, but a way to discern how reading experiences influence the working mind and experiences of a reader and thinker. From her perspective, reading comprehension is a way to help students use knowledge to comprehend larger ideas and experiences, not just perform better on measurable or

standardized tests. This is the approach to reading comprehension that most aligns with my disposition about why reading dystopian novels in a social studies class provides opportunities for students thinking process to emerge. This standard for reading comprehension makes space for thinking and content, and allows for students to be in the right disposition to approach a fictional story from an aesthetic mindset with the goal of living through the life of another person, while still ultimately being able to connect to their own world. That is why I used reading comprehension as a lens for analyzing student responses.

During the analysis of the student response writings, I used the categories of text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-world to categorize the type of personal responses students demonstrated from the reading of novels. These writings were two-page responses where the writing assignment asked the students to describe life as a citizen in that society. This essay assignment did not require students to make any specific type of response, yet many students created thoughtful personal responses which made connections to their own lives, the content of the course, and the larger, political world that they inhabit. Through these responses, I also identified instances where the personal responses illuminated the habits of mind consistent with students engaged in aesthetic reading experiences and/or historical thinking mindsets, through my categories of how these two theories overlap.

Categorizing Responses

I collected two types of student written responses: reader response essays and final exam essays that required academic research, connections to dystopian society, and cumulative knowledge of the semester course. For the reader response essays, I

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

categorized by the type of connections the students made and then examined the responses for how they connected to my overlapping themes of historical thinking and transactional theory, and grouped them in categories of text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world. For the academic essays, I also aimed to discover connections between historical thinking and transactional theory, but categorized them around the requirements of the essay, and identified larger concepts of reading comprehension, not just the schema comprehension tools of text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world. For these essays, student writing went beyond just trying to understand any one book, and took on understanding how stories and information from government could form their new knowledge. Using concepts like inference, determining importance, synthesis, as well as using schema, helped me to identify moments of student comprehension that illuminated my intersection of theories.

For the reader response essays I used the ideas of text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world to analyze the written work. As I began my data analysis I realized I needed a framework for my textual analysis to make meaning for me and to be able to demonstrate that student responses intersect with my suggested overlapping themes of transactional theory and historical thinking. I also realized that my students, by virtue of the assignment, engaged in textual analysis. The students were not required to connect to course content, just merely reflect on life as a citizen in the dystopian society, but I think the responses illustrated that they used what they knew about Government to frame their observations, particularly when they stopped reading and crafted written responses. Certainly by the end of the semester, this was true, since the final essay exam was a much more deliberate, crafted writing about dystopias and Government. Nonetheless, I realized

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

I needed to categorize my student responses. The reader response essays demonstrated a different approach to reading and writing than students typically encounter in a high school social studies course. I think these reading experiences are deeper aesthetic experiences than I typically offered in my social studies instruction. Though the construct of the course, and the mere fact that I required students to read and write, contradicted a *pure* aesthetic experience, I believe the independent reading environment and the free response expectations for students demonstrated at least a further shift on the continuum to an aesthetic stance. Typically, government and social studies courses do not provide this space at all. Positioning the student responses in that light, I separated my analysis of their writing for textual analysis based on the type and level of connections students made, using text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world. These categories let me know how to sort the reading experiences of the students and how the experience of living through another world, allowed them to understand themselves (text-to-self), their own knowledge (text-to-text), and the world in which they inhabit (text-to-world).

Research Questions

How does an aesthetic reading stance, with dystopian literature, aid teens in the development of historical thinking skills? I also considered:

- How do teen readers respond to dystopian literature?
- How does dystopian literature support the social studies curriculum?
- What are some key components for guiding teen readers to read in an aesthetic stance?
- How can transactional theory apply to the social studies curriculum goals?

Findings Part One: Reader Response Writing

The Writing Prompt

With just the simple prompt: *tell me what it is like to be a citizen in this society*, my students completed short two-page writings to share their response from reading dystopian novels.

Class Context

In the third week of this semester course I explained the semester long project and theme to the students. I provided book talks with the books in my room and a cart of books assembled by the librarian. I told the students I wanted them to use dystopian reading as a method to develop tools of comparative government. In terms of the gradebook, I expected each student twice in the semester to submit a two-page written reflection about reading a dystopian novel, and then to complete a final exam. The final exam was a research-based essay that connected knowledge and theories of the course with examples from dystopian literature as well as our democracy. Without much preview, I jumped right into book talks about the dystopian books and students eagerly raised their hands to claim their book. Since this was the fourth semester of weaving dystopian societies into government, I already understood qualities of what made some books better than others for this project. I spotlighted these books for this project because of these qualities:

- Books that tap into bigger ideas of human nature and grapple with whether people are basically good or bad
- Books that connect to social contract theories and show when people might resort to civil disobedience or a challenge to the structure in the dystopic society

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

- Books that develop hero characters and offer an exciting story of fighting for justice
- Books that offer a slice of reality, perhaps an exaggeration of a current problem we recognize in our society (abortion, social media, punishment of criminals, etc)

With respect to popularity of the books and effectiveness for this project, it did not seem to matter if the characters were male or female or if the books were classified as young adult or adult.

Students engaged in independent reading in class. With the spirit of *free voluntary reading* in mind, from the work of Stephen Krashen (2011), I provided as little directive as possible to the students about how they were to make meaning from the text.

Repeatedly I told the students to relax and read: to try to enter another world and to look around and see what they can observe about that society and its citizens. I joined them as we set aside time in class every Monday, for the first ten minutes of that fifty minute class period and every Wednesday for the first twenty minutes, of that ninety minute class period. Once the time ended, we put books aside and continued with the normal curriculum and topics in US Government, with no attempt to make direct connections to their independent reading. The semester I collected data was the fourth semester I taught this US Government course to seniors and the fourth semester I used independent reading and dystopian society projects as the thread for the semester. By the fourth semester, the reading time was less directed and I removed almost all direct instruction about dystopia from the course. In the first few semesters, I felt a need to explain the genre or demonstrate examples of how it would connect. I discovered this took too much class time. I also realized that the more I spent talking about the genre of literature, the more

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

students grew resistant to the practice of reading dystopian novels in Government at all. Ironically, by the fourth semester, with just independent reading and no direct instruction about dystopia, the students more easily accepted it as a meaningful and reasonable course expectation. I think this observation of my practice demonstrated that I tried making it more of a deliberate, academic study and when I made it a relaxed reading experience, students more easily accepted it and engaged. I also learned to minimize the written assignments that stood as proof of completion of the reading. The reader response essays were simple, two-page reflections of the dystopian reading that asked the students to write about *what is it like to be a citizen in this society?* I discouraged summary and told the students these were not punitively graded, but rather a completion grade, meant to provide space for reflection.

Student Responses to Book Reading

I taught four separate classes of Government this semester, ranging in size from eighteen to thirty-six students. These students were all seniors in high school, so many signed their own consent form to allow me to use their written responses for this study. The school district research compliance office requested I wait until I submitted final grades for the course before gaining consent from students. Before final graduation, and after I submitted final grades, I found twenty-three students willing to allow me to use their written work for my research. I collected forty-six reader response essays and twenty-three academic essays from twenty-three students. I began by reading each reader response essay and coding responses as text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world.

Table7. Dystopia and Reading Comprehension Connections.

	Text to Self	Text to Text	Text to World
1. <i>Fahrenheit 451</i>	X X	X X	X
2. <i>Matched</i>			
3. <i>The Circle</i>		X	
4. <i>V for Vendetta</i>	X	X X	X
5. <i>Hunger Games</i>	X X X	X	X
6. <i>1984</i>	X	X	X X
7. <i>Walking Dead</i>		X X	X
8. <i>Year 3000</i>		X X X	X X X
9. <i>Unwind</i>	X	X	
10. <i>The Road</i>	X	X X	X
11. <i>City of Ember</i>		X	
12. <i>World War Z</i>	X		
13. <i>The Enemy</i>		X	X
14. <i>Ready Player One</i>	X	X X	
15. <i>Girl with all the Gifts</i>		X	
16. <i>When She Woke</i>	X		
17. <i>Little Brother</i>	X X	X	X X X
18. <i>The Road</i>	X	X	
19. <i>Hunger Games</i>	X		
20. <i>Ready Player One</i>	X		
21. <i>Unwind</i>	X X	X	X
22. <i>Mortal Engines</i>	X	X	X

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

23. <i>Unwind</i>	X	X X	X X
24. <i>Fahrenheit 451</i>	X	X	
25. <i>Adoration of Jenna Fox</i>	X	X	
26. <i>World War Z</i>		X X X	X X X X X X
27. <i>Across the Universe</i>	X	X	X
28. <i>Brave New World</i>			
29. <i>Dustlands</i>	X		X X
30. <i>Running Man</i>	X	X	X
31. <i>The Giver</i>	X	X	X
32. <i>World War Z</i>	X	X	X X X
33. <i>Little Brother</i>	X	X	X
34. <i>Unwind</i>	X	X	X
35. <i>Unwind</i>	X X	X X	X X X
36. <i>Brave New World</i>	X X	X X	X X X
37. <i>The Circle</i>			
38. <i>The Circle</i>	X X	X X	X X
39. <i>Delirium</i>	X		
40. <i>When She Woke</i>	X X	X X	X
41. <i>Unwind</i>	X X X	X X X	X X
42. <i>The Circle</i>	X X	X X	X X
43. <i>Walking Dead</i>	X X	X X X	X X
44. <i>When She Woke</i>	X X X	X X	X X
45. <i>Handmaid's Tale</i>	X	X X	X

46. <i>Ready Player One</i>	X X	X	X X
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Text-to-Text Examples and Summary

Independent reading became a vehicle for helping me position students in the aesthetic stance to read dystopian novels in my class. Achieving the aesthetic stance in a formal class space is difficult, but independent reading with these novels got them closer to aesthetic than typically achieved in my government or social studies class with any other type of writing. Text-to-text analysis was a way for me to look at the type of learning students engaged in while reading the novels in my class. While their reading experiences were as aesthetic as possible, the students remained members of my community of learners in government and on their own, made some connections to other readings and lecture topics from the course. When students created text-to-text responses that meant they were considering both the dystopian world they explored and connecting it to something else they read. I analyzed the student response writings for text-to-text responses. I made no requirement for students to connect their reading response writings to the course or any text. I suppose since they were students in my government class, they felt like the best way to please me was to make some connection to course content. But both the quantity and quality of connections surprised and impressed me. Only seven of the forty-six essays made no comments to evidence a text-to-text connection, which means eighty-four percent of the free response writings connected to something else we learned in class or another text a student read. Some connections illuminated direct concept connections and other connections demonstrated some non-linear thinking about concepts and knowledge. A few examples demonstrate the wide breadth of knowledge

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

that students connected to when they created a written response about the dystopian society.

Several students noticed connections to the philosophical founding aspects of the government class and connected to topics related to political philosophy or US Constitutional founding and documents. The dystopian books that connected these concepts for these students included: *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Circle*, *Walking Dead*, *Year 3000*, *Unwind*, *The Road*, *The Enemy*, *Ready Player One*, *Girl with all the Gifts*, *Mortal Engines*, *World War Z*, *Running Man*, *The Giver*, *Brave New World*, *When She Woke*, and *Handmaid's Tale*. Each of these books presented different stories, some are more recently published than others and they represent both adult and young adult publications. Nonetheless it proved quite common for students to consider text-to-text connections about government content and readings when they reflected on a dystopian novel. Some of the direct connections included the First Amendment aspects of free speech when reflecting on *Fahrenheit 451* or the Fourth Amendment and aspects of search, seizure and privacy when reflecting on *Little Brother* or *Brave New World*. These are dystopian stories where the extreme absence of these personal rights made the society a dystopia. Some of the more indirect connections originated from students making philosophical connections to larger themes of books. One student used the social media dystopia of *The Circle* to describe what it would feel like to be asked to forfeit personal freedoms for the sake of the greater good. For this connection, the student saw how the dystopian society of this novel made citizens become transparent on social media at all times and understood how the book argued that it was a moral, social and political obligation to create equality and stability.

Several students also made connections to real, current events and specific laws or court cases, when they reflected on their experiences in a dystopian society. One student used *V for Vendetta* to connect to LGBTQ laws and explain how the writing of laws often serves to segregate a society based on identity, race, or opinions. Another student, while describing *1984*, made a passing reference to the Patriot Act because it reminded her of the ways in which the government continues to invade our lives. A third student referenced Roe v. Wade, the landmark Supreme Court case that legalized abortion in the US, when reflecting on life in *Unwind*, a society that forbids abortion, but allows for unwanted children to be *unwound* and donated for body parts as an ethical alternative. A fourth student made a literal text-to-text connection and quoted from Aristotle when reflecting on *World War Z*, to make the point about a society that forgets how to treat its citizens in a time of panic. The majority of text references were to big concepts, more than to specific laws or dates, but students did make those type of specific connections to exact texts, class notes or other facts they learned from class.

The dystopian experiences seemed to offer a chance for a lot of students to also work out definitions for systems and definitions for types of government. Eleven of the forty-six student writings made references to explain how this story reminded them of socialism, anarchism, totalitarianism, democracy, communism, or a dictatorship. Essential then, to explaining their experience of what *it was like to live in a society* seemed to be the students' necessity to identify and define the society in a way that fit with an existing schema for what it means to be a society or government.

Students referenced some specific concepts from class, without any prompting. Readers, who comprehended the reading, also related it to and comprehended their world.

Without any requirement to do so students demonstrated knowledge of specific concepts read in the course text or class notes. Here are a few examples.

Checks and balances. In writing about *Ready Player One*, a student made a connection to the concept of checks and balances. He wrote, “The government no longer has any checks and balances to keep corruption from overflowing and power becoming too much for one branch and also includes the absence of an actual stable economic within the U.S.” This student demonstrated how the concept of checks and balances keeps our government functioning and identified it as a characteristic in the book’s society that made it a dystopia.

View of human nature. Several students referenced political philosophy to merit text-to-text connections. One student made reference to the general idea of the philosophy of human nature and how it informs society and laws, but also made a reference to a quote by a philosopher. By connecting to *Unwind*, he wrote, “The view of human nature is that kids between the ages of 13-18 deserve to be “unwind” because they are considered a waste if they are troublemakers or disobedient. This story suggests that government hinders and hurts people. The government strips the rights, freedom and privacy of the kids being unwound and this mentally and emotionally hurts the kids and it will physically hurt them as well as eventually when their body parts will be harvested. ‘Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.’ - Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It means that a person is only born free and after that he is always in chains as to being watched over and controlled.” For this student, this novel became a dystopian society because it did not provide safeguards against the nature of humans and preserve rights.

Role of a social contract. Students are fascinated by the idea that the Constitution makes rebellion and revolution allowable, if the government is not meeting their needs, or holding up their side of the contract. This philosophical idea from Locke, Rousseau, and other political philosophers resonated with students in text-to-text connections. Using *World War Z* ideas, one student wrote, “Since every individual has power to affect the government, the government has to constantly do things to inspire the people and keep their faith in the government’s ability to function. The people are likely to tear up the social contract between the governed and the government in a democracy if they feel that the government is no longer able to adequately protect them, meaning that the United States was forced to make an attempt to not only destroy the zombie horde coming from New York City, but to do it in a fashion so impressive to behold that the American people would truly believe that they had the ability to end this crisis.” For this student, the text-to-text connection was significant to understanding the concept of the social contract. Through some analysis of the motives of the government in this story, this reader realized it was a dystopian society because it lacked the legitimacy as a government and that the people would ultimately be left with no choice but to abolish the government and the contract, and seek to survive.

Society loses its grip. Using *World War Z*, this student did her own research to find a quote by a political philosopher only briefly mentioned in class. She wrote, “‘The society that loses its grip on the past is in danger, for it produces men who know nothing but the present, and who are not aware that life had been, and could be, different from what it is.’ (Aristotle). This quote from a political philosopher reminds me of the government and how they treat their citizens in the book. The society has clearly lost its

grip on reality and how they deal with things in the past due to a panic.” For this student, the text-to-text connection goes beyond class, required texts, and entered into a text she encountered on her own.

Text-to-Text Analysis

The New Mexico content standards for Government consist of four sub-categories with twenty-nine indicators (Social Studies Standards). The text-to-text analysis demonstrated that students alluded to content in fourteen out of the twenty-nine indicators. These writings were free response writings for reflections on books the students read and I made no requirement to mention course content. The forty-six reader response writings analyzed for this project represented twenty-three students. The time I allocated to reading in class amounted to about thirty minutes of instructional time each week, out of about two-hundred and forty minutes. Though I wanted my students to read for the sake of experiencing a story and a life in another society, I did not feel like I sacrificed time for direct instruction of concepts in the content standards for government. Rather, the time spent reading allowed students to enter the life of another person in a different society. At the same time students internalized concepts and ideas from the government standards. The students consistently demonstrated a strong grasp of political philosophy, foundational philosophy, voting rights and the rights and participation of citizens. Many students also demonstrated specific interest in landmark court cases, specific amendments and modern controversies or laws. The areas of the content standards, not covered by these reading responses are focused on specific functions of state and local government as well as procedures for obtaining office or explicit naming of branches of government or documents, if not the concepts. Though text-to-text

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

analysis is more aligned to efficacy of efferent reading than reading in the aesthetic stance, this analysis demonstrated that the continuum of reading stances was always at work for students and readers. Students may never completely shift their disposition and completely relax into an aesthetic stance in a school environment; the challenge for teachers then, is not to worry so much about comprehension as measured by factual recall and take-away knowledge. Rather the challenge is creating opportunities for students to aesthetically engage. The aesthetic engagement opened new opportunities for my students to think about the lives of different people and offered a way to explore other societies and governments and perhaps, provided just the right background knowledge and experience to bring meaning and context to academic content standards.

Text-to-Text Conclusions

As the students' government teacher, I applied the text-to-text category code to any connection of ideas from our course curriculum. In some cases, students made connections to other novels, laws, the Constitution, or class ideas and concepts. Some students also quoted philosophers we studied in class. Since the prompt did not require students to connect to class knowledge in any way, I categorized these responses as text-to-text connections. Furthermore, like the intent of text-to-text, these student responses demonstrate the ability of students to internalize new knowledge from previous texts through the free reading and response of their dystopian books. Students voluntarily wrote about connections that came to their mind about knowledge, even without the requirement to do so. When they took time to reflect on their reading experience, the students naturally fit the experience into how their own working body of knowledge. My interpretation and application of text-to-text suggested that while students engaged with

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

independent, free reading of dystopian literature, they made connections, unprompted, to course knowledge and information. Since I did not require the students to integrate course knowledge, I considered the proliferation and quality of these connections as noteworthy. In some ways, the unprompted text-to-text connections by my students demonstrated the knowledge they internalized, partly through the journey and experience of reading the dystopia; that the course content knowledge, paired with the dystopia reading experience, created both information and context for the internalization of new concepts. At the minimum, this demonstrated that as a social studies teacher I can use fiction in class and not *waste time* away from the curriculum. Oftentimes history teachers discuss the use of historical fiction, but seldom do social studies or history teachers open up the curriculum for general fiction reading. This data demonstrated that students used the experiential reading journey in dystopia fiction as a frame for internalizing course information.

I did not start this reading experience activity in the hopes that my government students would acquire new information; I wanted them to acquire new experiences, to see how other societies and governments were both formed and organized and to consider what the role of any individual citizen is in either our democracy or another, even fictional, society. In the end, the text-to-text data analysis told me that students may not acquire new knowledge, but the reading experience allowed them to retain course knowledge and internalize it.

The intent of my study aligned with text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world connections because I wanted to understand how we can create a lived-through experience for students in order for them to experience other peoples, in other places, in other times- both fictional and real. The reading comprehension strategies were not a part

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

of my intersecting theories that prompted me to begin this study, but they did become essential tools for me to use as a teacher as methodology and as a textual analyst as lens for decoding student meaning from the reading experiences. Students in this climate of standardization and knowledge-based emphasis, often miss the opportunity to engage with the type of learning that is about experience, insight, creative dispositions, and habits of mind.

As a social studies teacher I believe in the value of process as much as content; I try to find ways to create opportunities for students to acquire historical thinking as well as historical knowledge. Nonetheless, giving up time in the curriculum, as a 12th grade Government teacher, for independent reading of dystopian stories seemed like something I could not *sell* to my colleagues, or justify amidst the numerous demands for students to demonstrate content proficiency. I started by analyzing my text-to-text data, because it told me that students do learn knowledge when engaged with reading, even when the teacher does not require the students to take away any specific knowledge. I expected to minimize the text-to-text element for this study because it is often measured by what students *take away* rather than what they *experience*. Although I still wanted this study to explore the value of the aesthetic mindset in a social studies course, and share the efferent knowledge that emerges in students' writings when I analyzed for text-to-text quality responses, I discovered that students acquired the knowledge *because* of the opportunity to engage aesthetically with a fictional world. This time set aside in class to allow students to freely approach reading with no prior content requirements, provided alternative experiences for them to internalize and bring meaning to course knowledge.

Potentially, the acquisition of knowledge cannot effectively exist without the pairing of aesthetic or lived through experiences.

Text –to-Self as an Analytical Lens

The student reader response essays also illustrated text-to-self connections and the intersecting themes of historical thinking and an aesthetic stance. Since this was the fourth semester I taught this curriculum, requiring students to read and respond to dystopian literature, I selected ten responses to demonstrate the text-to-self connections. These ten examples were a manageable number to demonstrate the typical type of personal connections students made to these lightly structured reading experiences. I used text-to-self as criteria for selecting passages that demonstrated students' desire to personalize their reading experiences. For this category, I selected responses that demonstrated connections to their own opinions, personal life experiences and musings, rather than course content. Often, the text-to-self criteria is valued as the least of the critical thinking connections for readers engaged with texts because it is easiest for students to put themselves first and to consider how something impacts them. Though I think it may be the simplest request to allow young readers to connect to their own life, I think it is an often neglected request or activity with allotted time in the secondary classroom, and a rare exercise in my high school social studies class. It may also be a bit difficult for a student to think about themselves living in a dystopian society. I did not prioritize or rank text-to-self lower or higher than text-to-text or text-to-world; rather my sense making of text-to-self offered a chance for me to demonstrate that students engaged in thoughtful and interesting musings while engaged with fiction. This fictional experience helped them achieve the type of mindset needed to become effective historical

thinkers. My sense making of their responses allowed me to see that unstructured literary journeys in my class allowed them to enter a mindset that is natural to an aesthetic stance and served them well to develop the skills needed to be historical thinkers.

After each student excerpt of text-to-self connections, I provided sense making of my own to illustrate how the student's free response to unstructured reading activities illustrated my thoughts about the intersecting themes between transactional theory and historical thinking. One of the goals of any social studies class was to make students more aware of their own self, ideas, and choices, and to become aware of how they are situated within the social-political world. Textual analysis was embedded within this project as a way to guide students, as a way for me as researcher to demonstrate the intersecting themes, and as a culminating goal for the students themselves as citizens. Alan McKee situates sense-making as "an abstract part of our lives, and it isn't a luxury afforded only to a few. It's part of existing as a human being. How we make sense of our lives, and of other people's, has vital implications for our own well-being and for how we treat others" (2003, p. 44). As a result, I used textual analysis as a methodological tool to demonstrate the sense-making of my students. Similarly students engaged in dystopian reading also engaged in making sense of the text and the world as they situated themselves in the fictional stories.

Text-to-Self Examples and Summaries of Response Writings

Below are examples from ten student essays that illustrate the type of text-to-self connections that students included in their reader response writings. I provided the student responses exactly from student writing; I did not correct grammar and convention errors in the following analysis. For each of these ten illustrations, I demonstrated how

the students used the reading comprehension and thinking strategy of text-to-self and how that connection demonstrated the ways student thinking created examples of how the themes of historical thinking and the aesthetic stance overlap, because of the lived through experience from the dystopian literature. I created a short title summary based on the main concept explored by the student to organize each of student selections and my subsequent analysis.

Laboratories for identifying problems of the world (*V for Vendetta*, Response

#4). Connecting theme: Self-understanding; Empathize.

Student response:

“Some ways I think this could be prevented from happening is by people realizing we aren’t that different from each other. We are all people we just might look, act, feel, or live slightly different from each other, we are all the same. Next we would need to realize that we are the 98% and they’re only the 2%. We are the real voice in our government. We are the ones who need to run this place. It is our lives and our freedom. We aren’t pawns in their game of chess to make money off of. The next step would be to make the government fear us. I want to live in a world where the government is afraid of its people, not the other way around.”

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. This student engaged in self-understanding in order to recognize that the fictional characters are valued as real people, though different, but in the same ways that he would expect of people in his current life. He also realized what type of government he wanted, both from a personal point of view and a collective point of view. This was a critical culmination of self-understanding. From a transactional theory point of view, he displayed understanding of his own system of values. For historical thinking he demonstrated the ability to look at behaviors of people and also began to wonder about what he considered fair and just, as it related to this world and his own.

This student also demonstrated some qualities of his ability to empathize. He became a participant in the story, drawing in what he knew of this world, and then taking that world back out to shape his world. With respect to historical thinking, this ability could translate nicely into a student who could identify, and empathize with, problems facing people in his life and world.

Good people make bad choices (*Unwind*, Response #9). Connecting theme:
Empathize; Embrace Complicated Narratives.

Student response:

“I don’t think that I would like this world because I have to admit, I’m not perfect and everyone else isn’t either. We have all done bad stuff and we would get punished harshly in this society. So the reason I would not like this society that much is because there is no law against harsh punishments, you just get the worst one after so many offenses. Also it’s when your parents get tired of you they can send you off to another family or they can make you be unwound. These rules are just way too harsh to children and they literally do not stand a chance in this society if they are not perfect which is not a society I would ever be in.”

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. This student embraced the complicated narrative of life and personal choices. She suggested that good people can make bad choices, and vice versa, and that somehow society and law should make accommodations for those; so she expressed hesitation about being a possible member of this dystopian society.

The attributes of being able to empathize with a story seem a precursor to being able to then embrace a complicated narrative and this excerpt demonstrated how the student made that step. She began by stepping into this world and identifying with the participants in this society; she became alive in this dystopia and identified with the teens who seemed to be good people who were forced to make bad decisions. Therefore, she connected personally to the notion that laws should create space for mistakes because she

assumed that good people might make mistakes, like her. This student might be well-positioned to become a historical thinker who is capable of identifying problems or dilemmas in history and current society and understand the human decisions that shaped real events.

The fear of death drives us (*The Road*, Response #10). Connecting theme:

Imagine.

Student response:

“The story paints a picture of what happens when civilization falls apart, and the world is ruled by fear instead of governments. The story is not of a dystopian government, but a dystopian society without a government. . . .McCarthy creates a world in which humans are not interested in helping each other or retaining any sense of humanity they might have had in the previous world. He puts forward through this text that the strongest sense humans have is not love or compassion, it is the fear of death. He makes it clear that if pushed to the limits, humans will do anything to stay alive.”

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. The striking observation of this student is when he remarked that this is not really the story of a dystopian government, but a dystopia because of the absence of government. This student really engaged with imagining the world of this story and the lives of its characters. Through his ability to imagine what it would be like to be there, this student was able to see the motivations of humans, in general, stripped to their most basic, and without government. He succeeded at putting himself in the shoes of another. He identified the fears, the motivations, and thought logically about the basic instincts and survival tactics of humans. The imaginative capacities that grow out of aesthetic reading experiences allow readers like this student to put themselves in the place of another. One goal of historical thinking is that students be able to identify the humanity of individuals, through

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

fears and hopes, etc., in any historical moment to understand historical context of human decisions, in order to understand, rather than merely judge.

Freedom or security (*Little Brother*, Response #17). Connecting theme:

Embrace Complicated Narratives; Adopt a Critical Stance.

Student response:

“The people obviously want to be safe, and they are sacrificing their freedom for their safety. While Homeland Security was questioning Marcus they were threatening him to get the information out of him. They wanted justice and would do anything to get it...I learned from this book that safety is very important to Americans but at what cost. We are the land of the free and should be able to have our freedom. I want to feel safe living everyday of my life; I also want to be comfortable, relaxed, and calm everyday. If we sacrifice out freedom I don’t think we can achieve that.”

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. This student embraced the complicated narrative of not just real life but of the character in this story. This dystopian story is perhaps the most realistic-world setting for a dystopian novel among the student choices, and was a story that demonstrated what life could be like after a terrorist attack and citizens were asked to sacrifice some basic rights, in exchange for peace and security in society. For both the character in the story and for this student, freedom and security existed in tension to each other. This student adopted a critical stance to the real life choices of the protagonist in this story and also transferred the observations about that tension into his own life. By living through the story of the teen protagonist in a high security government dyostopia, this student engaged somewhat in the aesthetic stance and became able to allow that lived through experience to evoke opinions about both that fictional world and his real life. A key goal of historical thinking is creating opportunities for students to challenge simple narrative and instead, question historical narratives of historical inevitably, by seeking out alternative human choices and

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

responses. This student identified the tensions in the story through the character's experiences, but also demonstrated how those experiences connected to larger themes that resonated with real life and modern times.

Decisions to compromise, enjoy life, and rebel (*Adoration of Jenna Fox*,

Response #25). Connecting theme: Adopt a Critical Stance; Embrace Complicated Narratives.

Student response:

“Similar to other dystopian novels, Jenna questions the environment she has been placed in and looks for loopholes to change it. When she realizes her situation is practically unchangeable she finds little things to make her life more personally acceptable. She throws away her back-up hard drive that her parents had been saving in case Jenna had another accident. She found this incident freeing, because it gave her back the right to die. .. This novel is a very good representation of a dystopian society. I liked that there was eventually only one character living in the dystopia because it gave a clearer look of how oblivious the government or the source of the control can be to someone else's idea of right and wrong. Although it took Jenna a long while to discover that her insides were made of neural chips controlled by a greater power, she knew early on that her values and identity were not what they were supposed to be. Like other dystopian characters, she channeled her fear and confusion into questions which lead her to a kind of rebellion, all of which are included in most dystopian novels.”

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. In this aesthetic stance, a student who embraced complicated narratives effectively is situated well to explore ambiguities and ponder uncertainties, and to be open to the idea that there is probably not always a *right* answer to life choices. Similarly, in historical thinking, an effective student thinker can challenge oversimplification of historical inevitability by explaining how different human choices result in different consequences and outcomes. At the same time, in this response, the student realized the limitations and restrictions on choices due to historical context and understood the historical narrative and how it might have been altered. This student identified that the individual and up-close journey of this

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

one character allowed her to explore the life choices of the main character. Through this character's life, this student explored the tension of wanting to live an authentic life and be awakened to reality, even if that meant breaking rules and rebellion.

The ability to adopt a critical stance might be demonstrated by a student who became a self-critical reader with the ability to both understand and criticize. In a similar way, effective students of historical thinking interrogate historical data and identify bias or credibility, in order to give weight to people and perspectives in forming their own narratives and opinions. This student used a journey to discern who can be considered a trusted and reliable source in either a story world or in the real world. This student drew from the experience of a character that learned to assess her environment and found ways to challenge everything about it.

See the promise in the panic (*World War Z*, Response #32). Connecting theme:
Empathize; Learn and Seek Multiple Perspectives.

Student response:

“In my opinion I believe that the society should've taken the warnings seriously despite the fact that there were little to no warnings and the government on the other hand trying to cover it up. That's exactly what would happen in a society today as well. People don't take anything serious until it doesn't get out of our control. If I were in this situation just like in this book, I also wouldn't take it seriously until the water doesn't go through the roof. I would run around in panic trying to protect myself from not being eaten by a zombie. This zombie apocalypse is kind of like a disease basically. It spreads quickly and causes a panic on society and there's no way to stop or control it. One thing I enjoyed while reading this book wasn't the fear of zombies that blinded the government and society. It was the way that society breaks down and re-forms itself after a huge disaster. Zombies are just the 'catalyst' for the breakdown of society, and the existence of zombies sets a new set of rules for life that people have to adapt to. The citizens of this society were terrified.”

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes:

At a basic level, the ability to empathize is about the ability to identify with other people. Readers in an aesthetic stance are more likely to experience an emotional empathy as they get drawn into a life through a story. Historical thinking is less concerned about the emotional experience of empathy, and more the intellectual practice. In some ways, though, most students might be able to make that intellectual jump to become historically empathetic because of their experiences through reading. They will, in essence, know what it *feels* like to understand another point of view or life because of an aesthetic reading experience. It is a far less, natural practice to engage in empathizing in historical thinking. This student explained exactly what it would feel like to him to be there, making no excuses for irrational behavior, but merely jumping into the story and becoming a part of that situation. This empathy allowed him to make an analogy about the dystopian zombie apocalypse being like a disease. It also led him to understand about the restarting of society and led him to see multiple perspectives about how to solve a problem. As indicative of the ability to learn and seek multiple perspectives, he was able to identify the human motives, fears, etc. that influenced behaviors and considered those as elements to address potential solutions.

I would've been unwound (*Unwind*, Response #35). Connecting theme:

Empathize, Imagine.

Student response:

“As I have already turned 18, I would have no fears in this society. Instead I’ll put my age down to 16 for this scenario. I’ll also give myself a pair of spiteful parents just for the sake of argument. At 16 I had made two very big decisions in my life. I for one chose to quit soccer and pursue my grades as they had been very sub par at the time. At the time my father had threatened grounding and summer school as punishment for the grades, and both my parents were upset by my decision to quit soccer. I as an individual chose to make my life better in a very obvious choice,

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

but my parents had a different opinion on how I should've made my decisions. Now just a year later I turned into a straight A student and a still avid athlete with a passion for another sport. If I had lived in the government created in the book I undoubtedly would've been unwound under the belief that I was turning into an 'undesirable' child with no future. Now we can see that I was able to turn things around and even start my career in college. If I lived in the conditions of the book's government nobody would've been able to see that and I would be dead at this very moment. That's a big difference. It really makes you value your privilege in life."

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. This student, though connecting entirely to his own life, was not really showing self-understanding, because he was more making a parallel to his life that he figured out at an earlier time. He did however, seem to be able to take the dystopian scenario of unwound kids and consider how that felt to live in that society given the fact, that he knew that teenagers- including himself- often make bad choices or do not seem "worthy" at all times. He transcended distinctions between real and imaginary to conclude about what is fair or just. Ultimately, he also concluded that his life is privileged and that he had space to make errors and find himself.

Judging a society we don't understand (*Unwind*, Response #41). Connecting theme: Suspend Judgment; Adopt a Critical Stance.

Student response:

"Dystopian novels allow readers to journey through a system so flawed, making one wonder whether these laws could ever be allowed. Reading this genre of books also allows you to clearly establish what type of role our personal government would play with these particular decisions. ..There are multiple moral dilemmas each person faces, like, their body parts having the potential to save numerous people, and if being unwound is really dying or not. The government is very subtle throughout the story, making it seem as though killing delinquent kids is not a big deal, as long as it saves more people....This shows me that the government in their country doesn't want to broadcast when they have made a mistake. It is easier to act like the runaway troublemakers disappeared, rather than admit that their system is flawed. . .When someone has a lot of questionable rules or laws forced them, and are fighting for their life, they may make riskier decisions. This is obvious throughout Lev's changing personality."

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. To suspend judgment means a student can temporarily suspend his life, problems, values, constraints, etc., and in exchange, enter a totally different space, through totally different eyes. Historical thinking takes this a bit further and requires competent thinkers to avoid present-mindedness and instead, set aside the values, norms, or life of current times and try to only understand the historical moment from the point of view and historical context of the time under study. Though aesthetic stance does not require us to set aside our present mind, it does allow students to practice the intellectual ability to set aside judgment. In this student response, the student explored the tension of seeing teenagers breaking laws and becoming criminals, and yet she created space to understand that, even excuse it. Through that suspension of judgment for those teens, she arrived at some big picture conclusions about the role and purposes of government.

By adopting a critical stance, this response shows a student who criticized and determined credibility, to not just believe the *rules* of society and accept them as real and true, but to create space for herself to determine that the facts and experiences of the story create an alternate interpretation about justice.

Opening our eyes to living (*The Circle*, Response #42). Connecting theme: Self-Understanding; Learn and Seek Multiple Perspectives.

Student response:

“The sharing and showing people the cool experiences you have is amazing and it is cool to see what others are accomplishing, but there is a thin line between enjoying and admiring. . . .the harsh reality is that experiences don’t come from a cell phone; they come from going out into the world and opening your eyes. To prevent that, we need to be more opening to getting out of service ranges and knowing the limits to what we post. When it’s on the Internet, it’s always there. People forget that someone can easily save something you post and it can haunt you in the future. . . People just need to be aware of the disadvantages of social

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

media because the moment the horrible things that can happen are played out, then people realize it's not all fun and games, and that will prevent the society from becoming like the novel. The idea of social media becoming the headquarters of society is frightening because we are very interconnected already that it would be hard to get back the pieces of our lives that we put out there. There is a limit to everything. I don't believe that social media is evil, but if it isn't use with precaution, The Circle gives a good example of a situation that could arise from it."

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. This student response very quickly made parallels to social media as it applied to her life and her society, using this social media dystopia storyline to teach her about her life and her life choices around social media. Historical thinking similarly requires students to be able to pause and identify similarities and differences in our lives and the lives of the past. Through this analysis, students might arrive at the ability to propose alternative ways to live or derive answers to ethical and legal questions. She also considered the multiple perspectives about the uses of social media and how and when it can become something that is useful, frightening, consuming, or evil, to humanity.

Social contracts can be broken (*Ready Player One*, Response #46). Connecting theme: Suspend Judgment; Imagine.

Student response:

"In my opinion the government had let the country get away from them. The majority of America was no longer prosperous and there was just so much bad. It was appalling that the government had let living conditions decline to the point where 'stacks' were a common living situation. Having to live in one of the top mobile homes on the stack would be nerve wracking to say the least. When Wade's stack was blown up and there wasn't any suspicion about it that was also very concerning. The government needed to be more proactive in protecting the lives of Americans. The living situation did not give me confidence in the new direction the government had taken. My experience in the society of Ready Player One was overall not a very good one. I enjoyed the time spent in the OASIS, but I didn't like the world outside of that. The world outside of the OASIS has just deteriorated to a point where I would not be happy living there. I am not the type of person who could just live on the internet in this virtual reality so I can't imagine being particularly happy in that society."

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. This student response demonstrated how students might completely immerse themselves into the story, as evidenced by first person evaluation of what he would like, or not like. In order to explain the qualities of this society, this student chose to imagine it completely as a participant. He sets aside the idea that this is not real, and accepted the premises of this story to make sense of the world, the people, and the events of the story. With his journey and experience in this world, he emerged willing to make assertions about the world and offered his praise, criticisms, and general reactions to this life. Through his imagination, he identified the problems, and offers solutions. Even when this student read a historical narrative, his mind engaged in the imaginative features and human aspects of the story with the goal of being able to understand human motivations, thinking, and choices. This student demonstrated a willingness to aesthetically enter another world through the dystopian story and that skill would be applauded as a successful historical thinker, as well. In his ability to do this, he realized that this concept of a social contract is one that applied to this world and rationalized why people no longer paid attention to a government that did not protect the citizens.

Text-to-Self Analysis and Conclusions

My textual analysis allowed me to conclude some ideas about how students make sense of dystopia, when readings occurred in an unstructured environment in a Government course, not an English course. I believe that offering minimal constraints on the reading experiences, created opportunities for students to engage with reading aesthetically, or at least more on the continuum of an aesthetic reading experience than what students typically encounter in a social studies or high school classroom

environment. In presuming that students entered the novel in a more aesthetic stance than normal, I discovered these qualities that demonstrated the intersection of transactional theory and historical thinking because of the fictional experiences. In sum, the student responses demonstrated that students:

- situated themselves into a story and found ways to connect with the people and places.
- made their sense of their fictional worlds and brought in parallels to understand themselves, imagining other worlds in an effort to consider their own.
- suspended judgment to decide if people in a world gone wrong, could claim the right to rebel, for example.
- empathized through efforts to understand people in other places.
- adopted a critical stance as they observed, critiqued, and authenticated the imaginary spaces as relevant or legitimate to themselves and their world.
- learned and sought multiple perspectives each time they encountered a place where humans could make alternate choices or choices similar or different to themselves.
- embraced complicated narratives that paralleled our real world every time they recognized that sometimes life is not always one option, at the exclusion of others.
- engaged in the text of dystopia and entered another world, for the purposes of exploring life and humanity; they organically made connections on a personal level.

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

As a teacher and researcher of this study, my sense making of the student responses allowed me to realize there truly was value for my students when I provided reading journeys in social studies.

Text-to-World as an Analytical Lens

In the same vein as text-to-self, analysis of student writing allowed me to discover connections students made between the story world and the real world they inhabited. Successful historical thinking skills require students to be able to understand the lives of other people, in different places and times. For most social studies teachers, this objective is often met with primary source reading or historical fiction and movies. Those approaches often value the historical content as much as the mental disposition and intellectual activity of truly learning to think and see the world like another person. For government, I wanted students to be able to critically examine other places, societies, structures, and the subsequent impact on the lives of regular citizens. Understanding our own society was part of it, but understanding our society vis-à-vis another society (fictional or real) was another way to complete the experience. By looking at the quality and type of responses generated by students, when categorized as text-to-world, this allowed me explore how independent reading of dystopian fiction put students in the emotional mindset to achieve the intellectual skills of historical thinking.

Independent reading time was the best strategy I could provide to convince students that I wanted them to engage with a text in an aesthetic stance. By just giving curricular space for reading and no factual assessment of the reading, I positioned it as aesthetic, rather than efferent. Taking words from Rosenblatt, I asked the students to focus on what happens “during the reading event” and to turn their attention “toward the

journey” of being in a dystopian society (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 24, p.28). I wanted them to step inside another world, and examine it from the viewpoint of the characters of the book. Yet, as their responses demonstrated, many students took their experiences inside these dystopian worlds and made connections to their own worlds, in a way that demonstrated they enjoyed the personal journey of the story and the lives of the people, all the while, keeping a connection to how it applied to their world.

Text-to-World Examples and Summary

Fiction creates an exercise in comparative government (*Year 3000*, Response #8). Connecting theme: empathize, imagine.

Student response:

“Daily life includes manual labor, censored speaking and being spied on by many of the country’s secret police. It resembles something along the lines of Russia during the rule of the czars, and the control over its population much like current day North Korea. It is probably the worst place to live in...Next is the Land of Equality. This is basically an extremist version of communism and socialism. In this land you would find yourself borne with a certain look, intelligence, and social standpoint, but after time the community would lower or raise your intelligence to an average level, change your appearance to match those around you, and be raised or lowered to a social status that is no better or worse than another individual...Finally the world rotates around one center point known as Andropolis...It is a democracy that is composed of every country, and follows the rules decided upon by the representatives. To me this planet sounds highly risky to live on. It sounds like a mixture of the united nations and a democratic republic.”

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. This student described this dystopian world from the point of view of being there and used tools of both imagination and empathy to get inside this society. He described the place in a very sensory manner but also inserted himself into this society in order to understand what was dysfunctional about it. He was not just harnessing his imagination, but also his ability to empathize with people, like him, who might live there.

Would we know if our rights were violated? (*Little Brother*, Response #17).

Connecting theme: learn and seek multiple perspectives

Student response:

“Once Marcus is released he returns home. He realizes that the Homeland Security is spying on everyone through the internet. He and his father argue about whether or not their rights are being violated. This is very similar situation to what our country has gone through in the past with the NSA. . . This book takes on topics of discussion that are happening in our country right now. Are we willing to sacrifice our freedom for safety? I think that is the question the book asks in the beginning. Marcus chooses to fight for his freedom, which turns out to be a very good choice. . . Donald Trump is a political leader that has ideas that are related to this book. Trump is worried about terrorist’s in this country so he won’t allow people from the middle east enter the country because they can be considered a threat. It is the same in the book when Marcus is considered a threat because he was near the attacks when they took place.”

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. For this reader, he used the dystopian novel to connect to his world in a way that allowed him to explore the multiple perspectives on several issues. Through both issues he discussed, violation of rights amidst a terrorist attack and contemporary politics around Middle Eastern immigrants, as controversial topics. Although the student did not seem to arrive at a final opinion of his own, it is clear that the book allowed him to understand the perspective and topics in both the fictional world, as well as his world. The book allowed for the experience of another, which translated to the experiences and current stories of life in his real world.

Responses to fictional crisis through comparative government (*World War Z*, Response #26). Connecting theme: adopt a critical stance; suspend judgment.

Student response:

“Several events happen in the book that show the abilities of different governments to interact with their people in times of crisis. One of these events is the United States trying to make a big spectacle out of destroying a massive swarm of zombies from New York City in order to regain the confidence of the

people. This is the ways that democracies have to think about their people. Since every individual has power to affect the government, the government has to constantly do things to inspire the people and keep their faith in the government's ability to function....many considered the social contract to be inadequate and lost any sort of respect for the authority of the American government. They quickly began to completely disregard any order or suggestion that was given by the US government. This sort of misdemeanor would not be tolerated in a government such as the one in Russia, which had complete authoritarian control over it's people....This is not a society in which people do as they are told, and if they do not, they are severely punished for it. The government is strict and all powerful. There is no option for citizens to take action against things they do not believe in. This shows that, at least in the story, Russia is not a constitutional republic, as they claim to be, but closer to an absolute dictatorship, with their president at the head. This has been shown several times throughout the short history of the Russian Federation, such as the murder of Yakhya Yevloyev, a professor of Putin's regime who was pulled into a police car and shot at point blank range.... Cuba is well suited to not only survive, but thrive in a world completely controlled by zombies. Their attempts to keep their own people from fleeing the country to the United States meant that their beach borders were well defended and hard to access. The relative safety of the island meant that now, American citizens were feeling towards Cuba."

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. This student adopted a critical stance in order to understand when a government best serves its citizens and which situations or types of governments can change that perspective. He suspended judgment and embraced the elements of different governments that actually seem favorable in the event of a massive crisis or threat to safety. In this way, the student put these experiences into his modern concepts of these governments in order to determine an opinion about how a government can craft and be responsive to a social contract.

Why do governments break down and how do they reform? (*World War Z*,

Response #32). Connecting theme: empathize; self-understanding.

Student response:

"In my opinion I believe that the society should've taken the warnings seriously despite the fact that there were little to no warnings and the government on the other hand trying to cover it up. That's exactly what would happen in a society today as well. People don't take anything serious until it doesn't get out of control. .. This zombie apocalypse is kind of like a disease basically. It spreads

quickly and causes a panic on society and there's no way to stop or control it. One thing I enjoyed while reading this book wasn't the fear of zombies that blinded the government and society. It was the way that society breaks down and re-forms itself after a huge disaster. Zombies are just the 'catalyst' for the breakdown of society, and the existence of zombies sets a new set of rules for life that people have to adapt to. The citizens of this society were terrified. They had to live in refugee camps and most just died there, because they couldn't be treated correctly. Many lost their jobs, families, homes, leaving them helpless and devastated. I think the government is well to be blamed for this because they didn't do a better job at warning people of what was coming. I think this story suggests that the government ends up hurting its citizens and society overall rather than protecting them. . . Since there's never been a zombie apocalypse in the history of mankind there isn't any type of organization to prevent it from happening because most likely this wouldn't happen. It's not real it's just in books and movies for entertainment, there is no reality to it. If this were to ever happen though, I as a citizen would do all I can to protect others as well as myself. Making sure we all have our emergency needs such as food, water, cloths, fist aid kits, tools and supplies, medications, etc. so we can fight the zombies before they spread, and take over the entire world like they do in this book."

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. This student used personal connection, imagined herself right in the story in order to determine how she might react or what she might want to see provided to her from the government. She also empathized with the story as someone experiencing it for herself and tried to be in that position to understand the dysfunctional responses of others. This reader achieved a certain level of self-awareness in order to decide what she valued and how she would respond and how she would be prepared, with or without the support of the government or society.

Identifying and define "extreme" (*Unwind*, Response #35). Connecting theme: embrace and explain complicated narratives.

Student response:

"I believe that this government can be loosely related to many governments during the 1980s, and also to some current extreme governments. One government that immediately comes to mind for me is Soviet Russia. In the same way children are on thin ice in the book in order to not be unwound, children in Soviet Russia were given aptitude tests to determine immediately how far they

could go in life with a profession chosen carefully by the government. Both of these governments are a rigging of fate so to speak, and eliminate the possibility of basic citizenship and natural rights. A government that comes to mind that is still functioning is The Republic of China. In this society children are determined to be successful or not very early on, and if they fail to reach a certain criteria they are essentially eliminated from the possibility of a prosperous and free life. They are disowned by parents, and their chances to even survive and fulfill their most basic needs are drastically downsized. The frightening part of this fictional society is that societies function very similar to it, and even in America there are certain groups that if given the right tools and power, would see this to be a reality. There are currently right wing parties that would love to see abortion made a criminal offense even though we have laws in place to prevent such a possibility.”

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. Though the final assertions may not be successful, this student demonstrated a willingness and desire to embrace and explain complicated narratives. He wanted to connect across time and experiences and used that to understand an issue that troubled him in his own life and time. His understanding and experiment with embracing complicated narratives also suggested that he was willing to accept that there are not always easy answers or solutions to controversial issues or problems in society. This student demonstrated that he is comfortable creating questions for himself, as much as “solutions”.

Dystopia as a cautionary tale and critique on our lives (*The Circle*, Response #38). Connecting theme: imagine.

Student response:

“In reading *The Circle* I found similarities to our society today, specifically in the ways we interact with each other as a result of social media. I think Dave Eggers overall message with this book was showing where our society is potentially headed if we drive further into an internet run government. Eggers portrayal of the effects of an online government was terrifying, but he came up with very good points that tie into dystopian societies. . . One point that the book touched on only a little was the lack of physical activity these people would eventually come to with an increase in time spent on device. This is seen in our society today, however with the amount of time spent on-screen is rapidly increasing in the book, this would proportionally relate to an increase in obesity. . .Does obesity really have to do with government structure? No, but I just wanted to rant about how Eggers was wrong about how the whole health thing would work out.”

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. This student saw the dystopia as a cautionary tale, a potential reality of extending the lifestyles of modern day. This student inserted herself into imagining the world of this story so that she could determine other issues that may arise in this place and to see that habits and behaviors in our current life could be extended to result in a society like this. This dystopian experience represented the reader being willing to step inside the story but keep an eye on what is happening in her life and see those connections.

Segregation hurts all citizens (*When She Woke*, Response #40). Connecting theme: empathize; embrace and explain complicated narratives.

Student response:

“It is also degrading because your skin is the color of your crime where people will judge you and not give you a second look if you have a different skin color. It would be like living in the 1940s America as an African American, you get judged and you aren’t allowed to go into some places with a ‘no chromes allowed sign’. This society was built for good so that there is less of a chance of crime but also why would we want to degrade people for committing a crime? In the book the survival rate for reds were so low and a red female was even lower because they get murdered or don’t find a job and die homeless. The separation of church and state is a good thing because ‘We put our hand on the bible and swear to uphold the constitution, not put our hand on the constitution and swear to uphold the bible.’ To live in this society would be having to live by the government’s idea of good and that is not right. Everything surrounds religion and in this society people can not be truly free.”

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. This reader posed as many questions for herself, as she found solutions. She embraced the complexity of crime and punishment, in both this novel and modern society, but more importantly demonstrated a high degree of empathy. She demonstrated a willingness to consider that crime and punishment are not easy to define, nor categorize and that if it

were her, in that place, or someone she loved, it would be easy to see why it made life worse to enforce consequences like this society did.

Identifying and solving societal problems (*Unwind*, Response #41).

Connecting theme: empathize; embrace and explain complicated narratives.

Student response:

“Dystopian novels allow readers to journey through a system so flawed, making one wonder whether these laws could ever be allowed. Reading this genre of books also allows you to clearly establish what type of role your personal government would play with these particular decisions. . . Each teenager has different thoughts on being an unwind. There are multiple moral dilemmas each person faces, like, their body parts having the potential to save numerous people, and if being unwound is really dying or not. The government is very subtle throughout the story, making it seem as though killing delinquent kids is not a big deal, as long as it saves more people. . . This novel was so intriguing to read, the new laws written as a solution to the pro-life and pro-choice arguments was quite an interesting concept. It makes you question the decisions their corrupted government placed on society. This novel made me question things about the book, like, are they really dying, or are their spirits going with the numerous lives they save? Does that government have the right to own teenagers as property, if their parents don’t want them? Why should the government have the ability to control a citizens body? This story left me speechless, would a government actually do this? I was in awe at the different aspects to the storyline the author incorporated. In some ways I was feeling a sort of acceptance towards these laws, but then I would quickly learn some horrifying, negative aspects that made me have feelings of anger and disbelief. Overall, the governments’ role in this novel, made me think more in depth about societal problems and solutions in present day America, especially abortion related factors. It was really interesting stepping into a world of a severely changed and flawed society, and how these fictional characters made it to live another day.”

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. This reader situated himself right into the story and identified with the teens and wanted to offer challenges to point out the flawed way of thinking that landed that dystopia in such a bad place that seemed reasonable to others. At the same time, he understood the complexity of a society that tried to control and do good and needed to enforce rules on citizens. By empathizing with characters and suspending judgment to join the story, he embraced the

complications of this society and created more questions and bigger ideas, rather than a simple critique.

Treatment of citizens and criminals (*When She Woke*, Response #44).

Connecting theme: learn and seek multiple perspectives.

Student response:

“The journey that they had to go through to get the life that they wanted was intense. They had to basically live in trunks of cars and in safe houses with people that they don’t know but just have to trust. In this book there is the reality of fear. In this book the two girls almost got killed, they were drugged and sold, and almost raped. That is a real thing in the real world and as a girl that is a fear that you don’t want to happen. . . This scene from the novel hurts people because the government makes everyone else in the world think that these chromes are terrible people. When these people see how they are treated they just act worse and just have worse self-esteem about themselves. Also because of this the chromes hurt from this because it is like segregation all over again. Like the chromes are the blacks and the non-chromes are the whites. It hinders the chromes by not allowing them the same opportunities as other people. They can’t get the same jobs as the others and they get treated like trash and everyone is supposed to be scared of them all because of the color of their skin. I believe the way to prevent this type of dystopian society is to keep doing what we are doing now in the world. We have come so far to make lots of people feel good about who they are. We have made lots of things legal to allow people to be who they are. But when it comes to abortion, it is good now because we have pro-life and pro-choice which works for everyone and each side as pros and each has their own cons but everyone can understand each other’s sides. I think we are doing all the right things to not have this type of dystopian come true. We are on the right path to make things better and equal for everyone and we won’t have to worry about any of this happening when it comes to chroming.”

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. This student demonstrated a desire to find as many perspectives on an issue as possible, in both the dystopian society and in her real world. She used her reading experience to provide her the life and personal experience of understanding different points of view and then attempted to translate that into issues that confronted her real life. The story experience allowed her to *try on* different points of view and perspectives because she was able to identify with these characters and this story.

Slipping into acquiescence of citizen and human rights (*Ready Player One*,

Response #46). Connecting theme: imagine; empathize.

Student response:

“One thing in this new society that was familiar was the struggle for money and power. Whether it was the struggle to win the contest and get all the money and power that accompanied winning or Wade’s time spent in indentured servitude, it was clear that part of human nature hadn’t changed. In particular the indentured servitude was alarming. It was basically equivalent to slavery seeing as how the company didn’t really plan on ever letting anyone actually fully repay their debt. It’s a scary reality to think that you could end up stuck in indentured servitude for having too much debt, a problem that in that society happened much more often than it should have. I did not like that this had become an accepted thing in society and it was okay to just enslave people.”

Sense-making of student responses to show intersecting themes. This student connected to an experience in the story that he could relate to and imagine. He could see how this financial problem could plague people and lead to bigger problems. It is not a key feature to this story, but obviously something that connected to him as a cautionary ingredient for modern society. His imagination allowed him to connect to a problem and consider the context, solutions and human choices that could be implemented to prevent such a scenario. Since he did more than just imagine, but empathized with the characters and situation, he became objective about evaluating the effects of this context and choices on the lives of the people in this society.

Text-to-World Analysis and Conclusions

By using the reading comprehension strategies to sort student response to reading, I identified the intersecting themes from transactional theory and historical thinking at work. When I returned to my chart to code and categorize student responses around those themes, and re-align it around text-to-self and text-to-world categories, I saw that the

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

student writing demonstrated strong use of the intellectual practices that overlap in the theories that mattered to me.

Table 8. Intersecting themes of transactional theory and historical thinking,

	Self-Understanding	Imagine	Suspend Judgment	Empathize	Critical Stance	Perspectives	Complicated Narratives
Text-to-Self							
Student 1	✓			✓			
Student 2				✓			✓
Student 3		✓					
Student 4					✓		✓
Student 5					✓		✓
Student 6				✓		✓	
Student 7		✓		✓			
Student 8			✓		✓		
Student 9	✓					✓	
Student 10		✓	✓				
Text-to-World	Self-understanding	Imagine	Suspend judgment	Empathize	Critical Stance	Perspectives	Complicated Narratives
Student 1		✓		✓			
Student 2						✓	
Student 3			✓		✓		
Student 4	✓			✓			
Student 5							✓
Student 6		✓					
Student 7				✓			✓
Student 8				✓			✓
Student 9							✓
Student 10		✓		✓			

What I think this categorization of responses demonstrated was the power of fictional journeys, with an aesthetic approach, as a mental disposition for gaining the skills of historical thinking. The most consistent observation of this sample of student responses was their ability to gain a sense of a lived through experience in another society. The student responses showed a willingness to empathize with the role of

citizens in those different places. The students also demonstrated a consistent willingness to suspend judgment in order to accept the premises of those worlds, often using examples from dystopian seamlessly to make a point in modern society. The dispositions and mental, or even emotional, traits described by social studies pedagogy as unnatural acts were quite natural dispositions for students to enter when given a fictional journey and few strings-attached, content requirements for the reading.

Findings Part Two: Academic Essays

Academic Essays and Reading Comprehension Analysis

According to Keene, reading comprehension is not just about assessment, but a part of a conversation to support ongoing instruction (2010). The student responses generated in my class for study were the product of experiences with reading. These reading experiences, though not entirely aesthetic in the purest form described by Rosenblatt were assuredly shifted on the aesthetic-efferent continuum more than was typically expected in social studies (1994, p.22). The rest of my social studies classroom readings came from the textbook or factual academic journals and overviews, sometimes news videos and documentaries or judicial briefings, and other legal documents. Frequently those reading assignments were accompanied with an expectation to find specific facts or outline for, future factual recall. Those typical reading experiences were more likely to situate the student into an efferent state of mind because the student knew I expected him to *take away* specific concepts and information. Therefore, the dystopian novel reading time and assignment allowed for me to intentionally not dictate learning outcomes, specific knowledge, and not even strict pacing. Rather, during these reading

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

experiences, I cued the students to relax, observe, and join another world to see what it is like to be an inhabitant of another society and government.

Reading comprehension became a valuable lens for my instruction and my data collection and textual analysis, mostly because I did not come to this study as an English teacher, but as a social studies teacher. When I discussed what students *got out of* the reading, I was talking about how to put them in the mindset to create personal experiences with the text. Both the aesthetic response and historical thinking practice required students to engage in intellectual mindsets. The learning outcomes for these intellectual mindsets can be difficult to measure, even hard to make tangible in the way that reading comprehension tests and assessments can evaluate a student's ability to recall facts and information. Reading comprehension as a concept for categorizing students' efforts to incorporate new knowledge into her worldview proved a valuable insight for me to help categorize and analyze responses. Categorized in this vein, student responses illustrated these intersecting themes of historical thinking and aesthetic response. That categorization also allowed me to see ways that students *lived through experience* informed their own lives and their views of the world. The lived through experience, demonstrated a consistent necessity especially for students to imagine, empathize, and suspend judgment. When I realized that reading comprehension strategies could sort my student responses in a way that allowed me to see these connections, I not only found a way to categorize and analyze responses, but I also discovered a method for highlighting my intersecting themes. Reading comprehension is not just about factual recall, but the opportunity to make personal connections to new knowledge and experiences, and incorporate that new information into an existing worldview.

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

Along with Keene, there are research practitioners who focus reading comprehension as something that can be best attained when students engage with the text on the personal level. This stands in contrast to reading comprehension studies, like that above, that distill reading down to the amount and percentage of concrete facts that can be most efficiently and effectively pulled away from a reading setting. In his practitioner guide, *This Time It's Personal*, an experienced English teacher describes the ballooning negative outcomes from the recent trends to test and track students according to reading levels and test scores and concludes it “may be one reason so many students see little connection between school life and their lives outside of school” (O’Connor, 2011, p.7). With respect to teaching writing, he argues that writing assignments should allow students time to “construct a new relationship with an intended audience” or be an “empathetic piece” that generates emotional response, or “constructs a new relationship in the substance of the writing” because, he believes, “the generic limits of the assignments do not allow students to construct new relationships in the substance of the writing, and the academic voice of such essays eliminates the possibility of empathy (O’Connor, 2011, p.11). I would argue that these are the same as my goals and purposes for teaching reading in my class. O’Connor describes also the goals and benefits of reading in the aesthetic stance as well as the intellectual ability to engage in historical thinking, but turns those mindsets into a disciplined, teaching vision, a practice, and a pedagogy.

In the teacher practitioner book, *I Read It, But I Don't Get It*, Cris Tovani uses experience as a social studies and English teacher to share strategies to help students comprehend more through reading, discussing a variety of methods and ways of thinking

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

(Tovani, 2000, p.64). This book provides stories and examples to contextualize tools, like giving the reader's purpose, but also devotes time to how we help students more effectively find personal connections and use background knowledge. As for my instruction, and subsequent study, I wanted students to gain new knowledge from the course, but also believed personal reading experiences complemented learning and made reading comprehension and the acquisition of new knowledge more successful. More importantly, though, I wanted to explore reading options for students to grow thinking skills and intellectual mindsets in order to learn about other people and their world. I needed to discover ways to balance the fervor of using reading to gain knowledge and learn to temper it with the need to allow students to develop their habits of thinking.

Another angle to the reading comprehension conversation was considering the philosophy of instruction around reading in the classroom, not just for the sake of comprehension, but for the sake of increasing the love of reading in my students. Since it was pivotal to my teaching practice for this study, it was important to talk about independent reading as a way to teach reading. In her guide, called *Yellow Brick Roads*, Janet Allen helps teachers who want to foster independent reading, because in the culture of standards and testing she discovered teachers "weren't teaching the strategies as processes transferable to all reading. They were teaching them as test-taking strategies, not reading strategies. In that process, they were leaving out critical conditions of reading: engagement, immersion in diverse texts, and opportunities and time for choice" (Allen, 2000, p.49). This practical guide to implementing independent reading, as well as the larger conversation about independent reading, informed my practice as a teacher and my disposition as a researcher about what I wanted students to value from the reading

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

experience. Though there were moments in my classroom instruction where I needed students to read in order to *take away* new knowledge and facts, I did not want that to define the entirety of my instruction and purpose for reading in the classroom. Allen allowed me to realize that my independent reading study with dystopian literature in government was not focused on getting students to list facts and recall specific information, but it was still a project about reading and reading comprehension. A critical component of comprehending was how a student created new worldviews while immersed in reading. For my instruction, I discovered when I loosened up the reading experience and related course requirements and emphasized how much I just wanted them to join a world, I discovered, the students gained important insights. Teaching reading was sometimes about noticing key facts and information and sometimes teaching reading was about demanding students learn how to enter a new world and understand new people and places.

The academic essays required of students at the end of the semester created a different opportunity to see how reading experiences altered the lives of students. For this essay task, students need to reflect back, pull out specific experiences and knowledge from the novels, from class content, and their independent, academic research. As a result, as a tool for textual analysis, it was not as useful to consider the level and quality of personal responses, but rather the type of reading comprehension strategies students utilized. These writings offered a cumulative demonstration of experiences and knowledge. The academic requirements of this task, positioned the students in a more academic, efferent mindset than an aesthetic one, so evaluating and categorizing student writing based on the quality of personal response, missed the opportunity to see how

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

students comprehended the overall semester. The fictional reading, in an independent reading format, paired with the course content allowed readers to make personal and academic connections through lived through experiences, as both real and fictional citizens in comparative societies. Though Keene offers an extended list of thinking strategies of proficient readers in the appendix of *Mosaic of Thought* (2007, 1997), she provides an overview of the *key reading comprehension strategies* in “New Horizons in Comprehension” (2010). These seven key strategies serve as the categories of textual analysis for me to find meaning in the students’ academic essay writings. In *Mosaic of Thought*, Keene also calls these key strategies, metacognitive strategies. She created these categories:

- 1. Monitor for meaning.** Know when, as a reader, you fully understand or don’t understand.
- 2. Use schema.** Relate the new to the known; activate prior knowledge to help you understand new information. Make connections between texts, portions of the same text, the text and the broader knowledge, and the text and the reader. If you realize that you lack necessary schema to understand a text or concept, create schema using a variety of methods.
- 3. Infer.** Predict; make independent decisions about inexplicit meanings; form opinions and defend them; draw conclusions and defend them.
- 4. Ask questions.** Generate questions before, during, and after reading. Use questions to focus, delve more deeply, and extrapolate to insights within and beyond the text.
- 5. Create images.** Use images that emanate from all five senses and from the emotions to understand more vividly.
- 6. Determine importance.** Make decisions about which ideas and concepts are most important in a text; articulate why those ideas are most important.
- 7. Synthesize.** Be aware of how one’s thinking changes during reading. Create a cogent expression of key points after reading, which may contain information from a variety of sources outside the current text. (Keene, 2010, p.71).

Unlike the student responses from book reading reflections, these academic essays were not best categorized by text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world. Though there were elements of personal response to the final essays, they were not primarily

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

about personal response and connections. Rather, these final essays allowed students to demonstrate other types of strategies of reading comprehension and learning.

I chose this set of key reading comprehension strategies to sort and analyze the student academic essays because they represented more than just efferent knowledge gleaned from reading a text. When Keene designed and advocated for reading comprehension strategies to be used in the classroom it was because “in this scenario, strategies aren’t treated as ends in themselves, but as tools to enhance understanding” (2010, p.71). The conditions of the creation of these academic essays meant the students were not just responding to reading, but considering how the reading and their reading experiences impacted their new knowledge and helped create their new arguments and positions about citizenship and society.

Along with the forty-six reader response essays, I collected twenty-three final essay exams, one from each student. Per the instructions in my methodology chapter, these essays required students to answer the prompt: *what is the role of a citizen in a society?* The essay required content connections to course material, examples from dystopian literature, and support from academic journals, primarily for the connections to political theory and government (Table 1). For these essays, students needed to center around proving themes of citizenship could be true or observed in both a democracy and a dystopia. In addition to the prompt, I provided in-class time to explain the essay requirements and structure, gave the students some examples, guided them through searching databases for academic journals, time to outline and write, and time for peer review and class discussion. Unlike the student free responses and reflection writings based on single book readings, I provided direct instruction about the organization,

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

structure, and requirements of this essay. I wanted the students to realize that their reading experiences could become valuable vehicles for their academic success and that new knowledge is crafted not just from facts, but also from experiences. I also told the students that they could use any experiences with *other worlds* as evidence in this essay and were not required to use the two books they read for the semester. Therefore, students used some books or movie references for dystopian examples that they either enjoyed on their own time, in addition to these books, or that they read for another class. I wanted to open up their options for examples, but most stayed with the books they read for the semester. Each student invited me to their essay on google drive where I provided comments and feedback and supported their efforts to properly cite their research. For this study, I removed all student identifiers, and then printed the essays to keep in one book for data analysis for this study.

The academic essay assignment took place at the end the semester, after the students completed all dystopian reading and reading responses writings. During the other sixteen weeks of the semester, the students engaged in independent reading, regular class activities, and submitted the two reader response writings at evenly spaced intervals in those weeks. I did not discuss any academic requirements or final essay expectations until the end of the semester. When we began the academic essay assignment, it was the last two weeks of the semester and I framed it as an assignment designed to measure and evaluate their cumulative knowledge about government (Table1). To introduce the concept and assignment, I posted instructions and examples of themes for body ideas on the class site. I sent students to that page to read. I asked them to just take out a pencil and paper and brainstorm. I prompted them to begin a three-minute timed, free write

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

session on what they think it means to be a citizen in a society. I told them to list as many details as they could remember from their dystopian readings about what citizens or governments did to demonstrate their role. I walked them through a hypothetical example, using the book *The Giver*, since most read it in 8th grade, know about it, or saw the movie that was released summer 2016. I talked and typed, one part at a time, until I constructed an example for the students. This demonstration required me to explain a big theme or concept from the beginning of the Government semester, to use knowledge of the course to explain the concept or theme to illustrate the theme with an example from dystopia and to model the use of an academic, research database to find scholarly work to support the theme or specific concept from the course. Since I modeled this on my promethean board, and used Google Drive, I allowed students to then invite themselves to this document. Next, I made each student create two Google documents at that time: one for the outline and working bibliography and one for the final paper and final bibliography.

Academic Essay Data

The academic essays created an opportunity to dig a bit deeper into the concepts of reading comprehension to sort student responses, but I also wanted to see the connections to the aesthetic stance and historical thinking skills. I recorded the dystopian book titles used by students as experiential examples to prove their cumulative knowledge of government, aligned that with students who successfully met the criteria for the assignment and noted which students used books that I promoted at the start of the semester. From the twenty-three essays, there were ten students who used at least two different dystopian novels as supporting experience or information for their essay, met

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

the requirements of the final essay assignment, and referenced at least one of the books I promoted through book talks at the start of the semester. I used the content from those ten student academic essays to do in-depth textual analysis into the student writing to discover the use of reading comprehension strategies and the intersecting themes of historical thinking and the aesthetic stance, in order to illustrate and answer my research questions.

Table 9. Academic Essays Filtered for Textual Analysis (Bolded titles met filter criteria).

Student Essay Title	Dystopian Books used in Academic Essay	Academic Research cited (yes/no)	Government course content connection (yes/no)	Book Talk Title (yes/no)
1. You and the 4 th	<i>Dustlands</i>	Yes	Yes	No
2. 2 nd Amendment	None	Yes	Yes	No
3. Americas Problems	<i>The Giver</i>	Yes	Yes	No
4. The Role of Being a Citizen Within Our Society!	<i>Ready Player One</i> <i>Hunger Games</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
5. Citizens in Society	<i>Hunger Games</i>	Yes	Yes	No
6. Civil Rights!	<i>Unwind</i> <i>Running Man</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
7. Climbing Over the Wall of Citizenship	<i>Little Brother</i> <i>Brave New World</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
8. Empowerment: Amendments, Philosophers, and the People	<i>When She Woke</i> <i>Brave New World</i> <i>Handmaid's Tale</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
9. The Issue of Participation And Personal Accountability: A Guideline	<i>Year 3000</i> <i>Unwind</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
10. The Key Roles of a Citizen	<i>World War Z</i> <i>Unwind</i> <i>Brave New World</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
11. Liberty Among the Few	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i> <i>1984</i>	Yes	Yes	No

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

12. Participate, Contribute, Be Educated, Otherwise You're Not Worth It	<i>Little Brother</i> <i>The Circle</i> <i>Brave New World</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
13. Rights and Responsibilities: the Roles of Citizens in a Society	<i>The Road</i> <i>Brave New World</i> <i>The Circle</i> <i>World War Z</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
14. The Rights of Muggles in America	Brave New World Matched	Yes	Yes	No
15. Rock and ROLE of the Everyday Citizen	Unwind	Yes	Yes	Yes
16. Is the role of a citizen benefiting the government or the people?	<i>Delirium</i> <i>Unwind</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
17. The Silence of Submission	<i>Adoration of Jenna Fox</i> <i>Hunger Games</i>	Yes	Yes	No
18. Civic Responsibility	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i>	No	Yes	No
19. Being an A1 American Citizen	None	No	Yes	No
20. Final Essay	1984	Yes	Yes	No
21. The Role of a Citizen in Society	<i>The Running Man</i> <i>Player Piano</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
22. Political Parties and the Downfall of Modern Society	<i>Shatter Me</i> <i>Brave New World</i> <i>Blindness</i>	Yes	Yes	No
23. A Citizens' Job is to be a Citizen	<i>Maze Runner</i> <i>1984</i>	Yes	Yes	No

Table 10. Filtered academic essays and themes.

Essay Title	Reading Comprehension Strategy Used	Intersecting theme connection	Government concept experienced/ lived through in dystopia
1. Essay #4. The Role of Being a Citizen Within Our Society!	Infer Ask questions Synthesize Determine importance	Empathize, imagine	The lack of public good or citizens doing things for others
2. Essay #6. Civil Rights!	Determine importance Infer Use schema	Suspend judgment	Being left out of the government process and left with no voice
3. Essay #7. Climbing Over the Wall of Citizenship	Determine importance Infer Synthesize	Self-understanding	Being denied the ability to exercise rights
4. Essay #8. Empowerment: Amendments, Philosophers, and the People	Monitor for meaning Use schema	Suspend judgement; embrace complicated narratives	Following laws that conflict with a country/ region
5. Essay #9. The Issue of Participation And Personal Accountability: A Guideline	Determine importance Use schema Synthesize Infer	Adopt a critical stance, self-understanding	Participating in government, even when you disagree or do not want to
6. Essay #10. The Key Roles of a Citizen	Infer Ask questions Use schema Determine importance	Empathize, imagine	Being informed and taking action
7. Essay #12. Participate, Contribute, Be Educated, Otherwise You're Not Worth It	Infer Synthesize Use schema	Imagine, adopt a critical stance	Individual contributions for the greater good
8. Essay #13. Rights and Responsibilities: the Roles of Citizens in a Society	Infer Use schema	Learn and seek multiple perspectives	Civil disobedience; stand up for others; social contract
9. Essay #16. Is the role of a citizen benefiting the government or the people?	Infer Use schema Ask questions Monitor for meaning	Self-understanding, empathize	Having rights limited, justly and unjustly
10. Essay #21. The Role of a Citizen in Society	Infer Determine importance Synthesize	Embrace complicated narratives, learn and seek multiple perspectives	Civil disobedience

Essay #4- The Role of Being a Citizen Within Our Society! Intersecting theme: empathy, imagine. Key reading comprehension strategy: infer; ask questions, synthesize, determine importance.

Student Writing:

“We can make a difference in this country which brings the question, what will you do to show your role as a citizen? . . . One of the most important aspects of being a citizen is being a good person and promoting good, so others will follow in the same footsteps. . . The philosopher Rousseau claimed that people could form their own community and they would give up their needs for the greater good of others, this allows public good. If you have a group of individuals who start promoting good and it starts to spread they’ll soon have their own society based on doing good towards others. Using this theory we can make a society a better place for people to live. The world is a fragile place, and to many people take it for granted which only contributes to the decay of this world. In the book, “*Ready Player One*,” the world is almost completely destroyed, and cities are destroyed every week. The world is run by rich civilians who don’t care about anyone, but themselves which is much like the society we live in. This is what the future could look like if we decide to sit blindly. This is a possible future outcome for the world.”

Analysis. This student asked questions and made an inference about the significance of promoting public good. Then the student used an illustrative example from a dystopian story to synthesize his contention about how individuals must think about others in order to make an ideal community possible. For this student, the dystopian scenario was not so much a different world, but more of a modern day critique and cautionary tale. The tone of cautionary tale lets me know this student empathized with the characters and the situation, in attempt to want to avoid this same reality. This student imagined life in this society and identified, without judging, why that was a response some people might have, though she wished to avoid it for our world.

Essay #6 – Civil Rights. Intersecting theme: suspend judgment. Key reading comprehension strategy: determine importance, infer, use schema.

Student Writing:

“The citizens are what make the government run correctly. When we object is when we will have a great running government. For example, in a book called *Unwind* the kids are controlled and when they start to have issues with those kids

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

they are unwound which means that they are ripped into pieces and given to people that need the parts in order to survive. The kids have no voice before they are supposed to be unwound because they do not want to die. They are informed and they are petitioning against the government because their life is worth more. I believe this is crucial because in order for our government to work you need to be informed and have a different opinion of what everyone should believe.”

Analysis. This student determined importance of a concept about how citizens can make a government run more effectively and then used the illustration from the novel to create a schema about this concept about the role of citizens in bringing attention to problems to make life better. This student, also, accepted the world as a comparative and real option for drawing supporting details for her determination. For this student, the examples from the novel offered examples from experience or background knowledge. This student recognized that the teenagers in this story took action that might not otherwise be considered unethical, but for this point, suspended judgment about those actions, and in fact accepted that these actions seemed justified in this story to bring about change.

Essay #7- Climbing over the wall. Intersecting theme: self-understanding. Key reading comprehension strategy: determine importance, infer, synthesize.

Student Writing:

“In the constitution our rights are clearly explained. As citizens we shouldn’t sacrifice our rights so freely. For example people sacrifice their fourth amendment right very often. They allow their personal items to be searched and seized without a warrant. People claim they have nothing to hide but you should keep your private things private. Also we have the freedom to speak freely and express our opinions protected by the first amendment. We need to exercise that right and speak out for the things we believe in. In *Brave New World* the society they live in people don’t have the freedom to choose to voice their opinions or even emotions. They created a drug to dull people’s emotions and feelings. In their society people don’t even have the right to choose what profession to do. They are put into a caste from the moment they are hatched. In the 1960s African Americans were denied their opportunity to exercise their legal rights. Many groups including the KKK were out to make sure that African Americans could not exercise their rights. They had the right to vote however were forced to take tests that would determine if they could vote or not. These tests were unfair and

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

unpassable. This part of US history show us how important it is to have our rights we have by sacrificing them and not acting on them. We are the ‘Land of the Free’ we should exercise our rights.”

Analysis. This student also used examples from dystopia alongside historic examples to substantiate a claim, in a way that suggested the reading experience just adds to cumulative, prior knowledge on an issue and can be equally used as evidence. Comprehending this concept of exercising rights included both real and fictional experiences. The experience in the dystopian society offered another example, rather than a counter-argument. By virtue of framing this point as something he might take for granted, this student connected to the book and used an example from history to employ self-understanding. This student tried to understand how he might become complacent about something that matters so much today through examples from dystopia and US History that demonstrated times when most of society in those respective places also illustrated complacency towards a citizen’s ability to exercise his rights.

Essay #8-Empowerment. Intersecting theme: suspend judgement, embrace complicated narratives. Key reading comprehension strategy: monitor for meaning, use schema.

Student Writing:

“The 10th amendment exists to balance the powers between the federal government and the state. . . In *When She Woke*, the main character is forced to be colored red because she is a convict of the most serious crime, abortion. This shows the action of the supremacy clause because even if the state did not want to participate in her arrest the federal government exercised that every being who participates in the action of abortion or in any crime those individuals must be dyed the corresponding color and be held captive in a room for 30 days with live, twenty four hour surveillance that is shown to the entire world. This then means that the state must respect the rules of the government since it was stated in the Constitution of this society even if the entire state does not agree with such harsh punishments.”

Analysis. This student used the novel example to both monitor her own meaning about the 10th amendment but also internalized a schema for the supremacy clause. The supremacy clause or the possibility of state reversal of the laws in this dystopian society is not something I remember about this story, but this student created this schema to understand the scenarios that would cause a national government to create laws that severely punish people and yet compel citizens to follow such harsh conditions. The dystopian novel provided an experience to explain a concept and offered a contrast for our society. This student suggested that the 10th amendment might be a problem for allowing harsh laws and enforcements. This student did not take the space to judge whether the law was fair or just, or whether abortion should even be considered a crime or necessity. Rather, the student suspended judgment and used this experience to learn more about the concept of how you could live in a society where jurisdictions might conflict and following laws between several layers of government could be difficult. The issue of federalism is a complicated concept and with her ability to embrace the complicated narrative of the characters in this dystopian society, she understood the concept, even while suspending judgment about the ethics of any particular law.

Essay #9. The Issue of Participation and Personal Accountability: A Guideline. Intersecting theme: adopt a critical stance, self-understanding. Key reading comprehension strategy: determine importance, use schema, synthesize, infer.

Student Writing:

“Participation in the political and legal system is an essential and integral part of a functional society. Becoming informed on the matters of a community and casting votes on the representatives that support the good of the community. Participating in essential public services such as jury duty. Registering to vote allows you to make an impact on the election process as well as put you on the list for a chance to be volunteered for jury duty. For instance in the dystopian novel *Unwind* citizens were required to cooperate with the law and report criminal fugitives that were on the run, and were sometimes required to help in the capture process. In our right to a trial by jury of our peers ‘the jury are judges of law as well as of

fact' so it is necessary for citizens to maintain this process by both registering to vote and appearing on jury duty. As a registered voter, I reserve the right to cast my vote on matters that I believe will benefit society as a whole, and as a result, am signing myself up to be selected at random to serve on a jury.”

Analysis. This student used an example from the dystopian novel, alongside other examples of responsibilities of citizens, without contextualizing them as acceptable or not. Instead of challenging the reasonableness of obeying the laws, he drew similarities in the concepts across scenarios. The dystopian novel was a world where it might be reasonable to not comply, but this student still accepted this world and used it as a congruent example of the responsibilities of citizens in a functional society. He attempted to synthesize the concept of how citizens can follow laws they consider unfavorable and the dystopian society of *Unwind* offered an experience. This student used the reading comprehension strategies to develop a schema about what it means to participate, even revealing that in the story experience as well as his real life, that following laws or participating was not always the preference. This student accepted the world constructs of the dystopian society and explained why people were forced to follow a law, even if they acknowledge it was not ideal. Accepting that same complicated narrative, but applying it to our society, this student used this experience to understand why he would participate in government, when necessary, as well.

Essay #10. The Key Roles of a Citizen. Intersecting theme: empathize, imagine
Key reading comprehension strategy: infer, ask questions, use schema, determine importance.

Student Writing:

“According to one study, about 44% of Americans do not realize ‘Obamacare’ was passed as a law. If we don’t know about one of the most influential laws in recent years, how can we be expected to know about the elections and which candidate would do the most to improve our lives? There are consequences of not staying informed and missing out on opportunities that can be beneficial for you. In the dystopian novel *World War Z*, you’ll understand the consequences of NOT

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

staying informed. A zombie plague starts as all plagues tend to, slow and steady. China has a small outbreak of zombie that spreads out into the world through various routes, refugees, black market organs, and human trafficking. Many countries ignore the news of the dead rising up from the grave with the hunger for human flesh. The lack of information and preventative measures means the zombie tide doesn't stay back for long. Before anyone knows it, the undead masses have washed over the entire globe, biting, scratching, and killing all they come across. If the citizens had stayed informed and taken the news seriously they would've had higher chances of surviving, but they didn't which resulted in millions catching the plague. (Brooks). Now not only do you know your rights and privileges about staying informed, but also the consequences that come with it. Such as a zombie plague that you may think isn't a big deal, until half of the globe is dying all because you decided to ignore it. As a modern society, that's what we tend to do."

Analysis. This student used the dystopian novel scenario to support his inferences and importance about the concept of citizens staying informed. For this student, the descriptive example and consequences of ignoring the world substantiated a problem of apathy among citizens in the modern world. Therefore, this student partly accepted the premise of this world as an additional experience to illustrate a point but also used this zombie apocalypse scenario to offer a larger cautionary tale of staying informed. This student used his ability to empathize and imagine the zombie apocalypse to learn the consequences of being uninformed as a citizen in our society. This dystopia and schema for this concept became a warning, or cautionary tale, from this student. He was able to seamlessly connect his imagination and empathy as a citizen in this dystopia with what he saw as an ailment among citizens in our current society.

Essay #12. Participate, Contribute, Be Educated, Otherwise You're Not Worth It. Intersecting theme: adopt a critical stance, imagine. Key reading comprehension strategy: infer, synthesize, use schema.

Student Writing:

"The second duty of an individual in society is to contribute ideas, thoughts, and opinions. This goes alongside voting, where ideas, thoughts, and opinions are represented. The sharing allows not only for others within our society to know of discoveries and improvements that have been made, but should motivate

individuals to care. We should intellectually and physically build ourselves up to the best possible, which requires everybody contributing. A frequented improvement is that of technology. Evolution and technology are closely linked, and are characteristic of the people at the time (Bruland). This gives people opportunity to represent themselves through advancement, contribution and participation. In the novel *The Circle*, by Dave Eggers, technology is advanced with the justification it is for the greater good, “But I’m a believer in the perfectability of human beings. I think we can be better. I think we can be perfect or near to it. And when we become our best selves, the possibilities are endless. We can solve any problem. We can cure any disease, end hunger, everything, because we won’t be dragged down by all our weaknesses, our petty secrets, our hoarding of information and knowledge. We will finally realize our potential” (Eggers). The novel also uses social media as a means to project the thoughts of the individual. A single tweet or post may be insignificant, but when groups of people become involved, topics such as ‘world wide trending topic’ and ‘going viral’ become relevant.”

Analysis. From this student’s use of an example from *The Circle*, a reader might not guess this is a dystopian society that serves as a cautionary tale for not allowing social media and private corporations to take over our lives. Rather, this student selected the behaviors that offered potential for positive contributions for citizens in a society, as if the attribute might exist in our world as an asset, while it also existed in this world as a negative. Interestingly, the quote selected from the text is the propaganda used in the story to persuade people to over-share and create a dystopia, but this student extrapolated a small slice of that behavior and bent it to fit as evidence for his schema about citizen participation in modern society. This student was so capable of thoroughly imagining this dystopian society that she created some positive takeaways from this future gone wrong because of over-sharing in social media. Rather than judging all of the negative traits of this dystopian society where social media has dominated the morals, she adopted a critical stance and saw the power in how people used social media to become organized with other people and contribute ideas, thoughts and opinions.

Essay #13. Rights and Responsibilities: the Roles of Citizens in a Society.

Intersecting theme: learn and seek multiple perspectives. Key reading comprehension strategy: infer, use schema.

Student Writing:

“Another crucial characteristic of good citizens is being willing to stand up for those who are having their rights violated, even if it does not directly affect them. People can have their rights violated in all sorts of ways, whether through government officials, such as police brutality, other citizens, such as racial discrimination, or even the law itself. If these situations arise, all citizens have a duty to stand up for justice, no matter if it something that affects them or not. This also incorporates the ideas of Locke, as he says that the only way to prevent people from only looking out for themselves is to create a government. If the society created from a social contract naturally favors some citizens more than others, then there is no justice, and no contract. This strongly connects with the ideas of social justice theory, which says that without justice for all people equally, regardless of their race or social standing, there is no justice at all. Justice is supposed to be above all things, and look at everyone only as a single entity no different than anyone else. Without citizens willing to defend this justice, many people will have their most basic rights stripped from them. The 1964 and 1965 voting rights acts are great examples of what happens when people are willing to stand up for the rights of others. The early 1960s saw great unrest in black communities as they began to push for equal rights in voting, a topic they believed would be a stepping stone to a place of total equality. . . An example of a society where the citizens do not defend justice is Aldous Huxley’s “Brave New World”, which tells the story of a world in which all people are created rather than born, and created unequally. To keep the people from fighting back, the government of this society constantly gives opiates to its citizens, which keeps the citizens in a permanent subdued state. Even those who manage to overcome the drugs and fight back against the government are simply shipped away from the society to an island with all the other troublemakers. In this world, the rights of those created unequally can never be defended because the people are unwilling to fight against oppression.”

Analysis. This student creates a sophisticated inference and schema about what it means for a citizen to stand up for the rights of other people and the scenarios that make it possible as well as necessary. This student uses the dystopian scenario in the same manner in which she uses the examples of the Civil Rights era to make the point that a positive society requires the actions of others. This student included five dystopian novels in her bibliography, along with six academic journals, which was far above the standard

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

and level of performance of her peers. By seamlessly putting together examples from history, government, dystopia, and her life, this student uses many perspectives to create a sophisticated schema around the actions of citizens and comprehend how those actions can impact the larger society for good, or bad. For this student, the dystopian society just offered another perspective for how to comprehend this concept of social contract and justice for all people and what it takes to make that happen in a society.

Essay #16. Is the role of a citizen benefiting the government or the people?

Intersecting theme: self-understanding, empathize. Key reading comprehension strategy: infer, use schema, ask questions, monitor for meaning.

Student Writing:

“Students tends to have a limited rights within schools. This is so that a student can easily be controlled. Any type of suspicion can make your rights limited even more for example, searching you. Limiting right can happen easily if the government says it’s in the best interest of all of the people. This general good will benefit from your freedoms being taken away. In the court case TLO v New Jersey, a student was caught smoking cigarettes in the bathroom. The school searched her bag and found weed and she was charged with possession. Although cigarettes are legal, they were still able to search her bag. Many students are aware that this can happen, and teachers don’t need as much evidence as police officers. In the book, Unwind by Neal Shusterman if you aren’t a use to society, even if you aren’t a harm, you can have all of your rights waived by your parents. This shows that if you aren’t helping society progress, your rights can become limited. This shows that as a minor, you have less rights. And although it’s very drastic in the book, it’s still under the same concept... when rights are taken away, people fight back. Limiting rights in a way is limiting your freedom. This means the more rights taken away, the more unhappy the general populace is. We wouldn’t need to limit rights if everyone in society just did as they were told and behaved.”

Analysis. This student example demonstrated that the reading comprehension strategy of monitor for meaning was more appropriate and visible when the student grappled with explaining facts from government class, but was rarely seen with explanations or, or illustrations from, dystopian novels. This student used the concept of limiting rights stretched it to include real life, in a consistent way as the dystopian

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

society, suggesting that if people were to “just behave,” then there would be fewer problems and less conflict. The novel and stories became a part of their world and background knowledge to offer analogies and support to make points about society, citizens and government. This student seemed to personalize the concept of what it means to either willingly limit rights or to be forced to unjustly limit rights, demonstrating a strong ability to empathize and seek self-understanding. He used factual examples, theoretical arguments, and a situation from the dystopian all equally to demonstrate that limiting rights is acceptable in some situations. Ultimately, the student qualified that limiting peoples’ rights might lead to rebellion so by compiling scenarios to determine the boundaries for rebellion versus allowing rights to be limited for the larger good, is evidence of being able to place himself in a society and understand what might work for him.

Essay #21. The Role of a Citizen in Society. Intersecting theme: Embrace complicated narratives, learn and seek multiple perspectives. Key reading comprehension strategy: infer, determine importance, synthesize.

Student Writing:

“When something in society is wrong, or malicious, it is up to the citizens to stand up and show the ruling powers what they need, and what is required of them. In 1965 the Black population decided that it was absolutely necessary for voting rights to be expanded to everybody, in order to represent the current form of American society. In order to make the government listen to them, they staged a massive march from Selma all the way to Montgomery. The march worked wonderfully, and on August 6th of the same year the Voting Rights Act was passed, with the honest effort to completely enfranchise voting for everybody. In The Running Man by Richard Bachman, society is in a horrendous state after a forced class system is propagated for everybody by the people in power. It is a dystopia because the people lose the power in their government, and they become complacent with the conditions that they’re in. The only significant act of rebellion against this was when Ben Richards stops participating in the game show that he is manipulated into playing, and crashes a plane into the biggest building in the country. While this is extreme, it is also symbolic. Ben doesn’t crash the plane because he lost, he crashes it in order to win. He makes up the hundreds of years where civil disobedience was necessary in one massive

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

explosion, showing the government what he thought needed to change. I'm not advocating we all ram planes into the White House, but we need marches and protests in order to keep society in a state where that isn't necessary."

Analysis. This student demonstrated an ability to synthesize and create his own inferences about civil disobedience and its role in keeping a society responsive to its citizens. He had to stretch a bit to make the experience from the dystopian society work, but it speaks to what he thought was important about civil disobedience and became a strong example about why small acts of civil disobedience keep a government and society more helpful and avoid dystopia. This student embraced the complicated narrative of civil disobedience and the historical and dystopian examples that do not offer clear cut answers or guides to determine when civil disobedience is appropriate or reckless to society. In both the historic and the dystopian example, this student demonstrated his willingness to consider society as a whole, or the perspective of the government as well as the perspective of individual citizens.

Academic Essay Summary

I noticed some general patterns in this data analysis that told me about the nature of the students' reading experiences with the novels. The reading comprehension strategy of *monitor for meaning* applied to explanations of court cases, laws, or historic documents and never to examples from dystopia. The examples from dystopian novels were rarely officially quoted or cited, but referenced like a story from their personal lives. When students used research from an academic journal, they quoted and/or cited it. When students used examples or illustrations from novels it served to flesh out their inference or schema, or, in other words, to stand as an example or background knowledge, that proved a larger assertion or claim. Partly due to the structure of five-paragraph essay

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

writing, which I suggested in my class instruction as a model, a consistent pattern emerged in student writing for this assignment, whereby the student made an inference or determined importance through their topic sentence or body idea and then followed up with research or information from class to define the idea and then offered an illustration from a dystopia novel to complete the schema. Forcing students to use a variety and divergence of texts created opportunities for sophisticated schema to emerge, with unique interpretations and explanations. Interestingly, the illustrations from the dystopian novels offered them an ease with making analogies or pulling from experience and background knowledge. The least frequently used reading comprehension strategy was the use of creating images.

The use of dystopian novels as illustrations varied a lot with respect to whether students saw the world as possible or not. Some students saw these as cautionary tales, or as worlds for us to learn lessons for our current lives so that we do not continue on destructive paths. Some students saw dystopian worlds as proof of what happens when citizens do not follow laws, actually, which was different than a cautionary tale, but in some ways almost a *I told you so* element. Some students saw the dystopian novel as place where individual people can still stand up, or speak up or be the hero. Some students saw the dystopian worlds as places that were just another example, or comparative government, to illustrate the same phenomena as seen in our world, almost accepting these as real places to further illustrate an assertion.

As I began to categorize the academic, final essays with my students, I realized this was an opportunity to think more broadly about what they comprehended from the entire semester, including the dystopian reading, as well as their experiences and knowledge in

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

my course. In the same spirit as Keene, I saw reading comprehension as an opportunity to think about our learning, rather than a method for assessment. For me reading comprehension was not just about the facts they learn or about the reading of the book, but the reading comprehension they learn from reading their own, political and social world, through new knowledge and experiences. In the end, I believe students used the aesthetic stance to achieve historical thinking. In fact, students entered a world, without any burdens of bringing back specific knowledge. I believe the student responses demonstrated that their reading created an opportunity to experience and add to their background knowledge and world context. Students at a later date could summon these readings and stories much like they did personal memories or prior knowledge, providing a framework for understanding concepts and ideas.

I concluded the semester and this project with a graded, class seminar discussion. The students merely had to arrive with an abstract of their essay and discuss. I made clear to them that I was grading based on the content of their remarks as well as their awareness of the discussion process. I used discussion process grading and peer grading throughout the semester around controversial topics and primary source documents, so students know the process of discussion and the markers I identify as positive and negative. They also knew I believed that discussion is a practice that can be improved and a skill that can be taught and refined, so I expected them to get better at it with experience, role modeling, and awareness of the skills that qualify as positive contributions to discussion. Regardless, what I saw in this discussion was that students drew from dystopian stories in the same way that they drew from personal experiences. The reading became a way for them to know something about what it *feels* like to be treated any, particular way. The

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

discussion notes were not an official part of my planned study of data mining for this dissertation, because I am interested in the individual student responses, but it did confirm, for me, that reading for the experience, rather than just the factual recall, provided students more avenues into academic conversations and ways to understand their world.

Academic Essays Analysis

Analysis of these academic essays by students demonstrated more the value of dystopian literature as a specific genre, than just the values of reading and aesthetic reading. Using dystopian fiction proved a useful launching point or connection for students to problematize and theorize about functions of government and behaviors of humans in society. As discussed in the literature review, dystopian literature is uniquely situated to allow teens to identify not just heroes who can change the world, but they were often particularly “well received by young minds that are developing the ability and even willingness to grapple with complex ideas” (Scholes, 2013, p.14). I found this to be true with my students. The dystopian stories offered illustrative examples for them to prove their points, and sometimes perfect spaces to solve the problems of the world, and to talk and think aloud about the complexities coming into their awareness. Though I think that students derive benefits from fiction reading for any content areas, the use of dystopian novels in government class provided a nice opportunity to directly engage their fiction brains to connect to the themes and philosophy of the course.

The reading comprehension strategies created a chance for me to categorize my analysis of student responses and provided me a chance to think about the implications of how the use of fictional stories can complement learning in a social studies course. I

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

provided this analysis on only ten sample student academic essays and I was the only expert to determine which reading comprehension strategies were detected in the student responses, but there were some interesting observations and conclusions surrounding the type of strategies my students used. There were no examples of students using the strategy of creating images in the essays I analyzed for this study, though I did see in one of the other thirteen that did not make it through my filter for in-depth analysis. The most frequently used strategies by the ten essays used for in-depth analysis were: infer, determine importance, and use schema. When students used the strategy of infer they were making predictions and decisions, forming opinions and defending them (Keene, 2010, p.71). When students determined importance they were making decisions about ideas and concepts and justifying why their interpretation of the idea was the most important (Keene, 2010, p.71). When students used schema as a tool for reading comprehension, they were relating the new to the known and making connections between a text and previous knowledge (Keene, 2010, p.71). This revelation made me realize that reading comprehension strategies reveal some of how students claim expertise and how they incorporate concepts into an existing worldview. When students worked through ideas and used strategies like infer, schema and determine importance, they demonstrated a desire to claim expertise in understanding a concept. The dystopian examples provided a supporting role in that expertise. The students used the dystopian example to make an illustration, offer an example, or build an analogy. The more life experiences students accumulated the more likely they were to come to know and understand a concept or idea in the world. This suggested to me that students were able to

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

use reading experiences to build life experiences and though that, built a working expertise on a topic or concept about government, citizenship and society.

Academic Essay Conclusions

If we return to the *unnatural act* of historical thinking and the challenges faced by moving kids into this way of thinking, Sam Wineburg also identified the need for reading comprehension strategies as a vehicle for becoming successful. To this exact point, Wineburg acknowledged that there is something quite more than “locating information in the text” and rather something about reading comprehension that could help inform how we get students to comprehend “complex and rich problems, not unlike those that confront us daily in the social world” (Wineburg, 2011, p.51). Though Wineburg saw the *text* in history class as nonfiction, maybe primary sources, and in a rare situation, historical fiction, he was not so much interested in the factual recall parts of reading comprehension. Wineburg called for some other sort of reading comprehension, which aligns well to Keene and Zimmerman with *Mosaic of thought*. What my student responses told me was that the text matters, that a fictional journey offered an opportunity to put their brains in the right place, so that students imagined new places, so they suspended judgment, so viewed a new way of thinking, living, and functioning and imagined and empathized with the lives of others. Additionally, given the fact that I prefaced these assignments with no content burdens, and yet the text-to-text analysis indicated that the reading experiences still triggered much factual recall, meant there was no *lost* time in my curriculum content because of independent reading time. Historical fiction reading assignments probably contain content burdens or reading purpose from a teacher in a way that dystopian fiction cannot, or does not need to bring with it. I feel like

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

many social studies teachers still use historical fiction not because of its ability to transport students emotionally to another place, but because they still want students to learn something specific and informationally about the time period. I imagine when teachers use historical fiction it is often accompanied with the type of reading exercises that require students to always be one foot outside the story and into the world of content knowledge and factual recall. For my students, reading dystopian fiction felt like a chance to unwind, explore, and not worry about facts or information, because supposedly, none of that mattered in a world that did not really exist. My students had to read and explore another world. Perhaps fictional reading of books, other than historical fiction, can provide opportunities to enhance historical thinking through an intellectual mindset, rather than a factual finding and embrace the reading comprehension skills that allow students to understand not just the text, but the world. In history classes done well, according to Wineburg, the students learn that history is more than just facts and details, but “see history as a human construction, an enterprise in which people try to solve a puzzle” (Wineburg, 2001, p. 169). In social studies classes where the textbook dominates as the source of content and knowledge, students often never realize that history is derived from competing or limited information, or conflicting interpretations (Wineburg, 2001, p. 169). In a fictional novel, students naturally understand this. They already engage with the narrator or characters or story or place. In fictional journeys where students learn to live through a story, they enter it ready to see if the people are like them (and if different, in which ways). With fiction, students imagined the context, the problems, the people and their motivations and desires. With fiction, students rarely conflicted with the author about whether that world could really exist, they just accepted

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

it, they suspended their judgment, they accepted the premise of this new world and they placed the decisions and storyline naturally within the context of that world. With fiction, empathy was critical to being able to experience the story lives and understand the human choices or sequence of events. With fiction, students naturally adopted a critical stance and decided if this was a world they would like, people they would understand or believe, decisions they would have made, and worlds they would have chosen; readers allowed texts to change their lives. With fictional journeys, students naturally sought out multiple perspectives, or at least learned that they existed, as they followed the twists and turns of stories. They got to *try on* different points of view. With fictional journeys, readers embraced the complicated lives or stories as a function of entering the storyworld; they wanted to learn more about people and empathize with lives that forced them to consider new opinions and perspectives on moral ambiguities. For good readers, these characteristics and mental dispositions that accompanied fictional journeys, came natural. These same mental dispositions are just as necessary to recreate, understand, and enter the true stories of our past, but without fiction and the dispositions it naturally provided, these mental exercises just become *unnatural acts*.

Fictional journeys, alone, however, may not get students to these places. The other ingredient that worked for me to see the students get to these type of reading comprehension insights was that I tried, as much as possible, to create an aesthetic reading opportunity in the classroom space. Just as Rosenblatt titled her book, literature is an exploration, that literature can be used “as a springboard for discussion of human nature and society” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.20). For my students, I found the same to be true, that the fictional journeys allowed them to be more eloquent with examples of *life*

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

to position their opinions about modern society, citizens and governments, because the fictional journey gave them some other ways to think about the world and added to a sort of collective experience of the world. The student responses and class discussion opportunities demonstrated to me that the reading was not about factual recall, but an emotional and personal experience that fit into how they formed their cumulative knowledge of government. Still, they didn't just get there without some attention to how to instruct them to approach their fictional journey. I asked for no references, citations, notes, specific details, or factual recall. I asked the students to sit back, relax, and enjoy the story and when they found themselves in the story, to look around, see the new world, and consider what it was like to be a citizen in that world, keeping track of what it felt like or looked like. And I provided these instructions with time, allotted in the actual school day. I validated that time spent reading because an aesthetic stance was essential to their learning. My goal was to help them evoke the poem of the story, "to draw on his own internalized culture in order to elicit from the text this world which may differ from his own in many respects" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.56). I wanted my students to be concerned "with what happens *during* the actual reading event" and not worry about how the text would serve some content utility for the course (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 24). So I provided book talks and teasers into stories; I offered copies and made books available. I provided a range of reading levels, adult and young adult, even some graphic novels. I tried to make sure the students realized it didn't matter the about *quality* of the text, but only that they could explore another world. Then I provided time to read in class and hoped that the students understood that their primary purpose was to be "fulfilled *during* the reading events" and to fix their "attention on the actual experience he is living

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

through” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.27). I am not sure it is ever possible to say any required reading in a required school day will ever, fully arrive at the aesthetic reading continuum, as defined by Rosenblatt, but I do believe it is a continuum. I believe that teachers can strive to create emotional and intellectual reading events in the classroom and at minimum create opportunities that might come closer for some students than they might otherwise experience on their own, particularly if we never turn them into readers at all. I tried to create the expectations and environment that would allow students to relax and read and enter a story world because I believe that knowledge is not just about facts and content, but also about intellectual and emotional abilities. By allowing the students to read for the sake of reading in a lived through experience, they learned about new ways to think about the problems and solutions faced by citizens in their world. By bringing fiction reading to my class in this experience, rather simply the than content demand approach, I found students learned mental dispositions needed to be successful, critical historical thinkers.

Revisiting the Research Questions

I realize I mixed together theories that might not otherwise overlap and then added a few doses of educational ingredients to spice up the dish, and maybe complicated the story I wanted to tell about aesthetic reading and historical thinking and how I wanted my social studies students to experience and compare societies in government. For me the story remains simple and it confirmed my intuitions as a student and a reader. If I had to make a simple summation of my study it would be this: aesthetic reading experiences should be valued in social studies and by examining the transactional theory of reader response, we can see how reading dystopian literature can help put us in the right frame

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

of mind to understand society, government and the role of citizens. Along this journey I learned that aesthetic reading experiences validated more authentic and valid ways to consider the definition of reading comprehension. I also reaffirmed that historical thinking and transactional theory intersect. The most important intellectual mindsets and habits of mind from both demonstrated by my students was their willingness to live through the lives and experiences of others, fictional and real, and the abilities to imagine, empathize, and suspend judgment.

Dystopian literature is not the only vehicle to create lived through experiences for students. For this study, I wanted my students to live through societies and governments and to derive conclusions about what it means to be a citizen in a society. I wanted them to examine the features of societies gone wrong, to see life through the spaces and choices of different people, in different places. I wanted them to create large categories of philosophy and truths that could apply to any society or government, including their own. Analysis of my students' writings confirmed that dystopian novels allowed a natural entry for adolescents to wrestle with complex societal and moral issues (Scholes, 2013, p.14). And that by experiencing and *living through* the dysfunctions in speculative and fiction societies, my students became better prepared to examine the world they inhabit and articulate the world they want (Warren, 2002, p.6; Conkan, 2012, p.291; Kennon, 2005, p.48). I think any type of fictional reading, in the aesthetic stance, or using the tools of independent reading, could create opportunities for our students to live through and understand the lives of others. For government students, dystopian literature is just a natural opportunity and tool to heighten their awareness of society, government and the role of citizens in a society.

Final Conclusions

Ultimately, I wanted my study to contribute to the conversation about reading in schools. I wanted to suggest that reading needs less structure, and more space for students to live through the lives of others. I wanted to suggest that even loosely structured reading experiences can generate not just personal experiences, but new knowledge. I wanted to suggest that reading comprehension is a personal journey, rather than a testable, definable benchmark. So, I offered opportunities for students to read, in as much of an aesthetic stance as possible in a traditional, government class. By taking this approach with reading, I wanted to show how it was time-well spent, since the *intangible* skills and *unnatural acts* of historical thinking often overlap with the experiences of aesthetic reading experiences. The reading comprehension strategies and framework allowed me to bring clarity, focus, and discipline to my teaching and textual analysis and helped students position their reading and helped me position their responses.

Reading fiction allowed a lived through experience and this required, among many things, the skills of suspending judgment and using imagination and empathy. For readers in the aesthetic stance, this was a natural consequence of joining the story world; for social studies teachers it is almost always an impossible and *unnatural act* to try to engage students with people and places of the past. Reading fiction offered practice in an intellectual mindset that can be transferred to historical thinking, but it also complemented learning and added to students' ability to comprehend the world. The dystopian *experiences* became personal and lived through experiences for students and gave them the confidence to claim knowledge through experience and become experts because they could back-up their assertions about how they know what they know.

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

As I finished the last few revisions on this paper, I alternated between writing and reading the third book in the Throne of Glass series by Sarah Maas, called: *Heir of Fire*. In this third book of the series, we learned that the main character, besides being a female assassin and the king's champion (a title she earned in book one in a fight to the death competition) was now the lost queen of a conquered kingdom and part fairy. Of course she was. I never faltered or questioned it, and I loved it. This series of books is so good. It is a young adult series and I was hooked. I entered this story. I accepted the world, with all its trappings; I suspended judgment and truly empathized with Celaena, the assassin. Who wouldn't, right? When I studied history, though, I could do the same thing. I could travel back and put myself in a different place and time and think about the historical context. Though I rarely saw my students struggle with their ability to believe in and *enter* fictional worlds, I witnessed all the time, their inability to enter historic places and mindsets. When studying Antebellum US, for example, they often contended that all slaveholders were evil. Though I might acknowledge that it was possible to believe in absolute morality, regardless of time or place, I think their value judgments derived from their inability to put themselves into that story and place of history. As a history teacher I found it a constant struggle to get kids to drop the trappings and values of their world and accept the world of the past, to step into a place, to look around and think about the people within the given, historical context. I really do not think I would have to make that point as an ELA teacher if I asked students to join me in *Hogwarts* or the arena of *The Hunger Games*. In the end, this study allowed me to uncover some personal discoveries. My willingness and excitement for reading allows me to be a person who is willing to explain and embrace a complicated world, to consider multiple perspectives, to suspend

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

judgment and hear out an argument, to imagine, to empathize, to understand myself, and even to adopt a critical stance. Though it may frighten people that I speak in a way that I imagine Jane Austen might speak after I refresh a reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, I think it makes me a better person and not coincidentally, a more keen historian. As a person devoted to improving education and creating schools and experiences that enrich students' lives, I think independent and aesthetic reading experiences are key components to creating people who are better thinkers, more perceptive people, and citizens who know how to care about others and do what they need to be an important member of their society.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Overview

I learned that I need to make curricular space for both historical thinking and aesthetic reading experiences. I discovered that dystopian fiction created an opportunity for my students to engage in mental and reading exercises which offered them experiences and insights to complement their knowledge and content from my Government course. By adding some aesthetic, fictional reading experience opportunities, I discovered students could learn to think about the world in ways that extend beyond knowing facts and included, instead, understanding humans. Fictional reading journeys allow students to challenge their current world views and be disarmed by their own prejudices and understand complexities within moral ambiguities. In my textbook-only Government classrooms, students might continue to believe in binary debates of point and counterpoint or pro and con, but through fictional journeys, particularly in dystopian literature, the students got to live through the experience of being a citizen where breaking the law of that society was often the most logical option. Through this literary experience, students used the life and story of the *other* to bring meaning to factual information that might not otherwise connect to their personal life experiences. In short, students gained more life experiences and background knowledge to truly internalize course knowledge. As a result, as a social studies teacher I learned to think more broadly about devoting time to reading in class to fiction, not just historical fiction. Comprehension and the incorporation of social studies content requires both the acquisition of information and life experiences to serve as a context to bring meaning and personalization to the information.

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

In the end, this journey took me back to the simplest of assertions: that independent reading is a valuable pedagogy for any classroom and that teaching empathy is difficult, but can be accomplished through fiction reading. By weaving in and out of roles as librarian, social studies teacher, and even digital sales and library consultant, while finishing this dissertation, it made me realize that my conclusions are simple, yet significant. I would like schools to value and validate the simple act of teaching kids how to become readers. I think that the teaching of empathy overlaps with the mindsets that define historical thinking and the experiences of aesthetic readers who learn to enter another world through a story. Arriving at these assertions included a journey into my classroom and into the academic conversations about historical thinking and reader response, most specifically, Rosenblatt's transactional theory. By the time I arrived at Rosenblatt's work, I brought experience as a social studies teacher, a librarian, and had completed graduated work in the History and Education departments at University of New Mexico. Rosenblatt's work became the missing ingredient, the glue that brought my ideas together, even if invisible once it dried. The transactional theory needs more attention in our classrooms, even if it is not the tangible pedagogy, or test prep secret.

Though I grant that achieving an aesthetic stance in a social studies classroom might be difficult, I think the near attempt is worth the effort. I do not see any crusades to abandon the efferent approach because reading comprehension assessments fail; in fact, in the age of standardization in education, the efforts only seem to double down with each failing school report. In the meantime, there is more to education and learning than comprehension and fact retention. I value my ability to create thinkers, problems solvers, and empathetic citizens who can understand the lives of other people, in different places

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

or different times. This dissertation journey started with transactional theory because it resonated for me with a thoughtful disposition and quiet approach to allowing readers to create their own personal space, as a part of an individual, reading experience. I felt like there was a connection between this mental disposition and the goals of historical thinking. I felt like there needed to be some way to *attempt* to achieve an aesthetic experience for my students, whose lives are so scurried and scattered and teased with digital media. I wanted them to slow down and enjoy a book, partly just for the sake of enjoying a book, and mostly because I felt like this was the best way for them to understand another person in a different place or time.

To begin, I brought to this dissertation journey a background as an historian and a history teacher. I also brought a love of young adult literature and books, though with no experience as an English Language Arts teacher. My background and experience in education and the academic readings and research enlightened me to different approaches to reach my students. My starting research question was: How does an aesthetic reading stance, with dystopian literature, aid teens in the development of historical thinking skills? I also considered:

- How do teen readers respond to dystopian literature?
- How does dystopian literature support the social studies curriculum?
- What are some key components for guiding teen readers to read in an aesthetic stance?
- How can transactional theory apply to the social studies curriculum goals?

This study allowed me to realize that dystopian literature is a valuable tool for the social studies classroom. Students, once given, the space, time and encouragement to enter a

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

storyworld, used this reading to add to their collection of personal experiences to understand and think about their current, social and political world. I learned that aesthetic reading experiences offered space for intellectual abilities to emerge. The social studies curriculum benefited from time spent on unstructured reading, because it allowed students the chance to explore other people, truly through their point of view. This ability to understand other people is very difficult with nonfiction and to most history teachers, is viewed as an *unnatural act*. When our brains enter a storyworld through fiction, however, we can learn to live through the life of someone new. I think teaching this mental disposition in social studies is just as important as teaching content standards. The fictional experience can enhance classroom conversations as analogies and as examples, but just the ability to create a situation where the students can put themselves in the shoes of another is important to validate. The biggest evolution to my questions and focus was not why but how. I know the why and I hope my study demonstrated that an intellectual mindset is important to social studies and that the intellectual mindset that occurs naturally for fiction readers is a valuable intellectual habit for historical thinkers. For schools, the how is always the hardest. The how of my questions was trying to show that the lived through experience, the time for imagination, and the exercises with empathy all matter to social studies. These intellectual mindsets are not unnatural, by any stretch, for readers in the aesthetic stance. I did not fully anticipate the power of independent reading as a strategy for the how. I do now. I think the trick for schools is to trust that just giving time to read is valuable. Independent reading might not be the only strategy, but for me it was the simplest, easiest and best. I think it is very difficult in a K-12 class setting to convince students that the teacher really just wants you to read, and that there are no facts

or tests to follow the reading. It is equally difficult, I believe, to convince teachers that there is value in that exercise. Our current school culture seems obsessed with measurement of information and the accumulation of factual recall. Independent reading creates time and space in the curriculum just to read. If we want to shift the students into a mindset where they really feel like we want them to just read and can trust that they need to just experience, rather than take away facts, then independent reading is an important component to this conversation.

Findings and Interpretations

Dystopian literature and independent reading became my vehicles and therefore the tangible pedagogy that I wanted to see in classrooms, but for me the philosophy behind the scenes come from the tenets of transactional theory and historical thinking. From the seven intersecting themes that I identified in transactional theory and historical thinking, I realized that though all of them seem strong to me, the most consistent connections demonstrated by my students were the aspects of reading that make it a lived through experience. Put simply: reading allowed my students to live through the experience of different citizens in different places and times. The need to imagine and empathize with those people and places created a lived through experience. The lived through experience created the ability for my students to think through social and political problems. That ability to think through social and political problems became a part of my students' background knowledge and bag of experiences to help them understand issues in their own world and time.

I quickly realized that examining the student written responses required me to figure out what they comprehended. By comprehending, I mean the concepts from the

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

dystopian novels they used to make meaning of the world, not just the text. The use of text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-world as reading response analysis and the reading comprehension strategies for the academic student essays were valuable tools for me to categorize student responses. Though this reading comprehension is often used as a method for teachers to guide students to higher level thinking and discussion points, I used it less to evaluate the quality of their responses, and more to simply differentiate and quantify the type of responses generated from independent reading of dystopian literature in a Government class. I discovered that students, with little prompting, will find ways to connect literature to their personal lives, their background knowledge, and larger issues in the world. As a social studies teacher, I wanted to see all of these connections.

Traditionally, I expected students to approach my social studies classes ready to read and retain facts, so I was thrilled to see personal responses of text-to-self, because I did not just want to see text-to-text. The text-to-world analysis let me know the students considered the story in the larger world context, as well.

Discovering the reading comprehension strategies, by Keene, Zimmerman and others was also an important epiphany for me that connected my ideas, experience and research. I realized that comprehension is just as much about mental dispositions and experiences. When we accept that the goal of reading can be to experience another person, then the aesthetic approach, and at minimum a strategy like independent reading, gains a necessary place. When I read my students essays for this study I realized that the dystopian literature offered a perfect opportunity to suspend their judgment, imagine, empathize, and try to understand the lives of other people. I never asked for plot summaries or literary analysis methods but I asked for them to experience the life of

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

someone else, somewhere else. When they constructed these academic essay responses, the dystopian examples became a part of their personal experiences. These fictional world readings allowed them to understand an experience and transfer that experience to understanding a concept or person or political tension in their current world. I do think dystopian literature, and fiction in general, have a place in the school curriculum, and not just the English Language Arts classrooms.

Dystopian matters. I actually came to this study because I wanted to explore more about dystopian literature and the impact it has on teens. My study quickly became something broader about reading and fiction. Creating aesthetic experiences because of the value they bring to thinking like an historian became my focus, though my love of dystopian literature never disappeared. I learned that teenagers love dystopian novels. It might be just the trend right now, but I saw students reference all types of dystopian novels, new and old, adult and young adult. I also found it harder to predict book preferences based on gender with dystopian novels. I had boy students just as likely to read and enjoy *Across the Universe* and girl students enthralled with *Ready Player One*. In my experience as a librarian, I usually found that emerging teen readers liked books with protagonist of their gender, but I did not see that with the dystopian novels and I am still not quite sure how to explain that. I chose dystopian novels as the genre for this study because they represent a chance to identify and experience dysfunctions in a society (Warren, 2002, p.6; Conkan, 2012, p.291; Kennon, 2005, p.48). I also chose dystopian novels because as the readers experience the dysfunctional society, they can come away with lessons about hope and social action to put into practice in their society and government (Hintz, 2003, p.ix). Part of the reason I love teaching high school is that

teenagers are hopeful, optimistic and maybe naïve. They are keenly aware of social injustices and still believe they have the power to be better than their parents. The aesthetic reading experiences in my class, and the evidence of their reading comprehension of these worlds to connect to their own, illustrates the observation that through dystopian literary experiences “adolescent readers can imagine a future they desire” (Hill, 2012, p.102). Dystopian literature did not remain the main purpose of my study, but like the students, it excites me enough to want to re-enter those worlds and see what that experience can do to help me comprehend my world. By the fourth semester I taught Government and required dystopian novel projects, I met almost no resistance and lots of excitement.

Curriculum case study and the intersecting themes. There were two components to my study that made me identify it as a curriculum case study: I put my ideas into my own instructional practice with real students, and I took two known theories about pedagogy and tried to see how they might intersect. If a curriculum case study is intended to “understand a specific issue, problem, or concern” and how it can be observed in a classroom environment, I feel successful (Creswell, 2013, p.98). I wanted to find more tools to help students engage with the mindsets of different peoples, in different places in order to learn about government. Immersed in my study and teaching practice, I learned that students can achieve a natural mental disposition through fictional reading that is often difficult for them to achieve when I teach without the fictional experiences. Though I focused most of my analysis on the actual prompts of the students, I tried to share the process and thinking I used to create these reading and thinking opportunities for my students. I believe my students easily accepted and enjoyed the

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

opportunity to enter dystopian worlds, for the purpose of experiencing another society and government. I also believe I sacrificed no coverage of content in the curriculum because of this addition to the class. Providing space for aesthetic reading experiences has merit in my social studies class. The aesthetic stance was something I needed to deliberately attempt in my classrooms. As I experienced this study with my students, I also came to re-think what defines reading comprehension. Though reading comprehension can be expressed in measurements of factual retention, it can also be expressed in how the students learn to understand new concepts, new places, and new people. Reading comprehension is the acquisition of new knowledge and the process of how that new knowledge becomes incorporated into new ways to think about themselves and the world. I may not be any more equipped to teach reading in English Language Arts, but as a social studies teacher, this experience demonstrated to me the power of reading for comprehending the world.

Discussion

Independent reading. I admit it; I love young adult literature and reading and maybe all books. I also admit I do not read or teach like an ELA teacher: I do not particularly notice theme, style, or any literary elements and I bet I would not see foreshadowing unless someone told me to look for it and yet I think I contribute to the conversation about why teachers need to provide space for reading experiences in our classrooms. I read to enjoy a story and see how other people live. I might often read to just escape. I brought this personal approach and bias to my class because I think it made me a more interesting and empathetic person and I believed there was an argument for making a place for this in the formal curriculum. So, to be fair, I brought a certain amount

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

of excitement and legitimacy to my students when I shared this project and engaged in book talks to generate excitement about their choices. I connected with them, I engaged them in the story, I got them excited to join me. I tried my hardest to assure them that my goal was not to assess them or catch them not doing the work, but to really convince them to join another world, and for comparative purposes, live in another life, in another society, and then figure out what it teaches them about themselves and their society.

This dissertation was not about the research surrounding the practice of independent reading, but rather, the academic conversations that make it a valid and practical tool for a classroom. I do not think independent reading can be distilled to something as simple as a reading school trend we often see haphazardly attempted in schools. I think it is a variety of approaches and a natural tool to achieve some researched and principled ways of thinking about how we engage students, and teach them intellectual mindsets and a life-long love of reading.

Independent reading has always been the teaching practice that gets me closest to seeing the benefits of reading take shape in my students. It may not be the only strategy, but it highlights a different approach to the normal mode of factual comprehension or takeaway knowledge. In a K-12 classroom, it is the best way I can recommend to get closer to putting the students into the aesthetic stance. Once in that aesthetic stance, students gained intellectual insights and emotional connections to new places, new people, and new ideas. Once in that aesthetic stance, students gained the opportunity to put their own biases aside for a brief journey, and explore moral ambiguities and consider alternative and multiple points of view. Reading studies point over and over to the emotional and intellectual gains that accumulate to demonstrate that readers are just

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

better people, that readers are people who can inhabit other ideas, places, and people. As a social studies teacher, this is not just a neat coincidence to how I want students to be able to think in my class, but it is a critical ingredient to grow that ability, with respect to learning about history and contemporary society. Historical cognition, like reader response is partly emotional and requires students to put their own lives aside and accept the premise of another world, while not rushing to judgment (Wineburg, 2001, p.22). Social studies teachers generally accept reading content and activities from primary source documents and historical fiction as ways to get students into the mental disposition to think like a historian. I wanted this study to demonstrate that there was also value in reading fiction, where the reader disposition might be more naturally suited for the intellectual mindset of thinking like a historian.

Classroom spaces need to take time to identify what we value about readers, define what it means to be a good reader and then plan backwards to create that environment in our schools and classrooms. To me readers are interesting people; they are people who always have something new to add to a discussion; they do not need to resort to gossip or pettiness, because they have foreign worlds to share, the inside/inner emotional experiences of different lives to apply to the world around them, and large working constructs and background knowledge to develop new schemas, inferences and solutions to problems. Creating and capturing readers is more than just kids who test well or comprehend or know *stuff*. Readers are experienced and patient with the written word. They can enter a story, they can withhold judgment, they can suspend reality, they can openly explore and understand moral ambiguities and ultimately accept other people, in different places and times.

The momentum behind independent reading is gaining steam in school conversations and buildings. Schools want to create students with the characteristics of readers. To create these readers, we need to examine and align our instructional time and practices to make this happen. Like Penny Kittle, I agree that teachers need to start believing “rich and rewarding reading lives are within reach for all our students” but I think that can become a goal for teachers of any discipline, not just ELA (2013, p.1). A burden this great cannot be left to kids to figure out on “their free time.” Kittle built on the work of Donalyn Miller, Kelly Gallagher, Donald Graves, and Stephen Krashen, as well as many others who are devoted to creating and growing readers. So what does it mean to grow a reader? We need to align or accept that what we do in schools is often not about creating readers and thinkers. We get caught up instead in demanding students to use the efferent stance to accumulate knowledge, and to gain cultural literacy, and neglect the truth that reading can also provide cultural experiences. I learned from my study to be an advocate for this approach to reading. I realize that I, too, need to plan backwards and challenge my paradigms and be cognizant and honest about when I am using strategies to grow a reader versus when I am filling the vessels full of facts and cultural literacy. Schools need to be more aware of finding space to allow for aesthetic reading to emerge, even if it is just a small and not quite perfect experience for all students. Contrary to the notion that independent reading is *off-task or not productive or easy to do*, this type of approach required diligence and discipline to implement. Ironically, to implement an aesthetic reading time component in the classroom, a teacher needs to be strict about dedicating time. A teacher needs to be a role model, and read alongside the students. A teacher will be required to demonstrate patience as she watches the emotional stamina

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

grow in the students (Kittle, 2013; Miller, 2009). The students will need metacognitive conversations in order to identify their own mental dispositions as they approach their reading time. The students will need help finding the right book. The students will need to learn they have the right to use the library. The students will need to know that just because they don't like a book, that doesn't mean they are not a reader or a failure. The students need, and deserve, to see themselves in a story.

I did not come at this study as just a social studies teacher, trying to figure out how to get students to think historically. I came at this as an educator who believes passionately that reading makes us better people. When I encountered Rosenblatt for the first time in *The Reader, The Text, The Poem* and read about the transactional theory, I knew it resonated so much with me (1994). As I unwrapped Rosenblatt's transactional theory, I recognized that my time as a student and teacher was primarily in the efferent stance and as an avid personal reader, I valued the aesthetic stance. I realized that schools spend a large amount of time asking students to read in the nonaesthetic stance and are "focused primarily on what will remain as the residue after the reading- the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 23). There is value in this nonaesthetic, or efferent, approach. Schools want students to *carry away knowledge*, defined as the efferent approach by Rosenblatt (1994, 23). On the other end of Rosenblatt's reading experience continuum from efferent is aesthetic; the aesthetic approach is aimed at valuing what "happens *during* the actual reading event" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.24). If we can create space in a classroom to ensure students understand that the activities during the reading are as valuable as those when the reading is completed, we create new ways to think about reading and grow readers. Classrooms really do not have

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

to choose either efferent or aesthetic. In fact, even Rosenblatt suggests that one text can be approached in either way or that, in fact, it is not a choice but a continuum (Rosenblatt, 1994, p.35). I wanted to complete this study because my experience told me schools do not use much of that continuum and consequently miss opportunities to take advantage of the benefits derived from giving space for aesthetic reading experiences. This study did not intend to dismiss the value of reading for efferent purposes, but I did intend to illuminate that there is a need for ensuring we create a balanced approach to reading in our classrooms. We want our students to experience the whole continuum of what it means to read so that they can learn when and how to focus attention and when to “shut out” or what and how to permit “to enter into the center of awareness” (Roseblatt, 1994, p.35). Reading can be about the accumulation of knowledge, but it can also be about the opportunity to experience and live through another place and time and understand a new person. If we value the efferent approach because it leaves students with new information or solutions, then we should likewise value the aesthetic approach because it creates new experiences and mindsets. I wanted my study to demonstrate that even teachers of social studies should allot time in the classroom to validate aesthetic reading experiences. I also want teachers to find value in allowing students to shut out the accumulation of facts during reading; they might find, like I did, that the students became attuned to living in another world, and to understanding people in different places and times.

My experience as a teacher and a reader made me realize that aesthetic reading experiences and historical thinking overlap. For now, independent reading is the best strategy I can find to allow for these theories to overlap and take shape in my students’

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

formation of emotional and intellectual abilities to think more openly about their world and the world of others. As a social studies teacher, I don't offer this view of teaching reading across the school because it sounds like something we should all do, just to help kids. I offer this because I believe readers are better people, but more importantly, the intellectual skills required to be historians can be built from the foundation of being readers who have emotional and intellectual experiences through reading. So, it is not just a cliché or trend to promote reading in all content areas that made me do independent reading in my classroom; it was the best teaching practice I had to allow my students to experience the world and understand their own.

Teaching empathy. Increasingly the conversations about teaching empathy pop up not just in professional and educational journals, but in the mainstream press because even *regular* people need to understand that “mounting evidence over the past decade suggests that the mental calisthenics required to live inside a fictional character’s skin foster empathy for the people you meet day-to-day” (Pinker, 2016). This article references academic studies I reference below. Bringing this conversation into mainstream news, signifies hopefully a larger trend in education and society to value reading, not because it helps us learn new vocabulary, but because it helps us live together more effectively as humans. I like the idea of bringing “mental calisthenics” into my classroom teaching and instruction as a tool to learn how to interact with people in social studies. Though neither historical thinking nor aesthetic reading experiences can be distilled or simplified, or even extrapolated to be solely about empathy, there really is an overlap that can be explored for classroom practice. I didn't start this study with the goal of isolating empathy as an important point of examination, but I landed in this place.

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

Once I landed here, I took a new look at the research and found myself in good company. Besides bubbling into mainstream news, there is a significant body of academic research, both quantitative and qualitative to assert that reading of fiction is directly correlated to a person's ability to empathize. In the research and in the mainstream news articles is a response to the trend to standardized test, and evaluate reading as a tool for learning factual information. These responses can be lumped together as a collective desire to just let kids learn to be readers, rather than factual repositories and effective test takers. When the conversation switches to empathy as a value gleaned from reading, I think it is a response to the standards and testing movements. The momentum behind teaching empathy, and how fiction can be a vehicle, is growing.

Some researchers come at this at very different angles than I. Many academic proponents argue this notion that reading of fiction offers value, particularly in the development of empathy. Kidd and Castano call this a "theory of mind" and describe it as the "capacity to understand others" or "navigation of complex social relationships" and a "theory of mind" (Kidd & Castano, 2013, p.1). These researchers value "literary fiction" because of its ability to "unsettle reader's expectations and challenge their thinking"; because it gives readers a chance to "access to character's subjective experiences"; because it "presents opportunities to consider the experiences of others" and because it "engages readers in a discourse that forces them to fill in gaps and search for meanings among a spectrum of possible meanings" (Kidd & Castano, 2013, p.1). Their reasons to value fiction sound like the characteristics of historical thinking. They also value literary fiction because the reading activity of it is naturally suited to make the reader filter through the "consciousness of the protagonist" and simultaneously perceive the world

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

through their viewpoint and the characters, which they identify as their definition of theory of mind, or empathy (Kidd & Castano, 2013, p.1). In the end, these researchers, like me, aim to provide evidence that reading fiction contributes to the development of our consciousness and absolutely enriches our lives (Kidd & Castano, 2013, p.3).

The desire to capture and quantify the effects of reading on individual behavior is a topic with attention in the academic world. Even the brains of people far more quantitative than me strive to understand and isolate how reading fiction is an “entry into simulations of social interactions” and that “reading can have psychological effects that continue when one puts the book down” (Mar, Djikic, & Oatley, 2008, p.127). The results of the study on the individual effects on a reader lead them to conclude that readers have an “improved capacity to empathize with a marginalized group” (Mar, Djikic, & Oatley, 2008, p.130). The interesting components of this study is that it wasn’t just that they found these positive traits for individuals who read fiction, rather than nonfiction; the other moving part of their study rested on the reader’s ability to “imaginatively project” themselves into a story, which they identify as a “likely mechanism” (Mar, Djikic, & Oatley, 2008, p.130). I feel there is a strong connection there to the aesthetic stance and reader response theory, in general. When Rosenblatt describes what happens to a reader in the aesthetic stance, she writes, “we listen to the sound of the words in the inner ear; we lend our sensations, our emotions, our sense of being alive, to the new experience, which we feel, corresponds with the text. We participate in the story, we identify with the characters, we share their conflicts and their feelings” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p.270). Essentially, Rosenblatt would agree that the behaviors required to read and enjoy fiction are naturally suited create an empathetic

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

person. But besides empathy, aesthetic reading creates people who have experience with imagination and suspending judgment, as well as experiences in different places through the story. Experiences gained through reading fiction complement knowledge. My students demonstrated to me that their fictional stories became a part of their life experience, as much as their own personal journeys and lives. They also demonstrated that the fictional experience became a part of their background knowledge and a way for them to draw comparisons or analogies. The fictional reading experiences allowed my students to test how they know, what they know, about their world and the world of others.

The social studies teacher in me also found resonance in their findings. The fictional empathy studies aim to demonstrate and quantify that “the reading of narrative fiction probably plays a role in developing social expertise. Practice at understanding the fictional social worlds represented by narrative appears to improve our empathetic abilities” which are transferred to the real world (Mar, Djikic, & Oatley, 2008, p. 131-132). In 2009, Mar, Oatley and Peterson followed up to eliminate other reasons that might link empathy and reading. Through a quantitative and controlled experiment study with readers, they statistically demonstrate that “fiction was associated with the empathy task (the MIE), whereas nonfiction was not” and believe that “a ready capacity to project oneself into a story may assist in projecting oneself into another’s mind in order to infer their mental states” (p. 416; p. 421). Though these studies are not meant to prove my points, I think they do a beautiful job of supporting my intuition that much connects aesthetic response and historical thinking. Mar, et al. don’t identify the traits they conclude as ‘historical thinking,’ but they talk about “comprehension of peers in the

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

actual world” (Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, dela Paz, & Peterson, 2006, p.694). These researchers do not label the exercises or mental state of fiction reading as aesthetic or efferent, or talk about the “lived through experiences,” but they differentiate and value fiction over nonfiction and they describe “the tendency to become absorbed in a story” (Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, dela Paz, & Peterson, 2006, p.694). This study takes to task the desire to demonstrate that there is a “close relation between navigating social- and story-worlds” because they believe, “readers of predominantly narrative fiction may actually improve or maintain their social-inference abilities through reading” (Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, dela Paz, & Peterson, 2006, p.298).

Though Mar and his supporting researchers in various studies seem interested in dispelling the *bookworm* stereotype, I connect this social inference ability to historical thinking. At the heart of historical thinking is the need for students to be able to understand other people, to navigate and seek outcomes for the decisions and thoughts of humans in the past, to understand what it is like to be someone else, somewhere else. If reading narrative fiction because of its ability to allow a reader to transport into a story enhances that reader’s ability to understand other people and perspectives, then we need to see more of it in our schools and validate it as a key strategy to help students acquire historical thinking. If we really value the teaching of historical thinking, we must embrace the reality that the *unnatural act* is achieved only through the teaching of facts and a mindset. Reading fiction in an aesthetic stance allows the opportunity for students to *feel* that intellectual mindset of what needs to happen to truly understand people, world and choices of the past.

Future Implications

Impact for Changing Education

Even though independent reading is so simple, I see it meet resistance, fall out of favor or get misapplied, in the same way that reader response trends rise and fall. It is strange to say, but I think I became an outspoken advocate for independent reading out of this project. I never fully realized this chasm that existed between librarians and teachers, because it was never a personal chasm for me. If there is one trait I want to define me as an educational professional it is my fervor for independent reading. I see trends to embrace independent reading in ELA classes, as evidenced in work by Penny Kittle's *Book Love*. Her book (2013) lays out the argument for teaching reading, from an independent reading approach, while offering the reasons and justifications through her classroom teaching experience. I think the book, like most independent reading initiatives can do a lot to convince ELA teachers, but I found a small nugget that resonates with me, my study, and my life as a social studies teacher. In an excerpt from a student reading reflection, I saw these words from a student, "I took the place of every main character. I lived the lives of other people, opening my mind more and more to the world around me.. .Not only have I lived the lives of a dozen or so different people, I have opened the door to a great reading habit, enabling me to become hundreds of people with the turn of a page" (Kittle, 2013, p.132). Though Kittle's book is a handbook about why and how to build readers in an ELA classroom, and not about how that reading allows students to *see* and comprehend and *experience* the world, that is exactly the value this student described.

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

Some focuses for me for the future will be trying to determine the best ways to make independent reading tangible and transferrable to classrooms, across disciplines. I also want to explore the reasons educators resist independent reading, silent sustained reading, free voluntary reading, or whatever label is applied to the activity. I want to bring attention to how to implement and allow for a more imaginative and aesthetic reading space in the class curriculum, and across the curriculum, because it is not just about independent reading, it is about believing that there is value in creating space to allow students to quietly, and on their own terms, enter a story. I also think we need to explore the nature of how reading comprehension gets defined and put into practice in our classrooms. As my study demonstrates, comprehension is not just about a list of vocabulary terms or factual recall moments from stories and readings, but proof that students can think through a reading and internalize it. There is a solid, body of work on this approach, but I feel like the testable world of content standards leads us to often consider the easy way to implement the definitions of reading comprehension in our school. In the end, I believe schools should be places where we want to prove students can think, not just learn.

In my current profession, as sales consultant, I travel to schools and visit with teachers and librarians in two different states. One common conversation with a librarian, no matter the geographic location, is their wish that teachers valued reading more with their students in school. As research turns digital, some libraries have turned quiet, and many teachers continue to teach the canon of texts, rather than exploring current literature or trends. Many librarians and teachers talk about reading comprehension and test pressure and, very few, talk to me about independent or free reading in their schools.

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

There are noticeable exceptions. I am starting to see a strong undercurrent of libraries shifting to capture the excitement and energy of reading. Some libraries I visit now hold print collections that are almost fifty percent fiction. Those schools statistics partly represent that they are using nonfiction and reference in mostly digital format, but it is largely the case in these active reading schools that there are organized reading and independent reading initiatives in their schools and districts. I find a need to share my research and ideas about independent reading with librarians almost every day; it is so simple and so consistently underutilized in schools. Frequently it is the librarian who understands the need and I am able to provide them research, pedagogy, tools, and ideas to help them bring this conversation to their teachers.

It is not just independent reading that is valuable, it is the aesthetic stance. When I first encountered Rosenblatt, her books, and the transactional theory, I realized I spent far too much time making space for just efferent reading. I used reading as a tool to pass information and content to students, and rarely made space to validate reading for the experience of reading. I had to acknowledge to myself that I was not validating in my curriculum all the things about reading that made me love books and become a reader. I see struggling readers and underperforming schools and they are quite often the students who do not get a chance to just read and the schools who buy quick fix programs for reading remediation. Our solution to erasing reading gaps in our schools seem simple to me: aesthetic reading. Independent reading happens to be the tool that most directly put my students in the aesthetic disposition. Schools should provide time and space for aesthetic reading experiences. Students who read more, will become better students. They will be students who grow in imagination, empathy, vocabulary and world experiences.

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

Teachers need to revisit the basic goals of reading, acknowledge the amount of time spent on efferent reading, rather than aesthetic, confront the reasons why they make these decisions about reading instruction, and then enact simple plans like independent reading to engage, create, and grow readers.

As a social studies teacher it was a bit of a stretch to put aside time a few days each week to let students read books without any direct connection to my content standards. It is scary and stressful to make a decision that might fail and fail the knowledge acquisition of my students. This study allowed me to believe that any time spent reading nets in intellectual gains for students because it creates thinkers, it creates world experiences, and it creates an intellectual ability to empathize with other people. Prior to this study I used the typical tools of social studies teachers to try to create historical thinking opportunities, namely historical fiction and primary sources. Over time I realized that primary sources rarely shift students into the aesthetic stance. When students agonize over documents taken out of a context they agonize over strange vocabulary or spend time looking up information to try to figure out what they must be missing when they read them. When I used historical fiction I became guilty of still really just wanting them to learn something about a time period; I didn't let them engage aesthetically because I wanted to know what they *carried away* to prove they learned about the historical time period that framed the story. I chose dystopian literature for this project because I thought it was a sensible connection to government and the roles of citizens in any society. I've thought a lot about what other types of genres might work for these scenarios partly because I wonder if I just got "lucky" with dystopia. It is good because, as you observe, it shows government structure and policy, but I think it is more

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

than that. ... I think it is about understanding the human experience, or the experience of the “other”. I think historical thinking becomes “unnatural” because students often do not know enough about historical people, places, and contexts to be able to truly enter another world and leave behind the trappings of their real lives. They do not ever truly suspend judgment.

I think social issues could be explored through realistic fiction as well. If you consider a book like *Dime* by ER Frank, a story of a young teen who gets persuaded into becoming a prostitute because the pimp might be the only person who loved her, a reader can't help but feel complicated by the ideas that prostitution is not just a pro-con issue with a for-against binary argument, but a real issue that faces people whose lives are messy and real. This might change the way have students discuss not just societal problems but the possible solutions and impacts of laws that often intend to make life better, but only exacerbate problems and why. We can see similar ideas in stories like *All The Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven, a teenage suicide story wrapped up in depression and hurt and a story about what it means to be a friend. Or a story like *Serpent King* by Jeff Zentner that puts a story of three friends into a real life less than awesome lifestyle where being successful in life and school are not something all students can easily control. Readers learn to love and identify with these characters and students in social studies might, through this life experience, understand the realities of their classmates who struggle in school because of the socioeconomic realities that face their lives.

What I think social studies teachers often use as content tools is primary sources and historical fiction. Primary sources are tools of the past and documents from the past. But they are hard to read- the vocabulary is odd, the context is strange, there is so much

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

not known- they are never the full story, just scraps of the historical record. Though very important to understanding how historians *do* history, the reading burdens do not put students always into the historical mindset or the story of history. Historical fiction might work, but in my experience, I often find myself, and see other teachers USE historical fiction because they still want students to learn something efferent about a time period. If teachers could resist that type of approach with historical fiction, it could serve a purpose of situating a student into a historical story, too.

Providing aesthetic reading experiences in social studies can bring value in two ways: it teaches students to notice how their brain is working to be more effective at thinking historically and it gives them more lived through experiences to add to their own. Students can be taught to recognize the aesthetic stance. They can read and have teachers point out to them all the things they did to make that story believable and empathize with those characters. Then, if the teachers turn to primary sources or a historical time period, point out when they slip or don't empathize or consider the true context (historical story). I think this metacognitive practice in the aesthetic stance must be outlined to students, because they do it when they read and engage but they resist it when they study history. I also think the lived through experiences, not just the mental/intellectual practice is important to social studies. The more experiences students acquire, the more perspectives and ways they have to think about any idea, place, concept, etc. Students in my class incorporated the dystopian experiences into their life experiences and used them to illustrate an argument or make a point about a concept in our lives.

I didn't find students so much noticing the structures of government, though that is the point of dystopian societies. What I noticed more is that they recognized philosophical concepts and the ways that individuals might act in ways to protect themselves, or others and I noticed a variety of responses from students about how they considered the obligations of citizens to promote the good of the community, particularly in times of stress or with or without a government.

Researcher Reflections

On a personal level, I always knew I loved reading. I knew it made me happy and it wasn't just so I could escape. Reading has something to do with the fact that I am also pretty good with people. I sometimes feel very impatient with nonstop public education efforts to quantify success and measure knowledge. I didn't realize all of these issues would collide for me in this study. I thought my journey was strange and disconnected: who goes from teaching social studies to being a librarian to working as a sales representative in the private sector? Why do I still love to read young adult literature? Why is it so important to me to see kids become readers? Why do I still meet librarians who tell me that they just can't get their English teachers to bring their students to check out books for pleasure? Why is social studies so dominated by content knowledge acquisition and so little theory or truly *social* skills? Though I am sure this study doesn't answer all of these questions or complete me, I feel like so many of my disconnected paths finally converged. I started with so many interests and divergent ideas. I threw many out, de-emphasized some, and then at the end I can say I know why readers are just simply, more interesting people. I hope that we can learn to capture and create more readers in our K12 schools. I worry that as they go out into this modern world, they might

not put down the digital distractions and experience a story if we don't show them how to do that in a classroom. I think our classrooms need to recognize this need and identify it as a curricular goal and teaching strategy, right alongside factual recall and literary analysis. If we continue to translate reading comprehension as merely an instrument for the recall of facts, rather than the exploration of concepts, experiences and knowledge of the world, we will lose readers. If we continue to marginalize the value of allotting time in the school day to *just* read, we will lose readers. If we continue to think that reading is only valuable for what information we can *carry away*, rather than for the experiences of others we can live through for the sake of any content discipline, we will lose readers. When we lose readers, we miss the point about what makes reading so valuable to the imaginative and experiential capacities of what it means to be human.

Conclusions

I think I will continue to search for the answer to my original question about how an aesthetic stance with dystopian literature can aid and accelerate teens to develop historical thinking skills, but I end this journey with some frameworks, experience and examples, and further categories for inquiry. I began this journey, not as an English teacher, and still feel like there might be a world of difference between me and *them* when it comes to how and why we use reading in the school curriculum space. For me reading is not about any particular fact or book or set of knowledge. For me reading is about the stories, the journeys, the chances to learn something new, travel somewhere unknown, understand a person not like me. For me reading is about letting my brain relax and be transported to other places and enjoy the feeling of reading and exploring a new place. For me reading is about refining our abilities to understand other people and

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

therefore, become better people. I hope my study demonstrates the value of an aesthetic stance for my classroom reading instruction and provides some ideas for others who want to teach students how to learn to about themselves and their world.

Appendices

Appendix A: Student Response Writing Sample #1, *Unwind*

Book #1 Essay

The book I read for this assignment was called *Unwind*. The general theme behind this book is that the rights of pro-choice individuals have been taken away, and all abortions towards unborn children are made illegal. Roe Vs. Wade is now no longer an issue due to a civil war between pro-life and pro-choice factions within the United States. Though abortions within the womb are considered illegal under threat of execution, abortions to children are now made post birth in order to ensure that those who do not want their children any longer, and those who are in need of “parts” have both their needs satisfied. Parents have the option to have their children “unwound” by the age of 18 if they deem them unworthy of life, and they are taken to facilities called “harvest camps” in order to have their organs harvested.

I believe that this government can be loosely related to many governments during the 1980’s, and also to some current extreme governments. One government that immediately comes to mind for me is Soviet Russia. In the same way children are on thin ice in the book in order to not be unwound, children in Soviet Russia were given aptitude tests to determine immediately how far they could go in life with a profession chosen carefully by the government. Both of these governments are a rigging of fate so to speak, and eliminate the possibility of basic citizenship and natural rights. A government that comes to mind that is still functioning is The Republic of China. In this society children are determined to be successful or not very early on, and if they fail to reach a certain criteria they are essentially eliminated from the possibility of a prosperous and free life. They are disowned by parents, and their chances to even survive and fulfill their most basic needs are drastically downsized. The frightening part of this fictional society is that some societies function very similarly to it, and even in America there are certain groups that if given the right tools and power, would see this to be a reality. There are currently right wing

parties that would love to see abortion made a criminal offense even though we have laws in place to prevent such a possibility.

The philosophies in this novel are numerous. One is that religion should serve a big part in the American government's legal structure. Another prominent philosophy that I can think of is the view that of Rousseau. Rousseau believed in giving up certain rights in order to keep a stable government that all peoples can live under. This theory however is flawed. It allows for the ideals of the fictional government to be enforced and forcefully accepted by the people it governs. Another philosophy that I haven't heard of prior to this book is the theory that an individual must earn their rights to live in a society they were born into. It's not a theory because this very thing takes place in America. Those born disadvantaged, be it race or upbringing, have a blatant disadvantage in comparison with others in society. This is much like that of the children in the novel. Children born predisposed with violent tendencies, lower intelligence, and inability to compete athletically may be forced to give up their right to life if their parents see fit to enact their rights to "abort" their children.

As I have already turned 18, I would have no fears in this society. Instead I'll put my age down to 16 for this scenario. I'll also give myself a pair of spiteful parents just for the sake of argument. At 16 I had made two very big decisions in life. I for one chose to quit soccer and pursue my grades as they had been very sub par at the time. At the time my father had threatened grounding and summer school as punishment for the grades, and both my parents were upset by my decision to quit soccer. I as an individual chose to make my life better in a very obvious choice, but my parents had a different opinion on how I should've made my decisions. Now just a year later I turned into a straight A student and a still avid athlete with a passion for another sport. If I had lived in the government created in the the book I undoubtedly would've been unwound under the belief that I was turning into an "undesirable" child with no future. Now we can see that I was able to turn things around and even start my career in college. If I lived in the conditions of

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

the book's government nobody would've been able to see that and I would be dead at this very moment. That's a big difference. It really makes you value your privilege in life.

Appendix B: Student Response Writing Sample #2, *World War Z*

World War Z Paper

World War Z by Max Brooks describes a world that was taken over by zombies, then was reclaimed by a society forever changed by those events. It shows how different societies and peoples reacted to a complete crisis, and how some societies are much better equipped to handle disasters than others. It describes different types of governments, different interactions between governments and their people, and different ways that governments will control and handle their people when disaster strikes.

Several events happen in the book that show the abilities of different governments to interact with their people in times of crisis. One of these events is the United States trying to make a big spectacle out of destroying a massive swarm of zombies from New York City in order to regain the confidence of the people. This is the way that democracies have to think about their people. Since every individual has power to affect the government, the government has to constantly do things to inspire the people and keep their faith in the government's ability to function. The people are likely to tear up the social contract between the governed and the government in a democracy if they feel that the government is no longer able to adequately protect them, meaning that the United States was forced to make an attempt to not only destroy the zombie horde coming from New York City, but to do it in a fashion so impressive to behold that the American people would truly believe that they had the ability to end this crisis.

Unfortunately, this is not what happens in the story. The United States military spent so much time trying to make the battle look grand and impressive that they didn't prepare for a war against a different type of enemy than they were used to fighting. Instead of destroying the zombie horde in an incredible fashion, they were quickly overrun, the footage of which was broadcast to millions of Americans across the nation. After seeing this, many Americans considered the social contract to be inadequate, and lost any sort of respect for the authority of the

American government. They quickly began to completely disregard any order or suggestion that was given by the US government. This sort of misdemeanor would not be tolerated in a government such as the one in Russia, which had complete authoritarian control over its people.

In the book, there is a scene where soldiers of the Russian army began to disregard orders and commit acts of mutiny. As a response to this, the Russian government ordered that all soldiers get into groups of ten, then as a group decide on one member to be executed. The soldiers themselves would have to do the executions, and they could not do it with a gun, but instead with a rock, so the murder would truly be by their own hands. This enforced strict control over the Russian army, with no more chance of mutiny in the ranks. No one could forget the act of killing one of their own, and no one wanted to anger the leadership for fear of having to kill another round of fellow soldiers and friends. This event shows an extremely different sort of government. This is not a society in which the people have any social contract with the government. It is a society in which the people do as they are told, and if they do not, they are severely punished for it. The government is strict and all powerful. There is no option for citizens to take action against things they do not believe in. This shows that, at least in the story, Russia is not a constitutional republic, as they claim to be, but closer to an absolute dictatorship, with their president at the head. This has been shown several times throughout the short history of the Russian Federation, such as the murder of Yakhya Yevloyev, a protestor of Putin's regime who was pulled into a police car and shot at point blank range.

The book also demonstrates the ability of governments who already have strict control over their civilians and build themselves with the ability to lock their own people into their country have a very serious advantage when it comes to surviving a zombie apocalypse. In the book, Cuba is well suited to not only survive, but thrive in a world completely controlled by zombies. Their attempts to keep their own people from fleeing the country to the United States meant that their beach borders were well defended and hard to access. The relative safety of the

island meant that now, American citizens were fleeing towards Cuba, desperate for the communist ideals and safety they thought the government could supply. In this new world, where everyone was on the brink of death, socialism turned out to be one of the most effective forms of government, as it ensured that everyone received their basic needs. The zombies were hard enough to survive, but if citizens needed to also be worried about things as simple and necessary as providing food for their families, they would be impossible.

World War Z does not explain what life is like in a single society, but compares life in all societies in a time of crisis. It shows that many of the conventional ways to life as a first world nation are impossible when a true crisis strikes. Although the enemy was the zombies in this book, zombies are not the only threat that could create a crisis similar to the one seen. Famine, disease, and energy needs all can create situations of extreme desperation. When times come for us to confront those sort of issues, we would be wise to look at lessons from this story, and remember what happens when countries are unwilling to do what is necessary to protect their civilians.

Appendix C: Student Response Writing Sample #3, *When She Woke*

When She Woke

When She Woke is a dystopian novel where in the society if you are convicted of a crime you are injected with a tracker and a chemical to make your skin the color of your crime. In this society the line between church and state is completely diminished which makes everything so much more complicated. In this society if you are a red you are a murderer that can be anything from abortion to actual murder. I would hate to live in this society because you are not allowed to believe in what you want. It is also degrading because your skin is the color of your crime where people will judge you and not give you a second look if you have a different skin color. It would be like living in 1940's America as an African American, you get judged and you aren't allowed to go into some places with a "no chromes allowed sign". This society was built for good so that there is less of a chance of crime but also why would we want to degrade people for committing a crime? In the book the survival rate for reds were so low and a red female was even lower because they get murdered or don't find a job and die homeless.

The separation of church and state is a good thing because "We put our hand on the bible and swear to uphold the constitution, not put our hand on the constitution and swear to uphold the bible." To live in this society would be having to live by the government's idea of good and that is not right. Everything surrounds religion and in this society people can not be truly free because their government is a religion that might be different from what they believe in which is against the constitution. In this society if you are not a religious person you just won't fit in and I would hate that. It is also hard because if you do commit a crime you are projected on national television while you are in jail which is so weird. That is a major violation to our right to privacy and I would not like to have my prison sentence to be projected live, everything from eating to showering could be projected. When She Woke shows the potential if the line between church and state disappears with the rise of technology

Appendix D: Student Response Writing Sample #4, *Unwind*

Book #2 Writing Response

In this book titled *Unwind* by Neal Shusterman, takes place in the United States, after a civil war somewhere in the near future. After a civil war, known as the Second Civil War was fought over abortion, a compromise was reached, allowing parents to sign an order for their children between the ages of 13 and 18 to be unwound, taken to "harvest camps" and having their body parts harvested for later use. The reasoning was that since 100% of the body had to be used, unwinds did not technically die because their individual body parts lived on. In addition to unwinding, parents who are unable to raise their children to age 13 for retroactive abortion have the option to "stork" their child by leaving it on another family's porch. If they don't get caught, the "storked" baby then becomes the other family's responsibility. The story centers around three teens that have been scheduled to be unwound. They are all runaways; Connor, a sixteen-year-old whose family believes he'd gotten into too many fights and want to get rid of him due to his trouble making ways, Risa, a ward of the state who doesn't make it in the continuing program because of budget cuts, and Lev, a tithe whose rich parents had him specifically to be unwound, as he is the tenth child. Lev and his family believe 10% of everything they have should be given to the Church, including Lev. If you are between the ages 13 to 18 you have a high risk of being unwound. As a citizen in this society, it's the hardest on teenagers between those ages because they are the most affected as the entire "unwind" system is based around them. Some kids have no choice and go along with the decision made for them and some kids (like the three mentioned) chose to run and hide until the age of 18. I personally would also run and go into hiding so I don't get unwound because I don't want to live in a camp and have my body parts be used by basically killing me. This is torture to underage kids and should not be legal even in the real society today. The view of human nature is that kids between the ages of 13-18 deserve to be "unwind" because they are considered a waste if they are troublemakers or disobedient. This story does

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

suggest both government hinders and hurting people. The government strips the rights, freedom and privacy of the kids being unwound and this mentally and emotionally hurts the kids and it will physically hurt them as well eventually when their body parts will be harvested. “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains” – Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It means that a person is only born free and after that he is always in chains as to being watched over and controlled. There is a lot of fear throughout the book, The three teenagers that escape are in fear to being unwound that is why they run throughout the whole book, so they don’t get caught. We should never allow this type of dystopian scenario to become a reality in our society. This will be going against the will of our teenager citizens. It’s considered illegal in our society today to send kids to camps and to have their body parts harvested. So I doubt our government would ever allow teenagers to go through this. It’s important to keep in mind that these dystopian stories have some possibility and probability to them in coming true. So we can’t just turn our eyes away from something that has a chance in coming true. The book controls the lives of the people in such a way that the parents are forced to give up their kids to be unwound. Like Lev’s parents who chose him to be unwound before he was born because he was the tenth child.

Appendix E: Student Academic Essay Writing Sample #1**The Issue Of Participation And Personal Accountability: A Guideline**

The citizens of a free nation such as America, are not exempt from responsibilities and duties to maintain the country as we know it. These are less requirements and more expectations that we couldn't function without. In a democratic republic there are tasks that must be completed solely by the people on a regular basis. Volunteering in such public services keeps the country running smoothly and fairly. Without such services as jury duty, voting, participation in the legal system, and a general education the nation would cease to exist in the democracy we find presently.

In order to maintain a free and equal union it is necessary to protect the rights of all peoples within the United States. If we see a person or persons being oppressed, discriminated against, or held to a lower standard of treatment than is expected under the law, it becomes the duty of the citizens to intervene and uphold an equality of justice for such individuals. Our country's backbone throughout time has been the simple phrase: "all men are created equal", thus guaranteeing equal freedoms towards all citizens. Even in the book *The Year 3000: A Dream* the idea of a perfect civilization is found in a place called Tuturia where all citizens are made the exact same in mind and appearance in order to ensure equality in a permanent secure manner. In a perfect society equality would go as far as "social equality, legal equality, political equality, formal equality, or racial equality" (Darity, P.694). "Equality is so intimately related to the concept of justice that it is impossible to fully untangle the two", so by definition it is impossible to exclude an individual "on the "grounds of race, gender, or religion" without legal intervention. It becomes an issue of law when certain peoples are found to be treated in an unequal manner, and as citizens of the United States we are required to uphold the law in all forms. When equality is broken it is our duty as citizens of a free and equal nation to uphold our standard of equality.

Participation in the political and legal system is an essential and integral part of a functional society. Becoming informed on the matters of a community and casting votes on the representatives that support the good of the community. Participating in essential public services such as jury duty. Registering to vote allows you to make an impact on the election process as well as put you on the list for a chance to be volunteered for jury duty. For instance in the dystopian novel *Unwind* citizens were required to cooperate with the law and report criminal fugitives that were on the run, and were sometimes required to help in the capture process. In our right to a trial by jury of our peers "the jury are judges of law as well as of fact", so it is necessary for citizens to maintain this process by both registering to vote and appearing on jury duty. As a registered voter I reserve the right to cast my vote on matters that I believe will benefit society as a whole, and as a result, am signing myself up to be selected at random to serve on a jury.

A citizen in any functional government must be totally familiar with the law and be in accordance with it to ensure public safety and order, and ignorance to the law cannot be an acceptable defense to a power enforcing it. A society must have a common law by which to maintain order, and if a population fails to comply with such laws then the society itself crumbles. It is important for students at a young age to become familiar with their most basic amendments so that if the time comes they can defend their rights and the rights of others. In the novel *The Year 3000* citizens were required to fully understand and follow all of the laws of the country they lived in. This in turn created functional societies with the idea of criminals turned into a thing of the past. It is my personal belief that any citizen should be able to quote their most basic rights such as "religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition" (Constitutional Amendments). These amendments are our most basic securities that cannot be infringed upon. They are the "core

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

values of freedom and democracy” and as such they must be brought into the educational system early on so one can come to know the laws that guarantee their freedoms. Students should be taught law and the freedoms they possess under both the state and constitution in order to exercise their rights accordingly in order to fully maximize their role as a citizen.

In summation the law of the land must be maintained at all times. Whether it be general public services or interference in illegal practices, it is a citizen’s duty to not only participate but be actively engaged in such actions. In my opinion if you wish to live in a country that you look upon as a fair and free state, you should feel an obligation to actively engage in the functions that allow the machine to keep running. A country is nothing, but a representation of the population it governs, and as people of the United States we should be held accountable for the poor state we find ourselves in if the country begins to decline. We have the power to change our country for the better, but only if we become involved in the progressive actions that can bring change.

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Appendix F: Student Academic Essay Writing Sample #2

The Key Roles of a Citizen

There are many roles of a citizen in a society. An educated society has the capability of electing good candidates they think would make good Presidents. Citizenship is the common thread that connects all Americans. We are a nation bound not by race or religion, but by the shared values of freedom, liberty, and equality. With these rights, comes responsibility. Some of the rights come from our Amendments, such as the First Amendment, which gives freedom of speech, religion, and assembly. The Fourth Amendment protects you from unreasonable searches and seizures, and the Fourteenth Amendment which says all persons born in U.S. are citizens, and have equal protection of the laws. Although, these rights can be taken away from you, if you are doing illegal works and disobeying the law. To be a good citizen, you must start with staying informed of the issues affecting your community, participating in the democratic process, respecting and obeying federal, state, and local laws, paying income and other taxes honestly, and on time, to federal, state, and local authorities.

Part of playing your role as a citizen starts with staying informed. Informed citizens are necessary for a democracy to function properly. When average citizens stay informed, they reinforce democracy and help to keep the government in check to ensure the freedom of its people. Staying informed keeps people side-by-side of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, and enables them to act appropriately based on their knowledge. When writing the U.S. Constitution in 1787 the Founding Fathers created a new system of government. The power to govern comes directly from the people, not through primogeniture or the force of arms, but through free and open elections by the citizens of the United States. The first ten Amendments strictly come in action when your rights are violated. We are all born with individual rights of life, liberty, and freedom. The U.S. Constitution protects your rights as long as what you do is not illegal, or causing harm to others. Philosopher John Locke's arguments for the social contract, gave the right to citizens to revolt against their leader if they felt the leader was being unjust. This enormously influenced the democratic revolutions that followed, especially on Thomas Jefferson, and the founders of the United States. According to one study, about 44% of Americans did not realize "Obamacare" was passed as a law. If we don't know about one of the most influential laws in recent years, how can we be expected to know about the elections and which candidate would do the most to improve our lives? There are consequences of not staying informed and missing out on opportunities that can be beneficial for you. In the dystopian novel *World War Z*, you'll understand the consequences of NOT staying informed. A zombie plague starts as all plagues tend to, slow and steady. China has a small outbreak of zombie that spreads out into the world through various routes: refugees, black market organs, and human trafficking. Many countries ignore the news of the dead rising up from the grave with the hunger for human flesh. The lack of information and preventative measures means the zombie tide doesn't stay back for long. Before anyone knows it, the undead masses have washed over the entire globe, biting, scratching, and killing all they come across. If the citizens had stayed informed and taken the news seriously they would've had higher chances of surviving, but they didn't which resulted in millions catching the plague. (Brooks). Now not only do you know your rights and privileges about staying informed, but also the consequences that come with it. Such as a zombie plague that you may think isn't a big deal, until half of the globe is dying all because you decided to ignore it. As a modern society, that's what we tend to do. Staying informed doesn't sound like the most fun thing to do as a citizen, but it definitely is a big responsibility given to you by your Founding Fathers. ("Want To Know How To Become An Informed Citizen? Here's How.")

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

Citizens today might not realize the importance of voting and participating in the democratic process. There are many advantages that come with participating. It is your way of speaking out and having your say in government. You can participate by voting in local, state, and national elections, participating in a political discussion, writing letters to elected representatives, contributing money to a party or candidate, attending meetings to gain information, discuss issues, or lend support, campaigning for a candidate, lobbying for laws that are of special interest, demonstrating through marches, boycotts, sit-ins, or other forms of protest, and serving as a juror. As I listed above, there have been many protests throughout the history of America that caused citizens to participate, and take notice of what was going on around them. Voting is government's way of allowing you to participate in the government/democratic process ("What Is the Role of the People?"). The power to govern comes directly from the people, not through leaders or the force of arms, but through free and open elections by the citizens of the United States. The Civil War is a great example of how citizens took a stand and participated peacefully through boycotts and sit-ins. Martin Luther King Jr. never encouraged violence, but preached about having patience and getting your freedom the right way. He's the reason why African-Americans received the rights they deserved, and made it unconstitutional to have separate schools for black and white children. In the dystopian book *Unwind*, a compromise was made between the parents and government, allowing parents to sign an order for their children between the ages of 13 and 18 to be unwound, taken to "harvest camps" and having their body parts harvested for later use. Some parents chose their kids to be unwound before they're even born, such as Lev who is the tenth kid in his family. He decides to go with it without protest, because he believes this is what God chose him to be (Shusterman). Other kids such as Conner didn't take that so well. They fought the government by running away. This shows how parents are forced to participate in the government's decision even if their kids didn't agree. This proves the importance of participating as citizens of our society, is the vital key that improves our nation as a whole. Not only is it our right to participate, but also our responsibility. ("How Can Citizens Participate?")

No person is above the law. Whether you're rich and famous, or poor and broke. We all are considered equal under the law. So it's our job as citizens to respect and obey it. If you can't obey the laws then obviously there will be consequences which include jail, probation, community service, sometimes even death penalties. The Amendments protect your rights but if you use your rights to do illegal works or harm to others those rights can and will be taken from you. Thomas Hobbes believed people needed a higher power to rule them, such as a government, because they themselves were corrupt evil people who could take so much power into their own hands. In the place where the laws do not exist, insecurity and chaos are the norm. What's more, civilization cannot occur in a world that is lawless (Hobbes 256). This is why, even though we have much freedom and the right to express ourselves to the government, we still are not above the law and must respect and obey it. Failure to obeying laws can lead to the government to take your rights away and persecute you through the court. You can be jailed for life as people are being jailed today when they violate the Federal laws of the government. In the Dystopian novel *Brave New World*, everyone is ranked according to their colors in society the Alphas are at the top and the smartest. Natural birth is gone and everyone is born through machines. People are not allowed to learn anything from the past, because they are taught it was a terrible place and they are supposed to love their own government and society. They were not allowed to feel any emotions of love or pain so they took pills called "soma" to always keep them happy and young. Everyone in this book, always obeyed their government and never spoke against as to why they weren't allowed to study the past, or constantly take those soma pills. The main purpose of laws and commands is based on their ability to maintain peace and order in the society. We not only need the laws, but for the society to work we must all obey them. This is why we have rules for

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

everything, such as driving, our rights, it's to protect us. It's something a lot of people don't pay attention to or think it's not important but it is. Respecting and obeying the laws is the only way to maintain much peace in our society. (Huxley)

There are many things that come to mind when we think about our role as citizens in our society. It can be something small or even really big. Staying informed will always be the start of being a good citizen. How will you play your role if you are not aware of what's going on? Participating in the democratic process is also important although it something not a lot of us do. We decide not to vote because we don't like any candidates. But you not speaking out, means you are agreeing with whatever decisions are being made. If you have the freedom to do so, why not speak out? That leads into respecting and obeying laws. No matter what you do you need to make sure you're doing it legally so it doesn't violate the laws. These three arguments I believe is what brings our society together and under control.

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Appendix G: Student Academic Essay Writing Sample #3

Participate, Contribute, Be Educated, Otherwise You're Not Worth It

The theory of the social contract implies individual rights are sacrificed for the common good of the community. An individual civic duties to contribute opinions, ideas, thoughts, participate in society, including participating in public affairs, and to be educated. When an individual has successfully done this, then they have fulfilled their civic duty.

The first duty of an individual in society is to participate. One major way for anyone over the age of 18 is to register to vote, and cast a ballot. We are responsible for the government and politics, especially since we are in a direct democracy. By voting we take power away from the government and put it into the hands of the citizens. By not voting we give up our right to influence the decision and give the authorities total control. Although voting is not the only way to participate, it is one of the more direct ways to have input. A political system is considered legitimate when citizens participate, "*Sidney Verba and Norman Nie define political participation as, 'those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take' (1972, p.154)*"

(Participation). Unless the ideas of the individuals are reflected and portrayed by the legislature, there is no way to assert power of the people, which can lead to an oligarchy or other system of government besides direct democracy. Included in this is the right given to the people from the Declaration of Independence stating they have the ability to overthrow the government. The novel *Little Brother* by Cory Doctorow explores this concept which is exemplified in the quote, "Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness" (Doctorow).

The second duty of an individual in society is to contribute ideas, thoughts, and opinions. This goes alongside voting, where ideas, thoughts, and opinions are represented. The sharing allows not only for others within our society to know of discoveries and improvements that have been made, but should motivate individuals to care. We should intellectually and physically build ourselves up to the best possible, which requires everybody contributing. A frequent improvement is that of technology. Evolution and technology are closely linked, and are characteristic of the people at the time (Bruland). This gives people opportunity to represent themselves through advancement, contribution, and participation. In the novel *The Circle*, by Dave Eggers, technology is advanced with the justification it is for the greater good, “But I'm a believer in the perfectibility of human beings. I think we can be better. I think we can be perfect or near to it. And when we become our best selves, the possibilities are endless. We can solve any problem. We can cure any disease, end hunger, everything, because we won't be dragged down by all our weaknesses, our petty secrets, our hoarding of information and knowledge. We will finally realize our potential” (Eggers). The novel also uses social media as a means to project the thoughts of the individual. A single tweet or post may be insignificant, but when groups of people become involved, topics such as ‘world wide trending topic’ and ‘going viral’ become relevant.

None of this is possible without being educated. Being educated is not only in the sense of going to school and learning about subjects such as english or physics, but more specifically knowing what is happening within society. Our society has moved from an industrial phase to an intellectual knowledge phase, whereas some are still in their industrial phase, and education often leads to a higher tiered career (Knowledge). This places the focus on processes rather than static objectives. In the novel *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, the society is so far advanced that the people are practically brainwashed robots in social classes. The people who are put into the society realize the importance of civil liberties and qualities of life, “I want God, I want poetry, I want danger, I want freedom, I want sin”. It is important to be aware of what you do and do not

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

know, "We are not our own any more than what we possess is our own. We did not make ourselves, we cannot be supreme over ourselves. We are not our own masters" (Huxley).

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Appendix H: NM Social Studies Standards, Civics and Government

<p>Strand: Civics and Government Content Standard III: Students understand the ideals, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship and understand the content and history of the founding documents of the United States with particular emphasis on the United States and New Mexico constitutions and how governments function at local, state, tribal, and national levels. Students will:</p>
<p>9-12 Benchmark 3-A: compare and analyze the structure, power and purpose of government at the local, state, tribal and national levels as set forth in their respective constitutions or governance documents:</p>
<p>Performance Standards</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyze the structure, powers and role of the legislative branch of the United States government, to include: specific powers delegated in Article I of the constitution; checks and balances described in the federalist papers, Number 51; lawmaking process; role of leadership within congress; federalist and anti-federalist positions; 2. Analyze the structure, powers and role of the executive branch of the United States government, to include: specific powers delegated in Article II of the constitution; checks and balances; development of the cabinet and federal bureaucracy; roles and duties of the presidency, including those acquired over time such as "head of state" and "head of a political party;" 3. Examine the election of the president through the nomination process, national conventions and electoral college; 4. Analyze the structure, powers and role of the judicial branch of the United States government, including landmark United States supreme court decisions, to include: specific powers delegated by the Constitution in Article III and described in the federalist papers, Numbers 78-83; checks and balances; judicial review as developed in Marbury v. Madison; issues raised in McCulloch v. Maryland; dual court system of state and federal governments, including their organization and jurisdiction; 5. Analyze the rights, protections, limits and freedoms included within the United States constitution and bill of rights, to include: constitutional mandates such as the right of habeas corpus, no bill of attainder and the prohibition of the ex post facto laws; 1st Amendment guarantees freedom of religion, speech, press,
<p>June 2009 6</p>

<p>assembly, and petition; 4th, 5th and 6th Amendments address search and seizure, rights of the accused, right to a fair and speedy trial, and other legal protections; 14th Amendment protection of due process and equal protection under the law; conflicts which occur between rights, including tensions between the right to a fair trial and freedom of the press and between majority rule and individual rights; expansion of voting rights, limitation of presidential terms, etc;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Compare and contrast the structure and powers of New Mexico's government as expressed in the New Mexico constitution with that of the United States constitution, to include: direct democracy in the initiative, referendum and recall process; impeachment process; process of voter registration and voting; role of primary elections to nominate candidates; how a bill becomes a law; executive officers and their respective powers; New Mexico courts, appointment of judges, and election and retainment processes for judges; organization of county and municipal governments; and 7. Describe and analyze the powers and responsibilities (including the concept of legitimate power) of local, state, tribal and national governments.
<p>9-12 Benchmark 3-B: analyze how the symbols, icons, songs, traditions and leaders of New Mexico and the United States exemplify ideals and provide continuity and a sense of unity:</p>
<p>Performance Standards</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyze the qualities of effective leadership; 2. Evaluate the impact of United States political, tribal and social leaders on New Mexico and the nation; 3. Analyze the contributions of symbols, songs and traditions toward promoting a sense of unity at the state and national levels; and 4. Evaluate the role of New Mexico and United States symbols, icons, songs and traditions in providing continuity over time.
<p>9-12 Benchmark 3-C: compare and contrast the philosophical foundations of the United States' political system in terms of the purpose of government, including its historical sources and ideals, with those of other governments in the world:</p>
<p>Performance Standards</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyze the structure, function and powers of the federal government (e.g., legislative, executive, and judicial branches); 2. Analyze and explain the philosophical foundations of the American political system in terms of the inalienable rights of people and the purpose of government, to include: Iroquois league and its organizational structure for effective governance; basic philosophical principles of John Locke expressed in the second treatise of government (nature, equality, and dissolution of government); foundation principles of laws by William Blackstone (laws in general and absolute rights of individuals); importance of the founders of the rights of Englishmen, the Magna Carta and representative government in England; 3. Analyze the fundamental principles in the declaration of independence; 4. Analyze the historical sources and ideals of the structure of the United States government, to include: principles of democracy; essential principles of a republican form of government, code of law put forth in the Code of Hammurabi; separation of powers as expressed by the Baron of Montesquieu; checks and balances as expressed by Thomas Hobbs; ideas of individual rights developed in the English bill of rights; role of philosophers in supporting changes in governments in the 18th and 19th centuries (e.g., Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire); 5. Compare and contrast the concepts of courts and justice from Henry II of England to the court system of today; 6. Compare and contrast the unitary, confederal and federal systems; 7. Analyze the ways powers are distributed and shared in a parliamentary system; 8. Compare and contrast the different philosophies, structures and institutions of democratic versus totalitarian systems of government; 9. Analyze and evaluate the concept of limited government and the rule of law; 10. Compare and contrast the characteristics of representative governments; 11. Compare and contrast characteristics of Native American governments with early United States government; 12. Compare and contrast the philosophical foundations of forms of government to understand the purpose of the corresponding political systems (e.g., socialism, capitalism, secular, theocratic, totalitarian); and 13. Analyze the role that the United States has played as a constitutional republican government for nations around the world.
<p>June 2009 7</p>

Using the Aesthetic Stance to Achieve Historical Thinking

9-12 Benchmark 3-D: understand how to exercise rights and responsibilities as citizens by participating in civic life and using skills that include interacting, monitoring and influencing

Performance Standards

1. Describe and analyze the influence of the non-elected (e.g., staff, lobbyists, interest groups);
2. Analyze the rights and obligations of citizens in the United States, to include: connections between self-interest, the common good and the essential element of civic virtue, as described in the federalist papers, Numbers 5 and 49; obeying the law, serving on juries, paying taxes, voting, registering for selective service and military service.;
3. Demonstrate the skills needed to participate in government at all levels, including: analyze public issues and the political system; evaluate candidates and their positions; debate current issues;
4. Analyze factors that influence the formation of public opinion (e.g., media, print, advertising, news broadcasts, magazines, radio); and
5. Evaluate standards, conflicts and issues related to universal human rights and their impact on public policy.

Appendix I: Government Course Syllabus

Government
Semester Course (18 week course)
Syllabus
Heather Dahl

GOVERNMENT

NM State Standards for Government:
Students understand the ideals, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship and understand the content and history of the founding documents of the United States with particular emphasis on the United States and New Mexico constitutions and how governments function at local, state, tribal, and national levels

Overview:

This course is designed to allow students an opportunity to explore foundational philosophies and various forms of government, and to also prepare them to be participatory citizens in their own lives. This is a semester course and required for graduation in New Mexico.

Things you will need/supplies:

Composition books
Paper and a folder
Google account, dropbox account (Ms. Dahl will send link), and/or USB flash drive
Course text
Supplemental class readings provided electronically
Optional supplies- box of tissue and hand sanitizer or wipes

The Rules

1. Come to class prepared to engage with your classmates and contribute equally and openly
2. Show Respect. I'll point out examples of this in action whenever possible. 😊
3. Responsibility. Meet deadlines. Turn in work within school guidelines if absent. Etc.
4. Attend class and arrive on time. See school policies regarding late arrival and absences.
5. Stay informed. You must consult daily news during this semester.

Week 1: Digital Citizenship

Week 2-3: The Nature of Humans, Founding Philosophies, and Why Governments Exist

Week 4-5: Founding Documents and Rights of Rulers

Week 6: Political Parties

Week 7: Citizens United and the Supreme Court

Week 8: Social Activism and citizen action

Week 9: Voting Rights Act

Week 10-11: Landmark cases of the Civil Rights Movement and Modern US

Week 13-14: 1st and 4th Amendment Spotlights

Week 15-16: New Mexico Government

Week 17: Themes in Government projects- poverty, justice, gender

Final Project: Role of Citizens in a Society

Assignments and Make-Up Work-Classwork assignments are to be completed in class. These assignments will not be accepted late; students must use their class time wisely. When absent, it is the **responsibility of the student** to ask for his/her make-up work. In the event of a missed quiz or test, the student will need to make arrangements to come into class during lunch or after school to make it up. The student will have the same amount of days to complete his/her make-up work that he/she was absent; absent 3 days, then the work needs to be completed and turned in within 3 days.

Grading-Eldorado High School provides access to an online grade program so that students and parents can monitor individual student progress. Be sure you have your username and password. Grading in this course is based on a standard grading scale (90-100%-A; 80-89-B; 70-79-C; 60-69-D; 59 and below-F). Major projects, tests, and essays will be worth more points than daily, class work.

Major Components of Grade:

- Homework (25%): Weeks 1-12- Weekly Writing, submitted via email only; Amendment brackets and independent reading responses
- Exams (10%): exams at the end of each six weeks. Tentative: _____
- Class work and notebook checks (50%)
- Final Essay Exam Project (15%)

Keeping in Touch-If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please let me know. E-mail and notes are the best way to contact me

"The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a persons conscience."- Atticus in To Kill A Mockingbird

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