# "I HAVE NO STORY TO TELL": EXPLORING THE MULTIMODAL LITERACY IDENTITIES OF ADOLESCENTS

by

Brandi Bartok

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg

Copyright © 2018 by Brandi Bartok

## Table of Contents

**Table of Contents……...……ii**

**Acknowledgements…….……...v**

**Abstract…….…….……vi**

**List of Tables.……vii**

**List of Figures……..……viii**

**Chapter One: Introduction……...……1**

Background and Relevance……..……1

**Chapter Two: Literature Review……...……..……7**

Literacy as Multimodal……...……8
Multimodal Literacy Practices and Adolescent Learners……..13
Finding Our Way in a Multimodal Classroom Environment……18

**Chapter Three: Methodology…….……..……..26**

Summary and Research Questions……26
Context of the Study……..27
*Interviews and literacy journals*…….……...27
*Students as storytellers*……..……28
*Alternative representations*……..……..29
Data Collection, Validity and Analysis……...……..30
Consent……..…37

**Chapter Four: Nine Student Case Studies……..……..40**

Introduction to Case Studies…….…….……40
Case Study One: Natasha's Journey…….…….……41
*Natasha's literacy journal and interview*.....41
*Natasha as a storyteller*…….……53
*Natasha's alternative* representation…….60
Case Study Two: Logan's Journey……....66
*Logan's literacy journal and interview*……..……66
*Logan as a* storyteller……79
*Logan's alternative representation*……..……..84
Case Study Three: Audrey's Journey……...……88
*Audrey's literacy journal and interview*……88
*Audrey as a storyteller*……...……96

*Audrey's alternative* representation……..98
Case Study Four: Tambara's Journey……..……..……100
*Tambara's literacy journal and interview*.....100
*Tambara as a storyteller*……..111
*Tambara's alternative* representation……..115
Case Study Five: Kayla's Journey……..…..118
*Kayla's literacy journal and interview*……..……..118
*Kayla as a storyteller*……...……126
*Kayla's alternative representation*……..……130
Case Study Six: Curtis's Journey……134
*Curtis's literacy journal and interview*……...…134
*Curtis as a storyteller*……..……139
*Curtis's alternative representation*……..141
Case Study Seven: Rebecca's Journey……..…..143
*Rebecca's literacy journal and interview*……143
*Rebecca as a storyteller*……...……152
*Rebecca's alternative representation*…….……157
Case Study Eight: Nisha's Journey……..159
*Nisha's literacy journal and interview*……...…….159
*Nisha as a storyteller*……...…167
*Nisha's alternative representation*……...……169
Case Study Nine: Emily's Journey……..……172
*Emily's literacy journal and interview*……..……..……172
*Emily as a storyteller*…….……..181
*Emily's alternative representation*……...……185

**Chapter Four: Findings……...……..187**

Social Communities of Practice…….……..187
Preferred Practices and Technology……189
Creators and Consumers……..……193
School Influence and Barriers……..194
Student Experience with Multimodal Messages…….……195
Pedagogical Documentation and Sense of Community……...…199

**Chapter Five: Conclusion……..……203**

Implications and Ways Forward……..203
Limitations……...……208
Questions Not Yet Answered……...……210
Final Thoughts……211

**References…….……..212**

**Appendices …….……...……219**
Appendix A: Interview Questions…….……..219

Appendix B: Oral Script and Parent Information Letter for Recruitment……..…….220
Appendix C: Letters of Consent (Parent/Guardian/Student)…..……...……..224
Appendix D: Letters of Consent (Administrator)……..…..…232
Appendix E: Letters of Consent (Superintendent)……...……238
Appendix F: Confidentiality Agreement ……..…..….244

**Acknowledgements**

A learning journey of this magnitude does not happen in isolation, and I am extremely grateful to a number of people for their support and patience throughout this process.

Dr. Wayne Serebrin, thank you for your gentle guidance, encouragement, and valuable feedback. You have a way of shifting my perspective and helping me achieve more than I thought was possible. I would also like to thank Dr. Jennifer Watt and Dr. Jessica Senehi for being incredibly accommodating and generous with their time as members of my thesis committee.

Thank you to my school principal for all of our inspiring conversations and to the senior administrators of my school division for their support in allowing me to complete the research portion of this project. I am very grateful to work with colleagues who allow me into their classrooms and who provide a valuable professional network. I cannot thank the students enough for participating, learning, and growing along side of me. You inspired this journey and made it possible.

Finally, to my friends and family who have put up with so much during this process, I appreciate and love you for all of your support and understanding. Sydney, Gabriel and Lily, you are my happiness and I wish you joy in your own learning journeys as you continue to grow. Mom and Dad, thank you for everything that you have done and continue to do for me. You taught me the value of hard work and I carry that with me always.

**Abstract**

Adolescent students' participatory and multimodal experiences outside of school are often at odds with entrenched in-school literacy instruction that tends to privilege print-based over other forms of communication. This research study documents the multimodal literacy identities of students in a Grade 8 classroom as they explore storytelling through different modalities. Drawing upon pedagogical documentation and critical discourse analysis research methodologies, five specific inquiry questions are investigated: 1) How do students already engage in multimodal literacy practices and analysis outside of school? 2) What strategies do students have for making sense of multimodal texts and how do they identify and discuss different modes of communication? 3) What assessment evidence can be gathered to show how and if students transfer and enhance meaning across ensembles of modes, and how can this assessment evidence be gathered in contextually relevant and respectful ways? 4) Is there evidence to suggest that students demonstrate an increase in deep or critical thinking about multimodal analysis after the instructional-learning cycle? 5) If students are allowed to voice their own stories in different modalities, what impact will this have on the classroom community and their personal literacy practices and identities? Results of this qualitative study contribute to closing the established gap between adolescents' in-school and outside of school literacy practices, while offering pedagogical support to Manitoba educators as a new provincial ELA curriculum is introduced that advocates a multimodal literacy education environment.

*Keywords: multimodal literacy, multimodality, adolescent literacy identities*

## List of Tables

Table 1: Data triangulation……31

Table 2: Spreadsheet used to sort data……35

Table 3: Partial sample of student data sorted……36

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Natasha's figure skating brackets diagram……42

Figure 2: A novel……47

Figure 3: A textbook page……47

Figure 4: A book of inspirational messages……47

Figure 5: Natasha's calendar……48

Figure 6: Natasha's SnapChat screenshots……50

Figure 7: A Google Maps screenshot……51

Figure 8: Math homework and notes……52

Figure 9: Photos of a Christmas card……52

Figure 10: A gingerbread cookie recipe……53

Figure 11: Natasha's story map……56

Figure 12: Natasha engaged in a partner share with Tambara……58

Figure 13: "There's trees all around us in every direction"……59

Figure 14: Natasha's rough notes……61

Figure 15: The first draft of Natasha's poem……63

Figure 16: Natasha's concrete poem……64

Figure 17: Natasha's soundscape……65

Figure 18: Logan's screenshot of the YouTube logo……67

Figure 19: Logan's Xbox controller……68

Figure 20: A book Logan was reading……72

Figure 21: Logan's homework……73

Figure 22: A music video viewed on YouTube……74

Figure 23: A news broadcast……74

Figure 24: A screenshot of Logan's SnapChat feed……77

Figure 25: A globe……78

Figure 26: Social plans being made with the aid of a mapping application……79

Figure 27: Logan and Jeremy sharing their stories……80

Figure 28: Logan's story map……81

Figure 29: Logan using gesture……83

Figure 30: Logan's alternative representation……85

Figure 31: Audrey's magazines……88

Figure 32: A screenshot of Audrey's weather app……92

Figure 33: A cereal box……93

Figure 34: Non-fiction……93

Figure 35: Audrey's Instagram……95

Figure 36: Audrey's text message……95

Figure 37: Audrey's Apple Radio……96

Figure 38: Audrey working with Nisha……97

Figure 39: Audrey's first haiku……99

Figure 40: Audrey's second haiku……99

Figure 41: A news website that Tambara visits……101

Figure 42: Math homework……105

Figure 43: Tambara's novel……106

Figure 44: Tambara's Instagram……108

Figure 45: Tambara's text message……108

Figure 46: Tambara's SnapChat feed……..109

Figure 47: A Google search for information on Egypt……110

Figure 48: Tambara's story map……..……113

Figure 49: Tambara using gesture…….…….……..114

Figure 50: Actions mirroring words……...…….114

Figure 51: A flurry of gesture…….…….115

Figure 52: Tambara's alternative representation…….116

Figure 53: A carefully composed picture of Kayla's dance shoes……...……119

Figure 54: A music application……...…….122

Figure 55: A screenshot of a texting app icon…….……122

Figure 56: Kayla's photo editing screenshot……..…….124

Figure 57: An Instagram account Kayla followed……..124

Figure 58: A black and white photo…….125

Figure 59: A staged photo……..……..125

Figure 60: Kayla's storymap……..……..127

Figure 61: Kayla using gesture……..……..129

Figure 62: Kayla using an artifact……130

Figure 63: Kayla using an artifact……130

Figure 64: Kayla's rough notes……...…….131

Figure 65: Kayla's final alternative representation……..……132

Figure 66: a picture collage…….…….135

Figure 67: Curtis's alternative representation……..……142

Figure 68: Rebecca's monthly planner……..……..144

Figure 69: A teacher's website……144

Figure 70: Rebecca's school timetable……..……..145

Figure 71: A music app icon…….…….……..149

Figure 72: Rebecca's composition notebook…….……..149

Figure 73: Instructions for the board game Apples to Apples……..…….……..149

Figure 74: A map of Egypt from a textbook…….…….……..149

Figure 75: Rebecca's Netflix screenshot…….……151

Figure 76: Rebecca's Fitbit screenshot……151

Figure 77: Rebecca's story map…….……..153

Figure 78: Rebecca's nervous body language……...……..155

Figure 79: Rebecca using gesture……...…….156

Figure 80: Rebecca continued…….…….……156

Figure 81: Rebecca's stop animation…….…..157

Figure 82: Nisha's sketch of a ballerina…….…….159

Figure 83: Nisha's sketch of an eye…….……160

Figure 84: A selection of poetry, fiction and non-fiction……164

Figure 85: A screenshot of poetry research…….165

Figure 86: Nisha's Instagram screenshot…….……167

Figure 87: An edited version of Nisha's photograph……...……170

Figure 88: Emily's guitar…….……172

Figure 89: Emily's writer's notebook…….…….177

Figure 90: A piece of clip art to represent a math practice……..178

Figure 91: Emily's picture…….……..179

Figure 92: An image of a weather app…….……180

Figure 93: Emily's paper based calendar…….……180

Figure 94: Emily working with Nisha……...……..181

Figure 95: Emily working with Neil……182

Figure 96: Emily's story map……..183

Figure 97: Emily holding her story map……..……184

Figure 98: Emily's alternative representation……..185

Figure 99: New ELA curriculum conceptual framework……...……204

# Chapter One: Introduction

## Background and Relevance

My current position as a teacher-librarian drives me to be heavily invested in conversations around what it means to be literate. More specifically, I am interested in *who* gets to decide what that means, and which specific literacy practices become and remain privileged over others. In school, we tend to focus on print-based literacy, with choice about what is worth examining and how the expression of ideas takes place being dictated by entrenched teaching practices, political factors, and societal expectations of what constitutes academic work. Street (1995) asserts that the literacy practices being privileged in schools are based in western attitudes about authority, power, and maintaining knowledge hierarchies. In this system, the creation and interpretation of texts and their meanings is often prescribed, sometimes resulting in rigidly dominant standards of literacy practice. Language is taught as objective and entirely separate from experience, rather than as socially situated, with few connections being made to the lived contexts in which different discourses exist (Street, 1995).

In everyday practices, literacy is situated, embedded in culture, comes in many forms, and serves many purposes (Rowsell & Pahl 2005, 2007; Street, 1984, 1995; The New London Group, 1996). Outside of school, students choose from and engage in a wide variety of literacy practices and modes of communication for purposes that have personal or social significance. With the social and cultural make-up of our school community becoming increasingly diverse, and with the addition of how technology impacts how students choose to communicate, this literacy divide is problematic in terms of the relevance of what we are teaching and also because of how it negatively impacts

student agency and engagement. It also points to a systemic failure to recognize that literacy is a social experience, an ever-changing set of practices, and based in evolving cultural contexts. Furthermore, without some co-construction or consultation with those we seek to teach, the literacy practices we are trying to impart may not have any staying power (Street 1995, 1984).

Students attending the middle school where I work often come from an environment that is saturated in YouTube, online/video gaming, social media, and television. These multimodal forms of interaction present platforms where many modes of communication come together to create a highly immersive text. Social media, for example, offers opportunities for students to tell their story directly to as large an audience as they wish, while combining it with the stories of other people, remixing, adding music, filtering photos, adding text, video and audio files. Reality is viewed through a lens of meme culture, and likes and shares can determine social standing. Some of these experiences are ephemeral, existing for short periods of time, and then disappearing from devices and SnapChat feeds. Some of the experiences are longer lasting, such as video filming, editing, and posting for online audiences to gain views, followers, and comments. Young people participate in these technology-enabled multimodal literacy activities with a frequency, determination, and drive that I infrequently see when they are involved in school created or school sanctioned literacy activities. Regrettably, these types of activities are often missing from school life and the communicative powers of these experiences are overlooked.

With such a chasm between the out of school literacy practices of students, and what we are doing in school, it is difficult to know how proficient students really are with

multimodal forms of literacy. The puzzle for me is how do we as teachers understand how deeply students grasp the multimodal content that they are consuming and creating so voraciously? How aware are they of how different modes come together to create meaning? How can we engage them in the creation of multimodal storytelling at a compelling level, in a way that validates who they are as individuals, while striving to strengthen and develop their literacy practices in meaningful and contextual ways that will serve them not only in a school setting, but in their multimodal lives?

I have invited students to be co-constructors of literacy practices in the classroom with good results, demonstrated by a shift in student attitudes toward in-school literacy and growth in classroom community, through the facilitation of a classroom storytelling experience. During the process, middle school students explore their own personal and family stories as part of an oral storytelling experience, and then are invited to retell their stories in other multimodal formats of their choice, such as video, photography, augmented reality, artistic, and musical interpretations. I have observed that students are often initially dismissive of the importance of their own literacy identities, practices, and personal stories. “I have no story to tell,” and “I don’t know how to tell a story” seem to be fall back phrases I hear every year. Students are also reluctant to participate in the oral and multimodal storytelling process, as they don’t see the relevance to “doing ELA.” The disconnect between the out-of-school literacy practices of students and the in-school literacy practices that are designed for them is so large that students do not see their own stories as valid avenues for exploration in a classroom setting.

I have often wondered where these attitudes come from, if our institutionalized school definition of literacy is much too narrow, and if by focusing on mostly print-based

forms of literacy such as reading and writing, we are only acknowledging part of what it means to be a literate individual in a society where much information is presented visually, aurally, spatially, and via gesture and movement. Certainly, we all have stories and preferred methods of sharing them. Giving students the option of using the visual, verbal, gestural, audio, spatial, and written modes to express themselves could prove a powerful, inclusive literacy practice:

> Ultimately, reading is about agency—understanding from where the choices that we make about how we act, think, or value arise—and how we can react, interrogate, or critique messages—written, spoken, visual, gestural, musical—with insight and the methods to do such analysis (Albers, 2014, p. 95).

The new Manitoba ELA curriculum has begun to make room for a more layered, contextual and student centered view of literacy, with the focus being on language as Sense-Making, System, Exploration and Design, and Power and Agency (Manitoba Professional Learning Environment [MAPLE], 2015). This seems to offer a path for student engagement in many different modalities of communication, in addition to reading and writing, and for many different purposes. The pertinent issue here is not that the new curriculum lacks transformational power, but that teacher discomfort with *semiotics* (the communicative power of signs and symbols), *situated literacy* (literacy as culturally contextual and embedded in social practice) or multimodality might stand in the way of meaningful shifts in teaching practice. While there is a growing body of work on multimodal literacy, documented research of Manitoba-based classroom practices that support multimodal literacy are still difficult to find and the multimodal literacy identities of students is not well recognized or represented in schools, with the exception perhaps of

specialized multimedia classes or extracurricular activities. With a renewal of the curriculum, we have an opportunity to examine and challenge our views of literacy, the power structures that currently exist in the teaching of literacy, and to invite students into the process as co-creators of literacy practices as a rule.

Following and documenting students' learning as they explore their own stories offers an avenue for doing exactly that. Oral storytelling is itself a multimodal experience, and a skillful storyteller uses words, sounds, gesture, movement, and space to convey message and emotion. It provides a common experience to talk about multimodality, but also offers individual choice. Identifying the main theme, mood, lesson or emotion of the story and expressing or remixing it in another mode or combination of modes could offer different avenues of self-expression and communication. Leveraging modes of communication that are often not privileged in educational settings is an act of social justice, and providing opportunity for students to work in different sign systems gives young people access to power and agency (Archer, 2016). Additionally, working within the context of the students' own stories offers a path to relevance and respect for individual experience, culture, and social constructs; these are all important scaffolds for meaningful literacy learning.

From a rights-based perspective, we have an obligation to provide opportunities for students to engage with and create multimodal texts. A child's right to freedom of expression and access to information is detailed in Article 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child. It states that:

> The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless

> of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice (UNCRC, 1989).

Living in an age where access to information is so ubiquitous and the exchange of ideas is so quickly and easily accomplished via the internet, this particular issue has wide reaching implications for education. Students need to develop the ability to think about information and media messages critically, to examine the authors' intent, and understand all the ways in which a message is being communicated. They need these skills to avoid being taken advantage of, manipulated, or misled. We live in:

> an age of multimedia authoring where competency with the written word is still vital, but is no longer all that is needed to participate meaningfully in the many spheres of life. Adolescents need facility with an array of multimodal and digital literacies for different social purposes: critical inquiry, creativity, and communication (Mills, 2012, p. 36).

It is imperative that students know how to properly interpret and create multimodal messages, as they are essentially branding themselves when they engage in public social media platforms. Not understanding how their words, images, videos, and audio files work together to create meaning could have an effect on their own reputations and wellbeing. The education system has a responsibility to address these literacy practices during school hours, and to help students to better understand their rights as consumers and producers of media, imparting the practices that will allow children to be self-aware, critically thinking, and self-expressive while they access information and entertainment across different formats.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

The focus of this research study is on the literacy identities and the multimodal literacy practices of adolescent learners. This focus originally stemmed from reading a paper written by The New London Group titled *A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures* (1996), which subsequently led me to seek out related content centering on multimodality, student agency, and writing as identity formation and as social practice. I was somewhat familiar with the basic definition of semiotics and the study of modes of communication and sign systems, having read and considered these ideas for graduate course work, and I began with a review of the established literature on this subject. I also went back to articles I had read in the past, and combed through the citations for references that might relate to the focus of my research.

In searching for new material, I used the University of Manitoba Library search tools and Google Scholar, which led to numerous journal databases and resources. Keywords I included in my initial searches were "multiliteracies," "multimodality," and "digital literacies," as I tried to find material that would shed light on literacy practices that encompass more than one mode. I later searched for ways to connect this to educational practice and included terms such as "adolescent literacy," "multimodal literacy and education," and "assessment and multimodal and literacy." Connecting multimodality to the storytelling aspect of the student process, I included search terms such as "oral storytelling," "digital storytelling," "multimodal storytelling," and "oral storytelling and multimodality." Central themes common across most of the readings focused on participatory culture, rights, power, literacy as cultural and social practice,

and literacy identities. Additionally, I connected to the United Nations Rights of the Child document, and considered literacy from a rights-based perspective.

As I continued looking for material on multimodal analysis and multimodal literacy, I began to notice patterns in the criticisms of the theory, which centered on the disembodiment of literacy identities and situational context from the practice of multimodal analysis. This led to a search for a bridge between multimodality and literacy as social practice, and I found Street's book, *Social literacies: Critical approaches to literacy in development, ethnography and education,* to be helpful. In addition, the scholarship of Pahl and Rowsell (2007, 2010, 2013) also provided an important link between how multimodality and social practices are linked to literacy identities.

**Literacy as Multimodal**

Literacy is of central importance to the education system, not only in terms of learning how to read and write, but also in terms of being able to access new knowledge and to express new ideas. Despite the fact that these processes can and do happen in multimodal contexts, literacy levels of students continue to be taught and measured based on reading levels attained in prescribed reading programs and via written work, which largely focus on print text and exclude other modalities of communication (Vincent, 2006). Norris explains that the exclusion of different modes of communication from education "limits our understanding of the complexity of interaction" (2004, p. 2). Researchers such as The New London Group (1996) articulate why a "print-centric" definition of literacy is problematic, describing how it marginalizes the cultural, social, and situational multimodal literacy practices that exist outside of print-based texts, and

fails to recognize the increasingly complex nature of new technology-based communications. Further, if there is truth to the statement that "with the proliferation of visual information that passes by us at incredible rates, critical and systematic analysis of this information is crucial" (Albers, 2014, p. 94), we are not hitting the mark of useful literacy instruction in our schools.

On any given day, one might encounter and decipher a number of texts that are combinations of print, photos, art, film, music, spoken word, or movement. These types of texts are referred to as multimodal because they carry meaning or themes across two or more representational forms or modes of communication. These are usually described as the visual, verbal, written (linguistic), gestural, audio, and spatial modes (Kress, 2003; The New London Group 1996) and could further be extended to include any literacy experience that is multisensory in nature (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010). As technology has evolved, students are faced with increasingly sophisticated texts, and as students engage in social media, meme culture, play video games, browse websites, and watch YouTube videos, they must interpret meaning as it is represented in ensembles of modes (Kress, 2003). This by no means implies that multimodal literacy practices are solely dependent on advances in technology, even plain text can be studied as multimodal in terms of, for example, size, font selection, and physical arrangement (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013; Bearne, 2009); however, technology and the new "dominance of the screen" (Kress, 2003, p. 6) appears to be pushing literacy and communication into increasingly multimodal forms.

New technologies allow for all the modes of communication to be present in a text at the same time, with the result that "texts for children today produce a situation

where alphabetic print must be understood as only a partial transporter of meaning" (Hassett & Schieble 2007, p. 64). Foundational, then, to multimodal literacy, is the recognition that the full meaning of any text cannot be determined by analyzing only one of the represented modes; rather, the interpreter must take all of the represented modes into account as he/she "reads" a multimodal text. Interpreting any text requires careful consideration of how all of these modes are working in conjunction with one another to carry the weight of the meaning (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2003; The New London Group 1996). It also requires the understanding that modes are interdependent on one another, and that they may be subject to culturally dependent hierarchies of importance, with some modes assuming more significant meaning than others (Norris, 2004, p. 51).

Kress (2003) calls the transference of meaning across ensembles of modes, or from one mode to another, *transduction*. During the process of transduction, there may be gains and losses in meaning from one mode to the next and these must be negotiated as the text is interpreted. These multimodal literacy interactions require the new literacy skills of "differentiated attention to information that comes via different modes, an assessment constantly of what is foregrounded now, assessment about where the communicational load is falling, and where to attend" (Kress, 2003, p.174). This practice of transduction is an exercise in deep critical thinking, a process already valued in educational settings, but instead of focusing on only one mode at a time, it requires processing multiple modes of communication quickly, as well as consideration of the design of the text in order to determine meaning thoroughly.

Siegel (1995) speaks of this same process as *transmediation*, pointing out that

"instructional strategies involving transmediation . . . are critical to enquiry oriented classrooms because they promote the kind of thinking that goes beyond the display of received meanings to the invention of new connections and meanings" (1995, p. 456). Siegel (2006) later refers to this as a "generative thinking process" (p. 70), which is made possible because meanings are constantly negotiated as they are transferred between sign systems and as users of sign systems assign and adopt new meanings as desired and required. This demands of creators and consumers that they constantly renegotiate meaning in an inventive and highly critically thinking way.

Likewise, Hull and Nelson (2005) suggest that "multimodality can afford not just a new way to make meaning, but a different kind of meaning" (p. 225), extending the idea that a multimodal message is more than the sum of its parts, and that combinations of modes can have the result of creating an entirely different meaning than was originally intended. Correspondingly, The New London Group (1996) also focuses on the principle of design of text, and how it can be influenced by purpose and social contexts where meaning makers combine ideas, reformulate, remix, and transform content to suit their own purposes.

Pahl and Rowsell (2010) go further than this, asserting that "modal choice has to be understood as a felt, embodied, and sensory experience that is tied to identity" (p. 134). They go on to explain that layered or "sedimented identities" (2007, p. 388) are evident as artifacts when modal choices are made, becoming an integral part of the text, sometimes serving the purpose of passing on literacy practices. Their concept of "artifactual literacy" (2010) brings together the fields of ethnography and multimodality, and extends both ideas to something that is much more empowering to students: the act

of making meaning and story in and from their own contexts in collaboration with others. For Pahl and Rowsell (2010) "artifactual literacy is about exchange; it is participatory and collaborative, visual and sensory. It is a radical understanding of meaning making in a human and embodied way" (p. 134). The practices of ethnography and multimodality become complimentary, as viewing literacy through the lens of multimodality allows us to focus on the modal choices made to impart meaning during text production, while viewing literacy through an ethnographic or new literacies lens allows us to focus on the social contexts in which the literacy events occur, encouraging student agency (Pahl & Rowsell, 2016; Street, 1984, 1995).

Oral stories are an ever-evolving multimodal experience, and variances may be present depending on many factors such as audience, gesture, voice, space and time. Lwin (2010) points out that oral stories differ from digital or technology enabled stories because the physical presence of the storyteller creates a more immediate relationship with the audience (p. 359). In contrast, digital storytelling is often multi-layered, scripted, recorded or authored, perhaps going through many edits before a final, consistent version is shared with an audience (Bazley & Graham, 2012). Moreover, live multimodal performances differ from viewing or reading print material because one can revisit print material as many times as desired and over as long or short of a time as desired, while live performances are ephemeral (Bearne, 2009). Hull and Nelson (2005) explain that differences in how we interpret printed or recorded images and oral language exist because viewing images involves an "ordering principle that is spatial and simultaneous, whereas language, particularly oral language, is organized and apprehended temporally and sequentially" (p. 229). Clearly, there are many rich avenues available to explore

multimodality, and each offers an opportunity for authentic, critical, and meaningful inquiry.

**Multimodal Literacy Practices and Adolescent Learners**

The disconnect between out-of-school, multimodal literacy practices and in-school literacy practices (that continue to be mostly print-based) is an important educational issue (Albers, Vasquez & Harste, 2008; Gee, 2009; Hammet, 2013; Kress, 2003; Lankshear & Knoble, 2003; Rowsell & Kendrick 2013; The New London Group, 1996). There is much to be learned from student experience and bringing their literacy practices into classroom settings could enrich education. For example, students often have sophisticated engagement with video games outside of school. Video games offer opportunities for problem solving, making inferences, identifying with characters, and sense making on many levels. Text appears in video games as well, often as inventory lists, informational text, statistics, or as subtitles to clarify spoken dialogue. Decision-making takes place in complex ways as players strategize to find the best solutions to problems posed by the game. Moreover, this type of text offers multiple pathways to success and completion of the game, and students have some control over their character and the story as it unfolds. In this way, they are not just consuming content; they are also participating in creating the meaning of the story as they play (Gee, 2003).

In addition to being able to navigate, interpret, and "read" the rich multimodal video game environment, adolescents also often cross-reference with and create other related multimodal texts (such as websites and forum pages) to extend their knowledge of the game, to participate in fan-fiction writing experiences, or the production of tutorial

"how to" texts (Gee, 2009). Referring to these engagements with related online spaces as participation in "affinity spaces," Gee recognizes value in these informal learning experiences. These are rich and complex ways of acquiring, knowing, and expressing, as the modes of communication being encountered not only enhance what is being shared but additionally how it is shared. Furthermore, these types of experiences are self-driven, collaborative, and participatory, allowing users to feel that their contributions are meaningful—creating an environment with authentic audiences and a sense of community (Jenkins, 2006). In order to understand adolescent literacy practices, it is important to remember that the social and participatory nature of these interactions is a principal motivator, and by knowing the conditions in which they are creating texts, we can better understand the forms, styles, and design choices they are making (Jenkins, 2006).

Photography, film, gaming and virtual experiences are transformational, challenging the very way we process information and come to understand new concepts through lived experience, interest, and cultural background (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Lankshear & Knoble 2003); further, it is suggested that increased access to these forms of communication offer an alternative path for self-expression and have led to a shift in literacy identity and practice among adolescents (Gee, 2005; Jenkins, 2006; The New London Group, 1996). Additionally, the increasing use of mobile technology and the ability to share location through mapping applications has increased social interactivity to a level where adolescents can always be abridged of each other's exact location and map paths to one another or to a meeting place. This illustrates Leander and Vasdevan's

(2017) assertion that mobile technology is changing social practices in a way that was previously inconceivable, but now common among adolescent technology users.

Such shifts in literacy identities and practices, however, can create uncertainty within the school system as teachers struggle to keep up with the multimodal practices of their students—only to integrate the latest technology and find that meaningful student engagement may be elusive. Having observed students working within multimodal environments Albers, Vasquez and Harste (2008), Catlin (2013) and Ryan, Scott and Walsh (2010), concluded that student engagement is high while using technology tools that enhance multimodal production; however, they also commented that the engagement may be due only to the novelty of the tool, rather than being related to deep or critical thinking about the messages being created. Albers, Vasquez and Harste (2008) and Ryan, Scott and Walsh (2010) also assert that students still need teacher-directed guidance to maintain focus, while also advocating that the roles of the teacher are to encourage critical thinking practices in the interpretation or creation of multimodal messages and to provide overt instruction on the use of new technology. This contrasts with Hammett's (2013) findings that despite some technical difficulties, students already demonstrated high levels of critical thinking across different modes of communication and competency in the use of different multimedia contexts during his action research study that followed Grade 9 students as they explored *Romeo and Juliet* through social media conversations and multimodal representations of the play.

Multimodal texts can provide marginalized adolescent learners and EAL students with multiple avenues into literacy because alternative modes give the option of going beyond language for communication (Ajayi, 2009). Rowsell and Kendrick (2013) make

an argument that privileging print can come at the expense of some boys' literacy practices, which can be more visual and "action oriented" (p. 597). The experiential nature of creating in multimodal formats could provide a way into more traditional literacy practices for learners who would otherwise not be engaged in static print text. Vincent (2006) asserts that "some children need multimodal scaffolding in order to communicate complex ideas effectively" (p. 51), as well as that students who had difficulty expressing their ideas in language only were quite competent in other modes. It has been observed that the "multiple entry points" (Vasudevan, Schultz, & Bateman, 2010, p. 454) afforded by multimodal expression offers students more than one path for success, and avoids perpetuating the feelings of frustration and failure students might experience if only one mode is being privileged. In this way, allowing students access to other modes of communication helps to level the educational landscape and overcome barriers to self-expression that can be attributed to mono-modal literacy environments. When adolescents work in different modalities, it offers the opportunity to change how students value the stories of other people, how they perceive cultural differences, and how they perceive what it means to be successful at school.

Gallagher and Ntelioglou (2011) explore the importance of multiliteracies and student lived experiences as inspiration for writing scripts for dramatic representation in the classroom. Throughout the process, students showed increased engagement, movement between modes, exploration of identities, and the willingness to breakdown stereotypes and enter into meaningful dialogue with classmates. The dramatic representations of story allowed for a depth of exploration as students collaborated with and supported each other. It ultimately led to increased capacity in student writing. In

their conclusion, they pointed to "dialogue, collaboration, and ultimately performance as enabling factors in students' thinking and rethinking of their written expression" (Gallagher & Ntelioglou, p. 328).

In explorations of classroom experiences with multimodal storytelling that are student centered, based in lived experience, and approached as community building experiences, shifts are observed in how students express themselves, and in how individual students are viewed by classmates (Kuly 2009; Railton 2015; Vasudevan, Schultz, & Bateman 2010). Flattening the hierarchy of the classroom and embracing the stories of students allowed Railton (2015) to move away from literature that was not culturally representative of her students, and led to better cultural understanding among students and a stronger sense of community. Similarly, Kuly (2009) noted during a high school storytelling project that students developed empathy, overcame fears, and began to claim their identities by sharing in a storytelling process. Cohesiveness among the students also began to develop as cultural differences were no longer viewed as barriers, and students came to understand one another in a meaningful way. When students are involved in oral storytelling, we come full circle, and we begin to see how literacy, multimodality, and identity construction are linked and embedded within social movements; thus, challenging prevailing attitudes about the identities of a particular group of people (Mein, 2011). Archer (2016) suggests that "this approach to pedagogy has the potential to make classrooms more democratic and inclusive, enabling marginalized students' histories, identities, languages and discourses to be made visible" (p. 190).

**Finding Our Way in a Multimodal Classroom Environment**

Multimodal text opportunities represent an evolution of communication that continues to change at increasing speed, yet the education system lags behind the out of school literacy practices of young people and continues to concentrate mostly on print-based reading and writing as the primary supported literacy formats, while largely ignoring other modes of communication as valid expressions of literacy (Bazalgette & Buckingham 2013; Jewitt, 2003). Invoking Street's work in *Social Literacies* as a partial explanation for why educators do not meaningfully integrate "moving image" literacies into classrooms, Bazalgette and Buckingham (2013) cite educator discomfort regarding the lack of knowledge about the out-of-school social literacies in which children participate (p. 99). Faced with a rapidly changing teaching landscape and conflicting viewpoints, teachers feel tension over which literacy, skill, or area to focus upon (Albers, Vasquez & Harste, 2008). Moreover, it can be difficult to know how to start teaching in a multimodal literacy environment without some background, framework, or way forward, and unfamiliarity is a strong barrier to taking a new teaching stance (Bearne, 2009; Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Jewitt, 2008; Ryan, Scott, & Walsh, 2010).

Kress (2003) offers a design approach to multimodal literacy instruction that may provide at least some guidance for teachers. He discusses the importance of purposefully determining which modes best carry a particular meaning, the value of considering the directionality of reading paths, and having conversations about "gains and losses" in meanings when moving across modes as critical skills in the interpretation and creation of multimodal texts. Kress's description of modal "affordances" offers a way to discuss the possibilities and constraints to which a given mode might be subject. For example,

oral storytelling or speech would be subject to the constraints of time, both in terms of logical order and the inability to go back and re-experience a part of the story in exactly the same way twice; however, it has the possibility of audience interaction, gesture, and vocal tone to impart meaning. In discussions with students, it is important to recognize these characteristics and make specific choices about meaning. Kress (2003) stressed that this is a "prospective not retrospective, constructive not deconstructive, utopian and not nostalgic" process (p. 50). It is one of determining need, adapting and evaluating communicative resources available to build and carry a message most effectively in a specific context. In this way, Kress gives us a starting point for addressing these complex ideas with students.

Even as educators approach the practice of teaching with multimodality in mind, some areas of potential concern have been raised. Bazalgette and Buckingham (2013) point out that although it is contrary to one of the central concepts of multimodal analysis, teachers may give in to the temptation of over-simplifying the process for students by making clear distinctions between modes, and addressing them as a loose collection of parts to be disassembled and analyzed in isolation from one another rather than as ensembles of modes. Another potential issue they raise is the practice of reducing multimodality to a supportive role in literacy instruction. That is, privileging print-based texts as the main focus of literacy instruction, and only using multimodal texts as a way to increase performance with print-based literacy. Bazalgette and Buckingham caution that

> in addition to separating multimodal from print (presumably mono-modal?) texts, this advice implicitly allocates them a lower status. "Multimodal texts" in this

> scenario are just a way of getting children to do better at reading and writing: by implication, they have little intrinsic value. (2013, p. 96)

They further point out that this is really a case of the superficial use of multimodal texts overriding the theory of multimodal analysis, and that discussion of how different modes can be leveraged to create new meaning is being lost in a discussion about using multimodal texts to support traditional literacy instruction.

Multimodal analysis has been criticized for largely ignoring social use, purpose, production, and audience as important contributors to the interpretation of texts, and Bazalgette and Buckingham (2013) advocate for more of a "Media Studies" approach, which integrates these considerations while emphasizing critical thinking about texts (p. 462). Siegel (2012) pushes this idea further, and stresses that we must teach students to question how sign systems are traditionally used in order to avoid a simple replication process: "If, for example, students do not consider the ways modes are historically and culturally produced, they may simply reproduce designs that reflect and reinforce the status quo (p. 675)." In an examination of power and privilege related to literacy, Siegel adds, multimodality is not exempt from "issues of domination, access, and diversity" (2012, p. 675). Offering an additional solution to this issue, Street, Pahl and Rowsell (2016) point out that the disciplines of ethnography and multimodality when brought together are complimentary, with one offering an understanding of the social and identity contexts in which a text is produced, and the other offering a window into meaning through an examination of the modes of choice. They write that "by focusing on the *contexts* for reading and writing and for multimodal communicative practices, ethnography enriches understandings of the multimodal text" (Street, Pahl, & Rowsell

2016, p. 234).

Teachers may feel conflict over the seemingly intense time requirements and messy, non-linear processes that sometimes accompany multimodal text production. Recalling Gee's (2009) discussion of affinity spaces, it is clear that the looping, cross-referencing, and self-determined learning path he describes offers a degree of freedom for students to engage not only in different ways with the same content, but to whatever depth they desire, and with tools they see as well suited to the purpose. Teachers may face time pressure with these types of individualized, extended experiences, as they are counter to an educational culture where we often strive for coverage of a uniform, broad range of curricular content.

Another potential tension teachers face lies in scenarios where students may know more about navigating and creating technology based multimodal texts than teachers. Having to constantly learn about new software or digital forms of expression before introducing them in the classroom can seem an onerous task. These are two areas where teachers may need to shift practice and show willingness to learn alongside or from students or risk losing credibility when it comes to investigating literacies that adolescents view as their own. Lankshear and Knobel (2003) argue that the use of familiar teaching practices in a new, technology enabled learning environment creates in an "insider/outsider" mentality. This results in the students feeling alienated in academic settings when old teaching and assessment structures are imposed over literacies they are accustomed to using in very different types of social and situational contexts. Accordingly, they suggest that classroom hierarchies need to collapse in technology rich environments, allowing for teacher and student roles to be flexibly interchangeable and

for students to suggest how technology should be used in educational contexts. The resulting scenario is one where teachers aren't the only ones who are teaching, and students aren't the only ones who are learning.

Bearne (2003) also asserts that the education system needs to leverage student experience with multimodal texts, and to give them the opportunity to interpret and compose in multimodal formats. She points to the significant differences between the text experiences of adults which were largely print-based, compared to today's experiences of technology rich multimodal texts as a point of friction: "When children produce texts they assume integration of image and word, supplying sound, elements of gesture, and movement as they compose their own meanings" (2003, p. 98). These are often allowed in early years writing experiences, but are often not seen as desirable practices in middle and high school contexts where the focus often shifts to longer form writing, rather than on producing messages with multimodality as a consideration. Furthermore, visual elements of multimodality are not confined to picture or video, and educators may be overlooking an opportunity to engage with the multimodal design aspect of print itself, which can carry meaning through font selection, colour, arrangement on the page, and directionality (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013; Bearne, 2009).

Bearne (2009) points out that often, if classroom discussions are occurring about multimodal analysis, these are usually taking place inside the structure of ELA classes, which can be problematic because these discussions are happening within the confines of teaching and assessment practices that traditionally have been "firmly rooted in judgments about written language" (2009, p. 185). The implication being that written, graded work is still the privileged form in which teachers gather evidence about student

understanding and that this reality undermines the perception of multimodality as valid in academic settings. It is insufficient to remain in this teaching frame of mind because we have always communicated in ways that go beyond written language. In order to understand and create texts that are multimodal, we need to offer students the environment in which to both construct and deconstruct them, and to examine the "structures, purposes, and qualities within their own visual texts" (Albers, 2014, p. 96) as well as their own multimodal texts, while drawing upon assessment practices that capture all the facets of those experiences.

Vincent (2006) too points to the "monomodal" (p. 51) assessment practices that are still prevalent in educational settings as being out of synch with multimodality. Instead, arguing that students need to engage with multimedia, to create and demonstrate knowledge with modes in which they are already competent, while building on prior successes and reflecting on modal and design choices and practices that are complimentary to a multimodal learning environment (Jewitt, 2008; Lankshear & Knoble, 2003). Teachers will need to acknowledge that there are ways to document learning beyond written assignments and exams. Towndrow, Nelson, and Yusuf (2013) describe that in transition from monomodal literacy environments to multimodal literacy environments, teachers can create combinations of traditional qualitative grading and multimodal analysis assessments. However, they caution that ultimately "educators have to make a choice at the center of multimodality and educational assessment: either attempt to assess students' texts quantitatively, or describe and evaluate learners' growing compositional capabilities in more qualitative terms" (p. 332). They point to the difficulty of assessing multimodal texts in traditional ways because they fail to capture the

deliberate design decisions students make. Also problematic is the fact that teachers usually perform traditional grading practices alone, so they also do not take into account the collaborative nature of interpreting a multimodal text. Further, they suggest looking at growth as a whole over time and inviting experience with design of multimodal texts as a place for focus, rather than quantitative assessment methods.

In an examination of two primary classrooms where oral storytelling was being explored, Wessel-Powell, Kargin, and Wohlwend (2016) describe how they adapted assessments to capture aspects of multimodality as students experimented with becoming good storytellers. Extending what they were already practicing for assessment of writer's workshop, the teachers developed a checklist that helped them gather evidence of how students were making use of gaze, image, print, talk, sound and movement as they moved from one iteration of their story to another (p. 170). The checklist was used to assess student readiness for performance, and provided a way to capture the process as students worked through iterations of their story without necessarily having a written copy to reference. Similarly, Honeyford and Boyd (2015) positioned themselves as "practitioner researchers" and used a process of pedagogical documentation as they inquired into the multimodal learning experiences of middle school students participating in an after-school literacy club by gathering artifacts of learning such as video, photos, notes, and audio recordings. These were then analyzed collaboratively from a visual discourse analysis perspective as they tried to answer questions such as: "What literacy practices did they call on, learn, and share in producing their portraits? How had they mediated the spaces, media/tools, participatory structures, and practices in these quests?" (2015, p. 66).

Albers (2014) suggests that Visual Discourse Analysis can offer a way to capture what students know about interpreting a wide range of texts, and that "students often communicate more than what their oral or written narratives about a literary text say, and visual discourse analysis allows educators to understand what else students say about texts visually" (p. 88). Since as Albers' notes, visual discourse analysis is "grounded in semiotics" (2014, p. 87), it is complimentary to the processes of multimodal analysis, which is also steeped in the study of the same, offering a way to connect the teaching and assessment of multimodal literacy.

If we consider Street's (1984, 1994) conclusions that literacy must have connections to a student's identities and out-of-school life in order to be useful, retained, and relevant, it follows that assessment should be viewed the same way, and that indicators of success might be the emotional and social well-being of students, or perhaps the level of engagement that students demonstrate in their studies, with their school, and with their community. According to Eisner (2001):

> If we are going to use proxies that have predictive validity, we need proxies that predict performances that matter outside the context of school. The function of schooling is not to enable students to do better in school. The function of school is to enable students to do better in life (p. 369).

Moving forward, educators could use assessment to determine if we are helping students to "do better" in life and to become critical practitioners of multimodal literacy.

# Chapter Three: Methodology

## Summary and Research Questions

This study involved a Grade 8 class in an exploration of multimodal literacy identities. Students were asked to keep a photographic literacy inventory for 1 week in order to discover and define the multimodal literacy practices in which they participated in their day-to-day lives. These experiences offered the opportunity to talk to students about literacy as lived experience, identity, and social practice, as well as opening up an opportunity to talk about the different modes of communication. They also participated in an oral storytelling experience in order to live a personal example of multimodality. Students were then asked to create another representation of the theme or message of their oral story where different modes became dominant (visual, gestural, audio, linguistic etc.). The use of technology in these iterations was facilitated as initiated by students, but was not required as the focus was on multimodality, not technology enhanced production. Students were welcome to choose from musical interpretations, dramatic representations, expressions through movement and dance, and artistic creations in addition to video, photography, augmented reality, interactive online content, and simulations.

Students were asked to provide a brief video reflection on their storytelling and alternative representation projects. Additionally, students were asked to discuss and give feedback about their peers' work and their explanations and discussions were audio recorded to reveal whether or not the experience had increased their ability to articulate how different modes convey meaning.

The purpose of this research was to better understand the multimodal literacy practices and identities of the Grade 8 students in this particular class, to determine if

students demonstrated evidence of deep and critical thinking about the multimodal texts they encounter every day, and to look for a way to begin to work in a multimodal literacy environment. Specific inquiry questions included: How do students already engage in multimodal literacy practices and analysis outside of school (what are their literacy identities?) What strategies do students have for making sense of multimodal texts, and how do they identify and talk about different modes of communication? What assessment evidence can be gathered to show how and if students transfer and enhance meaning across ensembles of modes, and how can this assessment evidence be gathered in contextually relevant and respectful ways? Is there evidence to suggest that students demonstrate an increase in deep or critical thinking about multimodal analysis after the instruction-learning cycle? If students are allowed to voice their own stories in different modalities, what impact will that have on the classroom community and their personal literacy practices and identities?

**Context of the Study**

**Interviews and literacy journals.** I felt it was important to understand how students were already engaging in multimodal literacy practices and analysis outside of school, and to understand something of their literacy identities. Pahl and Rowsell (2010) suggest that students inhabit different literacy communities, and that asking them to bring artifacts from one space to the next can be a way to open up relationships and provide an entry point into meaningful literacy experiences (p. 21). In this spirit, students were asked to photograph ten different examples of literacy practices they engaged in over the course of a week. As literacy practices are socially situated, culturally dependent, and multimodal (Rowsell & Pahl 2005, 2007; Street, 1984, 1995; The New London Group,

1996), students were asked to document events that involved print text, signs, dance performances, movies, music, storytelling, technology-based experiences, dramatic representations, and so on. I received photographic literacy journals from eleven of the twelve students that consented to participate in the study, and conducted interviews with those eleven students. After the journals were collected, students participated in an interview process where they were asked to answer ten questions (see Appendix A) about their literacy practices. The ten questions were designed to gather context for the literacy experiences photographed and to hopefully reveal something of the students' out of school literacy identities beyond what could be interpreted from the pictures collected.

**Students as storytellers.** The storytelling journey was about further uncovering student identity and voice. It allowed students to bring something of themselves into an academic literacy domain, not only in terms of their personal stories told to one another orally, but also in terms of how they might choose to represent their stories in alternative ways, or combinations of modes if given the freedom to do so. As we moved through the oral storytelling process, I constantly asked myself how I could guide students toward telling their own stories in their most authentic voice. I observed for evidence that students were speaking about different modes of communication in their own language, that they were thinking more deeply about how they were communicating their messages, and if they were growing as storytellers.

Our storytelling sessions would often begin as a whole class meeting where we would share in a mentor text, collaboratively build new knowledge around what the text could teach us about being engaging storytellers, and set some goals for the remaining time which was given over to students for developing their own stories. Students were

free to work in whatever way suited them best, and mostly chose to work in small groups, scattered throughout the school. While the students worked on developing their stories, sharing them with one another, and giving feedback to each other, I circulated and conferenced with students to guide them through their process. Oral stories are ephemeral and cannot be revisited in the same way twice. In order to facilitate student growth as storytellers, students were encouraged to tell their stories over and over again with the understanding that they would be ever evolving and shifting. Memorization and written scripts were discouraged. Students were encouraged to use their own personal device to video or audio record themselves so that they could go back and reflect on what changed and on what needed further development. They shared these recordings with each other, and recorded feedback for each other in the same manner. This created a reflective, collaborative community around the storytelling process, and students learned as much from each other as they did from the mentor texts we explored. Students also engaged in story mapping, a process that allowed them to process the important aspects of their stories in a more visual way as symbols, pictures, and short phrases. The culmination of the storytelling process was our final storytelling circle, in which students shared their oral stories with the entire class.

**Alternative representations.** Once students had developed a good sense of their oral stories, we began discussing how the essence of their stories might come to life in other ways through alternative representations. This was a looping process in that students continued to work on oral storytelling as they considered the possibilities for telling their stories in different ways. It was at this point that I found it necessary to add some common language around modes of communication and how they can work

together in ensembles to convey a message, lesson, emotion, or main idea. These alternative representations gave me a sense of how students were able to move meaning across different ensembles of modes. In order to communicate their intended messages, students had to engage in making deliberate design choices. After our storytelling circle, students shared these pieces with one another and provided reflections on their own work and the work of their peers.

**Data Collection, Validity and Analysis**

Data collection was undertaken by a variety of means, and in an effort to respect the multimodal nature of the learning experience it captured as many modes of communication as possible. The literacy journals provided visual evidence of the literacy practices in which students participated. The journals were then used to aid in the facilitation of audio-recorded interviews about literacy practices and identities. During the learning process, I acted as a teacher-researcher, collecting audio recordings, photographic evidence, and video footage in an effort to capture the students' thinking processes about their meaning making and meaning sharing across ensembles of modes.

Video recording was necessary for visual discourse analysis, and to capture body language, student interaction with peers, chosen media, and dialogue simultaneously. Audio recordings were useful for capturing conference conversations between the students and myself. Photographs were taken to capture student work as well as moments of student demonstration of collaboration and multimodal expression. Additionally, written anecdotal notes about critical or pivotal moments were recorded.

**Table 1**

***Data Triangulation***

| **Research Questions** | **Data Source** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **1** | **2** | **3** |
| How do students already engage in multimodal literacy practices and analysis outside of school? | Student photographic literacy journal interpreted through pedagogical documentation [1] | Interview about out of school and in-school literacy practices interpreted through pedagogical documentation | |
| What strategies do students have for making sense of multimodal texts, and how do they identify and talk about different modes of communication? | Student photographic literacy journal interpreted through pedagogical documentation | Interview about out of school and in-school literacy practices interpreted through pedagogical documentation | Oral Story/ multimodal composing final project interpreted through visual discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis[2] |
| What assessment evidence can be gathered to show how and if students transfer and enhance meaning across ensembles of modes, and how can this assessment evidence be gathered in contextually relevant and respectful ways? | Teacher video journaling of the process and observation notes interpreted through pedagogical documentation | Student reflective video interpreted through pedagogical documentation | Oral Story/ multimodal composing final project interpreted through visual discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis |
| Is there evidence to suggest that students demonstrate an increase in deep or critical thinking about multimodal analysis after the learning cycle? | Oral Story/ multimodal composing final project interpreted through visual discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis | Student self-evaluation and reflection of own growth interpreted through pedagogical documentation | Student feedback on peer projects interpreted through pedagogical documentation |

[1] Pedagogical documentation is explained in more detail below.
[2] Visual discourse analysis is explained in more detail below.

| **Research Questions** | **Data Source** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **1** | **2** | **3** |
| If students are allowed to voice their own stories in different modalities, what impact will that have on the classroom community and their personal literacy practices and identities? | Student self-evaluation and reflection of own growth interpreted through pedagogical documentation | Teacher anecdotal observations about relationships among students interpreted through pedagogical documentation | Teacher video journaling of the process and observation notes interpreted through pedagogical documentation |

In order to assure *trustworthiness* of the qualitative data, Anderson, Herr and Nihlen's (1994) criteria for validity was employed. Using multiple forms of data (student photographic literacy journals, video/photo documentation, interviews, peer feedback, student reflections, audio recordings) offered process validity as triangulation of data was used to identify recurring themes across the data samples (see Table 1 above). The perspectives and observations of both the teacher-researcher and students are represented in the data and artifact collection, offering students an opportunity to comment on their own work through a video reflection and interview—*member checking*—ensured democratic validity. Raw data in the form of video and audio recordings captured a rich cross view of student work processes, and these fixed, as it happened "texts" of literacy practices, along with student journals and final projects offered tangible artifacts that can be shared, reviewed, and interpreted.

As a main focus of this research study was on student literacy identities, pedagogical documentation (Rinaldi, 2006) provided a way to enter into an on-going dialogue with students about their thinking throughout the process. Pedagogical documentation is a process of making student learning and thinking visual through the collection of artifacts and student experiences. These artifacts and experiences are used in

a reflective practice by the teacher-researcher to re-construct the learning process, understand the learning that has taken place, and to anticipate the next set of experiences necessary to shift student thinking. Students are active participants in their own learning process, reflecting and explaining key moments where they experienced a change in thinking. Rinaldi (2006) states that benefits can be realized through the use of a variety of documentation methods:

> It makes visible (though in a partial way, and thus 'partisan') the nature of the learning process and strategies used by each child, and makes the subjective and inter-subjective process a common patrimony. It enables reading, revisiting and assessment in time and in space, and these actions become an integral part of the knowledge building process (p. 81).

It is democratic and collaborative building of understanding between the teacher and the students and complimentary to the multimodal nature of the data collected during the study.

A critical discourse analysis framework—more specifically visual discourse analysis and a multimodal discourse analysis framework—informed the analysis and interpretation of student work. This allowed for not only an analysis of what was said/communicated, but how it was communicated and in what situational, cultural, and social context. Albers (2014) explains that visual discourse analysis

> is concerned with a theory and method of studying visual language that identifies how certain social activities and social identities get played out, how visual language enables literacy and language arts educators to identify genres of visual

> texts and what this signifies, and how art as language positions this sign system more significantly in the messages that learners communicate (p. 87).

Together, these frameworks encouraged a careful examination of the specific design choices that students made, collaborative dialogue about the chosen modes and how those modes impacted the intended meaning, and analysis of the social contexts students were immersed in when they constructed and interpreted multimodal and visual texts.

Data collected by video and audio recordings was transcribed before being categorized and examined for patterns along with the paper-based data. Visual data (some student final projects were mostly visual) were also categorized and examined for patterns. In order to sort the large amount of data effectively, an excel spreadsheet was created to categorize and sort the data. This table was similar to Table 1, in that the emerging areas of interest were listed on the left hand, the data source was listed at the top, and the data was sorted into thematic areas. I created a similar spreadsheet for each of the participating students. The spreadsheet allowed me to bring pieces of data together from multiple sources and in multiple forms. Documents, photos, audio files, notes, and pieces of dialogue were made accessible at the same time, and it was possible to zoom in and out, creating an interactive map of student experiences. Table 2 is an empty spreadsheet, and Table 3 is a sample of a small part of the spreadsheet created from the data available about Natasha (the spreadsheet extended across many pages and is too large to show in its entirety).

Table 2

*Spreadsheet used to sort data*

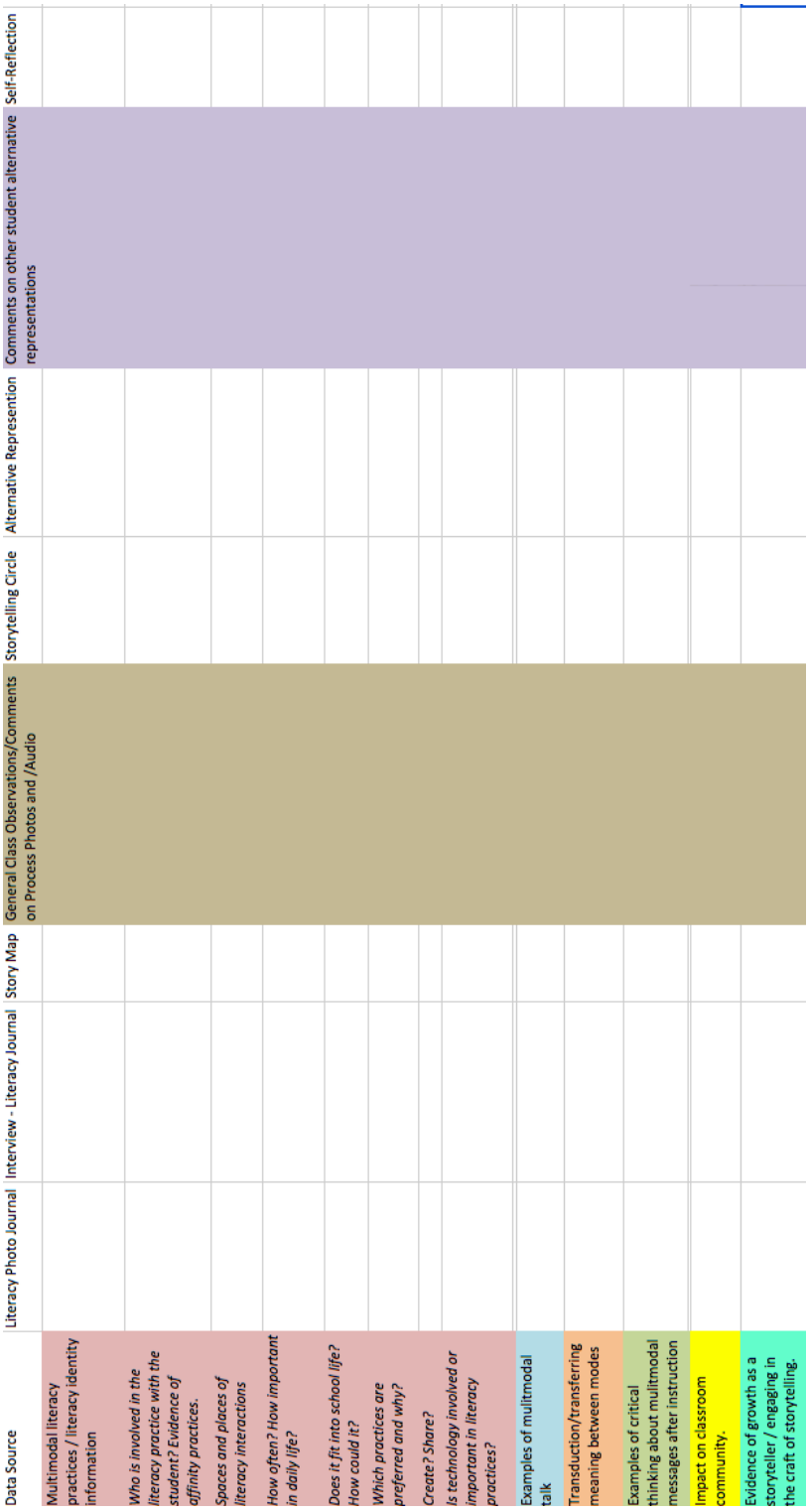
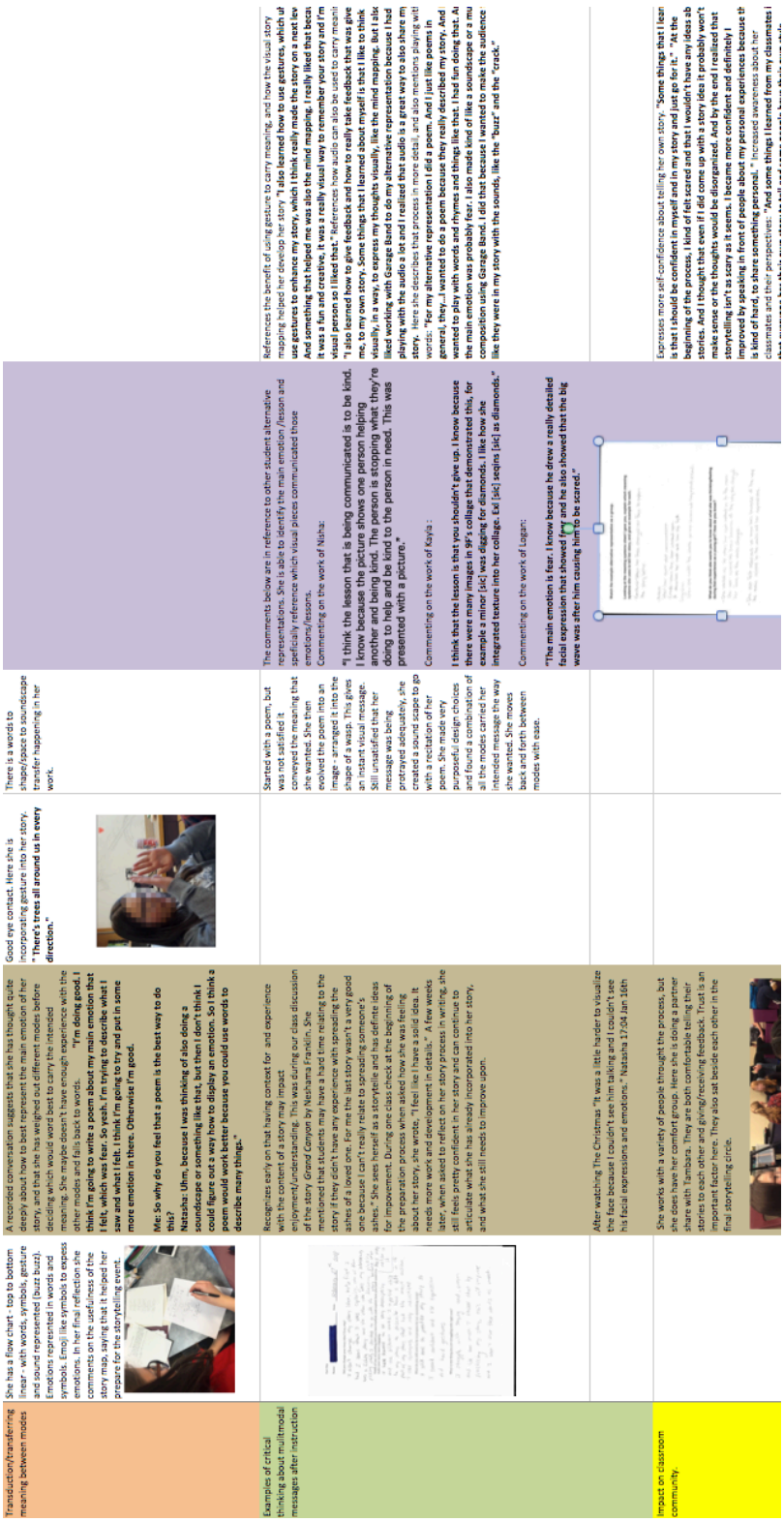


Table 3

*Partial sample of student data sorted*



Once I had categorized and sorted the data, it was much easier to see patterns that helped to answer my research questions, and some that went beyond the scope of my research questions. I re-read and revisited the data many times as I worked, creating topics to examine and expand upon, and what emerged are individual case studies of student growth and experience. The results of the study give a detailed understanding of the current multimodal literacy practices of the participating Grade 8 students, identify prior knowledge that students brought to the experience, and describe patterns that may be helpful in supporting a multimodal teaching and learning environment.

**Consent**

The study involved members of a Grade 8 class. As the participants were minors, they were not legally able to give consent on their own behalf. Consideration had to be made for concerns that students and parents might have felt pressure to consent because I was in a power relationship over the students. A colleague familiar to the parent community but not involved in the assessment of the group of students explained the scope of the research project and distributed written information which disclosed all ethical issues as well as letters of consent written in language that facilitated parent and student conversation about possible participation (see Appendix B). The same colleague collected the letters of consent and assent, and held them until the end of the research data collection and grading period in which the study took place. The names of consenting parents and students were not provided to the teacher-researcher until that time. Consent for participation was obtained from the legal guardian, as well as assent from the student in respect of the student's right to decline participation. Students were free to withdraw from the study at anytime.

Ethical issues around privacy had to be considered in three ways: as the participants were minors, I have a caring responsibility to ensure their privacy and safety when research is made public—the oral stories and final projects that students created may be unique and thereby enable identification of individual students, and with a small sample size (one classroom) identification of individual students might be possible via language used in transcribed interviews and conversations. Further to the sharing of oral stories, there was the potential for students to reveal meaningful or emotionally difficult stories that they did not want to share beyond the classroom. In the event that pictures, video footage or audio recordings included someone that did not consent to participation in the study, their visual appearance was digitally obscured (if the appearance was incidental and in the background), or the data was transcribed omitting from the transcript any students who did not consent. Photographs of consenting students that include faces have been pixelated to protect their privacy.

Finally, the exploration of multimodal literacy was time consuming, taking time away from more traditional literacy practices and had the potential to cause objections from the school and parent community who may have valued those more traditional practices. Community members concerned about taking time from traditional literacy instruction to engage in multimodal instruction had the option to have information provided to them to explain how multimodal literacy falls within the scope of the Manitoba Provincial ELA curriculum in order to provide assurance that their child was not being disadvantaged by the study of multimodal literacy.

Data collected in electronic format (video and audio) has been stored on encrypted devices and paper data and artifacts have been locked in a secure filing cabinet

and will be stored for five years following the completion of the data collection, at which time paper data will be shredded and electronic data purged. Data has been stripped of identifying information and students have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

# Chapter Four: Nine Student Case Studies

## Introduction to Case Studies

It is not surprising that the students who participated in the study each have unique literacy identities; however, there are some interesting patterns even within the uniqueness of these identities. Analysis of the transcripts and the literacy journals revealed areas of tension and conflicting information. Discussion of the interviews, literacy journals, storytelling journey, and alternative representations are presented here as nine individual student stories in order to preserve the sense of identity that was revealed. I have included documentation of the learning journeys of nine of the twelve students who consented to participate in the research due to the extensive volume of information gathered. The case studies included were selected based on three criteria: completeness of data collected (participated in the full range of the learning process), my desire to represent a diversity of student experience, and whether the student documentation revealed something unique from other students, and that provoked further deliberation for me as a teacher-researcher. Some students shared more than others and engaged in the process to varying degrees. As a result, some case studies represent a more complete picture of the student journey through this process, but each case study represented contributes something to the larger interest of this study. The experiences of the other three consenting students are sometimes woven into the experiences of these nine case studies.

For readability, I have removed repetitions and pausing language from the literacy journal interview transcripts when it was possible to do so without changing the meaning of what was said. Where appropriate, I have noted instances of laughter or long pauses, as

these signaled tensions for the students about their own literacy practices. These are of course judgment calls, and one cannot discount that creating a transcript of a conversation is itself an act of interpretation and transduction. With these exceptions, the interviews are presented without edits. Much is revealed about the students' individual personalities and preferences through the photographs and their responses to the interview questions. I have included pictures from the student literacy journals when students made reference to them during the interviews, or if I felt they shared something additional about the students' literacy identities that had not been previously revealed in our conversation. Where student photos and screenshots include material created or written by someone other than the student, I have added an original source reference when it was possible to find one. Additionally, photos, examples of student work, snippets of conversation and my own anecdotal observations are included in the case studies to give a complete picture of the entire, transactional learning process.

**Case Study One: Natasha's Journey**

**Natasha's literacy journal and interview.** (All participant names are pseudonyms). Natasha presented as a confident and thoughtful individual. She spoke at length about her involvement in figure skating, and it was apparent both through her literacy journal and her interview responses that figure skating was an important dimension of her identity. Natasha's literacy practices were quite varied, and her documentation revealed engagement with print novels, inspirational messages, the use of SnapChat, organizational documents, cultural traditions, and context dependent literacy experiences specifically related to figure skating. Natasha's motivations for engagement

with specific practices included a passion for figure skating, her ability to personally identify with texts, academic achievement, and entertainment.

As we began our conversation, Natasha chose to start the discussion with a picture she had taken of a figure skating brackets diagram (see Figure 1).

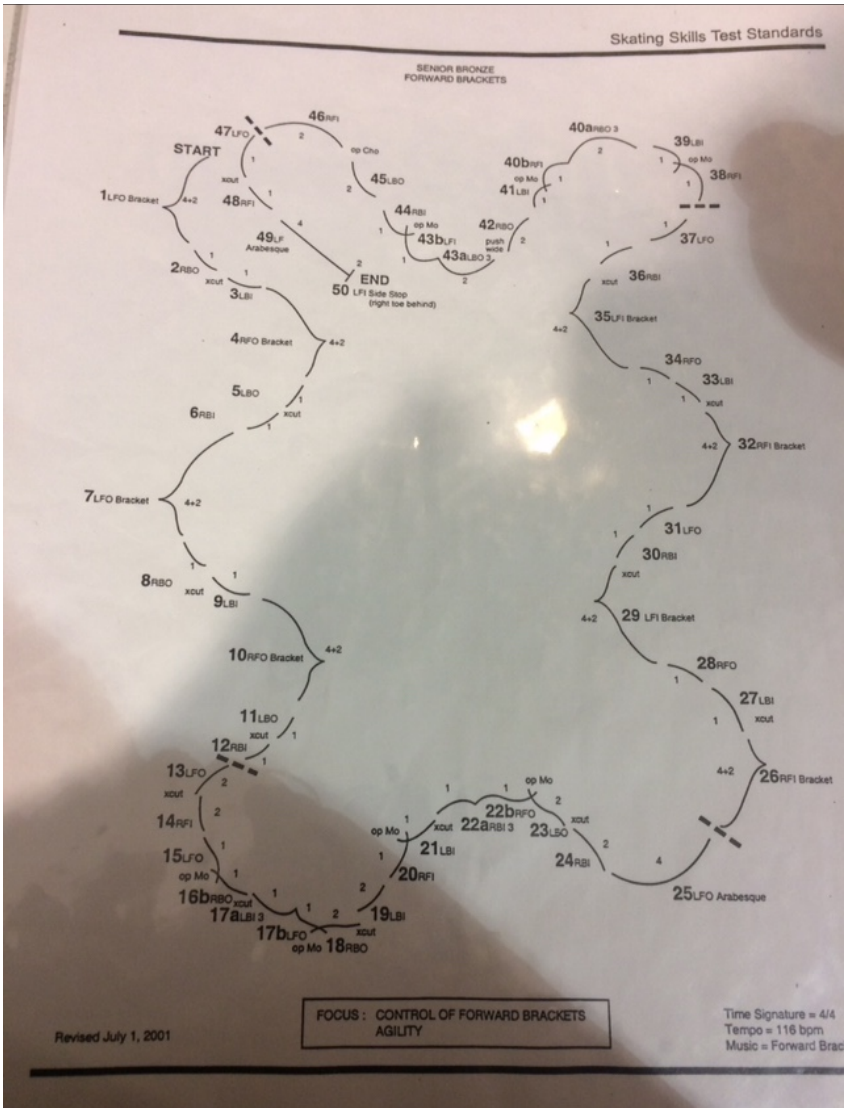



*Figure 1*: Natasha's figure skating brackets diagram. From "StarSkate Guide," 2018, retrieved from https://info.skatecanada.ca/index.php/en-ca/guides/110-starskate-guide.html. Copyright 2018 Skate Canada Info Centre.

Figure skating brackets are one foot turning skills that need to be mastered in specific patterns (like the one pictured), and skaters are tested on their mastery of these turning skills. Similar diagrams are used to map the various ice dances that Natasha learned during her lessons.

Ms. Bartok: "Can you please choose one of the entries from your literacy journal and can you describe the literacy practice?"

Natasha: "Ok. I will choose … Oh, let's go with this one (see Figure 1). This is a skating pattern for my dance at figure skating, and it's a little difficult to read unless you know because it's acronyms and stuff. And I feel like it's a literacy experience because you have to kind of decode the sayings and see where everything goes. And it's visual as well so, yeah."

Ms. Bartok: "So, where did this take place then?"

Natasha: "It was at a skating rink. I took a picture."

Ms. Bartok: "Ok. So, what exactly is being communicated here?"

Natasha: "Well, it's the pattern you're supposed to do. So you would start … oh no, never mind. You would start here [pointing at the word START], and then you would keep going around [indicates a counterclockwise direction]. So yeah, that's basically what you are supposed to do."

Ms. Bartok: "So, which dance is this?"

Natasha: "Uhm, it's called the … Oh, never mind. This is actually the brackets. It's a skill, but it's kind of like a dance. So, it's called brackets. They're skills that you would have to do and it's in a pattern, so it's like a dance but there's no music to it."

Ms. Bartok: “So, how is this being communicated then?

Natasha: “Kind of visually and with acronyms. And with steps. They tell you which steps.”

The diagrams that Natasha referred to require specialized knowledge of how skating edges are visually represented, what the abbreviations represent, and a sense of directionality. As she interpreted them, Natasha had to move the print and visual elements from the page and translate them into gestures, timing, and physical space on the ice. As she explained her practices to me, she engaged in multimodal discourse, and exhibited an awareness of the process of transduction, or the moving of meaning from one mode to another. Through her use of the words ”acronyms,” “visual,” “steps” and “pattern,” she referred to the linguistic, visual, gestural, and spatial modes that are being utilized to communicate information.

Ms. Bartok: “Were other people involved in this literacy practice?”

Natasha: “Well, other people made it, yeah. And this is actually not mine. There’s another coach who has a big binder full of patterns, so she lets us look at them and stuff.”

Natasha explained that her figure skating coach allowed access to these patterns. Note the words, “she lets ***us*** look at them,” indicating that Natasha was not alone in this literacy practice, and that in addition to her coach, there were other skaters accessing the diagrams. As these diagrams are a specialized type of text, their interpretation would require the support of an expert, in this case the coach, and possibly the collaboration of more experienced skaters. This can be likened back to Gee’s (2009) description of affinity spaces, as Natasha had a community of like-minded individuals who participated

in her construction of knowledge and refinement of skating skills in both formal and informal ways.

Ms. Bartok: "Why did you choose to document this literacy practice?"

Natasha: "Because it's something I see often. Every time I go to skating I usually look at one of these just to know if I'm doing everything right and to know which way the curve would go and which edge I have to be on."

Natasha's understanding of the specific gestures represented by the symbols on the diagram required a physical demonstration of the pattern and the experience of performing the movements, or tacit knowledge, after which the diagram becomes a useful document to reference if the pattern was forgotten.

Ms. Bartok: "How often do you engage in this type of literacy practice?"

Natasha: "I'd say about two times per week. That's when I do my skating like this. I practice that about two times per week."

Ms. Bartok: "How important is this literacy practice in your daily life?"

Natasha: "In my daily life? Well, I don't look at it everyday. It's only important on the days that I am skating to make sure that I'm doing the right steps because if I do a step wrong, then I memorize it wrong and then I do bad on my tests so … "

Natasha expressed that while these texts were important to her, they were only important in the specific context of the figure skating community. She did not identify the application of the more general skills of mapping or symbolic representation of movement in other areas of her life. She also identified another motivation for consulting with this particular type of text, which is related to performing the skills in order to pass a test and move from one level of figure skating to the next.

Ms. Bartok: "Ok. How does this literacy practice fit into your school life?"

Natasha: "Into my school life? It doesn't help me in my school life but I guess it helps me be more active as a person I guess, because it kind of … it's something I do at skating. And it helps me be a better person."

Ms. Bartok: "Do you feel your teachers would support this literacy practice?"

Natasha: "I feel like they would because there's nothing wrong with it."

Ms. Bartok: "How would you like to see this literacy practice integrated into school?"

Natasha: "Maybe not this exact thing but some things can be applied to other subjects, like maybe physical activity. You could do circuits like this in a pattern, maybe?"

Natasha's wording during this part of the conversation suggested some tension between her out of school literacy practices and her in school literacy practices. While this practice was important to Natasha, there was a sense that she believed her teachers would be indifferent and she had difficulty reconciling this type of literacy practice with the academic world of school. Natasha did see this practice as appropriate for gym class where physical movement could be represented as circuit maps but did not see a wider more general application across her school experiences.

Ms. Bartok: "Are there literacy practices in your journal that you prefer over others, and why?"

Natasha: "Yes. I feel like there are because some of them are like a little bit basic like reading a book (see Figure 2), reading out of my textbook (see Figure 3). And

other things I like because, like this one (see Figure 4). I like this book because it's some quotes here that I really like. So I like reading it more than other books."




*Figure 2*: A novel.



*Figure 3*: A textbook page.

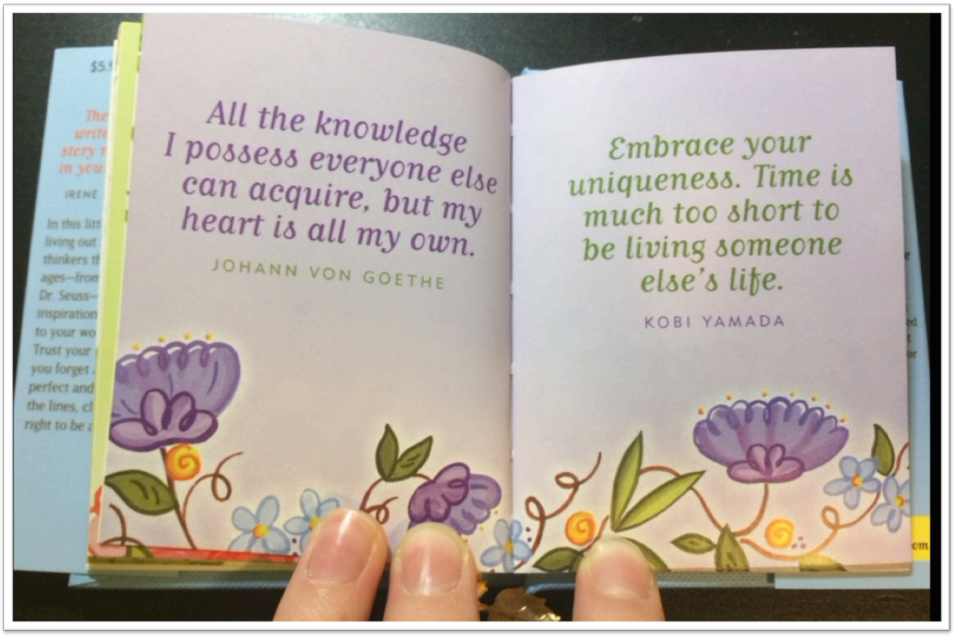



*Figure 4*: A book of inspirational messages.

Ms. Bartok: “Why do you like the quotes?”

Natasha: “I like the quotes because it’s about being you and not somebody else, and they’re inspirational. And also, I like my calendar because I look at my calendar all the time” (see Figure 5).




*Figure 5*: Natasha’s calendar.

Natasha’s preference for the book of inspirational quotes over other print material suggested that the emotional connection or inspiration she felt was a powerful motivator for her engagement in this particular literacy experience. Similarly, the explanation that books and textbooks “are a little bit basic” might have referred to a lack of emotional connection with these types of texts.

Ms. Bartok: “Do you ever create, write, compose, choreograph, or story tell outside of school?”

Natasha: "Yeah, I choreograph my skating routines sometimes. I don't really write that much outside of school unless it's for homework or something. But yeah. Not really."

Ms. Bartok: "Ok. Do you ever share your choreographed pieces with anyone else?"

Natasha: "Yeah, my family. Whoever is watching at the rink, like at competitions and stuff."

Natasha identified herself as a creator within the context of her figure skating practice, and she had an authentic audience with whom she shared her choreographed skating routines. This sharing was a fully participatory and public act, with family members, spectators, and judges witnessing her performances. Outside of figure skating, Natasha did not view herself as a creator, and mentioned that she only wrote in the specific context of doing homework.

Ms. Bartok: "How important is technology in your literacy practices?"

Natasha: "In my literacy practices? I think that a lot of these things include technology. Like this is on SnapChat. There's [laughing] celebrity gossip things and stuff which I watch all the time. So this is part of technology. And also Google maps and stuff. This is also technology involved."




*Figure 6*: Natasha's SnapChat screenshots. Stella Maxwell photograph from Backgrid, 2017, retrieved from https://www.usmagazine.com/stylish/news/stella-maxwell-wears-updated-take-on-crimped-hair-photo-w491318/, Copyright (n.d.), Backgrid. Ambulance image from NBC News, 2017, retrieved from: https://media2.s-nbcnews.com/j/newscms/2017_50/2257086/171211-port-authority-explosion-arrest-2-1035a-rs_ddb0c78ff24c6d7e1a98d96e73d1aa08.nbcnews-fp-400-280.jpg

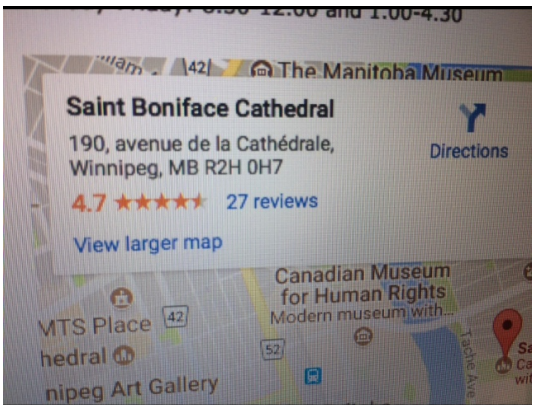



*Figure 7*: A Google Maps screenshot.

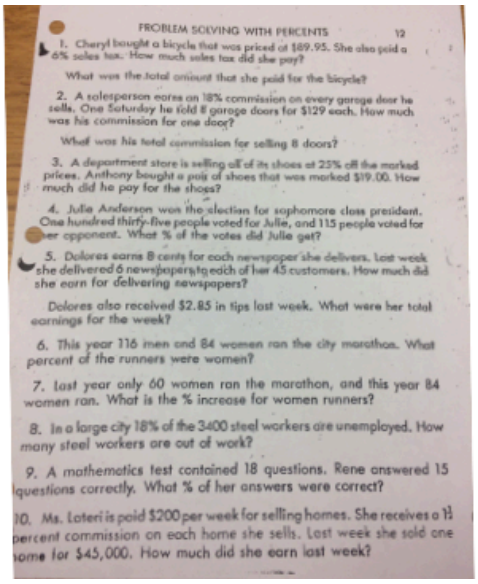
Map data copyright 2017, Google.

When asked about the importance of technology in her literacy practices, Natasha spoke about her use of SnapChat. Her frequent engagement with pop culture spoke to entertainment as another important motivation for choosing literacy experiences. Natasha's dismissive laughter suggested embarrassment and that she viewed this type of experience as trivial even though she indicated it was something she participated in frequently.

The Google Map image (Figure 7) that Natasha shared is an example of shifting practices in how individuals perceive themselves in relation to time and space. Often, making plans with peers means dropping a pin or sharing location using a mapping app in text conversations. This is a fairly recent shift, and it is becoming a more common practice that is mediated by the prolific use of cell phones (Leander & Vasduvan, 2017).

In addition to the interview, the pictures Natasha did not choose to talk about revealed something about her literacy identity as well. Overall, Natasha included three different examples of schoolwork (see Figures 3 and 8) in her journal, indicating the

importance of academics in relation to her literacy identies. These examples were mostly text based, although the text book page did include images as well.



PROBLEM SOLVING WITH PERCENTS 12

1. Cheryl bought a bicycle that was priced at $89.95. She also paid a 6% sales tax. How much sales tax did she pay?

What was the total amount that she paid for the bicycle?

2. A salesperson earns an 18% commission on every garage door he sells. One Saturday he sold 8 garage doors for $129 each. How much was his commission for one door?

What was his total commission for selling 8 doors?

3. A department store is selling all of its shoes at 25% off the marked prices. Anthony bought a pair of shoes that was marked $19.00. How much did he pay for the shoes?

4. Julie Anderson won the election for sophomore class president. One hundred thirty-five people voted for Julie, and 115 people voted for her opponent. What % of the votes did Julie get?

5. Dolores earns 8 cents for each newspaper she delivers. Last week she delivered 6 newspapers to each of her 45 customers. How much did she earn for delivering newspapers?

Dolores also received $2.85 in tips last week. What were her total earnings for the week?

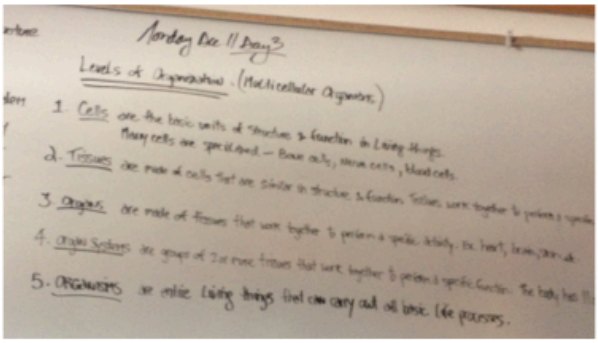
6. This year 116 men and 84 women ran the city marathon. What percent of the runners were women?

7. Last year only 60 women ran the marathon, and this year 84 women ran. What is the % increase for women runners?

8. In a large city 18% of the 3400 steel workers are unemployed. How many steel workers are out of work?

9. A mathematics test contained 18 questions. Rene answered 15 questions correctly. What % of her answers were correct?

10. Ms. Loteri is paid $200 per week for selling homes. She receives a 1½ percent commission on each home she sells. Last week she sold one home for $45,000. How much did she earn last week?



Monday Dec 11 Day 3

Levels of Organization (Multicellular Organisms)

1. Cells are the basic units of structure & function in Living things. Many cells are specialized — Bone cells, nerve cells, blood cells.
2. Tissues are made of cells that are similar in structure & function. Tissues work together to perform a specific activity. Ex. heart, brain, pancreas
3. Organs are made of tissues that work together to perform a specific activity. Ex. heart, brain, pancreas
4. Organ Systems are groups of 2 or more tissues that work together to perform a specific function. Ex. body has 11 organ systems
5. Organisms are entire Living things that can carry out all basic life processes.

*Figure 8*: Math homework and notes on the board.

Natasha also provided pictures of a Christmas card (Figure 9) and a recipe (Figure 10) for gingerbread, suggesting seasonal, cultural practices in which she was involved.



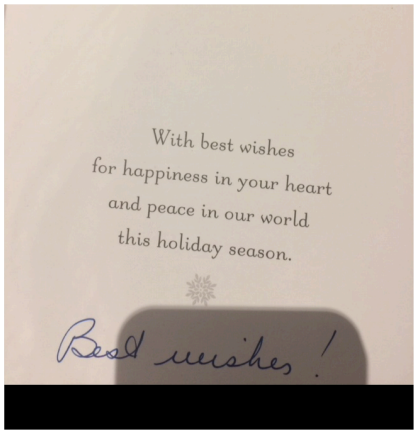
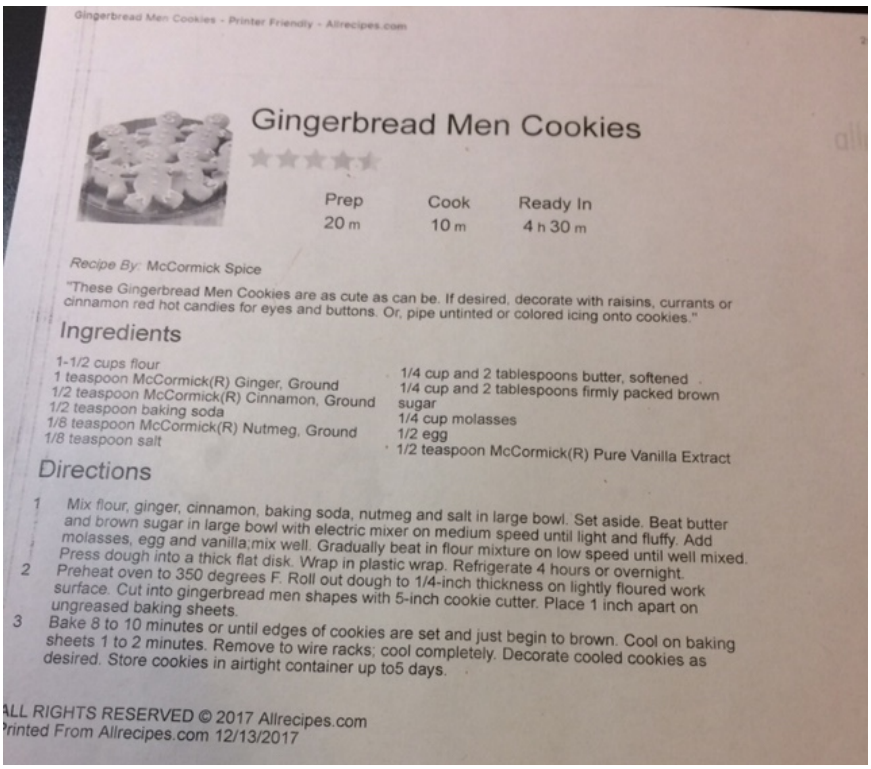



*Figure 9*: Photos of a Christmas card.



Gingerbread Men Cookies - Printer Friendly - Allrecipes.com

# Gingerbread Men Cookies

| Prep | Cook | Ready In |
|---|---|---|
| 20 m | 10 m | 4 h 30 m |

Recipe By: McCormick Spice

"These Gingerbread Men Cookies are as cute as can be. If desired, decorate with raisins, currants or cinnamon red hot candies for eyes and buttons. Or, pipe untinted or colored icing onto cookies."

## Ingredients

1-1/2 cups flour
1 teaspoon McCormick(R) Ginger, Ground
1/2 teaspoon McCormick(R) Cinnamon, Ground
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/8 teaspoon McCormick(R) Nutmeg, Ground
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup and 2 tablespoons butter, softened
1/4 cup and 2 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
1/4 cup molasses
1/2 egg
1/2 teaspoon McCormick(R) Pure Vanilla Extract

## Directions

1 Mix flour, ginger, cinnamon, baking soda, nutmeg and salt in large bowl. Set aside. Beat butter and brown sugar in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until light and fluffy. Add molasses, egg and vanilla;mix well. Gradually beat in flour mixture on low speed until well mixed. Press dough into a thick flat disk. Wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate 4 hours or overnight.

2 Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Roll out dough to 1/4-inch thickness on lightly floured work surface. Cut into gingerbread men shapes with 5-inch cookie cutter. Place 1 inch apart on ungreased baking sheets.

3 Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until edges of cookies are set and just begin to brown. Cool on baking sheets 1 to 2 minutes. Remove to wire racks; cool completely. Decorate cooled cookies as desired. Store cookies in airtight container up to5 days.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED © 2017 Allrecipes.com
Printed From Allrecipes.com 12/13/2017

*Figure 10*: A gingerbread cookie recipe. From "Gingerbread Men Cookies," *Allspice Recipes*, by McCormick Spice, 2018. Retrieved from https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/230238/gingerbread-men-cookies/.

One could also infer that the map search for St. Boniface Cathedral (Figure 7) was related to these cultural preparations for Christmas. This points to the important influence that family and belief systems have on literacy practices. The card and the recipe are both ways of celebrating and passing on cultural traditions. Even here though, there is a literacy shift demonstrated by the photo of the gingerbread recipe (Figure 10) and the fact that Natasha used the Internet as source for the recipe rather than a printed cookbook or a handwritten recipe.

**Natasha as a storyteller.** Early on in the process, Natasha had established that storytelling was about connecting with other people. As we explored mentor texts as a

class, she began to articulate the practices that both helped and prevented her from connecting with some of the stories. One of the mentor texts that we listened to in class titled *The Grand Canyon*, was difficult for students to engage with very deeply. The main character discussed the death of her husband and the spreading of his ashes on a rafting trip. Natasha identified that it was difficult for her to connect with because she did not have the same life experience as the storyteller, stating that, "For me the last story wasn't a very good one because I can't really relate to spreading someone's ashes."

Natasha also noted how absence of a visual image or video of the storyteller impacted her ability to understand the emotions being conveyed after listening to *That Christmas I don't even remember what gift I got*.

> Ms. Bartok: "How is the experience different if you can see someone versus if you can't see someone telling their story?"
>
> Natasha: "It was a little harder to visualize the face because I couldn't see him talking and I couldn't see his facial expressions and emotions."

Natasha had identified that an important aspect of storytelling involves the conveyance of information and emotion through facial expressions and body language. This observation points out the limitation of experiencing a story though audio only. She had identified that part of the communicative power of the story is lost when the storyteller cannot be seen.

As we continued our shared experiences of mentor texts, I asked students to begin thinking about the characteristics that define an engaging story or storyteller. Natasha's thinking about different modes of communication had started to take shape at this point as she explored ways to compensate for modes of communication that might be

missing from an oral storytelling experience. Particularly, she struggled with how to impart visual information about the setting of a story to an audience. Natasha explained that an engaging storyteller had to, "Try and make a picture in somebody else's head. Try to visualize it for them." She had identified that without the benefit of visual information, the storyteller must give enough detail so that the audience can visualize the events, setting, and characters for themselves.

Natasha also wondered about how time passes in a story, and noticed that in, *Fire, fire, fire,* a story about a young man caught in a grass fire, time was condensed in one part of the story when it did not suit the storyteller's purpose to describe a drawn out event. Natasha explained that "when the guy was saying that he waited for the fire department to come for 45 minutes, he kinda just mentioned that. He didn't talk about it a lot." She had noticed that the storyteller allowed time to lapse quickly, adding to the urgency of the storyline.

As Natasha started to find her own story, she remained aware of the lessons she had learned by listening to and observing other storytellers. This was evident in her story map which gave insight into the details she thought would be important for helping her audience connect with her story.

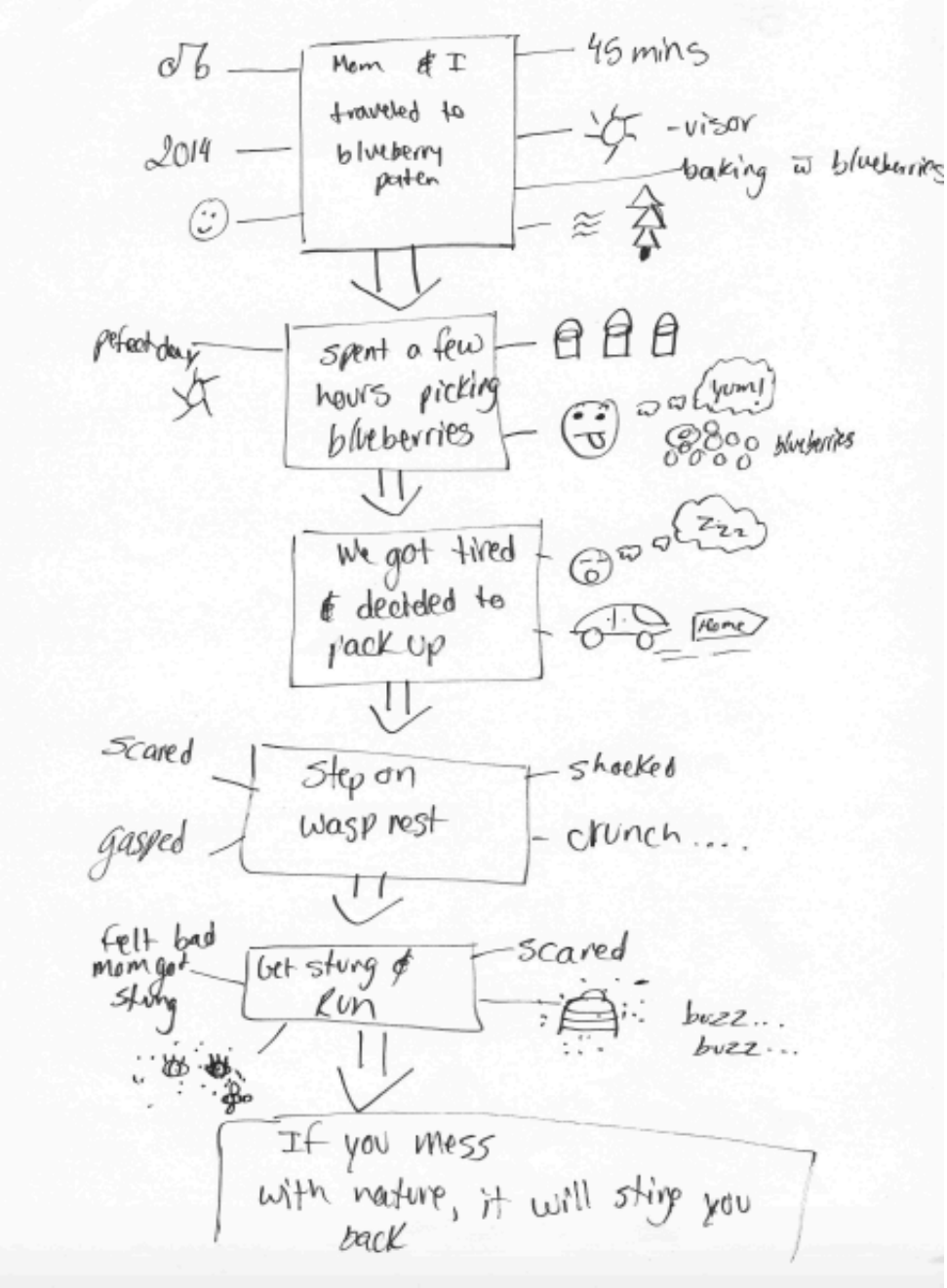



*Figure 11*: Natasha's story map. Her story described a blueberry picking trip with her mother that ended when they were attacked by wasps. Natasha had developed a story that her peers could connect with, and she added sensory details to make it engaging.

Natasha chose to create her story map as a flow chart (Figure 11) that started at the top of the page, with the story events progressing in a downward direction, as indicated by the arrows. Each box contained a short summary sentence about a moment in the story. Off to each side of the box were details that she wanted to remember. These symbols and words gave a sense of the emotions she wanted to emphasize, time, and sensory details. For example, off to the left of the first box, she used the music notes to indicate they were listening to the radio in the car on the way to the blueberry patch, using a visual cue to represent an auditory experience. Off to the right we see an indication that it took 45 minutes to drive there, representing a sense of time. The wavy lines and pine tree represented the breeze blowing through the trees, indicating a gestural and movement aspect of the story. To the side of the fourth and fifth boxes, she used onomatopoeia as the crunch of the nest and buzzing of the wasps were sounds she wanted to convey to her audience. Natasha's story contained a lesson, and as that was an important way for her to close her story, she wrote that line in its entirety in the final box.

Natasha worked on her storytelling practices with focused concentration and she was very receptive to feedback given to her by her peers. She often chose to work with Tambara, a close friend in the classroom, and the level of trust between the two of them was evident throughout the process. They were comfortable telling their stories to one another and giving/receiving feedback to one another. This was demonstrated by the way they would sit face to face as they worked, in a relaxed manner (see Figure 12).



*Figure 12*: Natasha engaged in a partner share with Tambara.

This level of trust continued into the final storytelling circle, where they chose to sit beside each other.

In addition to developing her own storytelling practices, Natasha showed development in her ability to give constructive feedback to her peers. In her final reflective video she stated that "I also learned how to give good feedback and instead of just giving the same feedback as everyone else, I tried to say something different. Not necessarily something that was bad about the story, but something that could have been better. I liked to try and give different feedback." Natasha gave carefully thought out feedback to her peers, and this was demonstrated in one exchange with Nisha in particular.

> Natasha: "I liked your story. It was really touching and I liked how you told the story and how you described the scene behind the restaurant with the cars and dumpster. Something I think you could work on is maybe describing how you felt when you saw the man digging through the dumpster because I would imagine you would feel sad and maybe you can describe some of that and elaborate on it."

Natasha had focused in on the moment of tension in Nisha's story, and encouraged her to help the audience connect to the highly emotional situation. She also demonstrated empathy for Nisha's experience as she expressed a desire for a more complete emotional connection.

During the final storytelling circle, Natasha's story was rich in sensory experiences. Many of the details that she included in her story map were evident in her story. Natasha made particularly good use of gesture and movement during her performance. In one instance, as she described entering the wooded area with her mother, she held up her hands in a circular gesture meant to indicate how the trees surrounded the two of them. (see Figure 13).



*Figure 13*: "There's trees all around us in every direction"

In addition to the rich sensory details and gestures that Natasha used to engage her audience, she also made eye contact with everyone in the group and often looked around the circle to ensure she had her peers' full attention.

In her final reflective video, Natasha expressed that she struggled with storytelling at the beginning, but that the process allowed her to become more sure of herself and appreciative of the stories of other people:

> Natasha: "At the beginning of the process, I kind of felt scared and that I wouldn't have any ideas about stories. And I thought that even if I did come up with a story idea it probably won't make sense or the thoughts would be disorganized. And by the end I realized that storytelling isn't as scary as it seems. I became more confident and definitely I improved by speaking in front of people about my personal experiences because that is kind of hard, to share something personal. And some things I learned from my classmates is that everyone has their own story to tell and some people have their own style."

Natasha felt secure enough to take risks during our journey and had realized her storytelling potential. She found value in sharing her experiences, and developed an appreciation for the stories her peers shared, as well as for individual storytelling styles. Her belief that storytelling was about connecting with other people was affirmed.

**Natasha's alternative representation.** Natasha had determined that the main emotion of her story was fear, and she brainstormed some different ways that she might be able to demonstrate that to an audience. In her rough notes (see Figure 14), it is evident that she was able to come up with many descriptive sensory words to help convey the emotion of fear. Natasha's thoughts about the design of text became visible as she

considered several different ideas for representing this emotion and initially choosing a poem.

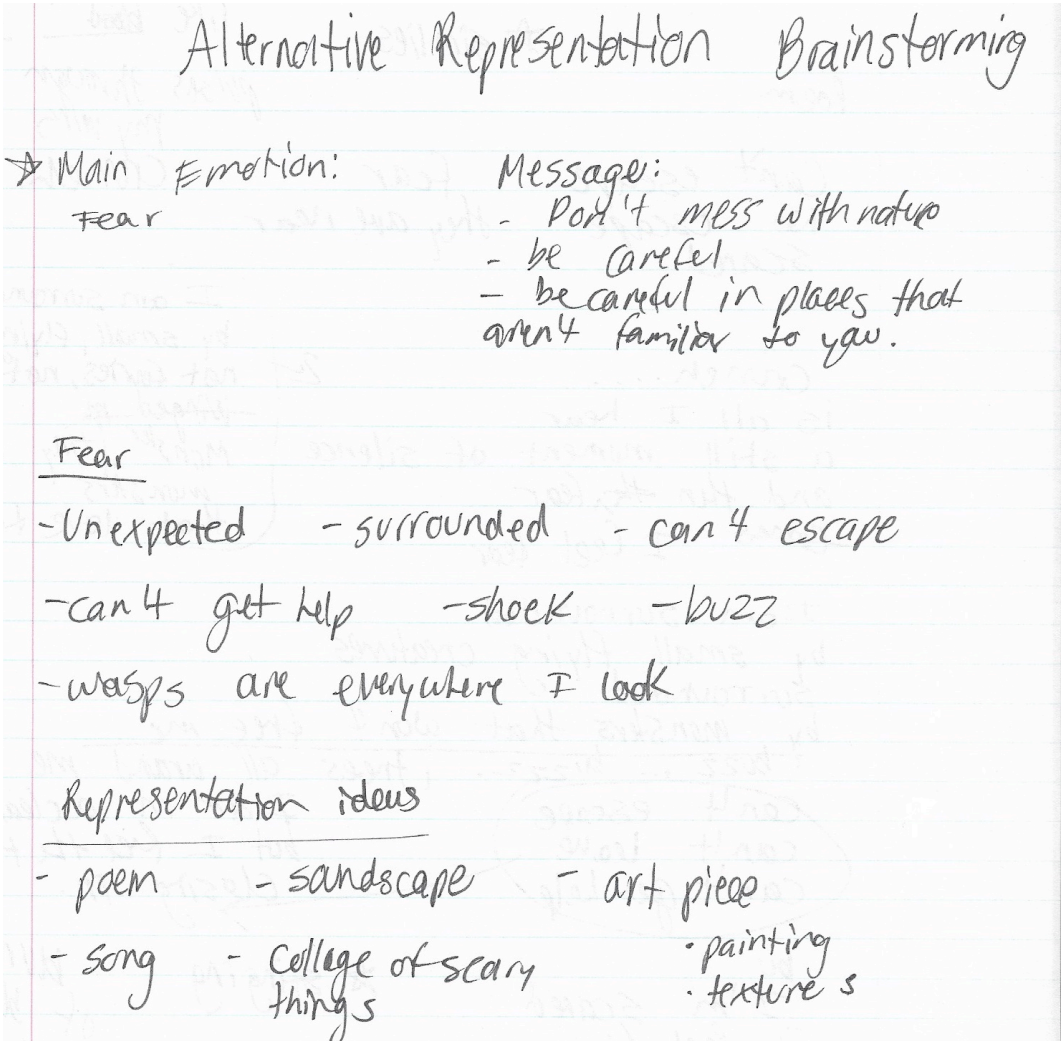
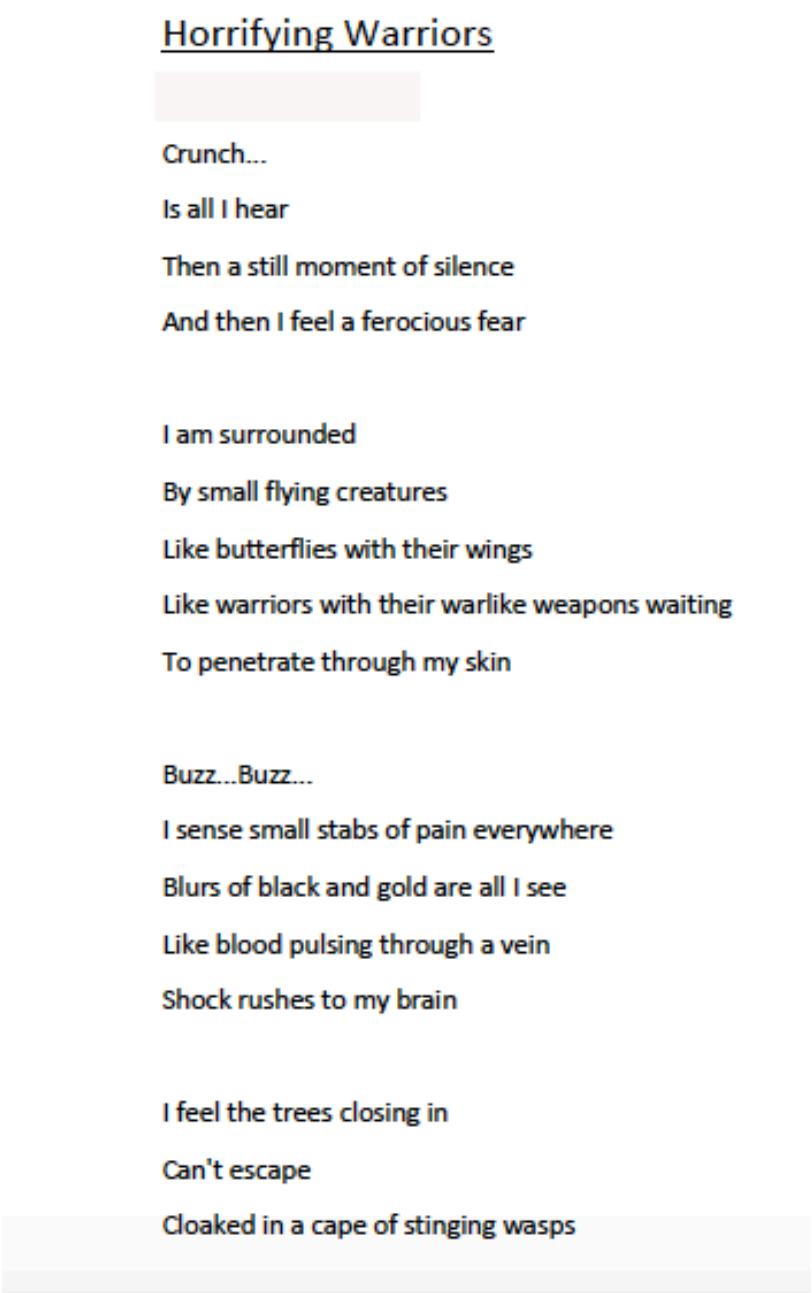



*Figure 14*: Natasha's rough notes demonstrate her thoughts as she worked out the best way to represent the emotion of fear.

When I stopped to check in with her as she brainstormed this list, she was able to articulate why she felt words were the best way for her to represent the main emotion of her story. She began to explain the deliberate design choices she was making, and why.

> Natasha: "I think I'm going to write a poem about my main emotion that I felt, which was fear. I'm trying to describe what I saw and what I felt. I think I'm going to try and put in some more emotion in there."
>
> Ms. Bartok: "So, why do you feel that a poem is the best way to do this?"
>
> Natasha: "Because I was thinking of also doing a soundscape or something like that, but then I don't think I could figure out a way how to display an emotion. So, I think a poem would work better because you could use words to describe many things."

Natasha's thinking about transduction is demonstrated in this conversation, as she struggled to move beyond words to demonstrate fear in another sign system. The precision of words was comfortable for her at this point, and she did begin to write a poem, but became unsatisfied that it conveyed meaning in the way that she wanted (see Figure 15).



Horrifying Warriors

Crunch...
Is all I hear
Then a still moment of silence
And then I feel a ferocious fear

I am surrounded
By small flying creatures
Like butterflies with their wings
Like warriors with their warlike weapons waiting
To penetrate through my skin

Buzz...Buzz...
I sense small stabs of pain everywhere
Blurs of black and gold are all I see
Like blood pulsing through a vein
Shock rushes to my brain

I feel the trees closing in
Can't escape
Cloaked in a cape of stinging wasps

*Figure 15*: The first draft of Natasha's poem.

As the poem evolved, it began to take on a visual form as Natasha arranged the words into the shape of a wasp. This had the benefit of delivering an instant visual message. The different fonts and the use of bold text further helped to emphasize the words and phrases to which she wanted to draw attention (see Figure 16).

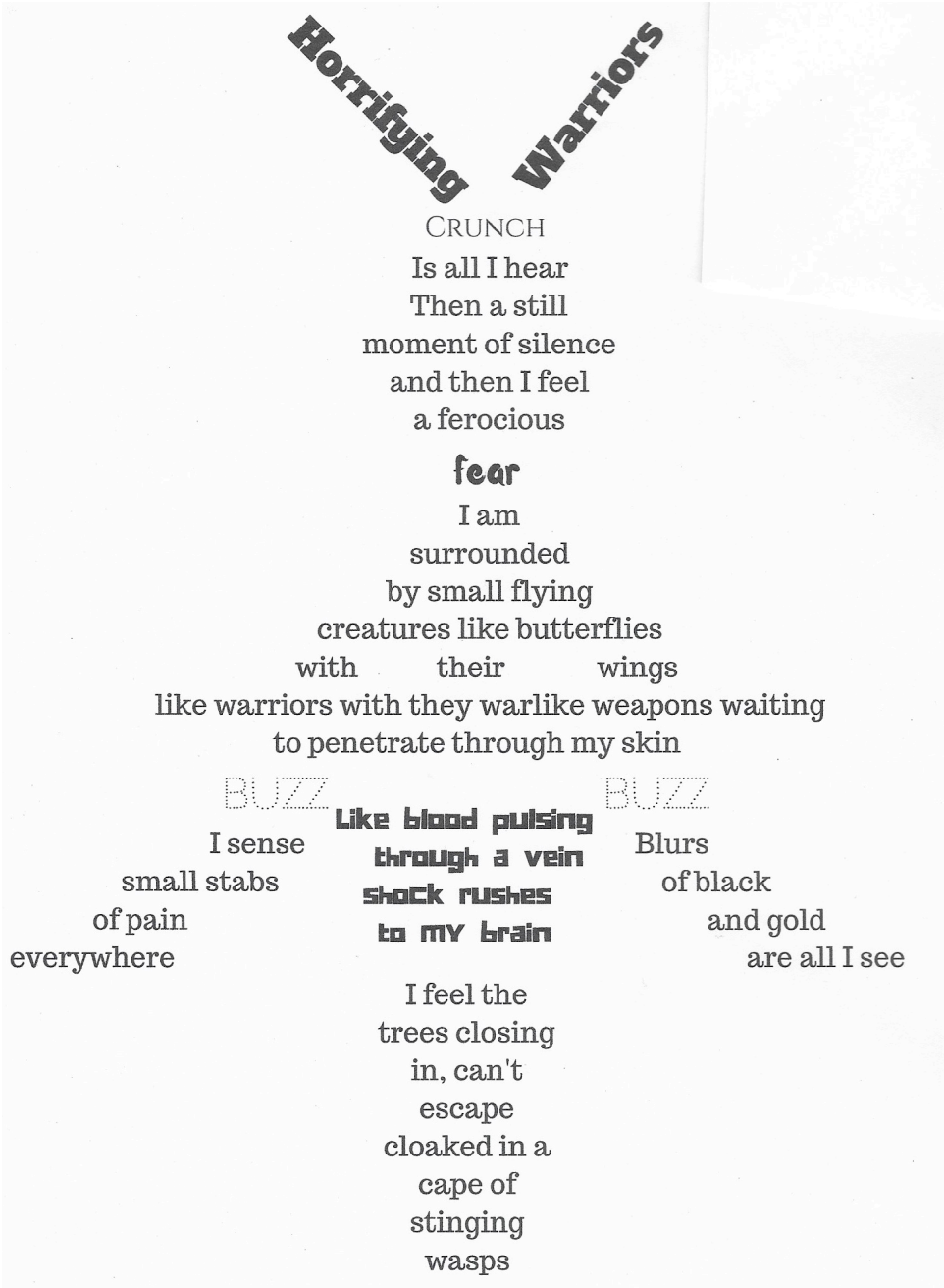



*Figure 16*: Natasha's concrete poem: an instant and clear visual message.

The visual concrete nature of the poem changes the way a reader experiences it. Instead of reading it from the top down, the bold words draw the eye first, and the sections under the word “BUZZ” that become the wings of the wasp can be read in any order. It became much more effective than the initial draft as the shape is immediately identifiable as a wasp and it taps into our innate fear of stinging insects.

As Natasha continued to work with her messaging, she decided to experiment with Garage Band and create a soundscape (Figure 17) that accompanied a spoken recitation of her poem. This purposeful retelling of her message through different modes demonstrated how she carefully weighed and experimented with the design choices that were available to her. With each shift in mode, Natasha had to rethink how to represent fear to her audience, and she was able to move back and forth between modes skillfully.



*Figure 17*: Natasha’s soundscape.

When she reflected on her final representation, Natasha revealed more of her thinking for the design choices that she made.

> Natasha: “For my alternative representation I did a poem. And I just like poems in general, they … I wanted to do a poem because they really described my story. And I wanted to play with words and rhymes and things like that. I had fun doing that. And the main emotion was probably fear. I also made kind of like a soundscape or a music composition using Garage Band. I did that because I

> wanted to make the audience feel like they were in my story with the sounds, like the "buzz" and the "crack." But I also wanted to portray the emotion of fear by adding, not creepy, but some sort of scary music into my composition. And then I also put my poem in the shape of a wasp because that was kind of like the visual aspect of it. Like I said, I was a visual person. I wanted to do something visually too because it looked good."

Natasha's poem and soundscape seemed to communicate emotion particularly well. After viewing her work, Jeremy was able to understand that Natasha's experience was intense, and he demonstrated appreciation for the concrete form of her poem.

> Jeremy: "Her poem was really well written and shows how intense it was for her. The way she shaped her poem was really well done."

Emily pointed out that Natasha was able to pull different sounds together to communicate that fear was the main emotion of her story.

> Emily: "The main emotion in this poem/soundscape is fear because all of those wasps were making her scared. She did an amazing job with making the sounds caliberate [sic] together to tell the main emotion in this story."

**Case Study Two: Logan's Journey**

**Logan's literacy journal and interview.** There was a rich range of multimodal literacy experiences represented in Logan's journal. He provided many examples of moving image, text combined with image, and interactive online content. Logan demonstrated that he was a video game player and an avid YouTube user. There was a definite preference for technology dependent activities represented in his journal, although he also documented instances of print based literacy. The interview with Logan

revealed that he viewed technology as a pathway to informal learning and entertainment. These two motivations were behind many of his literacy practices. At the beginning of the interview, Logan flipped to the screen shot he had taken of the YouTube logo (see Figure 18).




*Figure 18*: Logan's screenshot of the YouTube logo.

Ms. Bartok: "So, Logan, I'm going to start with you. And you've got a picture of YouTube here, right?"

Logan: "Mmmhmmm."

Ms. Bartok: "So can I just ask you then, can you describe what that literacy practice is for you?"

Logan: "It's watching videos, learning, like there's do it yourself kind of things. There's also just, top tens that teach you things. Stuff like that."

Ms. Bartok: "Where did it take place?"

Logan: "Where did I learn about it?"

Ms. Bartok: “Yeah. Where or when did you use YouTube? Where or when do you usually use it?”

Logan: “Before bed sometimes I watch YouTube. I started watching it in 2012.”

Ms. Bartok: “When you watch YouTube, what’s being communicated to you?”

Logan: “Facts. Sometimes walkthroughs of games. Stuff like that.”

A video game walkthrough is generally a screen capture recorded by an individual who has knowledge to share about a particular game. The screen capture records game play in real time, along with commentary about how to solve puzzles, overcome obstacles, and how to find helpful items during game play. Although Logan did not discuss it during the interview, he documented his video game practice in his literacy journal (Figure 19). This piece of conversation indicates that in addition to using YouTube for entertainment, Logan engaged in the platform as an informal learning experience, or affinity space, to support his video game practices.




*Figure 19*: Logan’s Xbox controller.

When I asked Logan how messages are communicated through YouTube videos, he spoke about the actual recording process, rather than how the messages were constructed.

Ms. Bartok: "How is it being communicated?"

Logan: "Through a camera. Someone's recording it and going on YouTube, making the video."

Ms. Bartok: "Is what is being communicated, being communicated in more than one way?"

Logan: "Yeah, you could do either, like record an actual TV, or act it out."

Logan didn't describe different modes or how the message was being communicated, but he did identify the means used to create the video, and two possible types of content that could be recorded: a screen recording or a video where people act out a scripted performance.

Ms. Bartok: "Were there other people involved in this literacy practice?"

Logan: "There's lots of people on YouTube. Some of my friends are on YouTube."

Ms. Bartok: "Why did you choose to document this literacy practice?"

Logan: "Cause I use it almost everyday. I watch it. It's pretty funny as well."

Ms. Bartok: "How often do you engage in this type of literacy practice?"

Logan: "Often. Everyday for thirty minutes to an hour."

Ms. Bartok: "At a time?"

Logan: "Yeah."

Ms. Bartok: "So, just once for thirty minutes or an hour?"

Logan: "Yes."

Ms. Bartok: "Ok. How important is this literacy practice in your daily life?"

Logan: "It can be important for learning facts or just learning something, to figure out how to do something in some way."

Significantly, when asked who was involved in this literacy practice with him, Logan stated that many people are on YouTube, and that some of his friends participate in the platform, indicating that his peers have some involvement in his literacy practices.

The use of YouTube was a daily activity for Logan, and it had been since 2012. Six years represents a significant part of Logan's life, and his preference for this type of media must have had a profound influence on his literacy and identity development. At the same time as this was obviously an important practice for Logan, he appeared to have some parameters around his use of YouTube, as he indicated that he only watched it for about 30 minutes to an hour each day.

When asked to describe how this practice might fit into his school life, Logan was able to articulate how he already saw it reflected there.

Ms. Bartok: "How does this literacy practice fit into your school life?"

Logan: "For projects you can do YouTube videos or just record yourself for it."

Ms. Bartok: "Do you feel your teachers would support you in this literacy practice?"

Logan: "Yeah, they would probably think it was pretty creative instead of just doing a PowerPoint or a poster."

Ms. Bartok: "How would you like to see this literacy practice integrated into school?"

Logan: "We kind of already have, [School news station] so, maybe just videos on how to do school things?"

Ms. Bartok: "Like, tutorials?"

Logan: "Yeah."

Logan identified the school news station, which was recorded by the school's multimedia students and broadcast daily on YouTube, as consistent with his own out of school experiences. Logan seemed to rank the act of making a video as more creative than using PowerPoint or creating a poster, and he believed his teachers would also find it a creative way to present learning as part of a project. This observation contrasted with several of his peers, who were unable to think of ways their literacy practices could be integrated in their school lives.

When Logan was asked about his preferred literacy practices, his value for multimodal forms of communication became obvious.

Ms. Bartok: "Are there literacy practices in your journal that you prefer over others?"

Logan: "Yeah."

Ms. Bartok: "Ok, can you show me one?"

Logan: "I prefer YouTube (Figure 18) over reading a book (Figure 20)."

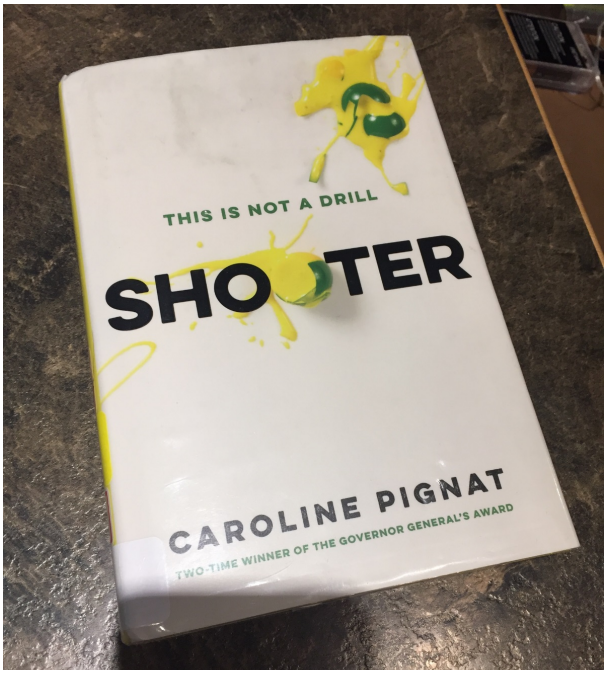



*Figure 20*: A book Logan' was reading.

Ms. Bartok: "Ok. Why?"

Logan: "Cause YouTube is a video, and in a book I'm just looking at lines. And in a book you can use your imagination, but in YouTube you kind of have an idea."

Ms. Bartok: "Ok, are there any other ones?"

Logan: "Mmmm. School work. [Refers to the picture of his homework, see Figure 21]. I prefer YouTube more than school work. It's a little bit more boring. "

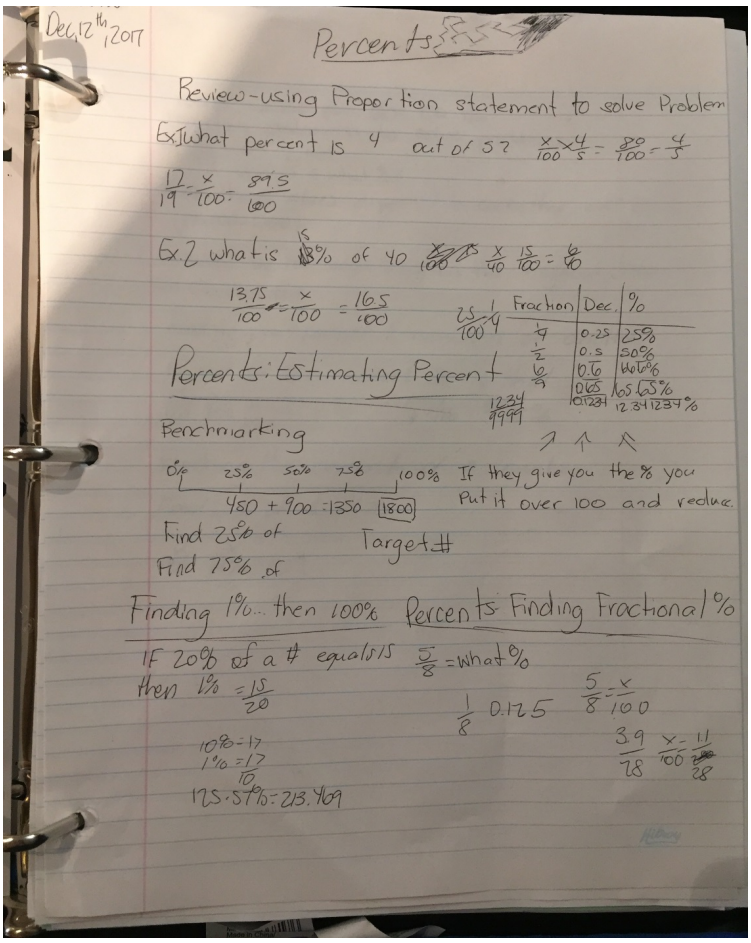



*Figure 21*: Logan's homework.

Ms. Bartok: "Are there any others in here that you prefer over others?"

Logan: "I prefer music (Figure 22) over the news (Figure 23) because music tells you more. It's more emotional and the news is more just out there."

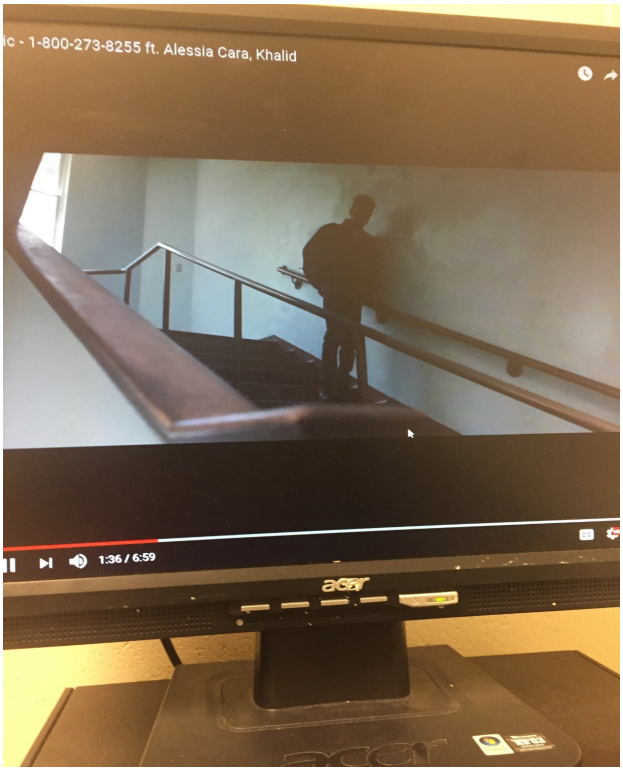



*Figure 22*: A music video viewed on YouTube.

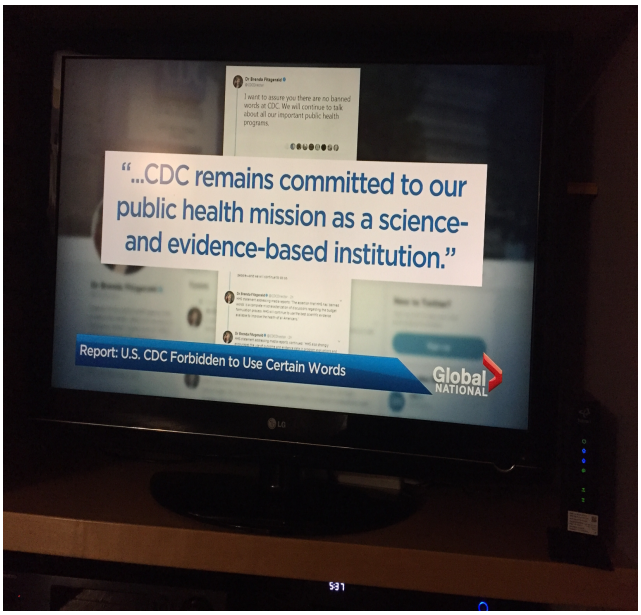



*Figure* 23: A news broadcast.

Logan exhibited a strong preference for multimodal texts over print forms of text. He revealed some awareness of how different modes carry meaning when he commented that "in a book I'm just looking at lines and in a book you can use your imagination, but in YouTube you kind of have an idea." He demonstrated an understanding of the limitations of print when it comes to communicating visual information, as it leaves the visualization up to the reader's imagination, while video may communicate visual information to an audience more effortlessly.

He also demonstrated awareness that music has the power to communicate emotion. His preference for music echoed the same type of emotional or personal engagement that Natasha referred to when describing her interest in the book of inspirational quotes. The students seemed to understand that there is a deeper communicative value when modalities are combined, and the affective domain is a compelling reason for engagement with a particular literacy practice. Additionally, the picture of the music experience Logan referenced (Figure 22) revealed that he was listening to and watching music videos on YouTube, again demonstrating the importance of the platform to this student.

When I asked Logan to describe his creative activities outside of school, I expected that he would again refer to YouTube and perhaps to the creation of his own original videos. This was not the case, and surprisingly, Logan had difficulty with this question.

Ms. Bartok: "Do you ever create, write, compose, choreograph, or story tell outside of school?"

Logan: "Not really."

Ms. Bartok: “If you were to, how would you prefer to create, write, compose, choreograph or story tell?”

Logan: “Probably I’d have a journal.”

Ms. Bartok: “So, a writing journal?”

Logan: “Yeah.”

Ms. Bartok: “Ok. You said that you don’t prefer to create, write, compose, choreograph or story tell outside of school, but if you did, how would you share it?”

Logan: “I’d probably just share it with my parents but not anyone else.”

Ms. Bartok: “How important is technology in your literacy practices?”

Logan: “It’s pretty important. Social media, (see Figure 24) I can talk to my friends. The news on the TV and YouTube, I can learn facts and stuff on there.”

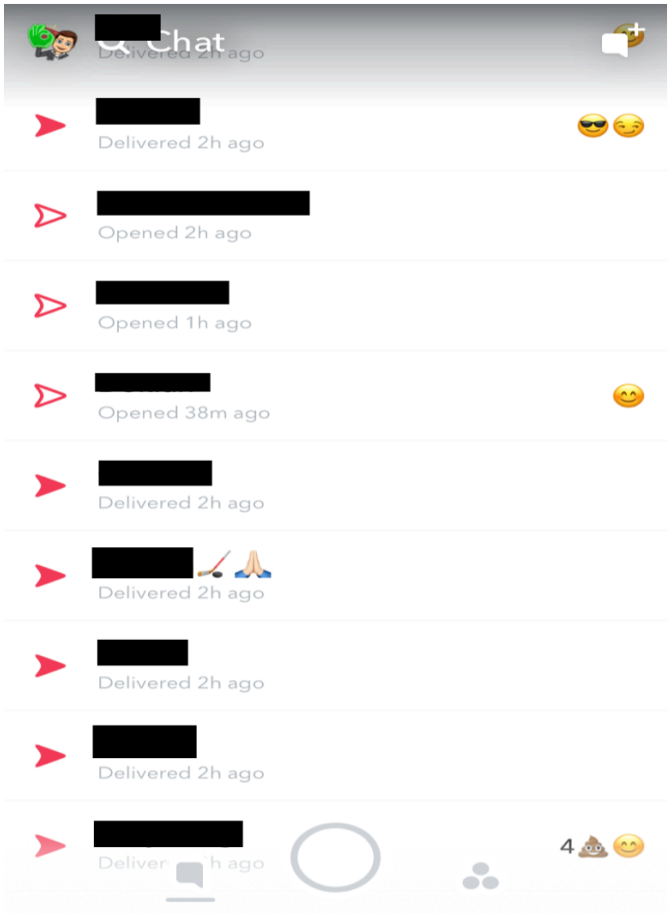



*Figure 24*: A SnapChat screen shot. Names have been redacted**.**

Despite the fact that Logan offered video production as a creative way to integrate his preferred literacy practice into his school life, he did not see himself as a creator outside of school. When asked to speculate how me might be creative, Logan named journal writing as an option, and stated that he would not share his writing beyond his family members. This seems contradictory to his previous comments and his documented practices which are technology heavy and socially based. It wasn't until he was specifically asked about technology that he spoke about his use of social media to communicate with his friends (Figure 24), but he did not recognize this as a creative act.

Upon examination of Logan's journal after the interview, I noticed an interesting juxtaposition between two images. The picture of the globe (see Figure 25) and screen shot of the Apple Maps application (Figure 26) represented two completely different ways of understanding location.




*Figure 25*: A globe.

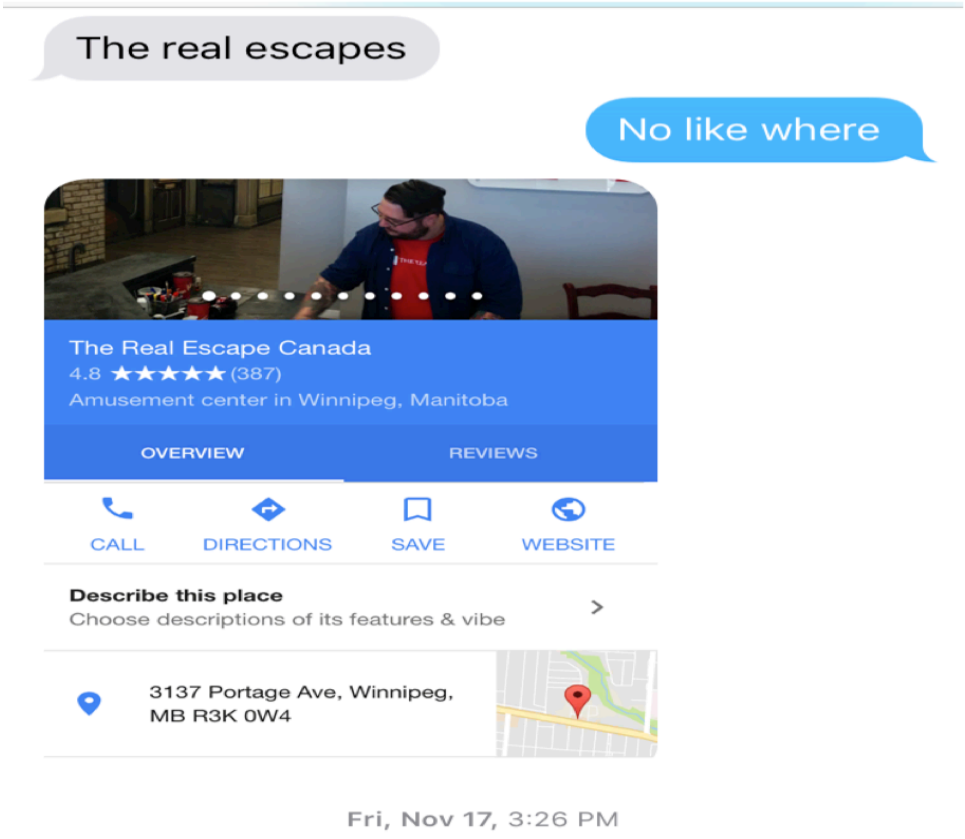



*Figure 26*: Social plans being made with the aid of a mapping application.

Both are interactive and represent multimodal representations of location, but the globe is a static representation, while the other is fully interactive and offers the added advantage of offering much more detail than the other. Additionally, the ability to share location through map applications and iMessages with peers means they can always be abridged of one another's exact location and map paths to one another or to a meeting place, again illustrating Leander and Vasdevan's (2017) assertion that mobile technology changes social practices, and represents a shift that adolescents have always known.

**Logan as a storyteller.** Logan worked on his storytelling practices in a reserved manner, listening attentively during whole class conversations about mentor texts, but seldom offering his thoughts to the entire group. He chose to fully engage in conversation

only when he was working in a pair or small group situation and he frequently chose to work with Jeremy. As they worked together, they demonstrated open body language and attentiveness to each other's stories (Figure 27).




*Figure 27*: Logan and Jeremy sharing their stories.

Logan struggled to find a story that he wanted to share, and changed his mind several times throughout the process. The two main story ideas he focused on were an accident at home that ended with a trip to the emergency room, and a vacation story that described a traumatic water experience. Logan's story map was constructed as he explored the first story idea.

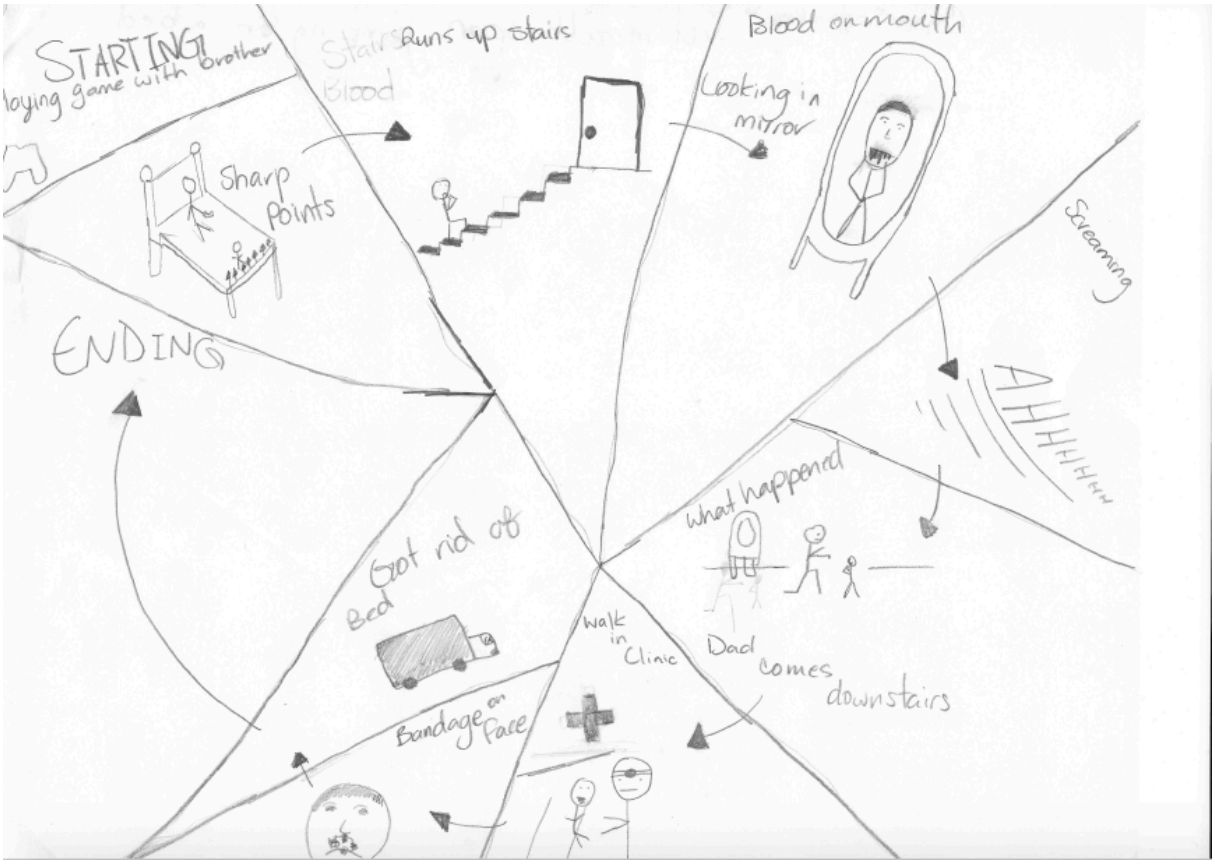



*Figure 28*: Logan's story map. This story described an accident at home that ended with a trip to the emergency room. This was not the story Logan chose to tell in the final storytelling circle.

Logan's story map was constructed in the format of a graphic novel or comic, with different frames separated by lines, and he condensed his story down to mostly images and a few very short phrases. As most of his story is contained in the visual mode, anyone viewing the map would have to infer that in the first frame, he falls on the sharp points on his bed, and the result is a trip to the emergency room with his father. The arrows indicate that the story progresses in a clockwise manner, and moving from frame to frame generally coincides with a change in setting. We see objects and people that are important to the main progression of the story, but there are very few details when

compared with Natasha's map that was much more detail intensive. It is interesting to note that this was not the story Logan chose to share during the storytelling circle. At some point in the process after we had done the story maps, he changed his story, and decided that he did not want to do another story map.

It wasn't until the final storytelling circle that I was sure Logan had internalized any of the practices of engaging storytellers that the class defined while exploring the mentor texts. It was a powerful moment when he began telling his story and revealed through his performance intentional use of several of the practices and demonstrated evidence of multimodal awareness. As Logan told the story of how he experienced being overwhelmed by ocean waves and a strong tide during a family vacation, he effectively harmonized his words, rhythm and body language to give a physical sense of how the ocean waves pushed and pulled him as he struggled to stay above water. As he spoke, he used his arms to indicate the pushing and pulling motion (see Figure 29).

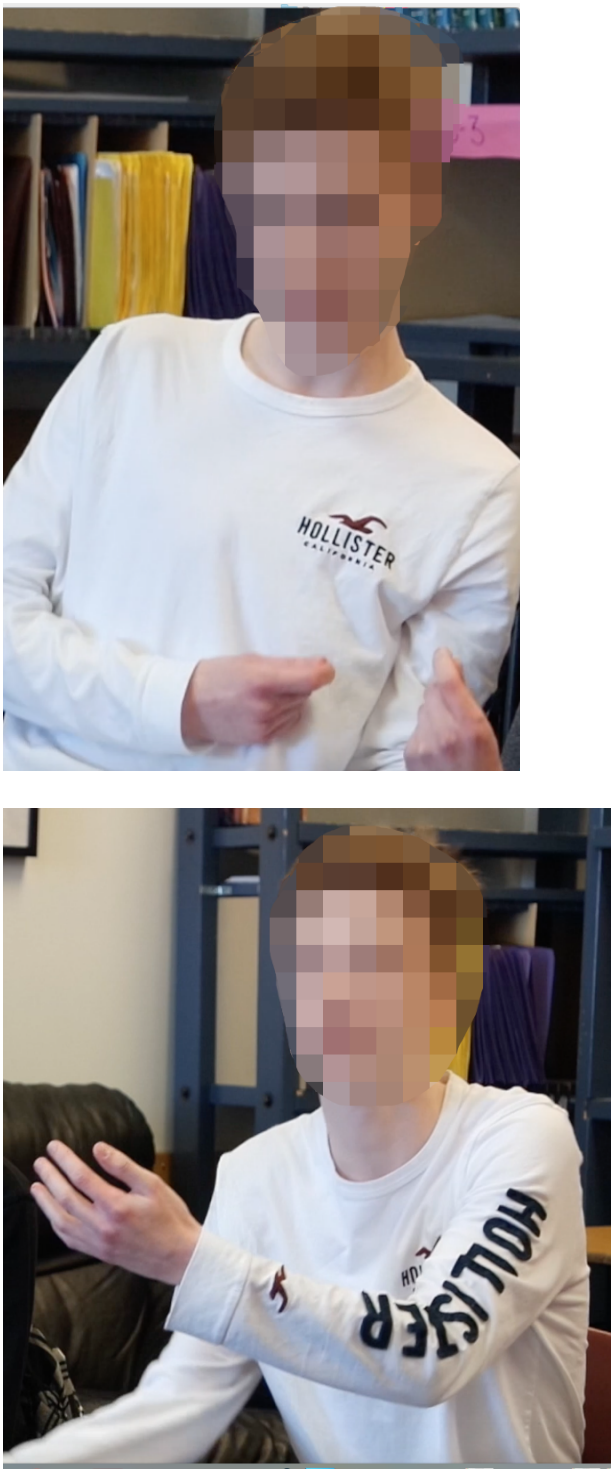



*Figure 29*: Logan using gesture. “The water pulls you back in and then throws you back out. And then pulls you back in and throws you back out …. ”

Logan also made use of humour in his story and had his classmates laughing at his predicament, effectively diffusing some of the tension that had built up as he recounted the traumatic experience. Logan had taken some significant risks in his storytelling performance, marking a shift in his storytelling identity.

**Logan's alternative representation.** Logan focused on the visual mode in his drawing of a specific moment of tension from his story.

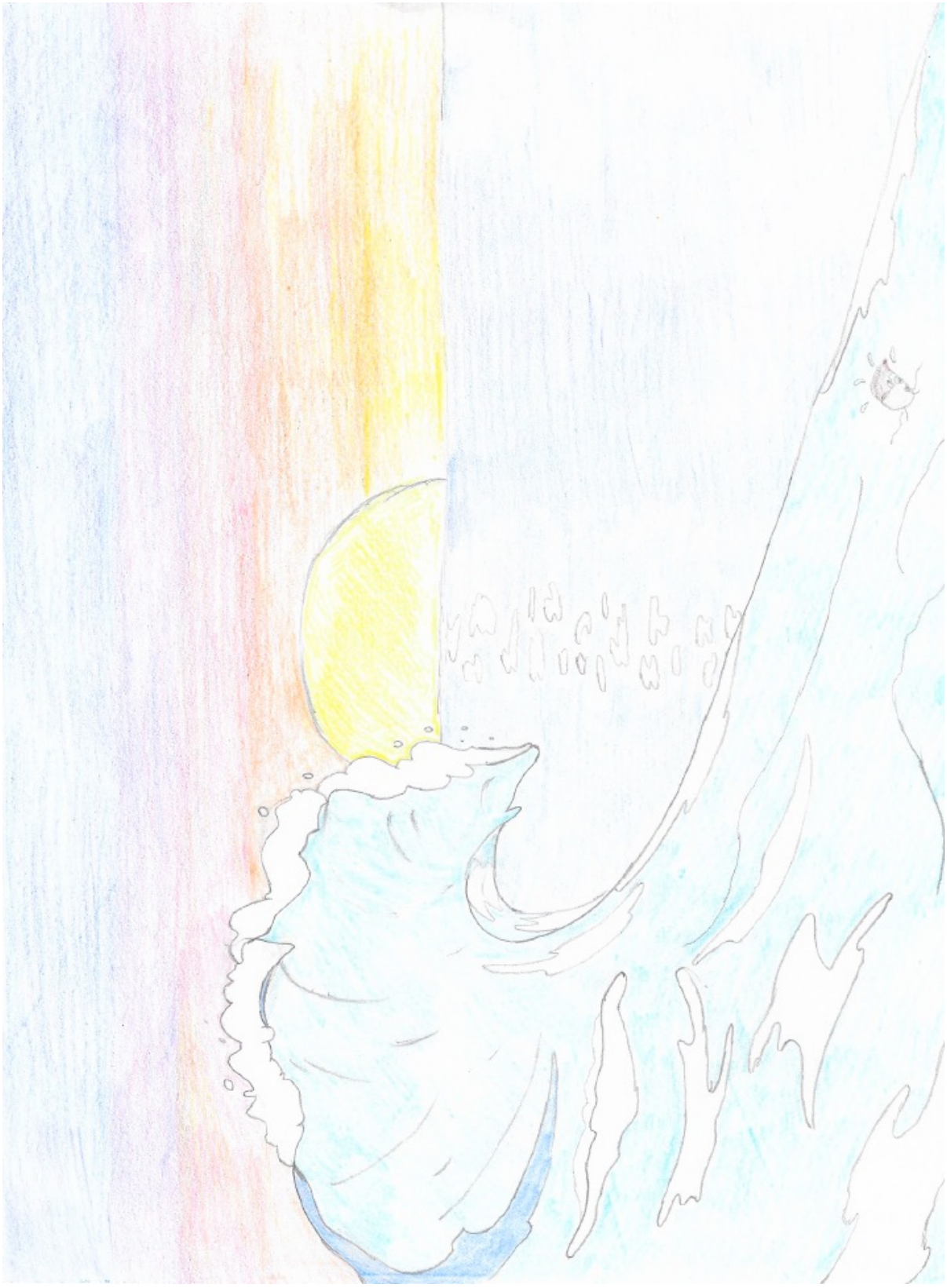


*Figure 30*: Logan's alternative representation.

He exaggerated the size of the wave to enhance the idea that he was feeling afraid. Note how small Logan appears in the bottom right hand corner in comparison to the wave. The expression on Logan's face is one of fear, indicated by the wide eyes and four tear drop shapes that spring from his head. There was also a gestural element in the drawing as the viewer anticipates that the wave will come down upon the subject. Logan captured time visually as the colours and sunset indicated that this incident took place in the evening. These were all deliberate design choices and demonstrated Logan's awareness of how to leverage visual elements to communicate a message. Logan was able to articulate some of those design choices in his final reflective video.

> Logan: "I chose a drawing for my alternate representation because I think I'm pretty good at art, or at least people said that I was good so I thought that would be an easy choice. To demonstrate the main emotion of my story I made the wave bigger than it actually was cause when you're looking at it as yourself, it seems a lot bigger than it actually was."

The comment Logan made about choosing to create a drawing because he was comfortable in his abilities and had peer approval did not surprise me given his reserved nature and preference for staying inside of his comfort zone. Although he chose comfort over risk with his alternative representation, he effectively moved meaning from the linguistic mode into the visual mode. In order to capture that moment, Logan had to give up some of the humorous pieces of his story, and weigh what was most important to represent, demonstrating a high degree of critical thinking.

Logan's message was clear, and many of his classmates were able to pick out that the size of the wave was an indicator of how he was feeling. Emily was able to

understand that there is a look of fear on the subject's face as the wave loomed overhead: "I think that the emotion in this drawing is definitely scared because the humans [sic] face in the water looked nervous for when the wave was about to hit him" Natasha was able to come to the same conclusion, using the visual cues in the drawing: "The main emotion is fear. I know because he drew a really detailed facial expression that showed fear and he also showed that the big wave was after him causing him to be scared." Jeremy understood that the wave in Logan's picture was exaggerated to represent a state of mind rather than the actual reality of the events: "He was trying to get the emotion of fear across. Even though the wave in the picture was not that big that's what it felt like." Kayla said that "I think the theme of his picture is trust your gut on making the right decisions. The picture showed this through him in the wave looking at it in horror. It showed how when he regreted [sic] going into the ocean, his feelings of terror and regret were his main instinct."

Logan's journey through this process began quietly, but he demonstrated growth in his willingness to share his story, and he felt a sense of accomplishment in that. In his final video reflection, he shared some of his thoughts on his development.

> Logan: "What helped me develop as a storyteller would be the videos, like watching the professionals do it, cause you kind of get some insight on what to do. In the beginning I was really nervous to tell my story because I'm not that good at public speaking and I get nervous before I present anything. How do I feel now? I still get nervous before presenting but I feel better about the story now than I did before. I learned that my classmates all have very different stories and good and intriguing stories to tell."

**Case Study Three: Audrey's Journey**

**Audrey's literacy journal and interview.** Audrey's journal and interview revealed her involvement in synchronized swimming and a family practice around reading magazines. Her journal disclosed a preference for informational print text over fictional print texts. Many examples of multimodal text were represented in her journal, and these were mostly related to her use of technology as she captured instances of text messaging, listening to music, and using social media. Audrey chose to describe a photo of a stack of magazines as we began the interview (Figure 31).




*Figure 31*: Audrey's magazines.

I recognized this as a shelf of magazines located in the school's Library Learning Commons, but her comments quickly informed me that this photo was meant to represent a home based practice.

> Ms. Bartok: "Can you please choose one of the entries from your photographic literacy journal to discuss?"

Audrey: “Ok. This one.”

Ms. Bartok: “Ok. Oh, it’s the shelf of magazines. So can you describe what the literacy practice is that you’ve added here?”

Audrey: “It’s magazines. I read them and they share information.”

Ms. Bartok: “Ok. Where did it take place?”

Audrey: Like the picture? Or … [The picture was taken in the school’s Library Learning Commons]

Ms. Bartok: “Well, where do you usually read magazines?”

Audrey: “Well, I read them at home most of the time. My parents usually get them and when I was little I used to usually just look at the pictures, but now I can read the articles. So, I read them at home mostly. Like, sometimes when they’re around and I see something interesting on the cover, I’ll read it.”

Ms. Bartok: “What’s being communicated?”

Audrey: “Lots of information about the famous people, and gossip and stuff.”

Ms. Bartok: “How is it being communicated, and is it being communicated in more than one way?”

Audrey: “Well, there’s pictures, so there will be, ‘who wore it better?’ and there’ll be a picture and a picture. Or there’ll be articles about people, and their problems.”

Ms. Bartok: “Were there other or are there other people involved in your literacy practice?”

Audrey: “Mmmm. I don’t know?”

Ms. Bartok: “You mentioned your parents before.”

Audrey: "Yeah, my mom she was the one who was like, 'Oh, you don't have a book, you should read this. I read this one, its really good.' Or my dad, he'll get *Men's Health* and he'll be like, 'Oh it's a hundred percent useful.'"[Laughing]

Ms. Bartok: " Why did you choose to document this literacy practice?"

Audrey: "I chose it cause it's helpful, and it's easy to find a magazine in my house because we just have them sort of everywhere. And we have really old ones, like we have some from 2010 because my parents, they don't really throw them out. They just sort of make a stack in the corner. And so if I wanted to look at something from say, 2012, I could go look at it."

Audrey's comments revealed that this is family literacy practice. The plentiful availability of the magazines, along with the family practice of sharing what was being read helped to shape her reading identity. At different stages in her literacy development, she has engaged with the collection of magazines in different ways. Audrey was getting visual information from the magazines before she could make sense of the print, as is demonstrated by the observation that she would "just read the pictures."

In the next part of the interview, Audrey spoke about the frequency of her engagement with magazines, and revealed through her body language and nervous laughter that she felt they weren't a serious literacy experience.

Ms. Bartok: "How does this literacy practice fit into your school life?"

Audrey: "It doesn't" [Laughter]

Ms. Bartok: "Not at all?"

Audrey: "Well, a little bit. They have them at school. They have magazines at school, but if I wanted to say, "Oh, did you hear about Selena Gomez and Justin Beiber … ?"

Ms. Bartok: "Do you feel your teachers would support this literacy practice?"

Audrey: "No." [Laughter]

Ms. Bartok: "No? If you pulled out a magazine in [your teacher's] class…?"

Audrey: "Yeah, I think if I started reading a magazine instead of a novel she would say, 'Go to the library. Get a book.'" [Laughing]

Ms. Bartok: "How would you like to see this literacy practice integrated into school?"

Audrey: "I don't really think that it needs to be in schools? It's not really important. You're not really reading very much. You could just look at the pictures. So, I don't really think it needs to be in schools."

Although Audrey acknowledged that there are already magazines in the school, her comments indicated that she thought they were out of place, and only for entertainment. The comment "you can just look at the pictures," gave the impression that Audrey perceived viewing pictures as a passive activity rather than an active communicative act. Audrey was dismissive of the importance of this practice in her daily life, she saw a limited place for magazines at school, and she did not feel her teachers supported her magazine reading practice. Pahl and Rowsell refer to the powerful learning experiences that develop when students are invited to bring objects or literacy practices from one domain (home or community) into another (school). This boundary crossing or "domain crossing" can cause significant shifts in student literacy identity as they combine

practices from different domains (Pahl and Rowsell, 2010, p. 16). The literacy journal was an invitation for Audrey to do just that, yet her laughter and comments indicated she seemed unable to overcome the tension between these two domains.

> Ms. Bartok: "Are there literacy practices in your journal that you prefer over others and why?"
>
> Audrey: "I like to read. I'd rather look at the weather (Figure 32) than read a cereal box (Figure 33). Or, I'd rather read a magazine then, let's say a…yeah. I don't know. I just put the cereal box because it's there and you just read it. So I'd rather do a lot of these more than the cereal box. But I put the cereal box because it's helpful."




*Figure 32*: A screenshot of Audrey's weather app. Weather data copyright 2017 The Weather Channel.

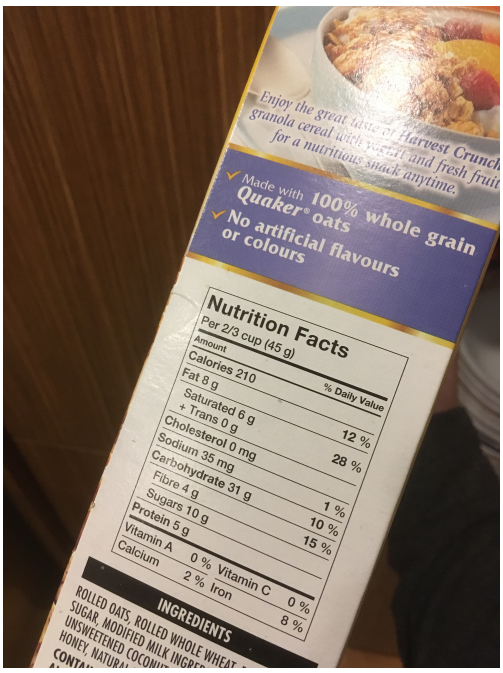



*Figure 33*: A cereal box

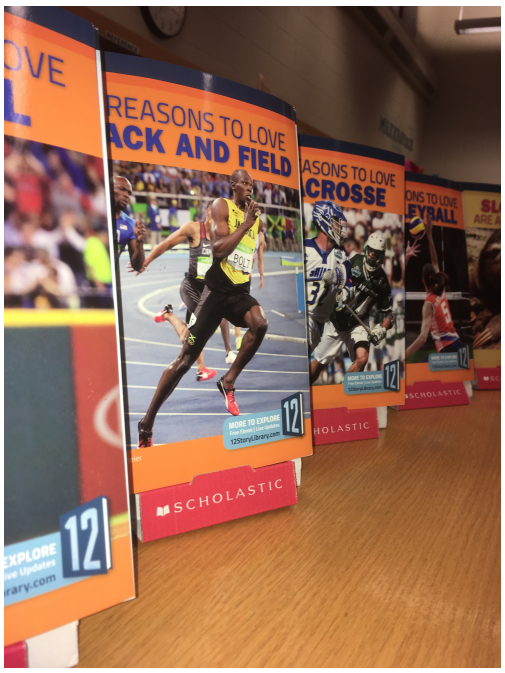



*Figure 34*: Non-fiction.

As Audrey referred to images of the non-fiction books she photographed (Figure 34), she indicated that she engages with primarily print based texts. The importance of mobile technology to this particular group of students is demonstrated once again in Audrey's reference to the use of her weather app (Figure 32). This screen shot captures the relatively new convenience of having access to information about the immediate physical environment through a mobile device on demand, rather than the need to wait for the weather forecast on television or the radio. The cereal box is representative of environmental print that is present in Audrey's home. Audrey acknowledged that it is part of her daily life and that it is helpful. There is no entertainment or intellectual value ascribed to it; it is simply present.

Audrey's responses became more animated when I asked about her creative experiences and she was able to talk about her synchronized swimming experiences.

Ms. Bartok: "Do you ever create, write, compose, choreograph or story tell outside of school?"

Audrey: "I play piano. So I don't know if that's … I don't really compose anything. And then, I'm a synchronized swimmer so we have to choreograph our routines, and this year I'm doing a solo, and you have to choreograph the whole routine."

Ms. Bartok: "Do you have to pick the music too?"

Audrey: "No, the coaches pick the music."

Ms. Bartok: "Ok. How do you prefer to create, write, compose, choreograph or story tell?"

Audrey: "When I come up with stuff for a routine, I just sort of do stuff until it feels right with the music or until it's not awkward. Cause I do lots of things and they'll just be super awkward, or it doesn't go. Like, I'll do a big movement but it's super quiet. So you just fool around until it works."

Ms. Bartok: "Do you ever share these pieces with anyone else? And how or where do you share them?"

Audrey: "I don't really share them with people at school. But my family members, sometimes they'll come and watch routines. And at the national competitions there's a live stream so they can watch it from home because usually I have to travel for those ones. And all of the judges watch because they have to judge obviously."

Audrey saw herself as a creator in the context of synchronized swimming. As she spoke about her creative process, she explained that her routines don't feel right if her

choreographed movements do not match with the intensity of the music, revealing some of her thinking about multimodality. Audrey described her design process as one of trial and error: "you just fool around until it works." Her comments revealed that she weighs her gestures and movements against the intensity and volume of the music, experimenting until the desired results are achieved. Audrey demonstrated an awareness of how gesture and music can either work together to create a coherent message, or work against each other when out of proportion to one another.

When asked about the importance of technology in her literacy practices, Audrey described it as present but unimportant.

> Audrey: "Mmmm. I wouldn't really say it's overly important. I don't think it's … like I only have a couple things. I have the weather app (see Figure 32), Instagram (Figure 35), and I have music (Figure 37) and texting (Figure 36). It's helpful but I think a book is just as helpful."

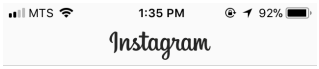



*Figure 35*: Audrey's Instagram.

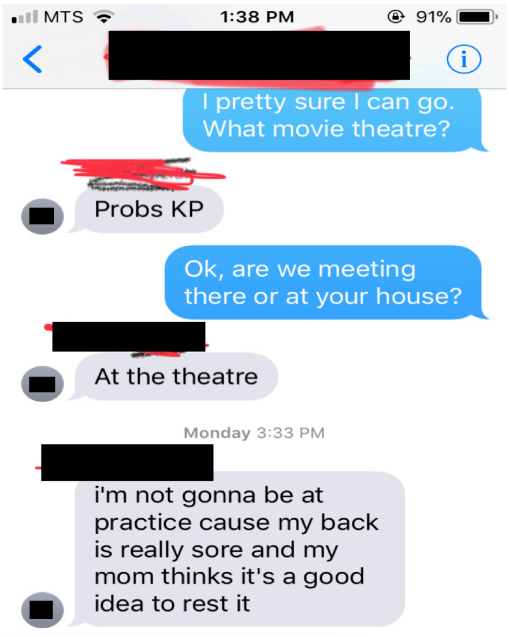



*Figure 36*: Audrey's text message.

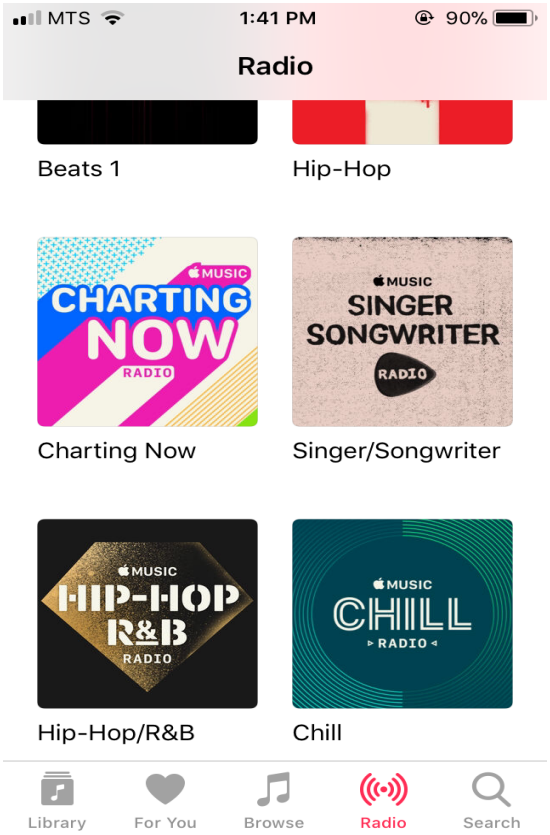



*Figure 37*: Audrey's Apple Radio.

Once again, we see the importance of social media, texting and the interaction between peers using a mobile device as important motivators and tools for daily literacy practices. Even Audrey's experience with music was represented by a screenshot of the Apple Music application taken with her device. Six out of ten of Audrey's documented literacy practices were technology dependent, yet she did not see technology as particularly important, perhaps because technology is so ubiquitous in her environment. Her mobile device was no more important to her than pencil and paper.

**Audrey as a storyteller.** Audrey expressed a lot of self-doubt throughout the process, and like Logan, her voice was often not heard during the whole class

explorations of the mentor texts. She was comfortable working in small group situations however, and she often chose to work with Nisha, tucked away in a corner of the library.




*Figure 38*: Audrey working with Nisha.

Being somewhat removed from the rest of the group made the pair more comfortable as they shared their stories with one another. In Figure 38, Audrey can be seen using a handheld device to audio record Nisha, so that the two of them could later listen to the audio recording and discuss feedback that would help Nisha move forward in her storytelling process.

Audrey was articulate when she gave feedback to her peers, and showed growth in her ability to give meaningful feedback throughout the process. After listening to Liana's story of her first public use of the English language upon moving to Canada, Audrey recognized the unique perspective her classmate could provide and offered some concrete feedback.

> Audrey: "Your story is really interesting and it's different, because not everyone is not from here. Not everyone is from a different place. And I think your story was interesting but you need to make sure that you have a set story because you sort of got a little bit off track. And I think you need to make up a finishing line."

Audrey also felt inspired by Nisha's story, and recognized that it contained a powerful message of kindness. She articulated that Nisha could make use of gesture and voices to make it more entertaining, demonstrating that she had started to internalize the impact that other modes of communication can have on creating a more engaging audience experience.

> Audrey: "I think your story is really inspirational and interesting and engaging. It makes me want to feel like a better person. I think that you could have more gestures and more different voices to make it a little bit more entertaining, but other than that I thought it was a really good story."

During the final storytelling experience, Audrey delivered her story confidently, and used descriptive language to explain her family's experience with a dangerous heat warning while on vacation in Arizona. Her body language remained somewhat closed, but she did make eye contact with other students in the circle. Her gestures were somewhat nervous and were not consciously choreographed to enhance the meaning of the story; however, she was able to engage the other students through humour.

**Audrey's alternative representation.** Audrey made two different attempts to translate a physical sensation from her oral story into another mode. Both showed an attempt to capture the feeling of the oppressive heat she felt while staying in Arizona

with her family. Audrey's first attempt was a haiku that tried to capture a specific moment in time.

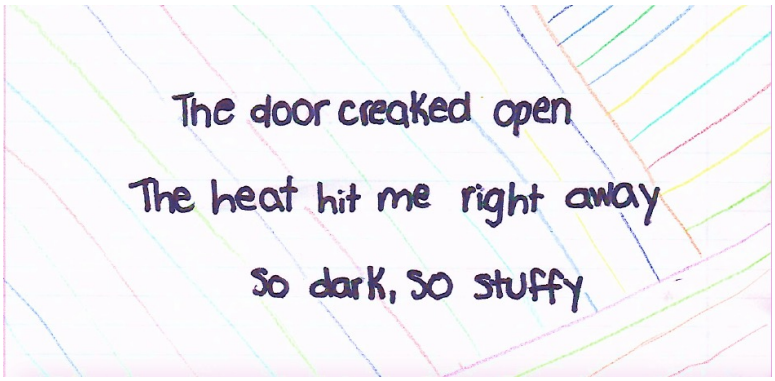



*Figure 39*: Audrey's first haiku.

The background behind the haiku was decorative only and did not help to enhance the meaning of the words, so I encouraged Audrey to think of a way she might make the haiku and a visual component work together. In Audrey's second attempt, she tried to impart the feeling of heat through a photograph of some candles. She also rewrote the haiku to better capture some of the emotion she felt during the experience.



The heat had hit me.
Worried feelings everywhere.
I breathed in hot air.

*Figure 40*: Audrey's second haiku and image.

Audrey struggled to represent her message in the way she intended. The substitution of the candles for the feeling of heat did not work the way she had hoped. Audrey was away for the last few weeks of the project and did not have an opportunity to revise her work or to create a final reflective video.

**Case Study Four: Tambara's Journey**

**Tambara's literacy journal and interview.** Tambara demonstrated a strong preference for social media and electronic forms of communication. Frequent engagement with SnapChat, reliance on the Internet for research, and communication with others via texting and email were all evident in her journal. During the interview, Tambara revealed her interest in current events and how it helped to keep her informed and shape her opinions. She also documented print based practices and expressed throughout the interview that she wanted to spend more time reading. Tambara began the interview by sharing her practice of watching the news and keeping up with current events.

> Ms. Bartok: "Could you please choose one of the entries from your photographic literacy journal to discuss?"
>
> Tambara: "This, I guess." (Figure 41)

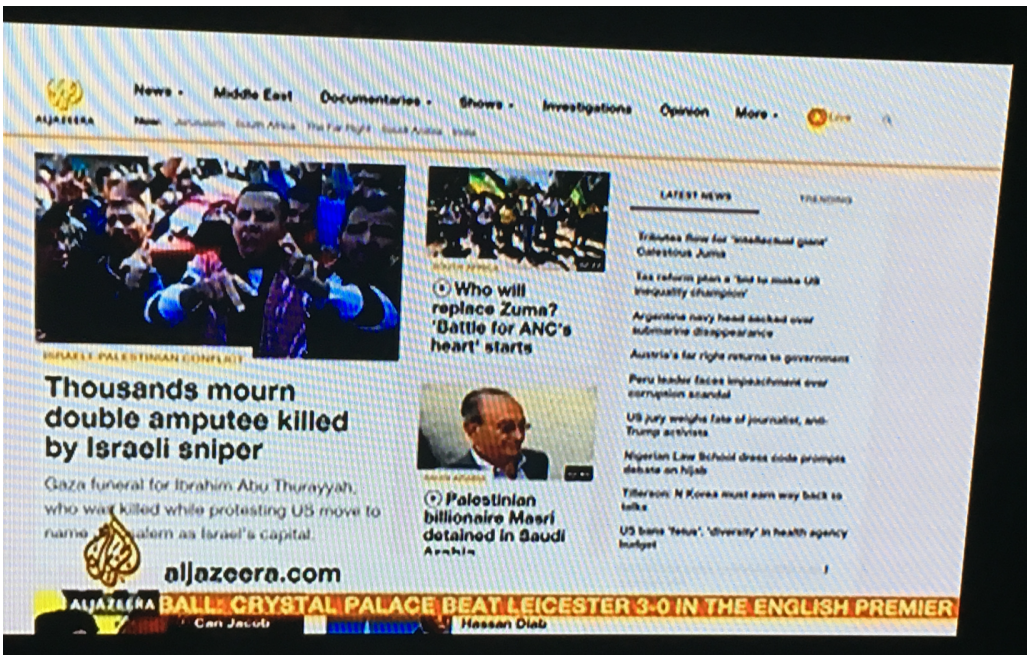



*Figure 41*: A news website that Tambara visits.

> Ms. Bartok: "Ok. So can you describe the literacy practice here?"
>
> Tambara: "It's getting news from a news source and learning more about your environment and what's going on in the world. So you know, when you're in a conversation you're not totally lost and you know the chaos that's going on and the good things and the bad things. So this is just the news that I'm watching."

Tambara's description of this practice made it clear that part of her identity revolves around being informed about current events and having a global perspective. She explained that she used this knowledge to inform her social conversations. This seemed a very grown up type of practice, and as we moved on to the next few questions, it became clear that this was a home literacy practice and a way for her to connect with her father each evening. This is another example of how home based practices and parental influence help to shape the literacy identities of young people.

Ms. Bartok: “Ok. Where did this take place?”

Tambara: “This as in … ”

Ms. Bartok: “When you were reading the news, where did this happen?”

Tambara: “In my living room.”

Ms. Bartok: “I can’t tell from the picture, is it a computer or a TV?”

Tambara: “Oh, it’s a TV.”

Ms. Bartok: “Ok. What’s being communicated then?”

Tambara: “The double amputee killed by Israel snipers. It’s telling me about that I guess. And things like that.”

Ms. Bartok: “How is it being communicated? Is it being communicated in more than one way?”

Tambara: “Yes, there’s pictures shown, and there’s words and you can see someone speaking in the background but you obviously can’t hear it.”

Ms. Bartok: “Were there other people involved in this literacy practice?”

Tambara: “Was someone, anyone else there with me watching it?”

Ms. Bartok: “Yeah.”

Tambara: “Yeah, my dad was there.”

Ms. Bartok: “Why did you choose to document this literacy practice?”

Tambara: “I chose it because I do it on a daily basis. And I felt like it was important to tell you that I do it on a daily basis and not just …. ”

Ms. Bartok: “How often do you engage in this type of literacy practice?”

Tambara: "My dad usually comes back from work and he's usually watching the news, and I usually do it with him. So probably every evening when I get back from school I guess."

Ms. Bartok: "How important is this literacy practice in your daily life?"

Tambara: "Really important because then I know what's going on and I'm not really confused when I'm having a conversation with people."

Tambara was not just reading the news and viewing photographs as I originally inferred from the picture, she was also viewing videos. Tambara and her father were able to choose which news outlet to consult for current events, they were able to choose which news stories caught their attention, and those which they did not attend to at all. This represents a significant departure from watching a scheduled television news program that dictates the stories presented, how long they are available to the viewer, and in which order they occur.

Tambara's awareness of multimodality was demonstrated when she identified that there were "pictures shown, and there's words and you can see someone speaking in the background." In her own words, Tambara was able to recognize that different modes of communication carry information, and identified the linguistic, audio, and visual modes that were present and contributing to the meaning of the news messages that she consumed.

Ms. Bartok: "How does this literacy practice fit into your school life?"

Tambara: "Well, if we have an assignment and we need something like this, at least I know I have something, a news source that I can go to, or something like

that. So I could go to this source to get my information if we have an assignment to do. So it's pretty important."

Ms. Bartok: "Do you feel your teachers would support this literacy practice?"

Tambara: "Yeah, it's teaching me more about the world and to have my own opinion and listen, and make my own opinion because I don't have to believe what this says I guess. I know what's going on but it's my opinion if I want to believe it or not."

Ms. Bartok:" How would you like to see this literacy practice integrated into school?"

Tambara: "I honestly don't know how to answer that. I'm not sure what to say. I don't know how but it would be good if people could teach more about this at school and about what's going on and stuff like that. But, we already do that so we don't need to implement it more if you don't want to."

Tambara valued online news sources as a place to find information for school projects, and this was consistent with the overall practices demonstrated by her peers. The Internet was the "go-to" place to find information about current events, and for other informational needs. Tambara was confident that her teachers would support this literacy practice and acknowledged that it was a part of her school experience, alluding to the development of her opinions and critical thinking skills. Tambara seemed to place some value on critical thinking when she stated, "I don't have to believe what this says I guess." This suggests that she weighed the information she read online with prior knowledge before deciding if it made sense to her. This is a valuable skill when reading online content, and it seemed that the social discussions she had about current events, her

school experiences, and the news based literacy practice she shared with her father have combined to give her a very critical stance on the information that she consumed.

When I asked Tambara if there were literacy practices in her journal she preferred over others, she hesitated and expressed a desire to spend more time reading print based texts.

> Ms. Bartok: ”Are there literacy practices in your journal that you prefer over others, and why?”
>
> Tambara: “No, not really. Well, actually, I don’t know why, but I don’t read that much. I want to start reading more. I feel like I would rather maybe watch TV more, or do math (Figure 42) more than read (Figure 43), and I don’t know why. Yeah, I need to start reading more. It’s not that I don’t like it, but I should do it more. That’s what I’m saying. Is that the question you were asking?”

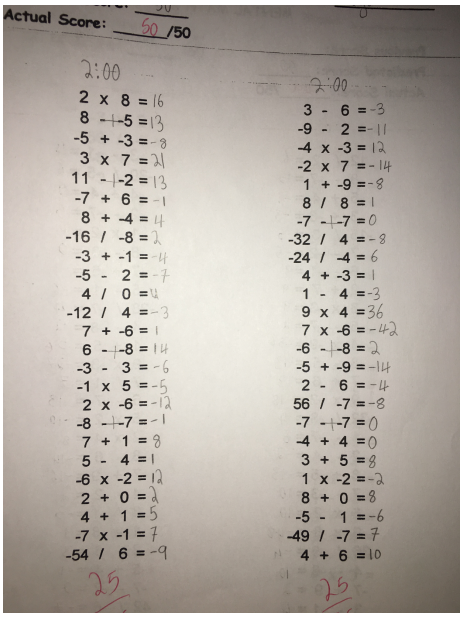
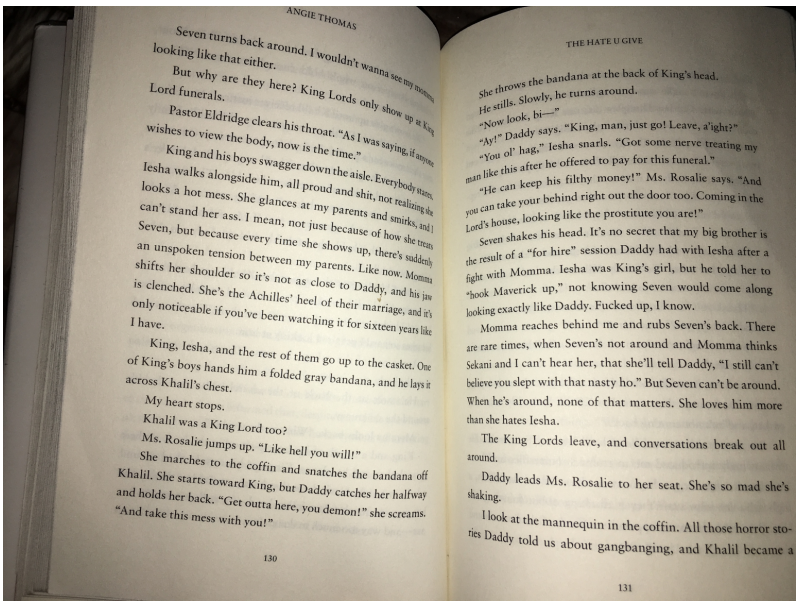



*Figure 42*: Math homework.



ANGIE THOMAS

Seven turns back around. I wouldn't wanna see my mother looking like that either.

But why are they here? King Lords only show up at King Lord funerals.

Pastor Eldridge clears his throat. "As I was saying, if anyone wishes to view the body, now is the time."

King and his boys swagger down the aisle. Everybody stares. Iesha walks alongside him, all proud and shit, not realizing she looks a hot mess. She glances at my parents and smirks, and I can't stand her ass. I mean, not just because of how she treats Seven, but because every time she shows up, there's suddenly an unspoken tension between my parents. Like now. Momma shifts her shoulder so it's not as close to Daddy, and his jaw is clenched. She's the Achilles' heel of their marriage, and it's only noticeable if you've been watching it for sixteen years like I have.

King, Iesha, and the rest of them go up to the casket. One of King's boys hands him a folded gray bandana, and he lays it across Khalil's chest.

My heart stops.

Khalil was a King Lord too?

Ms. Rosalie jumps up. "Like hell you will!"

She marches to the coffin and snatches the bandana off Khalil. She starts toward King, but Daddy catches her halfway and holds her back. "Get outta here, you demon!" she screams. "And take this mess with you!"

130

THE HATE U GIVE

She throws the bandana at the back of King's head.

He stills. Slowly, he turns around.

"Now look, bi—"

"Ay!" Daddy says. "King, man, just go! Leave, a'ight?"

"You ol' hag," Iesha snarls. "Got some nerve treating my man like this after he offered to pay for this funeral."

"He can keep his filthy money!" Ms. Rosalie says. "And you can take your behind right out the door too. Coming in the Lord's house, looking like the prostitute you are!"

Seven shakes his head. It's no secret that my big brother is the result of a "for hire" session Daddy had with Iesha after a fight with Momma. Iesha was King's girl, but he told her to "hook Maverick up," not knowing Seven would come along looking exactly like Daddy. Fucked up, I know.

Momma reaches behind me and rubs Seven's back. There are rare times, when Seven's not around and Momma thinks Sekani and I can't hear her, that she'll tell Daddy, "I still can't believe you slept with that nasty ho." But Seven can't be around. When he's around, none of that matters. She loves him more than she hates Iesha.

The King Lords leave, and conversations break out all around.

Daddy leads Ms. Rosalie to her seat. She's so mad she's shaking.

I look at the mannequin in the coffin. All those horror stories Daddy told us about gangbanging, and Khalil became a

131

*Figure 43*: Tambara's novel. From *The Hate U Give*, A. Thomas, 2017.

Tambara experienced some conflict between the literacy practices she had documented, and as she reflected on whether she should read more books, she echoed the same dismissive attitude toward her preferred literacy preferences as some of her peers. Her desire to spend more time reading may have been genuine. It may have been an honest observation about her habits, but it was notable that her preoccupation with reading continued when I asked about her creative habits outside of school.

> Ms. Bartok: "Do you ever create, write, compose, choreograph or story tell outside of school?"
>
> Tambara: "No. I read books. Not a lot, but I do read. But I don't tell it or write it or anything like that. Not outside of school, but we usually have journal writing in class and I usually do write in class. But not that much outside of school. I do journal write though, if that's what you're asking."

Ms. Bartok: "Fair enough. You say that you don't, but if you did create, write, compose, choreograph, or story tell, how would you prefer to do that?"

Tambara: "By kind of writing I guess. Writing it out. I don't know. I'm not very good at making videos or editing. I feel like writing would be easier to do and make more sense than doing something you don't know how to do."

Ms. Bartok: "If you did create something, like writing, composing, choreographing or storytelling, would you share these pieces with anyone else, and how would you share them? Where do you think you would share them?"

Tambara: "I don't think I would. Probably with my friends. I don't know. My friends write poetry and they show it to me, and I really enjoy them. Probably not in front of the whole school, like at an assembly or something. I feel like I would be too shy to do that. But probably to my friends and they would give me advice, like I should change this or that, but not to the whole school though."

This piece of conversation is layered with information. Tambara identified a common theme of seeking feedback and approval from her peers for her creative work, indicating the importance of peer group collaboration even though she did not see herself as a creator outside of school. She circled back to print based literacy and her concern that she needed to read more. The journal writing she spoke of is really a school-based practice, but she indicated it was one way she could be creative.

Tambara's comments indicated that she felt more confident and comfortable in the domain of print. It is tempting to assume that students in this age group would be adept at making and editing videos, but Tambara stated she didn't feel confident working with video and that it would be difficult to learn. This coincides with the idea that

students need overt instruction with technology, and that they may not have the skills to engage in creating multimodal messages without teacher guidance (Albers, Vasquez & Harste, 2008; Ryan, Scott & Walsh, 2010). Even though Tambara expressed doubts about creating in a visual medium, she did share visual information and text with her peers through Instagram (Figure 44), texting, (Figure 45) and SnapChat (Figure 45), as was evidenced by her own documentation of her social media practices; however, she did not mention these as creative acts, even when further questioned about the role that technology played in her literacy practices.

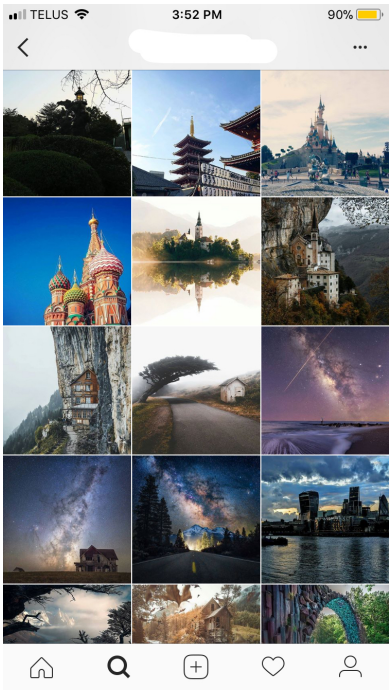



*Figure 44*: Tambara's Instagram.




*Figure 45*: Tambara's text message.

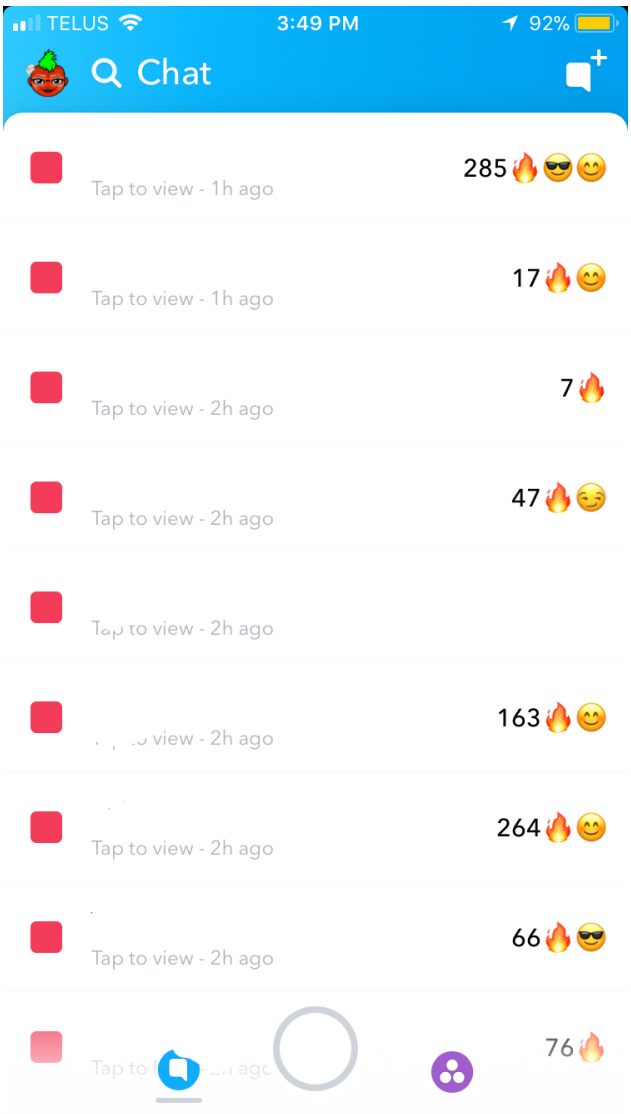



*Figure 46*: Tambara's SnapChat feed.

Ms. Bartok: "How important is technology in your literacy practices?"

Tambara:. "It's really important because it's where I get all of my information for school, like I'll search things up. If I have to I'll go to the library and get a book, but ninety percent of the time I'll use my phone to search something up and not books. 10% of the time, I'll get a book."

Tambara identified that technology was important to her in an academic context for sourcing information. Note the mention of the personal device being more important than a print book for research. For Tambara, knowledge was something carried in her pocket everyday, and she relied less on print found in physical books. There was fluidity between devices evident here as well. Although Tambara referred to using her personal device when searching for factual information, her journal included a picture of a desktop computer screen with a Google search for information about Egypt (Figure 47). Like most of her peers, she moved back and forth between the desktop computers and her own personal device constantly, depending on what was available and according to need.

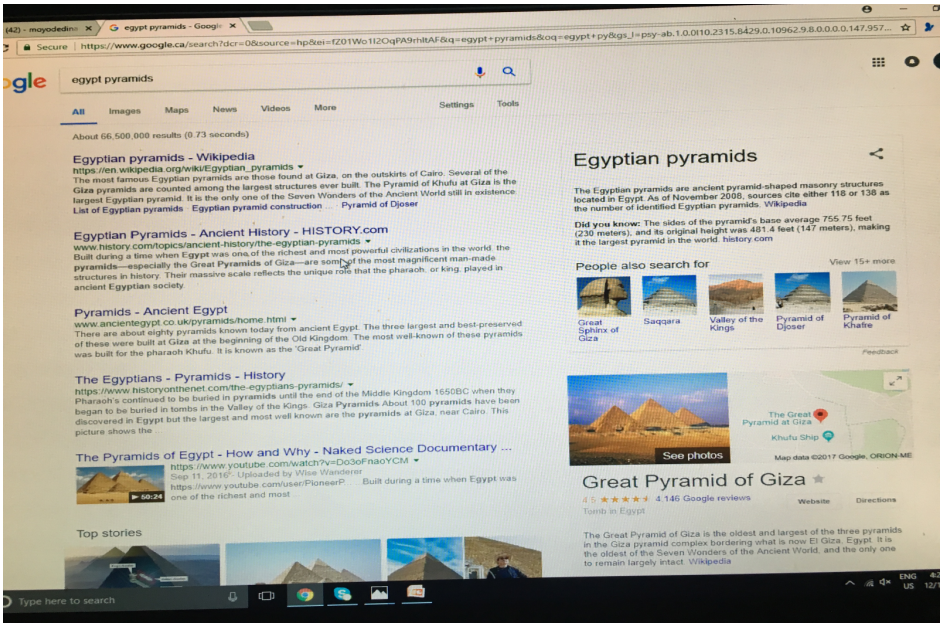



*Figure 47*: A Google search for information on Egypt.

It is interesting that Tambara did not mention technology in the context of maintaining relationships with her peers. She documented several examples of social media and electronic communication in her journal, suggesting that these were important

ways that she communicated and interacted with her friends. In the SnapChat screenshot (see Figure 46), the numbers on the right hand side indicate the number of consecutive days Tambara traded Snaps with a particular user. Her SnapChat statistics demonstrated that she had streaks that were close to three hundred days long. It requires some commitment to maintain those numbers; in order to maintain a streak, users must Snap each other at least once in every 24-hour period. Snapping is mostly visual, and the screenshot she captured showed that she had unopened Snaps without audio (indicated by the red coloured squares). They could behave been pictures, texts or videos, indicating her engagement with both consuming and creating multimodal content. The screen shot contains layered, coded, visual information about the relationships she had with her SnapChat peers. For example, the emoji with sunglasses indicates that Tambara had a best friend in common with the sender of that particular Snap. A smirking face emoji indicates that a particular user sent many more Snaps to Tambara than Tambara sent back to that particular user. There are subtexts of social status that regular SnapChat users are able to discern at a glance, and in the virtual space of SnapChat, there is a very high value placed on maintaining streaks. Tambara clearly placed a lot of importance on these virtual relationships even though she did not mention this practice during the interview.

**Tambara as a storyteller.** Tambara described storytelling as a way, "To teach others about what happened. Maybe you might want to tell other generations the history of your history." This was reflected in her own story that taught a lesson about thinking things through before acting. While she developed a story about giving in to peer pressure and injuring herself while running up an escalator at the mall, she struggled with the feeling that it was inadequate, and on an exit slip described that, "I am not very

confident in my story because I don't have a lot of details to add to it." This was a common sentiment among most of the students at the beginning of the process. It was through the telling, feedback and retelling cycle that students began to fill their stories with details that made them feel full and engaging.

Tambara was quick to internalize that stories were more engaging when they were told in a fluent way, and in her feedback to another student, identified that his frequent use of pausing statements interrupted the flow of his story. This was something we had discussed in class after watching a number of mentor texts.

> Tambara: "I enjoyed your story but I think next time you should add less pausing statements. You have a lot of "and thens, uhms, like", and I think that will make your story even better."

Tambara's story map (see Figure 48) contained a sense of the characters, the setting of her story (the mall), the season (summer), and further defined that the story took place on the escalator located close to the mall food court. There was a sense of the emotions she was feeling as she ran up the escalator stairs, when she dropped her phone, and when she injured her knee. Like Natasha, she had included specific phrases that she wanted to remember, and they were written at the bottom of the story map. There were also two directional arrows that indicated that the map should be read from left to right.

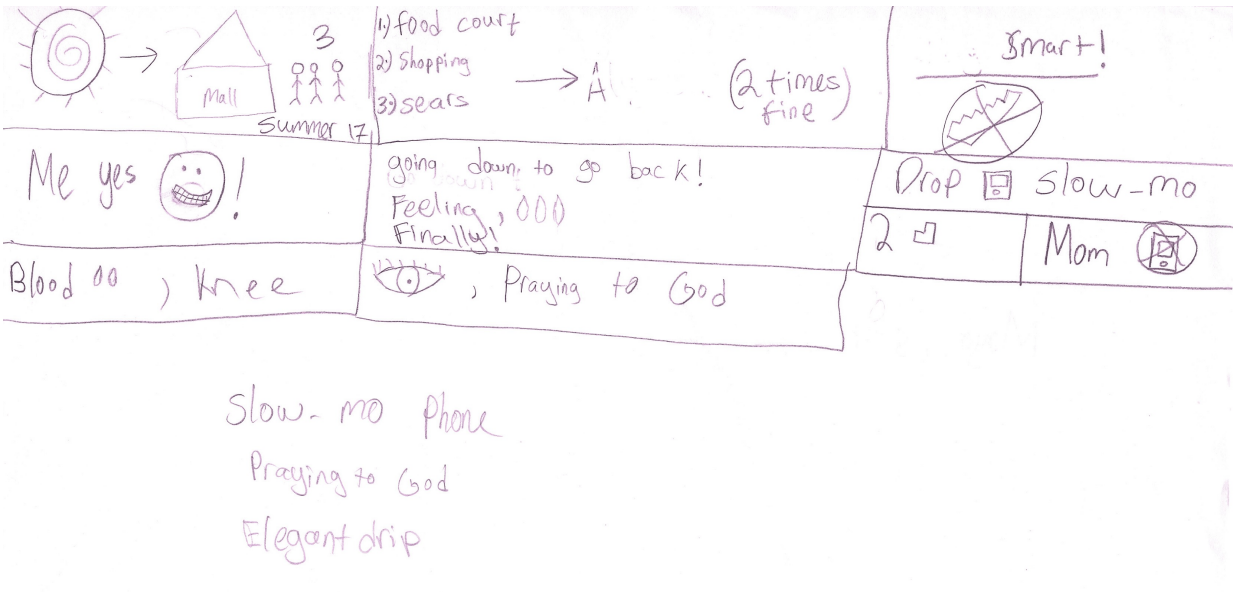



Figure 48: Tambara's story map.

During the storytelling work sessions, Tambara focused on her own fluency and on getting the rhythm and feel of her story just right. In her final reflective video, there was evidence that she made some very deliberate choices when working on her story.

> Tambara: "I learned how to change a boring everyday thing like going to the mall into a more engaging story for the audience. I also learned how to make a story very intriguing for the audience. For example, you add eye contact, gestures, details, descriptions, and you add other things. At the beginning of the storytelling unit I was not very confident in my story … but now at the end of the unit I am very happy with my story. I feel like I could [go] anywhere and tell it and not forget what I was talking about."

Tambara's story was very animated, particularly during the moments where she described how she attempted to run up the decsending escalator and she acted her story out in quite a physically exaggerated manner. As she did so, she made eye contact with

the other students in the circle, turning her body to make sure everyone was engaged with what she was saying.

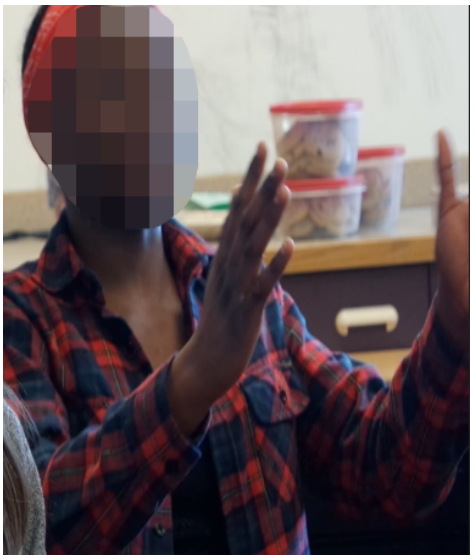


*Figure 49*: Tambara using gesture. “I look at the escalator.”

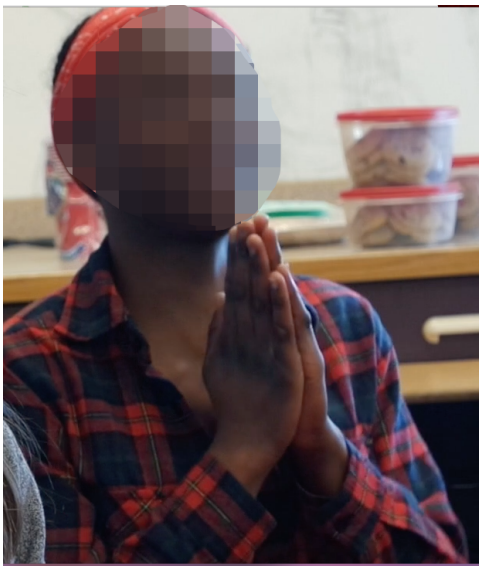


*Figure 50*: Actions mirroring words. “I’m praying to God. Oh God, please let me be able to do this!”

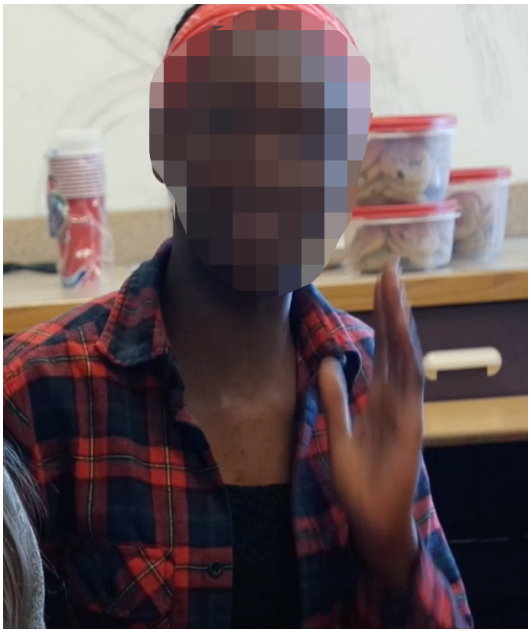


*Figure 51*: A flurry of gesture. “I’m running up the escalor. Running! Running!”

She made very effective and deliberate use of gesture, and the physicality of her storytelling carried a great deal of the meaning. Tambara also made use of dramtic pauses and volume of voice to convey emotion and suspense.

**Tambara’s alternative representation.** Tambara chose to represent her story as a short slide show, using emoji and bitmoji symbols to represent the people, objects, emotions and places that were central to her story. The images were accompanied by a short poem, music, and movement which moved the story forward. Given that Tambara mentioned her discomfort with creating videos during her literacy journal interview, the move to digital storytelling was a significant creative risk for her to take.

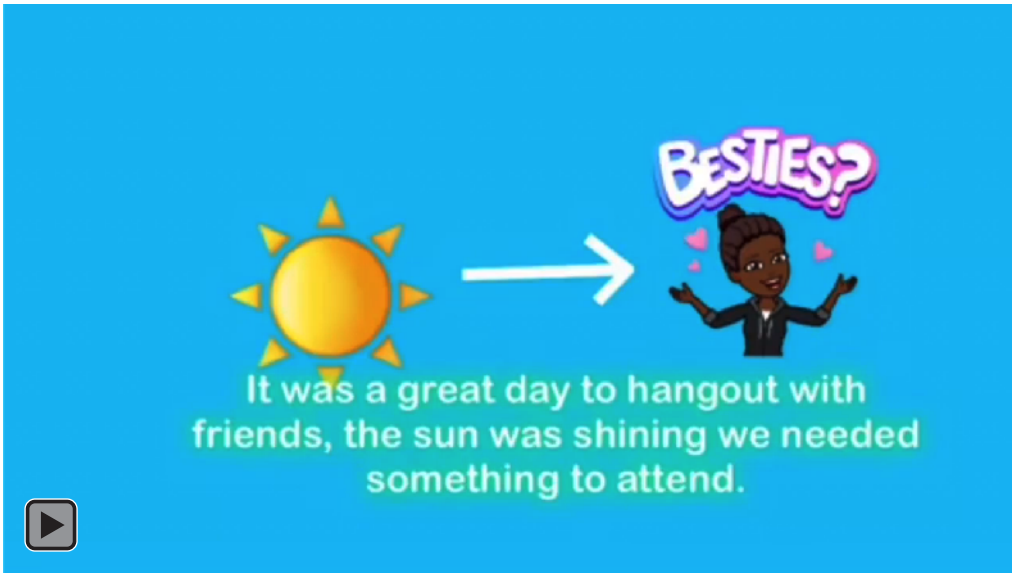



*Figure 52*: Tambara's alternative representation.

Tambara used arrows to indicate which way to read the images, from left to right, as each new action in the story lead to a new emotions being expressed by the main character in the story. For example, on slide three, Tambara expressed that she was bored, which lead her and her friends to think of a mischievous activity. This feeling of being mischievous was represented by the purple smiling devil with horns emoji. Although her oral story and digital story mentioned that a group of friends was involved in the action, Tambara chose to include only one bitmoji to represent that she was the central character in the story. It was evident that she chose one that resembled her own appearance.

Throughout this digital retelling, Tambara had to consider how to summarize and capture the meaning of her story without leaving out important information. She condensed an oral story of several minutes into mostly visual elements. In Tambara's

final reflection, she described how the use of the emoji and bitmoji symbols helped her demonstrate her ideas visually, compensating for her perceived inability to draw.

> Tambara: "I chose to do my alternative representation in the way that I did it because I felt that it was very unique and creative and nobody else would do it. Which I was right. Nobody else did do it. What I chose to do for my alternative representation was I chose bitmojis and emojis to express my emotion, which was fear, and other emotions. But the main emotion I felt was fear. I chose those because I really liked that I could not only show facial expressions, but I could also show me doing things. I could show myself falling, which I could draw, but I'm not very good at drawing. And I could also show thumbs down, like it wasn't a very good idea or something like that. "

This reflection gave some insight into how Tambara coded abstract ideas within the visual elements by choosing culturally known symbols, such as the thumbs down emoji, to represent a negative feeling about an idea. This reflection also revealed that Tambara seemed to place high degree of value on doing something that was creatively different than her peers.

Tambara's video was effective at conveying her main lesson and her peers were able to discern the intended message. After viewing Tambara's digital story, Rebecca wrote that "A message being communicated is to think things through. I know this because of the emoji's she used and the words that described and explained her Bitmoji's." Kayla wrote, "I think the theme of her alternative representation is to not always follow the leader but be a leader when your gut doesn't want to follow. She showed this by making a video clip describing the feelings around her. It also showed her

following a bad idea, then regretting it after it happened." Tambara had successfully moved meaning across modes of communication, she had taken creative risks, and compensated for her perceived weaknesses in order to communicate the message of her story in a new way.

**Case Study Five: Kayla's Journey**

**Kayla's literacy journal and interview.** Kayla identified as a dancer and a photographer. She documented a wide variety of literacy experiences; including dance, print, photo editing, social media, and Netflix. Like her many of her peers, she attended specialized classes and participated in informal groups to develop her preferred literacy practices.

Kayla flipped to a thoughtfully composed photograph of her dance shoes as we started the interview.

Ms. Bartok: "Ok. Kayla. Please choose one of the entries from your literacy journal to discuss."

Kayla: "I'll do this one."




*Figure 53*: A carefully composed picture of Kayla's dance shoes.

Ms. Bartok: "Ok. What is the literacy practice here?"

Kayla: "Well I … this is a picture of my shoes. I dance with these. They show my creativity kind of thing, through dancing."

Ms. Bartok: "Where did this take place?"

Kayla: "Well, I took this picture at home. But I use this, my shoes, at my studio to dance with."

Ms. Bartok: "What is being communicated?"

Kayla: "Creativity, and just expressing myself through dancing."

Ms. Bartok: "How is it being communicated? Is it being communicated in more than one way?"

Kayla: "It's being communicated by, well this picture, and by shows and competitions that I go to. Dancing."

Kayla clarified that the picture of her shoes was meant to be a visual representation of her involvement in dance and representative of her creativity. The picture was thoughtfully composed, suggesting that she valued the shoes and that she was using the visual mode to communicate something important about herself. She also identified that one can communicate and be creative through dance, and in this way alluded to the communicative power of the gestural mode. Kayla viewed her dance shoes as both a symbol of her creativity and a tool that helped her achieve creativity. This was layered into the picture she provided, and into the comments she made describing her practice.

> Ms. Bartok: "Were there other people involved in this literacy practice?"
>
> Kayla: "Yes, because I dance with lots of other people and not just only myself."
>
> Ms. Bartok: "Why did you choose to document this literacy practice?"
>
> Kayla: "Because I really think this is a big part of me that I would like to share with other people."
>
> Ms. Bartok: "How often do you engage in this type of literacy practice?"
>
> Kayla: "Twice a week. I dance twice a week and practice a lot as well."
>
> Ms. Bartok: "So how important is this literacy practice in your daily life?"
>
> Kayla: "Pretty important because if I'm feeling down or something it will just help me to cheer myself up."

Creativity and self-expression were important for Kayla, and she explained that she chose to document this practice because she wanted to share this part of her identity with other people. Echoing Natasha and Logan, she articulated the emotional connection that she had to this practice, and that it had the power to brighten her mood.

The importance of the social aspect of dancing became apparent when she spoke about how dance might be integrated into her school life.

Ms. Bartok: "How does this literacy practice fit into your school life?"

Kayla: "Well just by dancing if I'm having a rough day or I just, I'll try and be a little bit more happy during the day if I dance."

Ms. Bartok: "Do you feel your teachers would support this literacy practice?"

Kayla: "I think so."

Ms. Bartok: "So how does it fit into your school life?"

Kayla: "Well, I can share it by listening to the music of it with other people as well."

Ms. Bartok: "How would you like to see this literacy practice integrated into school?"

Kayla: "I think if we had a bigger dance group or something. It would be bigger and a little challenging. It would be kinda nice to have."

Ms. Bartok: "You said bigger dance group, so is there a dance group in school right now?"

Kayla: "Yes there is. But if it was a little bit more challenging, and gave people a little bit more of a challenge then it would be easier to do."

Kayla had difficulty articulating how her interest in dance could be incorporated into her school life, aside from being an extracurricular activity. She referred to a dance club that already existed in the school. The group was student led, and it was an informal club that students could join or drop out of at will. There was no formal instruction, and students were not required to attend on a regular basis. Kayla seemed to feel that a larger group

would be better, suggesting she would like something more than the casual affinity group arrangement that the dance club provided.

When Kayla was asked about her preferred literacy practices, she mentioned music was important to her, and this was a pattern that was repeated with several of her peers.

> Ms. Bartok: "Are there literacy practices in your journal that you prefer over others, and why?"
>
> Kayla: "I think probably my music picture (Figure 54) over my texting (Figure 55) because I listen to music more often than I text people."

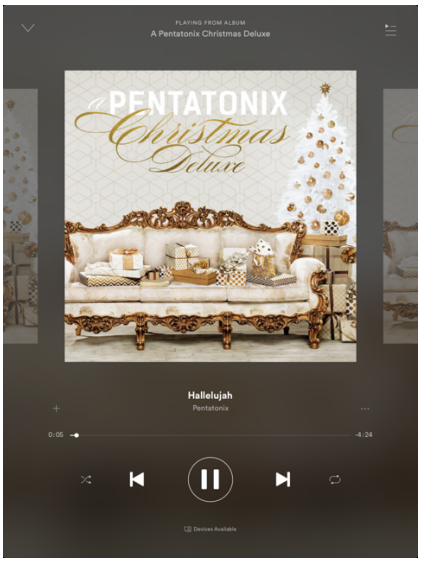



*Figure 54*: A music application.

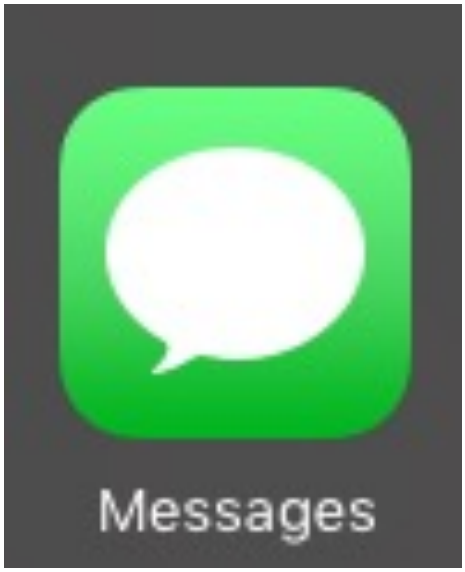



*Figure 55*: A screenshot of a texting app icon.

Like many of her peers, Kayla demonstrated how important personal devices were to this group of students, as it was evident that she listened to music on her device and that she used it to communicate with her friends via texting. The screenshot she captured also

revealed that the cultural practice of celebrating Christmas had an impact on the type of music she listened to on a seasonal basis, reinforcing the pattern that family and peer groups have a large influence on literacy practices.

When asked about her creative outlets, Kayla was able to discuss two ways in which she expressed herself creatively.

Ms. Bartok: "Do you ever create, write, compose, choreograph, or story tell outside of school?"

Kayla: "Yeah. I choreograph through my dance studio. So, my teachers will let me student choreo [sic] some of the dances I do."

Ms. Bartok: "How do you prefer to create, write, compose, choreograph, or story tell?"

Kayla: "I prefer to do it through dancing or through photography (Figure 56), creating like a photo collage or expressing myself through editing photos."

Ms. Bartok: "Do you ever share these pieces with anyone else?"

Kayla: "Yes. I share them on Instagram (Figure 57) or show people pictures of what I've done."

Ms. Bartok: "Just on your phone, or … "

Kayla: "Yeah. On my phone."

Ms. Bartok: "How important is technology in your literacy practices?"

Kayla: "I think it's pretty important because I can share things that I want to express."

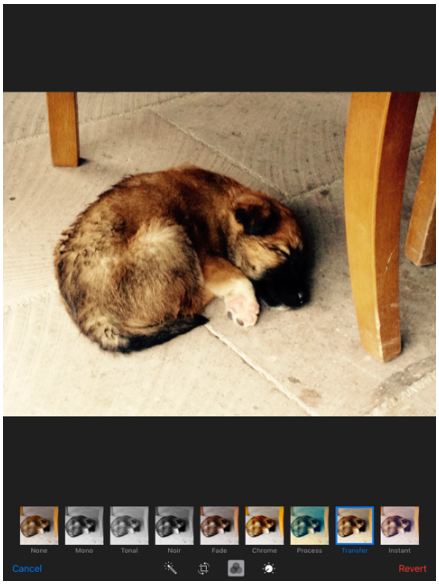


*Figure 56*: Kayla's photo editing.

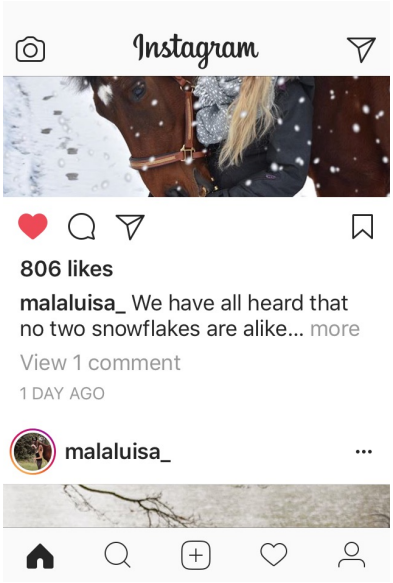



*Figure 57*: An Instagram account Kayla followed.

Kayla explicitly named dance choreography, photography, and editing of pictures as creative outlets. Sharing of her photography took place in two ways: on Instagram and on her personal device. These were both important ways that her peers interacted with her, and again, the significant influence that peers have over literacy practices became evident.

Instagram is a mostly visual social media platform, with a feature that allows individuals to leave text comments and "like" images that they connect with in some way. Kayla's engagement with Instagram was similar to Tambara's engagement with SnapChat in that they were both seeking and obtaining validation from their peers through these virtual spaces. Mobile technology was an integral part of how Kayla was sharing her photography and photo editing creativity.

Kayla did not discuss her engagement with print text during the interview, but she did include documentation of print both as the practice of reading (Figure 58) and what appeared to be the practice of a handwritten journal. (Figure 59).

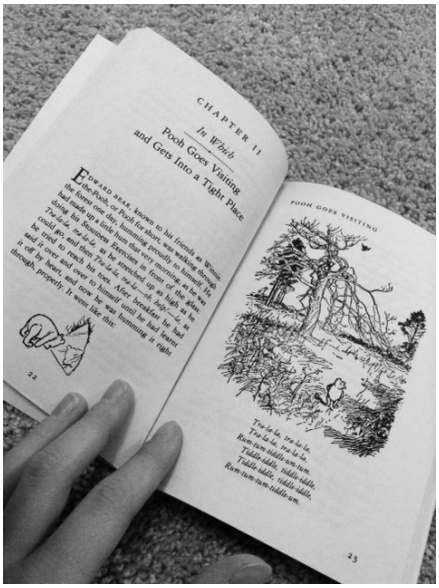



*Figure 58*: A black and white photo. Kayla's print literacy practice.



*Figure 59*: A staged photo. Kayla's journal writing practice.

The composition of these photos was interesting as they demonstrated some of Kayla's photography and editing skills. Both photos were staged and were similar to the picture of her shoes in that they suggested potential action. Figure 58 is a black and white photo, echoing the black and white text and pictures in the book she has photographed. Figure 59 depicted her hand, ready to begin writing. There was some thought behind how these photos were taken, and a dimension of Kayla's identity was layered within the text of the pictures she had taken.

**Kayla as a storyteller.** At the start of her storytelling journey, Kayla expressed the belief that the purpose of storytelling is, "to entertain." Throughout the process, Kayla was resourceful and unafraid to explore her stories from many possible angles. As she developed what would become her final story, she was able to research for details using her parents as a source of information. On an exit slip on which I had I asked students to describe how they were feeling about their stories, Kayla responded, "I'm feeling good about it because my parents have told me more information about it that I didn't know before." The act of storytelling allowed Kayla to link her home and school lives in a purposeful way.

Kayla's story map (Figure 60) was quite detailed, and it read much the same way a tri-fold pamphlet would be read; beginning in the top left corner, moving to the bottom of the first column, then moving to the top right center column and moving down, then to the final left most column from the top down.

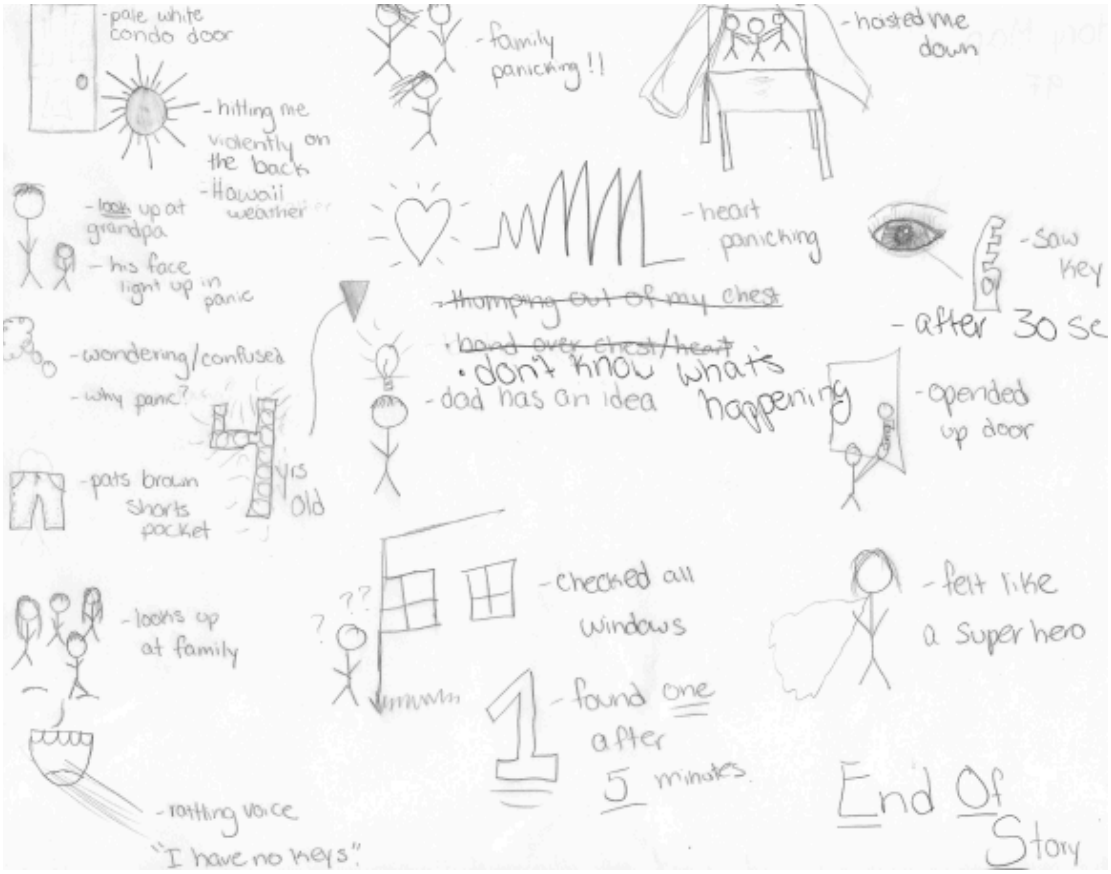



*Figure 60*: Kayla's story map. Her story was about a time when her grandfather locked his keys in his house, and as a small four-year-old girl, she was able to save the day by climbing through a window to retrieve them.

Kayla had included specific details and lines that she wanted to remember on her story map. Many of her images and phrases represented the emotions of the characters, and although her human figures did not have any faces or depict any emotion, at the top of the center column, the characters appeared to be running in different directions to indicate a sense of panic. The words, phrases, and punctuation carried the weight of the emotion being felt by the characters in the story. She has represented a sense of time on her story map, indicating with a decorated numerical symbol that she was four-years-old

when the story took place. The size of the number and the added visual details suggest that this was an important moment for her four-year-old self.

Her images also embodied actions, such as the heart monitor representation that illustrates a heart beating quickly, and an image of her family hoisting her through the window. She used common symbols to represent abstract concepts such as a thought cloud for thinking, a light bulb for an idea, and a cape to represent that she felt like a super hero at the conclusion of the story. Kayla was able to successfully move much of the meaning of her oral story into visual symbols on her story map.

As Kayla worked on her storytelling practice, she began to integrate gesture, vocal expression, and became much more descriptive. In her final reflective video, Kayla was able to describe how she grew as a storyteller.

> Kayla: "Through the storytelling process I learned to use more gestures and descriptive words to enhance my story and make it more interesting. At the beginning of the storytelling process I didn't feel very comfortable with my story because I wasn't confident in it. Now because I practiced it lots more times it was much more interesting and lots more people could relate to it by me using gestures and descriptive words."

Her comments revealed growth in the use of different modes of communication to allow her audience to connect with her story.

Kayla's final storytelling performance was a dramatic telling of how as a young child, she was able to save the day after her grandfather had locked his only set of keys in the house during a large family gathering. As she told the story she used gesture to demonstrate the confusion and panic her family felt when they realized what had

happened. As she delivered the verbal part of this story, she held her hands up to her head and gestured empahtically to represent feelings of alarm.



*Figure 61:* Kayla using gesture. “My whole family starts panicking! They’re like, ‘Oh no! What are we gonna do? How are we gonna get in?”

Kayla also made use of an artifact when she shared her story, introducing a concrete, visual element. She pulled a set of keys from her pocket in the last moment of the story and jingled them dramatically in the air as she delivered her final lines (Figure 62 and Figure 63).





*Figure 62 and 63*: Kayla using an artifact. "I saw the keys on the brown, marble counter top, snatched them up, unlocked the door, and let my whole family in! To this day, my grandpa has never forgotten the keys ever again!"

This concrete element made her story come to life in a way that set her story apart from the other stories told in the circle. It was a creative risk that her peers admired.

**Kayla's alternative representation.** Kayla identified the message of her story early on, and began thinking of how it could be represented in different modes, but she was somewhat unsure as she began to explore how to represent the theme visually. She approached me one day with questions about how she might move forward.

> Kayla: "So I have a question about the alternative representation. I have some different ideas, and so the kind of theme that I want to do is 'don't give up.' And

> so, could I do a bunch of drawings or a bunch of pictures of some people climbing up a mountain, or something like 'don't give up?'"

Kayla had settle on visual elements that represented people struggling with a physical challenge to represent the idea of "don't give up." In her rough jot notes, there is further evidence that she considered how to use other sign systems to reinforce her idea.

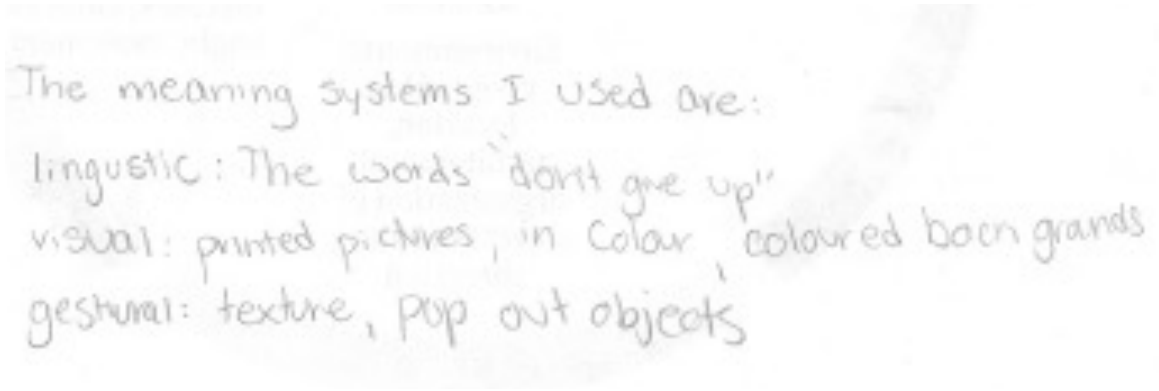



*Figure 64*: Kayla's rough notes, demonstrating some thought about which modes she could leverage to best represent the theme, "don't give up."

Kayla went through a process of elimination as she settled on the creation of a scrap book page that integrated the visuals she imagined, along with the words "don't give up."

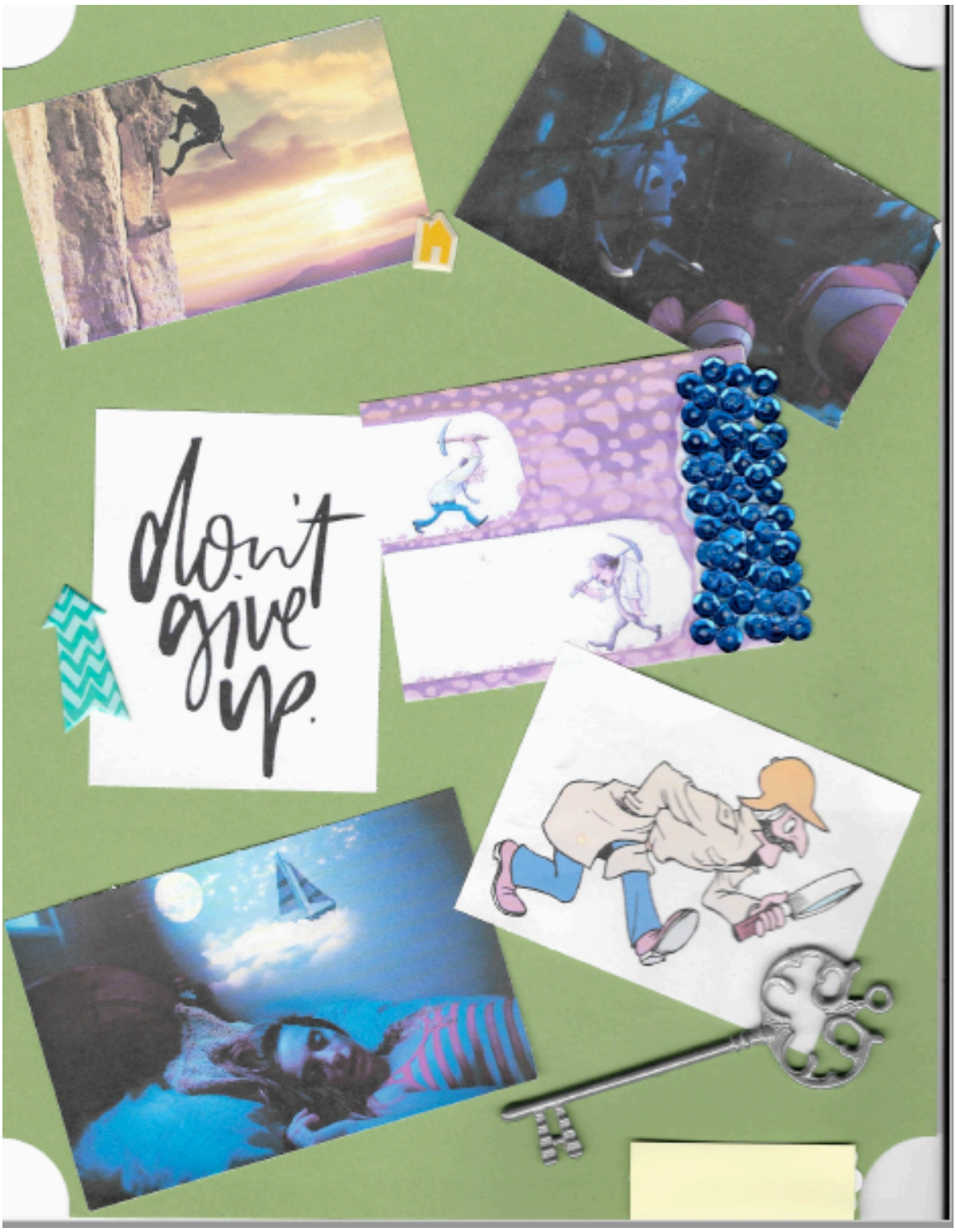



*Figure 65*: Kayla's final alternative representation.

It is not necessary to read this particular page in any direction, but as the key represents the object being sought in her story, that is the natural ending point. The project was quite tactile, and Kayla had used what she called "pop outs" to encourage people to touch the page. The purple sequins she has used to represent jewels being mined, and the key which is a plastic three-dimensional object glued to the page, were examples of these types of pop outs. The key was significantly tied to Kayla's story, as she had used physical keys as an artifact or prop as she told her oral story during the story telling circle. Upon careful examination of the page, a small visual reminder of the house is found near the top of the page.

In Kayla's final video reflection, she outlined her thinking process as she worked out her alternative representation.

> Kayla: "For my alternative representation I chose do a poster of my lesson/theme. I showed that 'don't give up' was one of the big themes in my story. Some things that I put on my poster really showed and enhanced what my story was about. I put some pictures on there as some examples to show not giving up. And just so that people could relate to it more and think of, 'Oh yeah, this is another example of not giving up.'"

The images that Kayla assembled on her scrap book page were effective in portraying her message. After viewing the page, Rebecca reflected that: "A lesson being communicated is to never give up. I know this because her pictures explained/showed how her family tried to find a new way to get in even though she had no key. Her images supported the main theme in her story." Emily astutely wrote that "I believe that the lesson in the collage is to never give up in trying something new. It will have failures, but

in the end, it's the effort that counts. There was a picture of two miners mining for treasure and one guy just gave up when he was so close." Natasha commented on the tactile nature of her work: "I think that the lesson is that you shouldn't give up. I know because there were many images in Kayla's collage that demonstrated this, for example a minor [sic] was digging for diamonds. I like how she integrated texture into her collage. Exl [sic] seqins [sic] as diamonds." Tambara wrote, "The lesson that Kayla's communicating to me is 'don't give up.' She shows this through a collage of pictures put together. It also has a quote on it that says don't give up, and it shows several pictures of people working hard to get things done." Kayla's scrapbook page was an abstract representation of the message of her story, but her message was successfully delivered and interpreted by her peers.

**Case Study Six: Curtis's Journey**

**Curtis's literacy journal and interview.** Curtis was a boisterous and lively young man, who showed an interest in basketball, social media, and prolific use of the Internet. Curtis created his journal in a different format than all of his peers. Where his peers chose to use PowerPoint to collect and organize photos with one photo on each slide, Curtis chose to make a one-page picture collage (Figure 66) with his images using an app on his personal device.




*Figure 66*: A picture collage.

He added text in different fonts to each image to explain the activity that was represented by the photo or the screenshot.

Curtis demonstrated a lot of tension between his documented practices and his interview responses. At the start of our conversation he spoke about his general use of the internet.

Ms. Bartok: "Please choose one of the entries from your photographic literacy journal to discuss and can you describe the literacy practice?"

Curtis: “Alright. So, Internet because you can look up like books and stuff. That’s literacy. And pictures, which also is literacy.”

Ms. Bartok: “Ok. So where do you usually take part in being on the internet?”

Curtis: “At school and at home.”

Ms. Bartok: “How is the message being communicated and is it being communicated in more than one way?”

Curtis: “Yes, it is because with the Internet you can do so much more things than just reading and writing [and] pictures.”

This piece of conversation illustrated that Curtis felt some tension with his idea that literacy is defined as reading and books, as he reached for a way to link his Internet practices with that primary belief, along with an acknowledgement that pictures can be literacy. His ideas about multimodality came through as he suggested that the Internet allows users to experience “more things than just reading and writing, [and] pictures.” Curtis acknowledged that the Internet is more than the sum of its parts. He alluded to the linguistic and visual modes of communication but seemed to be aware that there are other ways to communicate beyond these modes.

Ms. Bartok: “Ok. Were other people or are other people involved in this literacy practice with you?”

Curtis: “Yes. Pretty much everyone in the world that has a device.”

Ms. Bartok: “Why did you choose to document this literacy practice?”

Curtis: “Because the Internet has a lot of things that involve literacy.”

Ms. Bartok: “How often do you engage in this type of literacy practice?”

Curtis: "It depends. If it's a school day, sometimes, once a day. If it's not, twice a day."

Ms. Bartok: "How important is this literacy practice in your daily life?"

Curtis: "It's pretty important because in our generation the Internet is based off of everything. We don't really go to a library to find things anymore."

Curtis indicated that there is a global community that can be accessed online, and that he believed the Internet was the first place people his age go to find information, rather than turning to print materials that might be available in a library. Curtis expressed that information wasn't located in a particular place like a library; it was carried around in his pocket. Curtis gave the impression that looking things up online was the practice of an entire generation.

When I asked Curtis to speak about how this literacy practice might fit into his school life, the answer revealed just how accessible information was to Curtis and how comfortable he was with using anything he could find online to his advantage.

Ms. Bartok: "How does this literacy practice fit into your school life?"

Curtis: "Well, with the Internet say you need to look up a book report on a book, and say you haven't read that book, you could look up what to do."

Ms. Bartok: "Do you feel your teachers would support this literacy practice?"

Curtis: "Yes."

Curtis suggested he might use the Internet to understand an assigned book by finding an online summary. This practice could be viewed as academic dishonesty, but students the same age as Curtis have grown up with ubiquitous access to information. His suggestion to "look up what to do" was reflective of the shifting viewpoints around how schoolwork

is viewed and how it could be done. If something already exists online, students will find it and use it because they can. Curtis described a common practice of using what is available to make tasks easier and faster to complete.

> Ms. Bartok: "How would you like to see this literacy practice integrated into school?"
>
> Curtis: "Just doing more of it and not always just about learning and stuff. I mean, I understand it's school, but sometimes learning gets a little boring cause we do a bit too much of it. So just add a couple games in there."
>
> Ms. Bartok: "You'd like to see gaming integrated into school?"
>
> Curtis: "Not gaming. But learning games, like Kahoot or something like that."
>
> Ms. Bartok: "Ok. Like interactive polling quiz type games?"
>
> Curtis: "Yeah."

When asked how he would like to see his literacy practice integrated into school, he had a clear idea of how to use technology to make school more engaging. Kahoot is an interactive quiz game that can be customized to any subject or content area of choice. It encourages a collaborative approach to both creation of the online quizzes and playing of the game. The platform is also multimodal, and users can add photos, text, and videos to the quizzes they create. Significantly, Curtis saw this platform as a way to make learning fun, and the importance of positive emotional engagement in the context of adolescent literacy practices was again demonstrated.

> Ms. Bartok: "Are there literacy practices in your journal that you prefer over others, and why?"
>
> Curtis: "Not really because these are pretty much the main things that I do."

Ms. Bartok: "So they're all equal in your mind?"

Curtis: "Yeah."

Curtis did not indicate a preference for any one of his documented practices. His photo collage revealed many similarities with his peers in regard to the choices he was making. The use of a personal device was evident in both the documented practices and in the pictures and screenshots taken.

Ms. Bartok: "Do you ever create, write, compose or story tell outside of school?"

Curtis: "I mean, I'll story tell if the topic is on that, but no."

Ms. Bartok: "How important is technology in your literacy practices?"

Curtis: "It's really important because, it's kinda hard to explain but, it holds everything and if I just need something about literacy I can just go to any of these and it will help me." (Referring to literacy journal)

Curtis did not identify as a creator of content, aside from telling stories casually to his friends; however, the documented literacy journal practices again point to social media use, which is a form of creating and sharing multimodal content. Curtis overlooked the importance that these social media platforms played in his day-to-day literacy practices, and the presence of the mobile technology that made all of the interaction possible was so taken for granted, it was invisible.

**Curtis as a storyteller.** Curtis considered himself to be a natural storyteller, and from the first day he demonstrated a strong storytelling voice; however, he initially pushed back against the idea of telling a story that was about his own experience and demonstrated some discomfort. In one of the first brainstorming sessions, Curtis asked, "Does the story have to be about me?", and I created the loose parameter that the story he

shared had to be connected to him in some way, whether that was through a personal experience, a family story (with permission) or a cultural/religious story with personal significance. He was not the only student to ask this question, and so that became the loose rule for the entire class as well.

Curtis was not always fully engaged in the storytelling work sessions and mentor texts, but he demonstrated a willingness to reflect on his storytelling development. When asked how he was doing with his story, Curtis responded that "I feel like I need to improve on how I tell the story, and I think I need more description." He noted that he made progress in his final reflective video, and he was able to specifically describe how he improved.

> Curtis: "When I started in the beginning I was very nervous and my story was kind of 'stuttery'. Not really stutter, but there was a lot of pauses and I didn't have a lot of description either."

The flow of Curtis's story did improve as he engaged with his peers and integrated their feedback.

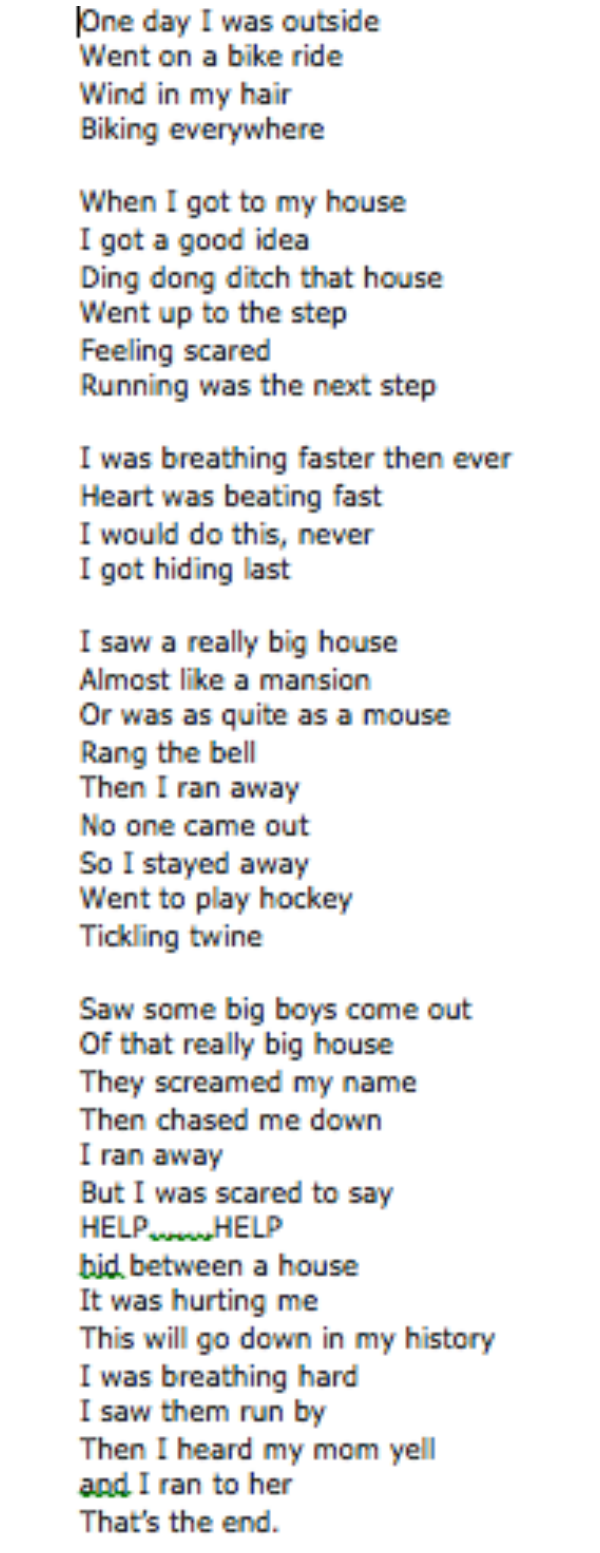
The final storytelling circle seemed very difficult for Curtis, which was surprising because he started off the process seeming very confident. As he began his storytelling performance, his body language was very closed and he looked down toward the floor. His hands were clasped very nervously and his voice was not as confident and boisterous as usual. Curtis's oral story detailed an adventurous incident in which he participated in the mischievous practice of "ding dong ditch." This involved ringing a stranger's doorbell and then running away. His language was quite descriptive and he did use some humour to keep his classmates engaged.

In his final storytelling reflection, Curtis described that he felt more connected to people in the class as he developed his story telling abilities.

> Curtis: "What I learned about is that we should trust people more often because after I started telling my story more, I could add a lot more details. Because in the beginning I couldn't really like, tell anyone anything because I haven't had a connection with anyone."

This theme of becoming more connected was repeated by several of his peers.

**Curtis's alternative representation.** Curtis created a rap version of his story, which he performed live for the class. In order to summarize the events of the ding dong ditch incident, he needed to leave some details out of this type of retelling. In order to make the story fit into the rap format, the rhythm of the words became important, so some of the details of his story were altered to fit the genre. Even when working within the linguistic mode, different writing genres create the need for careful thought about which details are highlighted and which are left out. In this case, because he needed a specific sense of rhythm representing the action and pacing of the story, Curtis had to decide which details he could change and still get his message across to his audience.



One day I was outside
Went on a bike ride
Wind in my hair
Biking everywhere

When I got to my house
I got a good idea
Ding dong ditch that house
Went up to the step
Feeling scared
Running was the next step

I was breathing faster then ever
Heart was beating fast
I would do this, never
I got hiding last

I saw a really big house
Almost like a mansion
Or was as quite as a mouse
Rang the bell
Then I ran away
No one came out
So I stayed away
Went to play hockey
Tickling twine

Saw some big boys come out
Of that really big house
They screamed my name
Then chased me down
I ran away
But I was scared to say
HELP.....HELP
hid between a house
It was hurting me
This will go down in my history
I was breathing hard
I saw them run by
Then I heard my mom yell
and I ran to her
That's the end.

*Figure 67*: Curtis's alternative representation.

In his final video reflection Curtis gave some clues about the considerations he made when creating the rap.

> Curtis: "For my alternative representation I did a song. And my song had everything in it, from the part where we were on the bike ride to the part that I was hiding in between two houses and everything in between. My song represents my story a lot just because the pace that the story, or the song sets in the story when it's chill, and when everything's calm, my song is calm. And then when I was being chased I kind of made my song a bit louder and stuff like that."

Curtis articulated that he matched the tempo and pace of the rap with the changing action of the story, thus harnessing the power of spoken word and rhythm to help him impart the mood of the story.

Creating and performing a rap was a significant risk for Curtis, and although he declined to be recorded, he delivered the performance in front of his peers with enthusiasm. It was as if he adopted a whole new persona when he delivered his rap. Perhaps the idea of taking on an entirely new role allowed him to take that risk. In contrast with his nervous storytelling performance, his rap performance was delivered with complete confidence.

**Case Study Seven: Rebecca's Journey**

**Rebecca's literacy journal and interview.** Scanning through Rebecca's documented practices, I noticed right away that she had three references to organizational type documents; a monthly planner (Figure 68), a screen shot of her teacher's website (Figure 69) and a school timetable (Figure 70). This was quite different from the rest of

her peers, and revealed that she placed an emphasis on managing her day-to-day activities. Rebecca did not appear to be as technology immersed or dependent as her peers, and despite the fact that she had a personal device, like Natasha, she chose to reference a physical print calendar/planner to keep track of her important events. Rebecca chose to start our conversation by talking about the importance of her monthly day planner (Figure 68).




*Figure 68*: Rebecca's monthly planner.

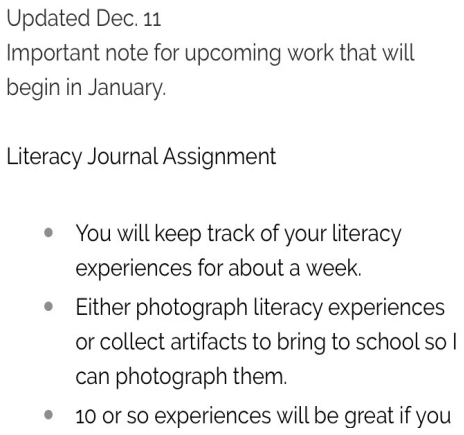
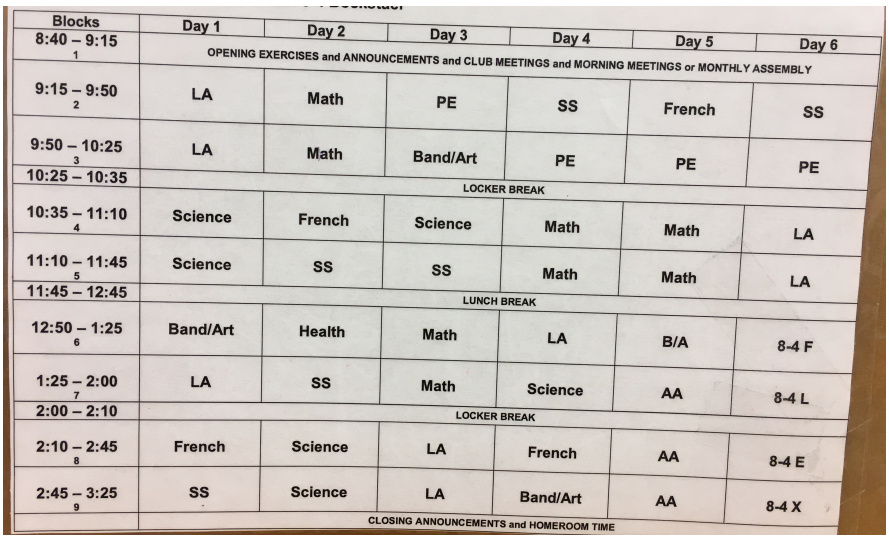



*Figure 69*: A teacher website.



| Blocks | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 | Day 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8:40 – 9:15 1 | OPENING EXERCISES and ANNOUNCEMENTS and CLUB MEETINGS and MORNING MEETINGS or MONTHLY ASSEMBLY | | | | | |
| 9:15 – 9:50 2 | LA | Math | PE | SS | French | SS |
| 9:50 – 10:25 3 | LA | Math | Band/Art | PE | PE | PE |
| 10:25 – 10:35 | LOCKER BREAK | | | | | |
| 10:35 – 11:10 4 | Science | French | Science | Math | Math | LA |
| 11:10 – 11:45 5 | Science | SS | SS | Math | Math | LA |
| 11:45 – 12:45 | LUNCH BREAK | | | | | |
| 12:50 – 1:25 6 | Band/Art | Health | Math | LA | B/A | 8-4 F |
| 1:25 – 2:00 7 | LA | SS | Math | Science | AA | 8-4 L |
| 2:00 – 2:10 | LOCKER BREAK | | | | | |
| 2:10 – 2:45 8 | French | Science | LA | French | AA | 8-4 E |
| 2:45 – 3:25 9 | SS | Science | LA | Band/Art | AA | 8-4 X |
| | CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENTS and HOMEROOM TIME | | | | | |

*Figure 70*: Rebecca's school timetable.

Ms. Bartok: "Can you please choose one of the entries from your literacy journal? [Rebecca flips to the page that shows a photo of her day planner] Ok. So, your planner? Can you describe the literacy practice that goes along with your planner?"

Rebecca: "Well, basically I write in it. I look at all the things that are going to be happening in just the one month and fill it in throughout the week: what's going to be happening, like my piano, and all my sports and I'll even put in my due dates for my assignments sometimes."

Rebecca clearly took pride in being an organized individual, and she used the monthly planner to manage her busy life. This literacy practice was a very practical and structured activity. As Rebecca continued to explain this practice, she revealed that she had developed a colour and symbol coded process for some of her activities.

Ms. Bartok: "So, where did it take place?"

Rebecca: "Where do I write in it?"

Ms. Bartok: "Yeah. Where?"

Rebecca: "I took the picture at my house. I normally sit at my desk and just fill it in all at once. So, it's basically just there that I normally write in it. I take it to school just in case I need to add something."

Ms. Bartok: "Ok. So, I think you kind of addressed this already, but what's being communicated then?"

Rebecca: "What's being communicated is basically my sports and anything that's going on throughout my month."

Ms. Bartok: "How is it being communicated, and is it being communicated in more than one way?"

Rebecca: "Normally it's just me writing out: 'Hockey at 6:30' or whatever but sometimes I'll put in a little star for – I have coloured stickers that I put in so yellow would mean sports. Or I have [a] turquoise one in case I have two sports that day. Sometimes I have a birthday cake if there's a birthday on that day I'll put stickers in there."

This coding system represented a multimodal practice; one that allowed her to recognize different types of events on her calendar at a glance.

Ms. Bartok: "Are there other people involved in this literacy practice?"

Rebecca: "Not really. It's mostly me putting it in, but sometimes my mom will let me know if I have something that's been updated on TeamSnap and I'll throw that in there."

Although she first identified this as a solitary practice, her mother did share this practice with her by providing updates on her scheduled activities as she received them via

TeamSnap, an app that is used by many sports teams and organizations to communicate game and practice schedules with team members.

Ms. Bartok: "Why did you choose to document this literacy practice?"

Rebecca: "I chose to document it because I think it is kind of important because I've been trying to stay a bit more organized this year. So I thought it was an important thing that I've been doing."

Ms. Bartok: "How often do you engage in this type of literacy practice?"

Rebecca: "I'll normally do it one to two times a month cause I fill in my month all at once. Or sometimes I'll do half a month and then once I finish that section I'll fill it in again. Normally one to two times a month but sometimes I'll do it an extra couple of times for something new."

Ms. Bartok: "How important is this literacy practice in your life?"

Rebecca: "I think it's quite important for me staying more organized cause sometimes I'll be rushing and this helps to look at what's happening that day and I won't have to rush because I can plan it out. "

Ms. Bartok: "How does this literacy practice fit into your school life?"

Rebecca: "It fits in because I can put in due dates. It will kind of plan out when I want to be done and it can also help me figure out when I want to start studying when I have a test coming up. "

Ms. Bartok: "Do you feel your teachers would support this literacy practice?"

Rebecca: "I think they would support it because it helps me stay organized and make sure I'm handing things in on time and studying for tests so I can get good grades."

Ms. Bartok: "How, or do you see this literacy practice integrated into school?"

Rebecca: "Sort of. When we were in younger grades we used to get agendas. Except we don't really get them anymore, and I feel like as you get older it's even more important to stay more organized with planners because you have even more on your plate. And you're more independent now so it might help."

Rebecca easily identified that this practice fit into school and that her teachers would support it. She spoke about bringing the agenda to school with her, and this was an example of a student successfully bringing a literacy experience from one domain into another. She viewed this as a practice that helped to support her independence and achieve academic success. There was a very practical aspect to this particular literacy practice.

Ms. Bartok: "Are there literacy practices in your journal that you prefer over others, and why?"

Rebecca: "I probably prefer listening to music (Figure 71) than I would over writing in my composition book (Figure 72). Or, I'd probably prefer playing 'Apples to Apples' (Figure 71) than I would looking at a map of Egypt (Figure72) or the timetable (Figure 68). Just because they're more interesting or they make it more fun."

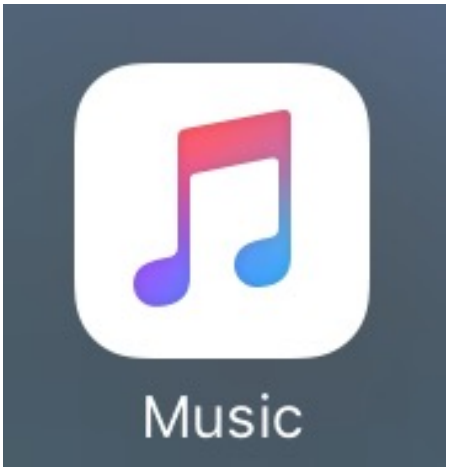



*Figure 71*: A music app icon.

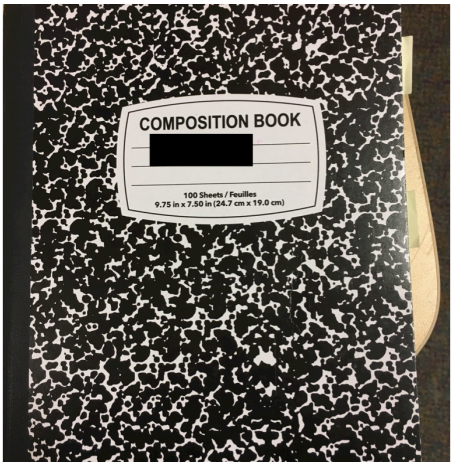



*Figure 72*: Rebecca's composition book.

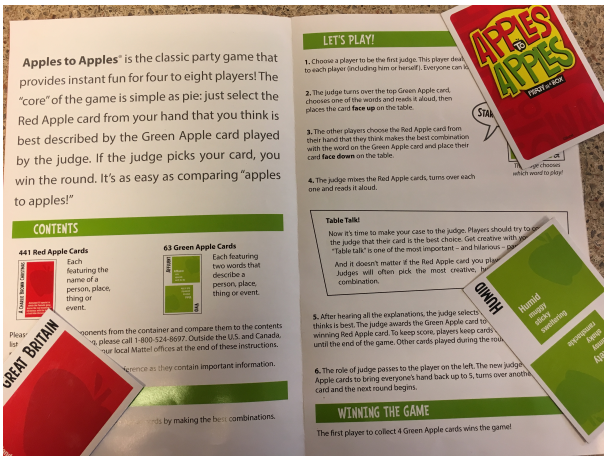



*Figure 73:* Instructions for the board game Apples to Apples.




*Figure 74*: A map of Egypt from a textbook.

It was apparent that enjoyment was a motivator for Rebecca's engagement with some literacy practices over others. Music was mentioned several times by her peers as a preferred practice, and experienced through an app on a personal device. The mention of the *Apples to Apples* board game suggested Rebecca's preference for collaborative and

fun activities over more solitary practices such as reading a textbook or writing in a composition book.

The composition book and textbook pictures both represented school-based practices, as did the school timetable, suggesting that considerable dimensions of Rebecca's identity are tied to her school experience.

> Ms. Bartok: "Do you ever create, write, compose, choreograph or story tell outside of school?"
>
> Rebecca: "Not often. I play piano but I really don't make my own music. I kind of just play what's in my book that my teacher tells me to play. And sometimes I draw a little bit. I've started to do that more. I find it relaxing a bit. But, not very much."
>
> Ms. Bartok: "Do you ever share these pieces with anyone else?"
>
> Rebecca: "Not really. Sometimes I share my drawings with other people, but not really often do I share this."
>
> Ms. Bartok: "When you do share them, how or where do you share them?"
>
> Rebecca: "Well, piano if I'm sharing one of the pieces I've learned I have a recital at the end of the year, so we pick some songs and then I play them. Or if I wanted to share one of my drawings, I normally just bring my book to school and if I've just finished working on it I'll show it to one of my friends."

Rebecca did not consider herself to be a creator outside of school, but the act of playing a piece of music is a creative experience as each individual brings a different interpretation and technique to playing an instrument. She also mentioned that she had started to draw, and that she shared these drawing with her friends, once again

reaffirming how important peer approval and feedback was for this particular group of students.

Ms. Bartok: "How important is technology in your literacy practices?"

Rebecca: "I think it's important but I've been trying to start not using technology as much, like watching Netflix or just like playing a game on there. So it's sort of important for Weeblies and things. Like, there's my fitbit to try and get lots of steps in lately, but other than that it's not that important."




*Figure 75*: Rebecca's Netflix screenshot.




*Figure 76*: Rebecca's Fitbit screenshot.

Rebecca felt that technology was somewhat important in terms of practical uses such as accessing her teacher's website and using her FitBit (Figure 76) to track data about her physical activity, but she otherwise felt it didn't play a large part in her life and that she would like to use it less for entertainment purposes. This seemed to be consistent with her journal as it documented only four technology dependent practices. It is a departure from the attitudes of most of her peers, but she was not the only student to express the desire to have technology play a reduced role in her life. However, the influence of a personal device is evident in her documentation.

**Rebecca as a storyteller.** Rebecca, like many of her classmates, was very unsure about storytelling when we began our journey. She had difficulty generating story ideas, and felt that her personal stories were not interesting enough to develop. One day, she came up with a short anecdote about being 8-years-old and learning how to water ski. She revealed that it was a very frustrating process for her, and I encouraged her to explore that frustration and develop her story.

Rebecca worked very consciously to craft her story into an engaging and descriptive text. She chose words and phrases that allowed her to convey emotion and physical sensations. This was a difficult process that involved many revisions and the integration of feedback from her peers. During a small group discussion, I asked Rebecca how her thinking about her story had changed.

> Rebecca: "I think I need to add more detail to mine. And make sure I'm not saying, 'I was upset' instead of making it sound like I'm upset.
>
> Ms. Bartok: "What will you integrate into your story going forward?"
>
> Rebecca: "I think I will try to describe more what I'm saying and make sure it's an interesting story and not boring so people will want to listen."

As she explored and developed her story, she gained confidence in her story telling ability. This was reflected in her final video where she explained her own development:

> Rebecca: "In the beginning I was very nervous about telling my story because I'm not a very confident person and I wasn't really telling my story very well with a lot of details. But now I am more confident in telling stories and my stories have become better for people to listen to. Something I learned about myself was that I need to practice being confident and just kind of go with it instead of always

being nervous, and I need to make sure that I am more bold in my actions. And something I learned about my classmates is that it's hard for everyone and it's important that we are very kind to everyone because everyone is having to go through the same thing."

Rebecca had also developed an appreciation for the common experience that pulled the class together, and it helped her develop trust and a sense of empathy with her classmates."

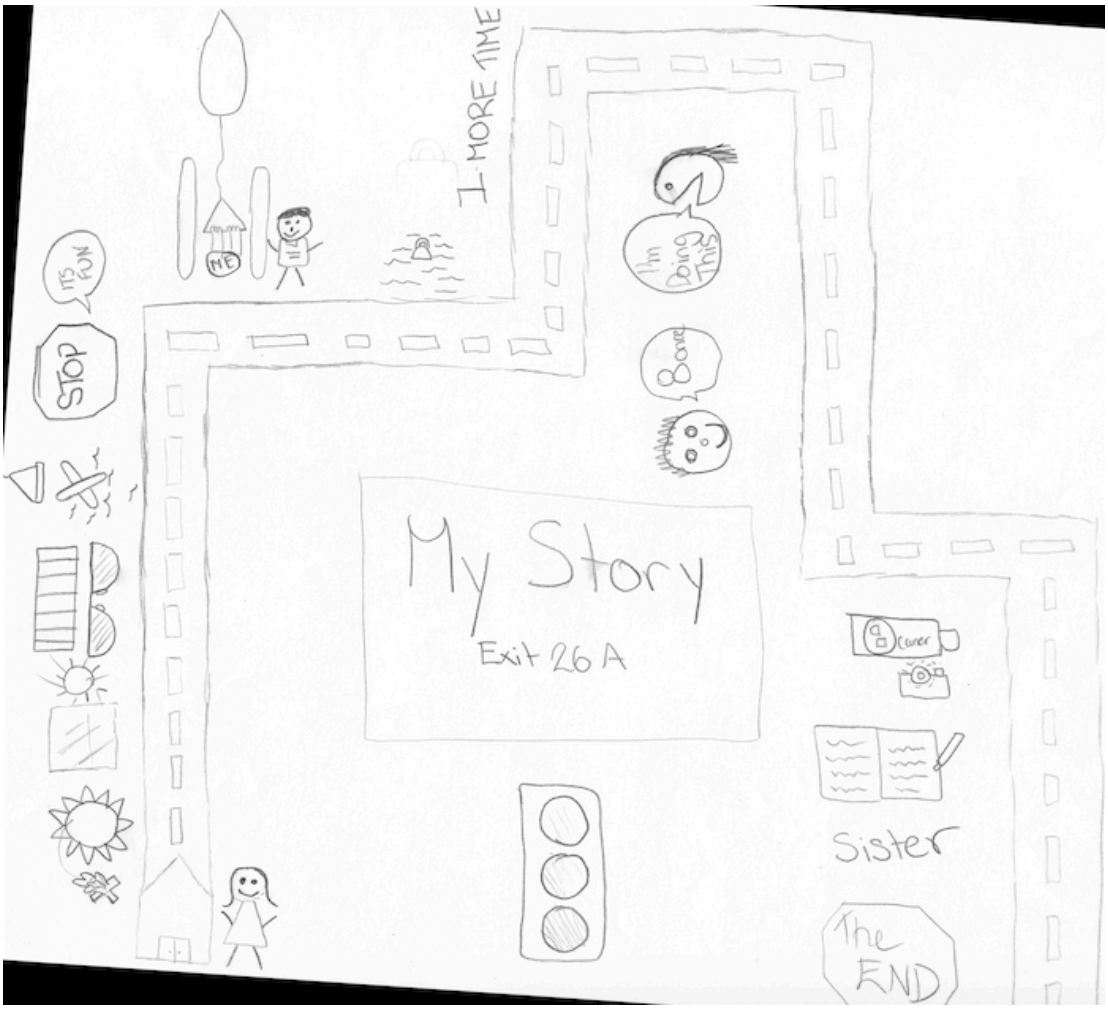



Figure 77: Rebecca's story map. Her story described her first experience water skiing.

Rebecca's story map took the shape of a road map, which began in the bottom left hand corner, and continued in a clockwise motion. This map contained much of its information in visual symbol form, with the setting and emotions being detailed in the pictures. Rebecca chose the sun to represent that it was a hot summer day, and symbolized the lake setting through the use of sunglasses and a beach towel. The main activity of the story was Rebecca's first, frustrating experience with water skiing, and we see this activity illustrated by the triangle which represented a boat, and an X shape that represented water skis. The stop sign indicated that she was nervous, and did not want to try water skiing.

The map itself indicated the way she felt about water skiing for the first time, with a traffic light indicating the go, yield, stop nature of her first attempts. The main emotional conflict that she had with her dad, who encouraged her to keep trying, is represented at the top of the map by her father's smiling face and the frown on Rebecca's face. Rebecca was creatively able to represent her story ideas in a visual format, while making decisions about what was important to remember and include on the map, and what was less important and could be omitted.

When Rebecca started her storytelling performance, she demonstrated some very nervous body language, and she twisted her hands in her shirt to relieve the tension she was feeling.

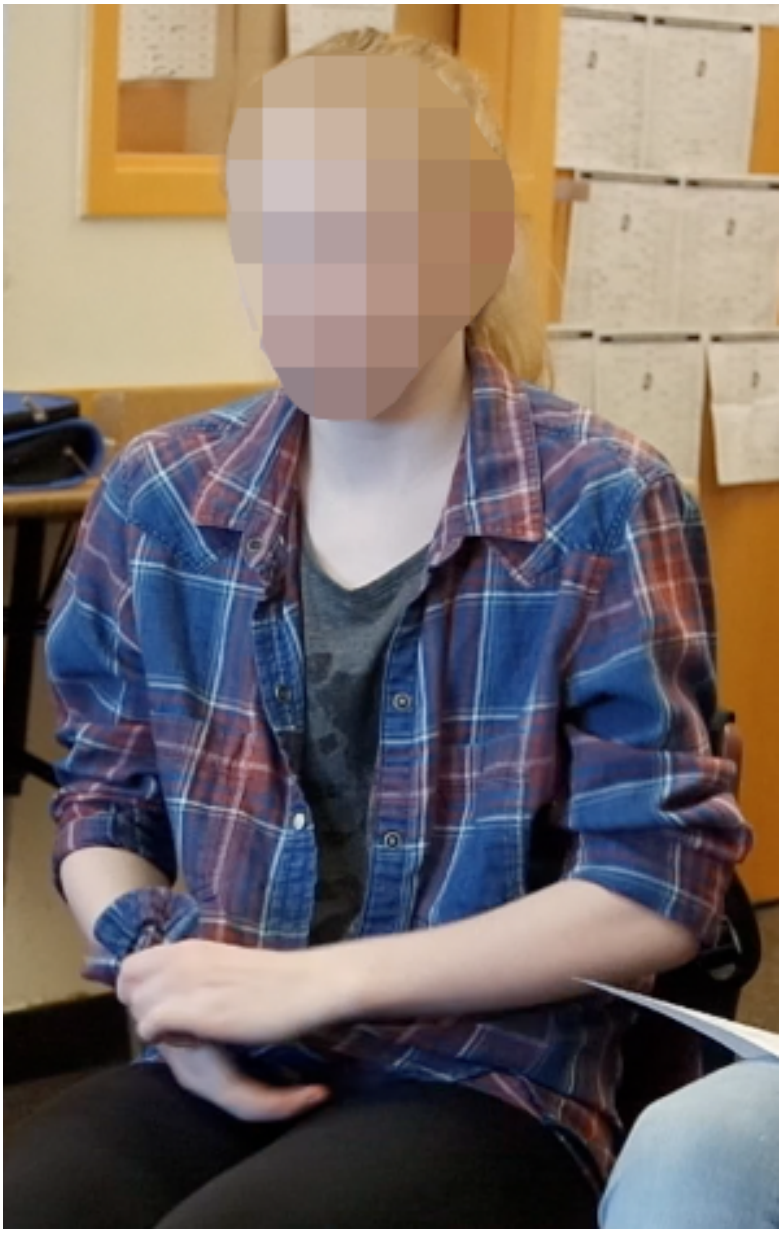


*Figure 78*: Rebecca's nervous body language as she started to tell her story.

As she continued telling her story she gained confidence and began to integrate some purposeful gestures to help demonstrate the physical actions that were taking place in the story.

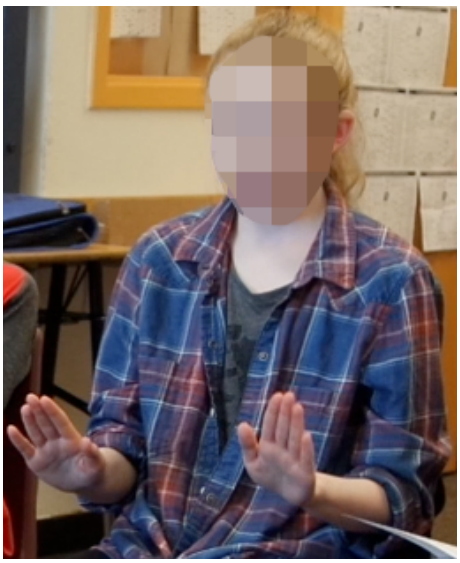


*Figure 79*: Rebecca using gesture. I signaled my mom I was ready to go. With my skis in front of me like this …"

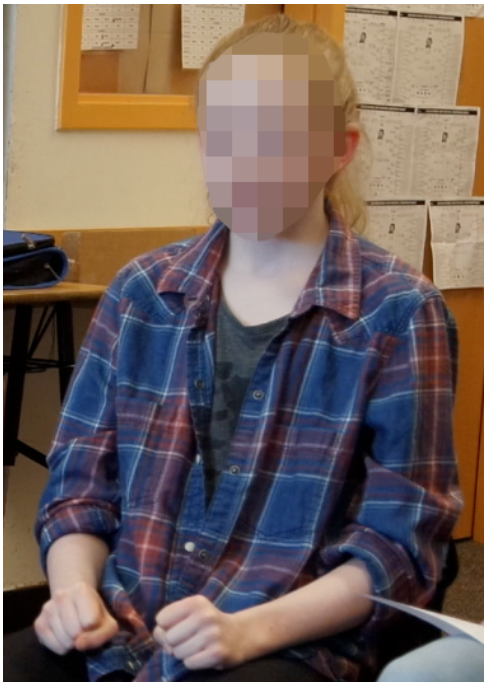


*Figure 80*: Rebecca continued, "gripping the rope as tightly as I could, I heard the familiar sound of the boat starting."

Rebecca gave a sense of her position in the water as she held her hands up to indicate where her skis were pointing as she waited for the boat to move forward (Figure 79). She clenched her fists tightly as if holding onto the rope, demonstrating the tension and fear in her story (Figure 80). Rebecca's gestures helped to visually ground her audience in the main events of the story and gave a sense of the emotions she was feeling as she attempted something new.

**Rebecca's alternative representation.** Rebecca chose to do a stop animation video for her alternative representation, which demonstrated her struggle learning how to water ski for the first time.



*Figure 81*: Rebecca's stop animation video.

The creation of this stop animation video represented a risk for Rebecca, as it was not a format she was familiar with until this experience. While the video is short and does not contain any audio, it was quite labour intensive, as the repositioning and filming process takes a lot of time. Rebecca recreated the dock and the water using Lego pieces and figures. The Lego figure is representative of Rebecca, and she is shown falling down and getting back up on the skis repeatedly, from two different angles. The video was made with her handheld device, demonstrating how important mobile devices are to the communication habits of adolescent learners and the ability of these students to use materials that are available to them in new ways if given license to think creatively.

In her final video reflection, Rebecca explained why she chose to do the stop animation video.

> Rebecca: "I chose to do a video for my alternative representation. I chose to do this because I thought it would be the best way to show what's happening in my story and it would help to describe the way I was feeling. I chose to use a Lego person for my video because that way they would be able to see it as like a human form sort of way. And that would help to make people understand the main emotion in my story, which is that I was very nervous about water skiing for the first time."

Rebecca used the tools she had available to her: Lego and a handheld device, and was able to recreate the main action of her story in a visual way.

**Case Study Eight: Nisha's Journey**

**Nisha's literacy journal and interview.** Nisha saw herself as an artist who had a keen interest in drawing the things she observed around her. Like her peers, she created a rich document that contained images of print text, social media, YouTube, and apps she used on her personal device. Nisha chose to talk about her drawings when we began the interview.

> Ms. Bartok: "Ok. So please pick one of the entries from your literacy journal to share and can you describe the literacy practice?"
>
> Nisha: "I choose my drawings (Figures 82 and 83) because for literacy I think they go into a little writing area because I can write whatever I want to but I choose to draw. So I draw whatever I see."



*Figure 82*: Nisha's sketch of a ballerina.

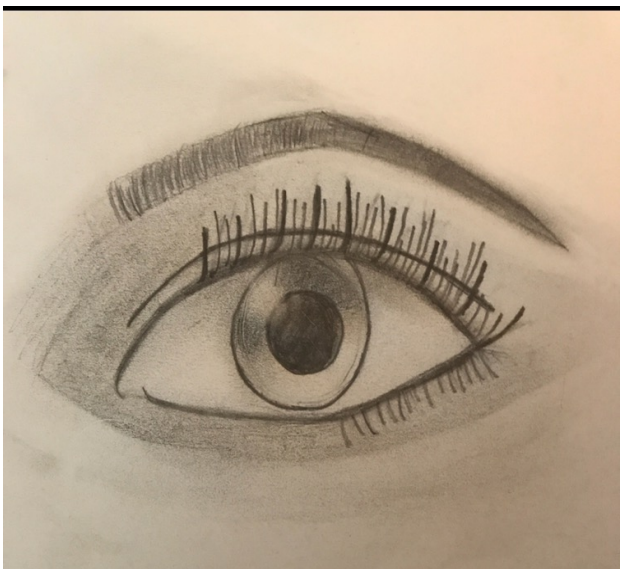


*Figure 83*: Nisha's sketch of an eye.

Ms. Bartok: "Where did this take place?"

Nisha: "At my house, mostly in my room, like I get inspiration from things in my room or outside of my room and I tend to draw them."

Ms. Bartok: "What's being communicated?"

Nisha: "I think shapes and different sizes are being communicated because all my photos are different. They're all differently drawn so I think those are what's being communicated."

Ms. Bartok: "So how is it being communicated, and is it being communicated in more than one way?"

Nisha: "It's being communicated in shapes and sizes as well as being communicated in different colours, techniques, and you know, maybe I decided to shade it in, or use a colour or different textures."

Both of the drawings she referred to are images of parts the human body, and were composed as if she has zoomed into the areas with a camera. The drawings were kept in a sketchbook, and they were important to her identity as an artist. When asked what was being communicated Nisha was able to articulate the techniques that allowed her to communicate her message; she described these as the creation of variations in the visual and gestural modes through size, shape, shading, texture, and colour. This was evidence that Nisha engaged in making very deliberate design choices as she created her sketches and demonstrated awareness of how her design choices impacted the message she was trying to convey.

Nisha also described an art based literacy experience that she viewed as mostly solitary, although she did mention seeking out others for ideas or for help with her drawings when she felt the need for another opinion.

Ms. Bartok: "Were there other people involved in this literacy practice?"

Nisha: "No, because it's just me. I ask other people for ideas and sometimes I ask for help but usually it's just me."

This demonstrated that even her most reflective and personal experiences were not completely solitary. This particular practice was not technology based (although we see evidence later that she found inspiration from photos she found online), yet the scaffold of affinity groups and participatory culture emerged here (Gee, 2009; Jenkins, 2006). Nisha asked for help or inspiration when she felt she needed it. It was self-driven, organic, and collaborative practice.

Ms. Bartok: Why did you choose to document this literacy practice?

Nisha: "I think drawing is very important for me. When I think of literacy I think of drawing and reading. And drawing more because that's something I enjoy more so that's why it's important to me."

Ms. Bartok: "How often do you engage in this type of literacy practice?"

Nisha: "Usually a few times a week if I'm bored or if I just want something to do. I'd pick a photo and spend a good hour on it, and draw it out."

Ms. Bartok: "How important is this literacy practice in your daily life?"

Nisha: "In my daily life it's important because it gives me opportunities to explore different things. I just get to see new things, and I get to draw them or I get to just see them and everyday life. It's helping me recognize things."

A number of Nisha's peers expressed that enjoyment was an important motivator for engagement in their own literacy practices, and Nisha fell into this pattern as well. Nisha also spoke of her sketching practices a way to explore, see, and recognize new things. It was a way to slow down, pay attention, and engage in an alternative way of coming to know and understand the world.

Ms. Bartok: "How does this literacy practice fit into your school life?"

Nisha: "I think it fits into art because art is a subject that I take and it helps me in the subject because if I already have experience then I can do more of it better."

Ms. Bartok: "Do you feel your teachers would support this literacy practice?"

Nisha: "I strongly feel like my teachers would support me in this literacy practice."

Ms. Bartok: "How would you like to see this literacy practice integrated into school?"

Nisha: "Maybe, the photos, you know. I could make them bigger. If I just do them on a piece of paper then I could make them into real art on a wall or on a bigger poster or something. I'd bring it to life or something."

Nisha felt strong teacher support for her drawing practice and this is an example of how a student's out of school literacy identity can cross over and have an impact on the school literacy identity. Even though Nisha was able to successfully bring her drawing practices from her home into the school, she still only saw her practice as something that would fit into an art class. This inability to generalize ways in which her drawing practice could be integrated across other subject areas demonstrated the same compartmentalized thinking that Natasha showed about her figure skating based literacy practices. There were obvious connections to the specialized classes, but this might also demonstrate that adolescent learners have internalized the dominant standards of literacy practices, power structures and knowledge hierarchies that Street describes (1995); thus reinforcing a rigid idea of what constitutes a suitable learning experience in a school based setting.

Nisha mentioned that she would like to have the photos of her art enlarged and displayed in the school as a way to integrate it into her school life. She seemed to think that displaying the pieces would validate them as "real art," dismissing that these drawings already are authentic artistic expressions. Her desire to share her art by publically displaying it was repeated later in our conversation.

Ms. Bartok: "Are there literacy practices in your journal that you prefer over others, and why?"

Nisha: "I think I prefer reading over poetry because reading is something I really love. I'd always have new books and stuff. And poetry is something that I just

started getting into it but I'm a little new to it. So I would prefer reading over poetry."

Ms. Bartok: "Ok, when you say you prefer reading over poetry, what do you mean then?"

Nisha: "Novels and stuff. Like, real fiction or non-fiction novels that are long novels with stories and stuff and not just short poetry that you just read or have put out."




*Figure 84:* A selection of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction.

Nisha appeared to enjoy reading fiction and non-fiction, and included a photo with four books on display representing some of her recent reading selections. John Greene and Sarah Dessen are popular young adult readers, and these two books are consistent with what her peers are reading. The Princess Diana biography fit with Nisha's interest in non-fiction books with a story. Perhaps somewhat surprising was the book of Rupi Kaur poems. These poems are written from a female perspective and accompanied by sketches, offering two ways for Nisha to have personally connected to the writing. They were a departure from what Nisha usually read, suggesting that her literacy

identities were shifting to include other genres. Notably, Nisha also included several screen shots of Rupi Kaur poems and a Wordle about poetry that she found on the Internet (Figure 85) in her literacy journal, suggesting that she was researching and learning more about this particular poet and genre, either for personal interest or for a school project.

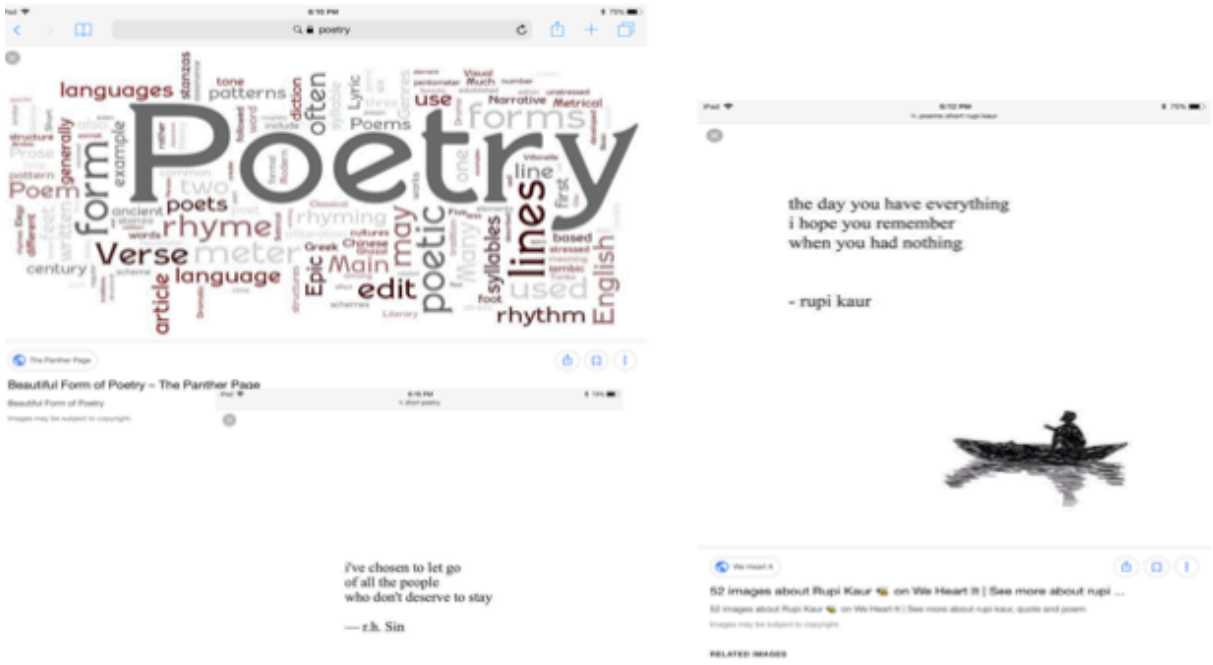



*Figure 85*: A screenshot of poetry research. Poetry from *The Sun and Her Flowers,* R. Kaur, 2017.

Consistent with her journal, when asked which literacy practice she preferred, Nisha mentioned her love of reading, but I was puzzled when she made a distinction between reading longer books and poetry. The phrase "not just poetry that you just read or have put out" made me wonder if she mostly viewed poetry as something one would read quickly or have on display, as opposed to being something to be savoured and

enjoyed. Poetry seemed to be a new literacy experience for her, and it was perhaps her inexperience with the genre that added to her feeling of preference for familiar types of texts at the time of this interview.

Nisha had a well-established sense of creativity, and when I asked about her habits around creativity, she revealed that she did enjoy sharing her work with other people.

Ms. Bartok: "Ok. Do you ever create, write, compose, choreograph or story tell outside of school?"

Nisha: "Create, as in, drawing?"

Ms. Bartok: "Sure."

Nisha: "Yeah, I do. If I sit outside, and I see maybe some nature things I would tend to draw those as well."

Ms. Bartok: "How do you prefer to create, write, compose, choreograph or story tell?

Nisha: "Compose, I think I would share these things online, so I'd tend to do it online, or just, I share it with family and friends."

Ms. Bartok: "How or where do you share online?"

Nisha: "Online or in person?"

Ms. Bartok: "Is there a specific place online?"

Nisha: "Instagram (see Figure 86) would be one. Pinterest as well."

Ms. Bartok: "How important is technology in your literacy practices?"

Nisha: "I think technology is something, like whatever you make you put it out and a lot of people can see it or learn from it, or they can teach you. So I think

technology is very important because it's something that you can always learn from or teach other people."




*Figure 86*: Nisha's Instagram screenshot.

When asked if technology was an important piece of her literacy practices, Nisha mentioned the potential for sharing and learning with and from other people. This was another instance of students seeing technology as a way to share and learn with a wider audience. Her desire to publically display her creations was echoed here through her use of Instagram and Pinterest, which acted as virtual places of display.

**Nisha as a storyteller.** Nisha was quick to establish that seeing facial expression and gesture made a story much more interesting and engaging. She connected facial expression to conveyance of emotion, and when we listened to a mentor text through audio only, acknowledged that the emotional information was more difficult to discern.

While listening to *The Haircut,* Nisha made the observation that the storyteller dramatized his expressions for the audience.

> Nisha: "He had very good expression"
>
> Ms Bartok: "What do you mean by he had very good expression?"
>
> Nisha: "He acted it kind of."

During a small group discussion, Nisha continued this line of thought as she articulated her thoughts about how much eye contact storytellers should make while telling a story, and the impact it might have on audience.

> Nisha: "You need eye contact, but you can't have too much eye contact. You need to have a good amount. You can't just look at one person. You need to scan the audience so it's not awkward."

This piece of conversation drew attention to the power of the gestural behavior of the storyteller to either include or exclude people from the storytelling experience by the amount of eye contact they make. The students identified that the situation becomes uncomfortable very quickly if the storyteller neglects part of the audience or focuses on one person for too long. This of course would have an impact on the effectiveness of the storyteller to convey a message.

Nisha wanted her story to be "something different that everyone can learn from" and her final storytelling performance was delivered confidently but quietly as she described a cold winter day when she observed her father helping a homeless man by purchasing a meal and winter clothing for him. Although her storytelling performance did not include gesture or different tones of voice, Nisha did make good eye contact with the group, and often looked around the circle to make sure others were engaged in her story.

Nisha's final reflective video revealed that she found storytelling to be a new way she could relate to people,

> Nisha: "I got more comfortable sharing my story with other people. I was a little more open minded to new ideas and I enjoyed listening to other people's stories because throughout the stories I learned how much you can relate with people. I was able to know more about my classmates than before and it was very fun."

Nisha had identified that she could be both a teacher and a learner through the act of storytelling.

**Nisha's alternative representation.** Nisha chose to create a photograph to represent kindness, which was the main theme of her story (Figure 87). She chose to think more abstractly about her story than some of her peers, and the final product represents a significant departure from the events of her oral story. Instead of a summary or moment captured in time, Nisha chose to think of ways that kindness could be represented in a photograph, and staged a scene where one student had dropped her books, and another had stopped to help pick them up. Nisha carefully weighed how her theme could be represented effectively through a visual mode, distilled her meaning down to its essence, and successfully represented her theme.




*Figure 87*: *An edited version of Nisha's photograph. As Nisha's photograph included a student that did not consent to participating in the study, I edited the picture in Photoshop, and converted it to a line drawing, in order to obscure the identity of the student.

Nisha's final reflective video didn't reveal the thought process she went through as she moved meaning from her oral story to the photographic representation, but it did reveal that she appreciated the opportunity to express herself in another mode of her choice.

> Nisha: "One of my favorite parts was the alternative representation because I liked the idea about sending or showing the message of your story through more than just one way, like not only just making a video, and how we had choices on representing the message in our story by doing anything else, and I took a photo and I think that was a great way to do my alternative representation."

Nisha was able to get her message across to the other students, and they were able to interpret the intended message of kindness or of helping others. After viewing the photograph, Audrey wrote that "Nisha took a picture of someone dropping her books and someone helping pick them up. This represents Nisha's theme of helping each other, well." Natasha came to a similar conclusion, "I think the lesson that is being communicated is to be kind. I know because the picture shows one person helping another and being kind. The person is stopping what they're doing to help and be kind to the person in need. This was presented with a picture." Tambara went into even more detail, inferring much more from the photo, "In Nisha's alternative representation the emotion that is being shown is happiness. Nisha communicated this to be through a picture of a student helping Liana pick up her books that she dropped. Liana looks happy because of the kindness that the student is showing to her." Nisha's peers were able to read the visual cues that were included in the photo.

**Case Study Nine: Emily's Journey**

**Emily's literacy journal and interview.** Emily appeared to be a conscientious and thoughtful student. She identified as a musician and felt that her music practices were a significant part of her life. She expressed enjoyment for math, writing, reading and gymnastics. Like Rebecca, she felt that technology wasn't a significant part of her life. When Emily chose to begin the interview by speaking about her guitar, it was obvious that this is a practice that meant a great deal to her, and that the guitar itself was a treasured object.



*Figure 88*: Emily's guitar.

Ms. Bartok: "Please choose one of the entries from your photographic literacy journal to discuss and can you describe the literacy practice?"

Emily: "I'd probably say my guitar."

Ms. Bartok: "Your guitar? Ok."

Emily: "So, composing music and playing music and stuff."

Ms. Bartok: "Where does this literacy practice take place?"

Emily: "Well I only have my guitar at home, so it usually takes place at home. And I have a case to bring it outside but I usually just don't bring it anywhere because it's an expensive object so I don't want to wreck it in any way shape or form!"

Ms. Bartok: "Ok. Do you take lessons?"

Emily: "I do take lessons at St. John's Music. So, it's a pretty big place."

Ms. Bartok: "What is being communicated from your guitar?"

Emily: "The music that I play on it. So, since there's strings you can press the different ones and different sounds come out of it. And it can represent different feelings throughout the different notes that you play. And that's why I like to play it."

Ms. Bartok: "Is it being communicated in more than one way?"

Emily: "I'd say not. Because really the only way that you can communicate is from the sound coming out of it. Unless you don't press the strings and you tap on the guitar to make a kind of echo sound, then it's not, it's just through listening to it. It's not through talking or looking at it. It's just the sound that you hear."

Emily understood that emotions can be conveyed through the musician's interaction with the strings and the body of the guitar; thus explaining how gesture and sound work together to communicate a message. When pressed to describe if the message is communicated in more than one way, she differentiated between the sounds the strings

could make with the sounds of tapping on the guitar, but did not identify any other ways that the message could be conveyed.

Ms. Bartok: "Ok. Are other people involved in this literacy practice with you?"

Emily: "My guitar teacher and sometimes my parents. But other than that, not really. It's just on my own."

Although she perceived her guitar playing as a solitary activity, she did mention her parents and music teacher as being part of the practice.

Ms. Bartok: "Why did you choose to document this literacy practice?"

Emily: "I chose to document this because it's a big part of my life. It makes me happy and it's the way that I, it's something that I do everyday when I get home from school. And it's just one of the main things which I think it represents literacy. It represents communicating something to others about something that I love to do and something that can be dear and it can say a message."

Ms. Bartok: "How often do you engage in this type of literacy practice?"

Emily: "Everyday."

Ms. Bartok: "How important is this literacy practice in your daily life?"

Emily: "I'd say I could probably live without it, but I wouldn't want to. I really like playing my guitar and I think it's a big aspect of my life. But it's not the most important thing of literacy to me."

Emily had a strong and very positive emotional attachment to this particular practice. Like Nisha, Natasha, and Audrey she had a desire to share her practice with other people.

Although it was something she engaged with everyday, and clearly felt it was an important way to communicate messages, she indicated it was still secondary to other literacy practices.

When I asked Emily about how her music practice might fit into her school life, she became quite thoughtful as she looked for a way to connect this practice to an academic setting.

> Ms. Bartok: "How does this literacy practice fit into your school life?"
>
> Emily: "It doesn't. Well, I do take band so learning music, it helps me understand different types of notes on different instruments because I play French horn and it's different than guitar. So I can explore different music genres and how the notes are different and the scales are different from each instrument. But not really school related. It's not academic related."
>
> Ms. Bartok: "Do you feel your teachers would support this literacy practice?"
>
> Emily: "If they understood guitar! But some people—I don't want to say this—but they may not be good at guitar because it is a hard thing to do. You have to take the confidence into playing it and take the time to learn how to do everything right. So I'd say that if you play guitar then, yes they could understand this."
>
> Ms. Bartok: "How would you like to see this literacy practice integrated into school?"
>
> Emily: [Long pause] "I could see it maybe in a project. Like, projects you could do more about yourself and the things that you do outside of school. If you do a social media project or something you could say how … oh no wait that's a bad

example. I don't really know. Like, guitar, it's just music. So band, but not really academically related. I don't know how they can connect in a way."

Emily took quite a long pause as she tried to think of a way her guitar playing practice could fit into her school life. In the context of a project about herself she felt it might fit, but like several of her peers, she could not perceive a way to integrate this into anything other than one very specific class. Like Nisha, she did feel that her out of school practice gave her an advantage in a specialized class, and articulated that exploring music on the guitar helped her be a better French Horn player. Emily expressed doubt that her teachers would be able to support this particular literacy practice, unless they had experience playing the guitar.

Ms. Bartok: "Are there literacy practices in your journal that you prefer over others, and why?"

Emily: "I definitely do like writing over others because it lets me express feelings that I don't want to say to people or I can just write down my daily activities in a journal. And I can keep them over the course of my life to see what I've done and record the things that have made me happy and the things that made me sad. And I can create goals and things like that, so I can look back and say 'Oh wow! I did this! I did that!'"

Ms. Bartok: [pointing to photo in journal] "And that's your writer's notebook?"

Emily: "Yes."

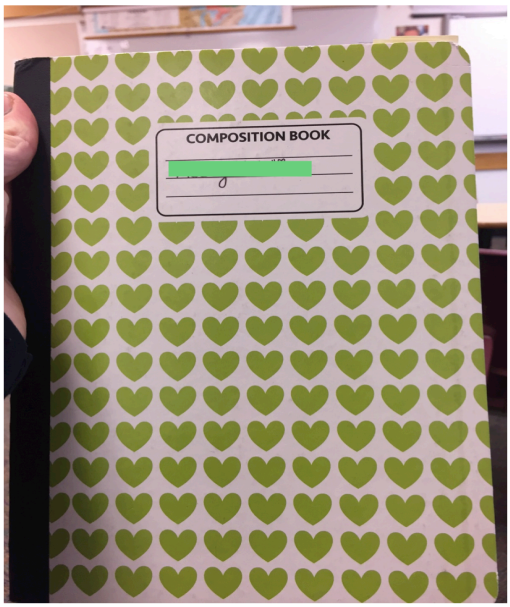



*Figure 89*: Emily's writer's notebook.

Emily described her preferred writing practice as a way for her to record her own sense of history, as a way to set goals and to look back over what she had accomplished. Her journal was an artifact of her life. Here again, the influence of school was evident because the writer's notebook was a school-based practice.

> Ms. Bartok: "Is there anything else that you would point to?"
>
> Emily: "Math. I really like math. It helps me understand things outside of school. So, if I wanted to go to the grocery store it helps me. I can learn about percentages off. So, if I have like, 20% off this item I can find it out and it's like things with my everyday life. It helps me."

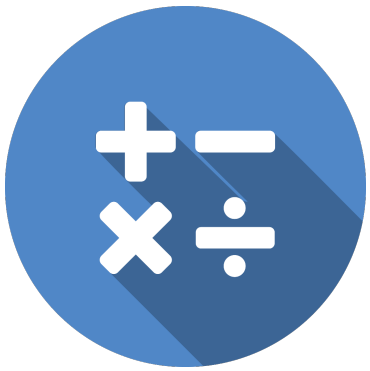


*Figure 90*: A piece of clip art to represent a math practice.

Emily is not the only student to have mentioned math as a preferred practice during her interview, and describes it as a useful tool for her daily life (Figure 90).

> Ms. Bartok: "Do you ever create, write, compose, choreograph or story tell outside of school?"
>
> Emily: "I do."
>
> Ms. Bartok: "Ok. How do you prefer to do those things?"
>
> Emily: "Probably by talking or writing something down. If I compose something, it's probably just a little mini song on my guitar but if I am telling something it's like probably just how my day was at school. I tell my parents. I tell my grandparents. They ask me questions so I often have stories to tell."

Emily considered herself a writer and a creator, and identified that she composed short melodies on her guitar and that she shared her personal stories with her family members. Beyond that, she did not offer anything about her creative practices during the interview; however, her literacy journal contained a very carefully composed photograph of two figures silhouetted against a sunset (Figure 91), demonstrating photographic creativity,

and suggesting that like many of her peers, Emily did document spontaneous moments with her personal device.



*Figure 91*: Emily's picture.

> Ms. Bartok: "How important is technology in your literacy practices?"
>
> Emily: "I'd say it's not very important to me because lots of people lived without electronics for such a long time and now that it's incorporated into our daily lives. It's just like an extra thing that people are getting attached to. But for me, its not very important. It can be important for some things like weather (see Figure 92), if you need to know it. It's important to know the weather outside. I can't just 'guesstimate,' oh it's going to be sunny today or it's going to snow today, so that's helpful. But I could live without some things that are technology. But it is helpful."



Figure 92: An image of the weather app icon that Emily included in her journal.

Emily identified that technology was somewhat important to her for practical reasons, or for finding out information, but she did not place a great deal of importance on it. Her attitude toward technology was very similar to Rebecca's in that it was seen to have a specific function, but it was not a priority. Also similar to Rebecca and Natasha, Emily documented an organizational and scheduling practice that was paper based (Figure 93), even though she had access to a digital device and apps that could be used to schedule to her time.

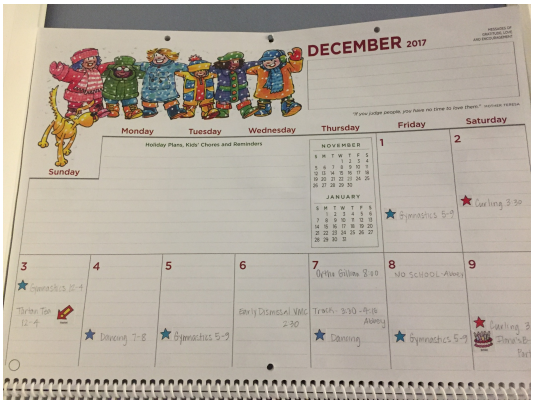



*Figure 93*: Emily's paper based calendar.

**Emily as a storyteller.** Emily's story described an incident that took place at a summer camp. During a game of "Predator versus Prey," Emily found her enjoyment cut short when she tripped over a stump and landed on a hornet's nest. Right from the beginning, Emily expressed doubt that she would be able to tell her story in a coherent way. As we moved through the process, her story developed, and she began to work on telling it to different students in the class. While some students chose to stay in comfortable groups or pairs most of the time, Emily often chose to work with different people.

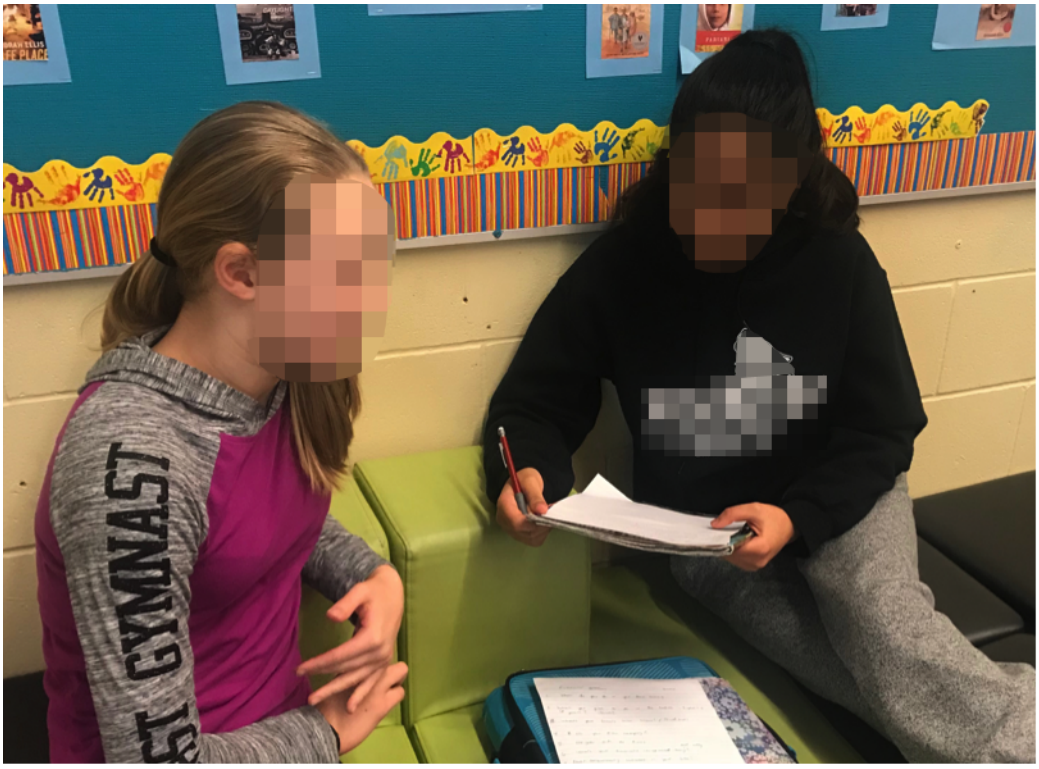


*Figure 94*: Emily (left) working with Nisha.




*Figure 95*: Emily (left) working with Neil.

Emily was aware that her story needed development, and during a work session, I asked her what her next steps would be to make her story more engaging. Emily replied, "I am feeling pretty good about my story but I definitely need to work on being more confident and add more details." This was feedback that she had received from her peers, and it helped to shape her story as she moved forward.

In her final reflective video, Emily recognized that everyone in the class was able to successfully develop their stories because the collaborative feedback helped them to hone their craft.

> Emily: "One thing I learned about my classmates and myself is that all of us are capable of making something possible if we put in the good work for it. If we take the time to rehearse our stories on our own and tell them to each other and give feedback we will each have a really good story in the end."

Emily recognized value in the authoring cycle, and expressed appreciation for the work her classmates had done.

Emily's story map began in the center of the paper with a figure that represented her, and the word "Start" suggesting that she was the central character of her story.

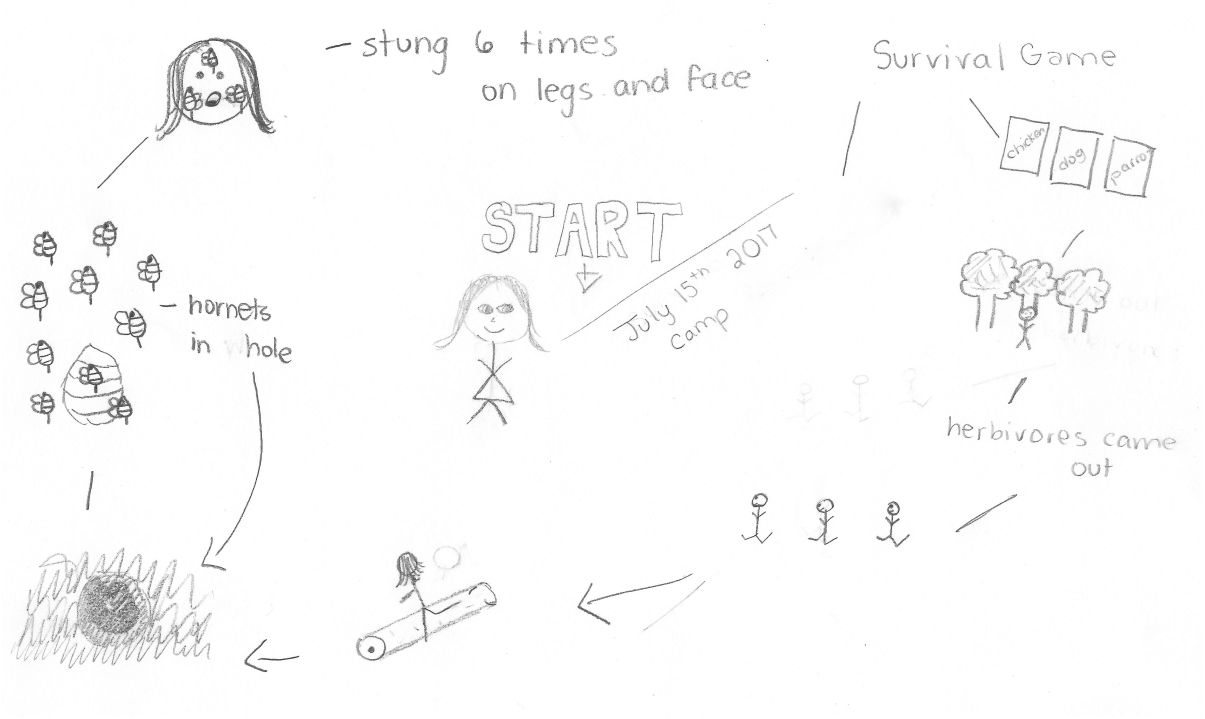



*Figure 96*: Emily's story map.

The other people that were mentioned in her story were only referred to in general as participants in the game. They were represented by the four faceless and hairless stick figures on her map. Solidifying the idea that she viewed herself as the primary subject of the story was the fact that only depictions of Emily had facial features, demonstrated expressions of emotion, and had hair. Her map sketched out only the most basic of story events, but there was a lot of detail given to the representation of the hornet's nest and to the swarm of hornets, suggesting that this was the particular incident she wanted to spend

the most time describing during her storytelling performance. Her map began in the center, and moved in a clockwise motion, ending at the top of the page with the final action of her story.

As Emily told her story to the entire class during our storytelling circle, it was evident that she had developed the confidence she needed. She was the only student that felt the need to have her story map in front of her during the storytelling circle (Figure 97).

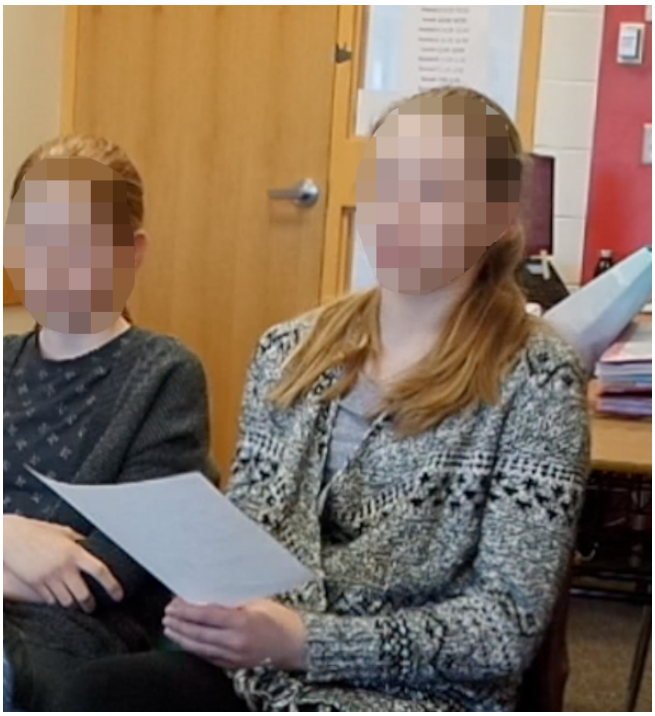


*Figure 97*: Emily holding her story map.

Although she looked down at it a number of times, the glances were brief and she always returned to making good eye contact with the rest of the group. I wondered if she held

onto the storytelling map because she was uncomfortable with the idea of using gestures to help tell her story, or if it just gave her an extra boost of confidence as she spoke.

**Emily's alternative representation.** Emily chose a poem as her alternative representational format, and it was accompanied by a cartoon like drawing.

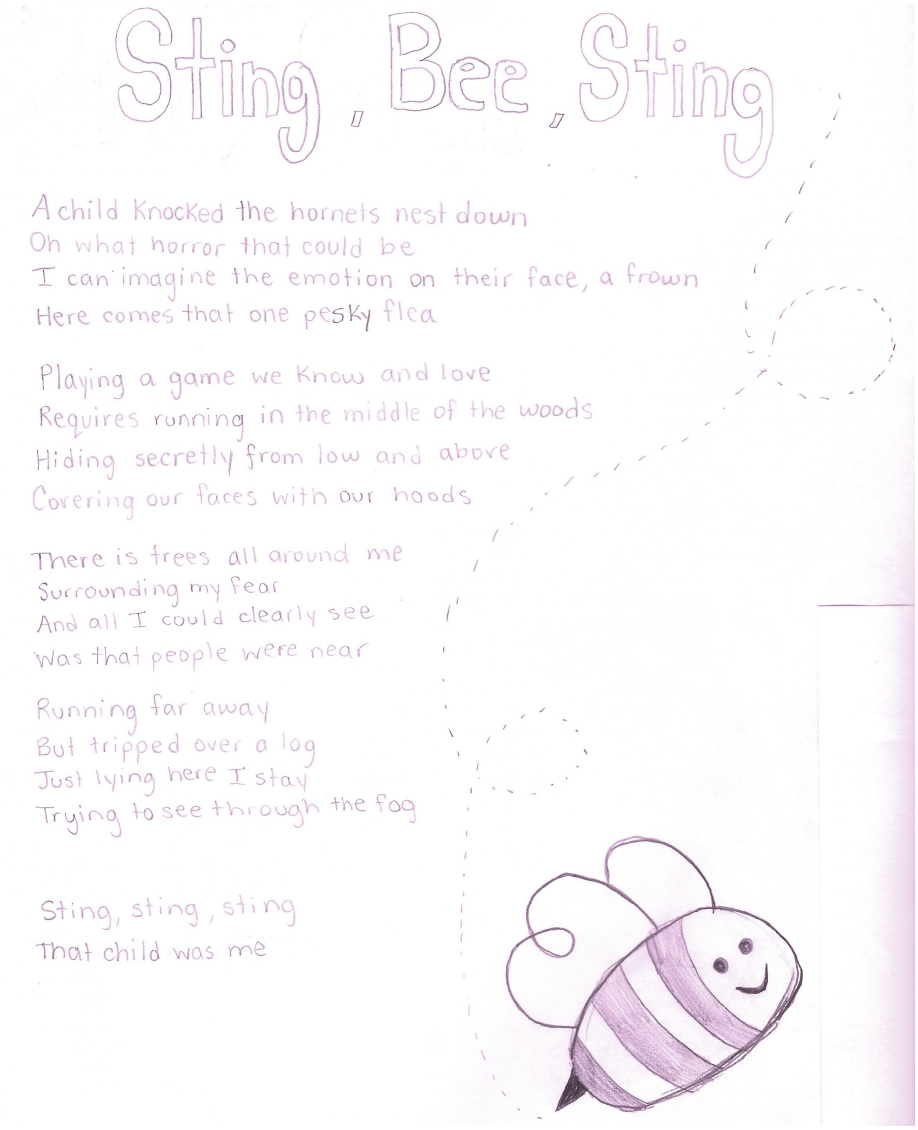



*Figure 98*: Emily's alternative representation**.**

Emily prioritized rhyming as an important aspect of her poem, and in doing so she had to sacrifice some of the meaning of her story While the drawing introduced an element of gesture via the dotted line that indicated the flight path of the hornet, it appeared to be incongruously cheerful with the main events of her story. Emily also chose to use the words bee, hornet and flea interchangeably when it suited her desire to rhyme.

In Emily's final reflective video, she explained that she chose to recreate the story as a poem because she felt most confident in that genre.

> Emily: "I did a poem for my alternative representation because I felt like a poem would be the best way to portray the theme of my story. I feel like writing paragraphs isn't my strong suit but a poem is a simple way of a paragraph and it portrays a theme in a short version. And the theme in my story was to always look what's ahead of you and make sure that you can know your way around because otherwise bad things might happen. I felt like a poem was the best way to do so because words are bigger than pictures. Putting a couple pictures on top of my poem also helped give the reader a sense of imagery in their mind for the poem that I made so they can really imagine the moment in that time of my life."

Emily identified poetry as a way to condense ideas, and that for her, poetry allowed for a more complete message to be relayed than visual imagery.

# Chapter Four: Findings

## Social Communities of Practice

The photographs and interview responses that students provided revealed patterns of social communities around literacy experiences and practices. Several students mentioned family members as participants in their literacy practices during the interviews, and it was also possible to infer family involvement from some of the photographs provided. In some cases, family members had considerable impact on the types of literacy experiences in which students were engaged, and this was particularly evident in the information provided by Audrey, Tambara, and Natasha. These family based literacy practices provided a way for students to connect with their parents, and there was a strong internalization of the parents' practices, in terms of reading, viewing, and cultural traditions.

There was also a strong undercurrent of peer influence, both "in real life" and online, which was evident from the photographs provided and some of the interview responses. This was most notable in terms of how many documented examples of social media practices there were in the journals. Social media and texting experiences were documented in most of the literacy journals, suggesting that this was an important part of their literacy identities and daily literacy experiences. Curtis and Logan spoke of the Internet being a large community to which they had access, and Logan specifically mentioned that his friends were on YouTube. Online social connections were mostly with people students knew in real life, but there was also an element of social connections with people they had never physically met. Only two of the students, Rebecca and Emily, did not document nor mention any instances of social media or texting activity. Embedded in

the social media use, there was clearly a pattern of peer interaction acting as a strong motivator for literacy practices, and students frequently mentioned friends as both a preferred audience for the sharing of creative work, as well as a trusted place to turn for feedback.

Formal and informal relationships were clear influencing factors, as coaches, teachers, affinity spaces (Gee, 2006) and online spaces were all important aspects of the student interviews and journals. The student literacy journals documented examples of specialized texts that were only found in certain contexts such as sports, music, and video gaming activities. To be able to interpret these mostly multimodal, specialized texts, it was necessary for students to have the guidance of an expert or collaborative group. The common thread, whether the specialized text was a video game, music or figure skating diagram, was in the need to have direct physical experience in the specific activity being supported before the associated text could be properly understood. This is consistent with Gee's notion of tacit knowledge being an important aspect of the literacy practices related to affinity spaces (2009). Knowledge can't always be fully constructed by reading a specialized text; there may be a set of lived experiences that need to take place before a specialized text can be fully understood and act as a useful reference. Also interesting was the importance of the affective domain as motivation for student engagement in these types of experiences. The students engaged in affinity spaces appeared to be motivated by friendship, curiosity, creativity, and enjoyment of the activity in which they were participating, providing authentic reasons for them to learn and internalize the specialized texts.

Even when students identified that their literacy practices were solitary in nature, that was not actually the case. Although much of the activity might have been done alone, such as with Nisha's drawings, students mentioned that there were times when they consulted or shared with other people for feedback. Students mostly preferred to share with their peers, their parents, or an online audience. This confirmed that students accessed their social communities at different times and for different reasons in an organic, as needed basis.

The importance of these safe, collaborative, organically accessed groups was also evident in the way students chose to work during the storytelling process and during the creation of their alternative representations. Students moved in and out of collaborative partnerships depending on their desire to work alone, request feedback, or seek out affirmation from their peers. The out of school practices students articulated and demonstrated through the literacy journals and interviews were constantly present in the classroom unless I chose to interrupt them.

**Preferred Practices and Technology**

While social communities were an important motivator for students engaging in different literacy experiences, there were other motivators present as well. Engagement with entertainment, pop culture, practical/organizational practices and school experiences were also influential in how and when students were engaging with multiple types of text. When asked which literacy practices students preferred, there was a definite trend toward multimodal texts and practices that were technology dependent both in the interview responses and in the journal documents, but not all of their preferences matched that trend. Some of the students preferred multimodal or monomodal activities that were not

technology dependent such as dance, playing an instrument, and reading fiction texts. The most surprising non-technology based pattern was in the instances of organizational and record keeping practices. The students who chose to document and talk about their organizational preferences described these as non-digital in nature. Students relied on physical paper calendars, agendas, and notebooks when engaging in organizational practices, rather than using the digital versions they all had access to on their personal devices.

There was a shifting practice in how students accessed information and engaged in research for school purposes. The majority of students mentioned or documented that they sourced non-fiction content from the Internet, rather than by referencing non-fiction print books. Curtis went so far as to say people in his generation don't go to libraries anymore, and others like Tambara used the internet acts as a kind of supplementary resource that provided information unavailable through print material available at school, such as textbooks. Students also mentioned working collaboratively when engaged in online research activity, indicating another shift from solitary academic learning to socially constructed learning. The sharing of technology was part of their collaborative practices, and they often worked on the same device or traded devices between them as they collaborated on the storytelling project and other school assignments.

Where non-fiction engagement seemed to have mainly shifted to online and digital sources, it was interesting that most students did not mention making the same shift in their fiction reading practices. Most of the participants documented or discussed the practice of reading fictional print books. Only one student, Curtis, documented the use of ebooks in his literacy journal. Looking at fiction in broad, multimodal terms, there

was a trend toward using platforms such as Netflix, YouTube and video games to fill part of the need for fictional entertainment, but this appeared to co-exist with the consumption of print based fictional texts.

Mobile technology had a particularly strong influence on all of the students in this group. Even the students who stated that technology was not particularly important made use of technology for practical informational reasons, or for entertainment. Many students documented either the use of weather apps and mapping apps, or described these practices during their interviews. Music was also documented as experienced through apps like YouTube, iTunes or Spotify, which allowed students to stream music, make collections and playlists, and have access to music at anytime through their personal devices. Although not mentioned by students, these music applications also have social components that allow users to share their favorite songs and playlists with other users across other social media platforms, reinforcing the influence that peer relationships have over these practices.

Remarkably, every student used a personal device in his or her documentation process. The images students collected for their literacy journals were captured in two different ways on mobile devices: students either took original spontaneous and staged pictures demonstrating their literacy practices, or they took screenshots of apps, websites and icons to represent their practices. During the storytelling learning process, the devices were often present and students used them to capture different retelling events and feedback from peers. Students also used them in the creation of their alternative representations, either to take pictures, make use of apps like Garage Band, or to make digital stories. The personal devices had become more than an indispensable tool, they

were an extension of student identities, and this fundamentally changed the way these students interacted with the world.

Personal devices were not the only pieces of technology represented in the interviews and student journals. Students made use of and moved between desktop computers, video game systems, smart televisions, tablets and laptops almost effortlessly. For example, Curtis chose to use his personal device to create his journal as a picture collage using an app, while his peers chose to transfer their photos and screen shots to a desktop computer or laptop and use PowerPoint to create the literacy journals. There appeared to be some thought behind which platforms students were choosing to use depending on purpose. Consistent with Hammet's (2013) observations, when students used technology, they either demonstrated competency, or they were able to develop skills as they needed them without overt instruction from the teacher. The best examples of this were Natasha's use of Garage Band, Tambara's use of the digital storytelling tool, and Rebecca's stop animation video. None of these students had engaged with these activities before, but they were able to learn on the go, and sought out help from peers or online sources to augment their skills.

After examining the journals of the eleven consenting students who completed them, and noting the frequency with which different types of literacy practices were documented, it became apparent how important technology in general was to the students in this group. About half of the student photos showed practices that were technology dependent, and there were seventeen references made to social media (texting, Instagram, SnapChat, YouTube). Almost everyone stated that technology was important or very important in her or his daily literacy practices. One student (Emily) said that technology

was not very important in her literacy practices; yet, this was inconsistent with her literacy journal where half of her photos depicted practices that were technology dependent. This may have been due to a simple underestimation of the importance of technology in her practices, or to an adherence to a traditional view that literacy is primarily defined as reading text.

**Creators and Consumers**

When asked about creative practices outside of school, many of the students expressed that they considered themselves to be creators and identified different ways in which they chose to express themselves. In this area, the literacy journals revealed something that the students did not articulate: while the vast majority of the pictures taken by the students demonstrated that they spent a lot of time consuming media of different types, they also revealed many acts of creative expression and underestimated the amount of creating that they actually did. Social media participation often involves sharing images and short text messages but this mostly went unacknowledged by students, except for Nisha and Kayla who both mentioned sharing their creations on social media. There was one instance of a student (Logan) who mentioned video editing as a way to connect his out of school literacy practices with his in school literacy practices, but when asked directly about his creative practices, he could not identify any. Many of the students also included staged photos to represent their literacy practices, indicating critical thought about how to best communicate their practices in a visual way. The literacy journals sometimes revealed the creativity that students possessed, even if they did not view themselves as creative individuals.

Students who did identify themselves as creative often did so within the context of an organized activity, such as music lessons or sports activities. These types of practices encouraged students to see themselves as participatory and creative, and students mentioned they had opportunities for composing, choreographing, and performing via these avenues. This was true for Natasha, Kayla, Audrey, and Emily who explicitly spoke of creative practices embedded within the out of school activities in which they participated. The organized activities also provided authentic audiences for the students to share their creative expressions.

The stories and alternative representations provided a way for students to demonstrate their creativity at school. Both processes involved significant critical thought about how to best communicate a message. Students experimented with gesture, vocal variations, tempo, visual, audio, and tactile elements. The variation between each alternative representation was particularly striking. Each story and alternative representation was unique and shaped by student identity. Most of the students were able to do both components of this project successfully as they demonstrated a high degree of creativity throughout the process.

**School Influence and Barriers**

Many students had images of schoolwork or homework in their journals. In all, there were fifteen references to academic work. It was interesting to note that the documented school based practices were mostly text based, with a few references to multimodal texts in the form of teacher websites, Internet research and textbooks, which did present combinations of images, charts, and text. This was in stark contrast to the out

of school, preferred practices that students discussed which were mostly multimodal in nature.

Some of the students believed that their preferred out of school literacy practices could or already did fit into school and all the students stated that they believed their teachers would support their literacy practices. The remainder of the students had trouble articulating or visualizing how those practices could fit into their school lives, and Audrey felt quite strongly that her out of school magazine reading literacy practice should not be integrated into school at all. When students could articulate how their preferred out of school literacy practices might fit into school, most mentioned that they could see them fitting into specialized classes, such as art, band, and physical education, or in the context of using technology to do research at school. This underscores the value that specialized classes and in school technology use have for adolescent learners. In some cases, it is only through specialized classes that students see their own literacy practices reflected in their school lives at all.

**Student Experience with Multimodal Messages**

Before any formal teaching about multimodality occurred during the learning process, students had some ability to articulate how messages were being communicated in their documented literacy practices, and they were able to identify and describe in their own words that messages can be communicated through combinations of visual, linguistic, audio, spatial, and gestural sign systems. Some students recognized that multimodal texts offered something to the communication of a message that monomodal texts could not. For example, Logan and Emily asserted that music could communicate emotion effectively through sound, and Tambara explained that the news platforms she

engaged with imparted information through sound, image, and print. Audrey recognized that magazines conveyed information through text and images, but had created a hierarchy construct in which the pictures were secondary to print in importance. Although students lacked the formal vocabulary to label and articulate the different modes of communication, there was general awareness that modes beyond the linguistic existed and could carry meaning, and students placed varying degrees of importance on these modes.

Awareness of transduction was particularly evident when Natasha spoke about reading the figure skating patterns and when Nisha discussed how she used shapes, size, colour, and textures to communicate messages through her drawing practice. Audrey's conversation around creating the choreography for her synchronized swimming routines and the need to match her movements to the music embodied the act of transduction. Even though students couldn't label this process, the act of moving meaning between modes was entwined in their creative activities. Uniquely, this awareness of multimodality and transduction was also illustrated in Kayla's journal as she told her story through her documentation. Not only did Kayla share her literacy practices, she did so in a way that intentionally revealed her interest in photography, as she played with black and white images, close-ups, and composition. The photos were an example of Pahl and Rowsell's (2010) theory of artifactual literacy, Kayla's identity was layered in her pictures and further revealed through her interview responses.

As students worked through the oral storytelling process, they experimented with ensembles of modes, first making note of how storytellers in the mentor texts made use of gesture, voice, eye contact, sound effects, and sensory language to create visual contexts

for the audience, and then experimenting with those ensembles to find combinations that suited their own stories and story telling styles. The classroom conversations about the mentor texts revealed growth in the students' observations of different modes, and they began to build their own vocabulary around those modes to describe them. This co-construction of multimodal talk helped to cement some of these ideas into student schema before any formal teaching about modes of communication was done.

The story maps offered a way for students to explore their stories in ensembles of modes where the visual mode became more dominant. They encoded the maps visually with symbols and short phrases or words to help them work through moments they wanted to slow down and expand upon, and to aid in remembering important story markers, characters, themes, and emotions. Students were quite engaged in the story mapping process, and brainstormed many possible formats as they tried to capture the essence of their stories. The maps proved to be an important window into the students' multimodal thinking patterns and they allowed students to experience the act of transduction in a meaningful and useful context. As students went through the process of creating their maps, they had to make purposeful decisions about which events were important enough to be included, how they were going to represent setting, emotion, the passage of time, and the order in which events were meant to be experienced. The act of moving meaning from an ephemeral oral mode to a visual mode helped to anchor students to reference points that allowed their storytelling to become more detailed yet still allowed for the stories to remain as living, changing texts.

There were some commonalities among the story maps, regardless of the format students chose to create. Almost every story map had representations of faces or the

human form. Where these faces and human forms appeared, almost all of them had demonstration of emotion, or represented the affective information of the story. Students had to decide which characters where important enough to include in their story maps, where they should be positioned on the map, and for what reason. This was usually related to a character's importance in the events of the story. Setting was also established on the story maps through words or image. Other patterns included a strong sense of gesture or movement in the maps, and an adherence to western reading norms when it came to the directionality paths they chose: left to right, up and down, or clockwise with obvious beginnings and endings.

Introducing language around different modes of communication happened throughout the storytelling process, as well as during the creation of the alternative representations. This was embedded in our discussions about sound effects, vocalizations, gesture, eye contact, body language, and word choice used to engage the five senses of the audience. When we began to explore the alternative representations, I made this language more specific. As the students planned their alternative representations, I noticed that the students who had a good grasp on the main emotion, message or theme of their story had an easier time translating that into other modes of communication and making design decisions. Some students wanted to stay in a place of summarizing the main events, but others chose representations that were more abstract. In some cases, this thought process was pushed by the modal choices students made, and the tools to which they had access, such as in Nisha's case and her choice to represent the theme of her story in a more abstract way through photography.

Students further demonstrated growth in their thinking about multimodal messages when they viewed and commented on each other's alternative representations. Overall, students were able to identify when and how their peers used the visual, gestural, audio, and linguistic modes to convey emotion and mood. Students were very successful at interpreting which modes and combinations of modes were carrying the meaning throughout the alternative representations they responded to, and how they were able to enhance one another. This demonstrated a high degree of critical thinking about what they were seeing, hearing, and experiencing.

**Pedagogical Documentation and Sense of Community**

Understanding something about how the students situated themselves within their own literacy identities and appreciating that they did have some awareness of multimodality was foundational in helping me choose how the storytelling process might be used to further increase their understanding. Knowing that students demonstrated a preference for multimodal forms of text affirmed the practice of engaging students in oral storytelling and the creation of alternative representations of story as appropriate and useful practices. Noticing that most students had communities of practice around their literacy experiences, and confirming that peer participation was very important to them helped to determine some respectful, relevant, and contextual ways for assessing how students were developing as story tellers, and in their awareness of multimodality.

Assessment was a shared relationship between the students and myself, as well as peer-to-peer, so it was necessary to find safe ways for them give and receive feedback. Allowing students to choose their own partners for collaboration in the early stages provided enough security for them to share their story ideas face-to-face and begin risk

taking. Students used personal devices to record their stories in order to reflect on their own growth, and in order to share different iterations with other students and myself. Feedback was sometimes recorded and shared in the same way. This encouraged students to retell their stories many times and track their own growth. The asynchronous manner of communication gave just enough of a buffer to create a safe space for students to interact with others outside of their usual peer groups. In addition to helping students improve the craft of storytelling through collaboration and diversity of feedback, it helped strengthen the sense of classroom community.

Students didn't necessarily understand how to give feedback to each other in the beginning stages. The first few attempts were very general comments, such as "I liked your story." As they worked together in an atmosphere of safety and trust, there was growth not only in their ability to tell a sustained story, but also in their ability to give useful feedback to one another. As we had class discussions about the craft of storytelling, students began to integrate this into the feedback they gave one another, and the quality of the feedback started to improve. Overall, students listened attentively to one another during face-to-face small group work, and offered useful feedback to one another, such as the need to use gesture, different vocalizations, sound effects, and eye contact.

Throughout the process, I conferenced with students individually and in small groups to offer support as they developed their storytelling voices. I asked them to reflect on their storytelling growth at several different stages, not just about the cognitive aspect of storytelling, but also about how they were feeling about their storytelling process and their next steps. Keeping things in the context of their own experience, their own peer

groups, and building the confidence to work with others in the classroom helped to create a respectful storytelling context for students to work within. By the time we had the culminating storytelling circle, students had told their story to everyone in the class either in small groups or via audio recordings.

I spent a lot of time circulating and taking notes, watching to see what students needed next to encourage them a little further down the storytelling path. Instruction was intentional and responsive to student need. I checked in with students at various points during the process to get valuable insight into how I could best support their storytelling development. I sometimes used a causal conference model to do so, visiting students as they worked, observing their process and asking them to reflect on what they needed to do to move forward. I also used Exit Slips, with questions requiring only short responses to get that information.

There was evidence that allowing students to explore their own personal stories had a positive impact on the classroom environment. Students learned things about each other that were previously undiscovered and they developed a new appreciation for one another's perspectives. The story telling process was sometimes uncomfortable for students and there was a feeling of everyone being a part of something challenging and new together. Overall, the storytelling experience leveled the playing field for the class, and the alternative representations gave students a chance to engage with the modes of communication they already felt comfortable using, or to take a risk and try something entirely new. Students also demonstrated empathy for one another, recognizing that emotion was a powerful motivator for telling a story, and there was a desire for students to connect on an emotional level with the stories told by their peers. The meaningful

interactions, exploration of identities, and growth of empathy echoed the findings of Gallagher and Ntelioglou (2011) and Kuly (2009).

# Chapter Five: Conclusion

## Implications and Ways Forward

A great deal has been written about the disconnect between out of school multimodal literacy practices and in school literacy practices as an important educational issue. It is suggested that there is much to be learned from student experience and that bringing their literacy practices into classroom settings could enrich education. This study offers one possible path for moving forward in a multimodal teaching and learning environment based in a Manitoba context. It was an attempt to understand the literacy identities of a particular group of students and to discover their discourse and thought processes around multimodality as they explored oral storytelling and the process of moving meaning between different ensembles of modes. The hope was to begin closing the gap between adolescents' in-school and outside of school literacy practices, while offering pedagogical support to Manitoba educators as a new provincial ELA curriculum is introduced that advocates a multimodal literacy environment. There are useful connections that can be made to the new Manitoba ELA curriculum as a result of exploring these topics with students, and five implications for teaching and learning: the benefit of inviting student identity into the classroom, the need to integrate multimodal talk and texts into both classroom consumption and creation processes, the importance of safe collaborative groups and spaces, the important role of pedagogical documentation when exploring multimodality, and leveraging multimodal expression rather than technology for student engagement.

The new Manitoba English language arts curriculum is a constructivist document with a strong inquiry stance that emphasizes the need for authentic and rich learning

experiences. The conceptual framework emphasizes the importance of literacy communities, meaningful contexts and multiple forms of text (Manitoba Education and Training. (2017, p. 7).

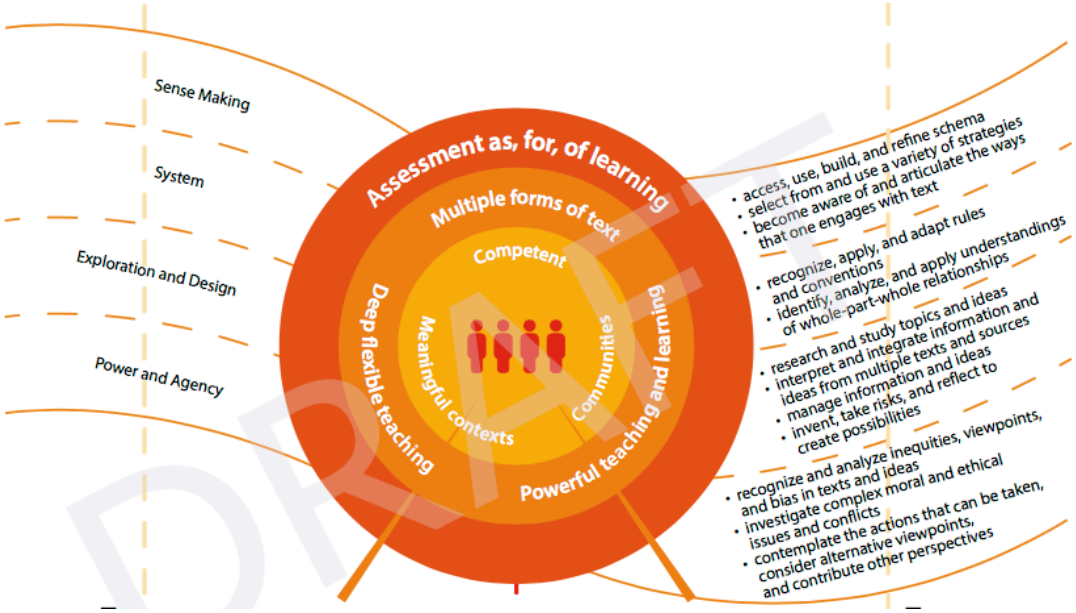



*Figure 99*: New ELA curriculum conceptual framework.

There is a path for student engagement in many different modalities of communication, in addition to reading and writing, and for many different purposes. As students engaged in an exploration of their own literacy identities, the storytelling process, and the creation of alternative representations, they wove in and out of the four practices of Language as Sense-Making, System, Exploration and Design, and Power and Agency. Working through English Language Arts through a Personal and Philosophical lens created a rich and authentic learning experience where student identities were welcomed and used as the larger context for "doing ELA". Although students worked in the ephemeral realm of oral language for a good portion of this study, the process was rich in design and involved intentional choices about meaning making. At its core, it was

a creative communication process that embedded a sound language arts learning opportunity consistent with the new ELA document.

The new ELA document places the importance of literacy communities at the centre of the conceptual framework, emphasizing relationships and the social nature of literacy. The concept of literacy communities was especially evident throughout this study, both in the out of school practices and in school practices of students. Outside of school, students engaged in affinity spaces, sought feedback from their peers and engaged in literacy practices with their family members. Students demonstrated involvement in literacy communities that both supported and shaped their literacy identities. During the study, the importance of the trusted peer relationships were evident once again as students engaged in small group collaborative activity, feedback cycles, the sharing of their drafts, and finished work. As students grew to trust one another and as they came together through a common experience, the development of classroom community grew and students were encouraged to overcome their fears and take creative risks. Cohesiveness among the students also began to develop as differences were no longer viewed as barriers, and students came to understand one another in a meaningful way. Cultivating these relationships in the classroom creates the conditions for a rich and meaningful English language arts creative process. Offering students an opportunity to create meaningful literacy communities in the classroom is both in the spirit of the new ELA document and the out of school practices in which students already engage.

The student and teacher documentation process demonstrated that students had a general awareness of multimodality. Although students engaged with different modes of communication constantly in their own literacy practices and could talk about them in

their own words, there was clearly still a need for teacher guidance. Students independently tuned in to all of the modes of communication in some way during the storytelling and creation of the alternative representations. They showed awareness of the modes working together, demonstrated awareness that an oral story had certain properties, and that those properties changed how a message was being communicated to the audience. When asked to give additional attention to how modes worked in ensembles, students were able to delve a little deeper and construct additional meaning with some guidance. They did not have the technical vocabulary to describe the modes of communication, but in their own way they were able to explain, compare and contrast, and detect differences in modes while viewing their peers' alternative representations.

Given an opportunity to work in a multimodal context, students demonstrated growth in their ability to articulate how different modes of communication could be combined for communication, and they were able to move meaning across different combinations of modes. Using the storytelling process as an authentic and rich experience to introduce different modes of communication in a holistic context both supported the curricular idea of engaging students in multiple forms of text, and is consistent with research which emphasized that modes of communication should not be addressed separately as parts, but together in meaningful contexts (Bazalgette and Buckingham, 2013; Kress, 2003).

A primary concern about working in an inquiry based multimodal classroom environment is the alignment of assessment practices with the extended and sometimes looping learning process. Bearne (2009) warned about the need to break away from assessment practices that are based in in written language when assessing in multimodal

contexts. Pedagogical documentation allows for a complex story of student learning to emerge and avoids the pitfall of out-of-step monomodal assessment practices. Pedagogical documentation offered a way to respond to students as they navigated multimodal learning experiences without over privileging written work for assessment purposes. Instead, a variety of documented pieces were leveraged to gauge student progress and determine next steps to encourage student growth. As students engaged in the design process, they also participated in the documentation process by giving and receiving feedback through audio recordings, and through a final reflective video. This collection of learning evidence was a collaborative assessment relationship that drove student growth and further strengthened community. This is a respectful, relevant, and contextual assessment practice that can and should be integrated into classroom learning experiences.

During the course of this study, the impact of leveraging choice of multimodal expression for student engagement was evident. Giving students an opportunity to experiment with many different forms of communication, both technology based and non-technology based encouraged risk taking and a diversity of products for student reflection. It was not necessary for the teacher to understand how all of the tools or formats of creative expression worked. When students were motivated to try something new, they were willing to learn about how those tools worked on their own. This required an investment of time, but student engagement remained high while they navigated the challenges of their particular choices. Rather than focusing on learning every tool a student might want to use, it is more important for the teacher to focus on guiding students to think about why they are using a particular tool or choosing particular

ensembles of modes, and directing them to make intentional and critical choices as they create meaning. This avoids the tensions teachers may feel around having to constantly learning new technology as described in the literature by Albers, Vasquez and Harste (2008) and allows the focus to stay firmly where it should be: on teaching the critical thinking skills necessary for both the consumption and creation of multimodal messages. It also ensures students are engaged with multimodal forms for the right reasons; the form affords the communicative power necessary for students to impart their intended message. The emphasis is taken off of novelty and placed on the design process, ensuring authentic student engagement, and avoiding the type of fleeting engagement when new technology is the focus, as noted by Albers, Vasquez and Harste (2008), Catlin (2013), and Ryan, Scott and Walsh (2010).

**Limitations**

Although I have attempted to provide a Manitoba perspective on moving forward in a multimodal teaching and learning environment through this study, there are several limitations that must be taken into consideration including the context of the population of the study, interpretation of the interview and collected data, and the biases of the teacher researcher.

This study occurred in the context of a community that is situated in a comfortable socio-economic bracket, although that had begun to shift over the last few years. Students generally had access to technology in and outside of school, as well as to many extra curricular activities and resources that had a significant impact on their literacy identities. Although the multimodal literacy identities these students exhibited were consistent with the literature, they may not be representative of all Manitoba

contexts. If one keeps the broader view that multimodality is not necessarily tied to technology, there are still implications for working with adolescent learners in many contexts that should be considered as a result of this study.

A second limitation exists in the interpretation of the interviews and other collected data. Although I did my best to set students at ease when the interviews were conducted, I observed nervous behavior from students and some seemed uncomfortable answering the interview questions. At times, I felt students were giving answers they thought I wanted to hear, rather than answers that were true to their literacy identities. There may have been several reasons for this, including my power over relationship with the students, the location of the interviews being a non-neutral location (the school they attended), and the age of the students.

The data I collected and analyzed was of course done so through a teacher lens, and qualitative in nature. Although I approached the data as openly as possible, I was looking for evidence that students were engaging in and talking about multimodality. Due to the nature of pedagogical documentation, although I tried to triangulate data as much as possible, there were times when one or two pieces of data were used to make observations rather than three. What unfolded was a learning story of each student's journey, reconstructed from pieces of a whole experience. Although it appeared to be a linear process, it was a looping and sometimes chaotic process. Retelling the story in a linear fashion changed it somewhat, and although I have done my best to stay true to the multimodal experiences as they unfolded, representing the experiences primarily in text has changed the information imparted, and this modal limitation cannot be discounted.

One must also consider the bias of the researcher. I interpreted the data myself, and did not engage a critical friend to give an alternative perspective. Doing so may have enriched the interpretation of the data and offered possibilities I did not see on my own. This was somewhat mitigated through the student's final reflective videos which offered an opportunity for students to articulate what they found valuable about their own learning processes and offer opinions on how they developed as storytellers and communicators of multimodal messages. These student perspectives were invaluable as data was examined, and served as a member checking process.

Finally, my literacy pedagogy is clearly grounded in multimodal theory and the belief that literacy is socially situated and mediated by power and authority structures. I analyzed the data through critical discourse analysis and a multimodal discourse analysis framework. Moreover, the data was collected through a pedagogical documentation process. These stances caused me to ask a particular set of questions to investigate, collect data in a certain way, and interpret the data in an attempt to answer my research questions. This must be forefront in the mind of anyone reading this study as they draw their own conclusions from the data presented.

**Questions Yet Unanswered**

I set out to answer five specific questions through this study, and feel that one has remained partially unanswered. It was beyond the scope of this study to examine the impact that this learning experience had on the students' personal literacy practices and identities. Although I believe a significant shift in their in school identities can be observed through the data as they first questioned their ability to tell oral stories and

gradually came to realize the strength of their own stories and voices, any impact on their out of school literacy identities remains a mystery. It would be intriguing to repeat this study a second time with a new group of students with the intention of doing a follow-up interview and examining how their literacy identities might shift and change as a result of the learning process. This could help determine if, as Brian Street suggests, co-construction of literacy learning environments do indeed have staying power (1995, 1984).

**Final Thoughts**

Ultimately, reading is about agency—understanding from where the choices that we make about how we act, think, or value arise—and how we can react, interrogate, or critique messages—written, spoken, visual, gestural, musical—with insight and the methods to do such analysis (Albers, 2014, p. 95).

What it means to be a literate person has never been a static target. Literacy is a relationship that changes across time, according to social context, cultural identity, and in relationship with different modes of communication. Students have literacy identities that are not well supported or recognized by the school system—with their lived, participatory reality often coming into direct conflict with traditional school power structures. In order to address those conflicts, educators must begin to understand and support the multimodal and new literacy practices of a technology and media-rich environment. This qualitative research study is pertinent to an important, overarching educational/pedagogical issue, it is grounded in the literature, and it provides a starting point to help bridge the literacy gap between school and student lived experiences.

## References

Ajayi, L. (2009). English as a second language learners' exploration of multimodal texts in a junior high school. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *52*(7), 585–595. doi:10.1598/JAAL.52.7.4

Albers, P. (2006). Imagining the possibilities in multimodal curriculum design. *English Education*, *38*(2), 75–101. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40173215

Albers, P. (2014). Visual discourse analysis. In P. Albers, T. Holbrook, & A. S. Flint (Eds.). *New methods of literacy research*. New York: Routledge.

Albers, P., Vasquez, V. M., & Harste, J. (2008, May). A classroom with a view: Teachers, multimodality, and new literacies. *Talking Points*, 3–13.

Anderson, G. L., Herr, K., & Nihlen, A. S. (1994). *Studying your own school: An educator's guide to qualititative practioner research*. USA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Archer, A. (2017). Power, social justice and multimodal pedagogies. In C. Jewitt (Ed.), *The routledge handbook of multimodal analysis* (pp. 189–199). New York: Routledge.

Backgrid (Photographer). (2017). [Digital image]. Retrieved from https://www.usmagazine.com/stylish/news/stella-maxwell-wears-updated-take-on-crimped-hair-photo-w491318/

Bazalgette, C., & Buckingham, D. (2013). Literacy, media and multimodality: A critical response. *Literacy*, *47(*2), 95–102. doi:10.1111/j.1741-4369.2012.00666.x

Bazley, M., & Graham, H. (2012). Experiment, share, revise: Learning through oral history and digital storytelling. *Oral History*, *40*(2), 109–113. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/41806362

Bearne, E. (2009). Multimodality, literacy and texts: Developing a discourse. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *9*(2), 156–187. doi:10.1177/1468798409105585

Bearne, E. (2003). Rethinking literacy: Communication, representation and text. *Reading Literacy and Language, 37*(3), 98–103. doi:10.1046/j.0034-0472.2003.03703002.x

Bezemer, J., & Kress, G. (2008). Writing in multimodal texts: A social semiotic account of designs for learning. *Written Communication*, *25*(2), 166–195. doi:10.1177/0741088307313177

Burke, A., & Rowsell, J. (2007). Assessing multimodal mearning mractices. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, *4*(3), 329–342. doi:10.2304/elea.2007.4.3.329

Catlin, S. J. (2013). Exchanges between two rivers: Possibilities for teaching writing in the Northwest Territories. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *36*(2), 119–143.

Eisner, E. W. (2001). What does it mean to say a school is doing well? *The Phi Delta Kappan*, *82*(5), 367–372.

Franklin, N. (2015, April). The moth stories: Grand Canyon [Audio blog post]. Retrived from: https://themoth.org/stories/grand-canyon

Gallagher, K., & Ntelioglou, B. Y. (2011). Which new literacies? Dialogue and performance in youth writing. *Journal Of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *54*(5), 322–330. doi:10.1598/JAAL.54.5.2

Gee, J. P. (2009). Affinity spaces: From age of mythology to today's schools. Retrieved from www.jamespaulgee.com/sites/default/files/pub/AffinitySpaces.pdf

Gee, J. P. (2010). *New digital media and learning as an emerging area and "worked examples" as one way forward*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Gee, J. P. (2003). *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Google. (2017). [Map data screenshot].

Hammett, R. (2013). 'Tech FTW!!!' Ninth graders, Romeo and Juliet, and digital technologies. *Language and Literacy*, *14*(1), 6–22.

Honeyford, M. A., & Boyd, K. (2015). Learning through play. *Journal Of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *59*(1), 63–73. doi:10.1002/jaal.428

Hull, G. A., & Nelson, M. E. (2005). Locating the semiotic power of multimodality. *Written Communication*, *22*(2), 224–261. doi:10.1177/0741088304274170

Jenkins, H. (2006). Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century. Retrieved from https://www.macfound.org/media/article_pdfs/JENKINS_WHITE_PAPER.PDF

Jewitt, C. (2008). Multimodality and literacy in school classrooms. *Review of Research in Education, 32*, 241–267. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/20185117

Jewitt, C. (2005). Multimodality, "reading", and "writing" for the 21st century. *Discourse: Studies In The Cultural Politics Of Education*, *26*(3), 315–331. doi:10.1080/01596300500200011

Jewitt, C., & Kress, G. R. (2003) *Multimodal literacy*. New York: P. Lang.

Kaur, R. (2017). *The sun and her flowers.* London: Simon & Shuster.

Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age.* New York: Routledge.

Kress, G. (2000). Multimodality: Challenges to thinking about language. *TESOL Quarterly*, *34*(2), 337–340. doi:10.2307/3587959

Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading images the grammar of visual design.* London New York: Routledge.

Lacayo, A. (2015, November 25). The moth presents: The bad haircut. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lLNTSjlZ0z8

Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2003). *New literacies*. Philidephia: Open University Press.

Leander, K., & Vasudevan, L. (2017). Multimodality and mobile culture. In C. Jewitt (Ed.), *The routledge handbook of multimodal analysis* (pp. 152–164). New York: Routledge.

Lwin, S. M. (2010). Capturing the dynamics of narrative development in an oral storytelling performance: A multimodal perspective. *Language and Literature, 19*(4), 357–377. doi:10.1177/0963947010373029

Manitoba Education and Training. (2017). *Draft English language arts document to support initial implementation*. Retrieved from: https://app.mapleforem.ca/en/groups/149/wiki/pages/1171

Manitoba Professional Learning Environment. (2015). *Reflecting on and moving forward with a new English language arts curriculum.* Retrieved from https://app.mapleforem.ca/en/groups/149

McCormick Spice. (2018). *Gingerbread men cookies*. Retrieved from https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/230238/gingerbread-men-cookies/

Mein, E. (2011). Multimodal literacies, pedagogy, and the construction of identity-based social movements: The case of "espina y jugo" in Mexico. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 44*(3), 296-310. Retrived from http://dx.doi.org.uml.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/10665684.2011.589766

Mills, K. (2012). Shrek meets Vygotsky: Rethinking adolescent's multimodal literacy practices in school. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *54*(1), 35–45. Retrieved from http://sfxhosted.exlibrisgroup.com.proxy1.lib.umanitoba.ca/umanitoba/cgi/core/sfxresolver.cgi

NBC News (2017), [Digital image]. Retrieved from https://media2.s-nbcnews.com/j/newscms/2017_50/2257086/171211-port-authority-explosion-arrest-2-1035a-rs_ddb0c78ff24c6d7e1a98d96e73d1aa08.nbcnews-fp-400-280.jpg

The New London Group (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, *66*(1), 60-92.

Norris, S. (2004). Analyzing multimodal interaction: a methodological framework. New York, NY: Routledge.

Pahl, K., & Rowsell, J. (2010). *Artifactual literacies: Every object tells a story.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Paskievich, J., Whiteway, J., Kuly, M., Beah, I., OMNI Television, Sedna Pictures, & Bullfrog Films. (2009). *The storytelling class*. Mississauga, ON: Sedna Pictures ; McNabb Connolly [distributor].

Railton N. (2015) Lessons in culture: Oral storytelling in a literature classroom. *Changing English*, *22*(1), 50-59. doi:10.1080/1358684X.2014.992210

Rinaldi, C. (2006). *In dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, researching and learning* (Contesting early childhood). New York: Routledge.

Rowsell, J. (2013). *Working with multimodality: Rethinking literacy in a digital age.* New York: Routledge.

Rowsell, J., & Kendrick, M. (2013). Boys' hidden literacies: The critical ceed for the visual. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 56*(7), 587–599. doi:10.1002/JAAL.184

Rowsell, J., & Pahl, K. (2007). Sedimented identities in texts: Instances of practice. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *42*(3), 388–404. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/20068302

Ryan, J., & Scott, A. W. (2010). Pedagogy in the multimodal classroom: An analysis of the challenges and opportunities for teachers. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* , *16*(4), 477–489. doi:10.1080/13540601003754871

Siegel, M. (1995). More than words: The generative power of transmediation for learning. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne De L'éducation*, *20*(4), 455–475. doi:10.2307/1495082

Siegel, M. (2012). New times for multimodality? Confronting the accountability culture. *Journal Of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *55*(8), 671–681. doi:10.1002/JAAL.00082

Siegel, M. (2006). Rereading the signs: Multimodal transformations in the field of literacy education. *Language Arts*, *84*(1), 65-77. doi:10.1080/13540601003754871

Skate Canada Info Centre (2018). *StarSkate guide*, 2018, retrieved from https://info.skatecanada.ca/index.php/en-ca/guides/110-starskate-guide.html Copyright 2018 Skate Canada Info Centre.

Street, B. (1984). *Literacy in theory and practice.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Street, B. V. (1995). *Social literacies*: *Critical approaches to literacy in development, ethnography and education*. New York: Longman Publishing.

Street, B., Pahl, K., & Rowsell, J. (2016). Multimodality and new literacy studies. In C. Jewitt (Ed.). *The routledge handbook of multimodal analysis* (pp. 227–237). New York: Routledge.

Thomas, A. (2017). *The hate u give.* New York: Balzer + Bray.

Towndrow, P. A., Nelson, M. E., & Yusuf, W. F. (2013). Squaring literacy assessment with multimodal design: An analytic case for semiotic awareness. *Journal of Literacy Research, 45*(4), 327–355. doi:10.1177/1086296x13504155

*United nations convention on the rights of a child.* Retrieved from http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx

Vasudevan, L., Schultz, K., & Bateman, J. (2010). Rethinking composing in a digital age: Authoring literate identities through multimodal storytelling. *Written Communication*, *27*(4), 442–468. doi:10.1177/0741088310378217

Vincent, J. (2006). Children writing: Multimodality and assessment in the writing classroom. *Literacy*, *40*(1), 51–57. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9345.2006.00426.x

The Weather Channel. (2017). [Weather data screenshot].

Weaver, W. L. (2017, December). That christmas, I don't even remember what gift I got [Audio blog post]. Retrieved from https://storycorps.org/listen/william-lynn-weaver-171215/

Wessel-Powell, C., Kargin, T., & Wohlwend, K. E. (2016). Enriching and assessing young children's multimodal storytelling. *The Reading Teacher*, *70*(2), 167–178. doi:10.1002/trtr.1491

Zuckerman, Z. (2016, July 25). The moth interns present Zachary Zuckerman: Fire, fire fire! Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7Oeo0qDt_U

## Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Please choose one of the entries from your photographic literacy journal to discuss. Can you describe the literacy practice?
    a. Where did it take place?
    b. What is being communicated?
    c. How is it being communicated (is it being communicated in more than one way?)
    d. Were other people involved in this literacy practice?
2. Why did you choose to document this literacy practice?
3. How often do you engage in this type of literacy practice?
4. How important is this literacy practice in your daily life?
5. How does this literacy practice fit into your school life?
    a. Do you feel your teachers would support this literacy practice?
    b. How would you like to see this literacy practice integrated into school?
6. Are there literacy practices in your journal that you prefer over others? Why?
7. Do you ever create/write/compose/choreograph/storytell outside of school?
8. How do you prefer to create/write/compose/choreograph/storytell?
9. Do you ever share these pieces with anyone else?
    a. How or where do you share them?
10. How important is technology in your literacy practices?

227 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

**Appendix B: Oral Script and Parent Information Letter for Recruitment**
*Oral Script for Third Party Recruitment Meeting for Parents & Students*

Research Project Title: I HAVE NO STORY TO TELL: EXPLORING THE MULTIMODAL LITERACY IDENTITIES OF ADOLESCENTS

Principal Investigator [redacted]

Research Supervisor: Dr. Wayne Serebrin, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. Email: Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca. Phone:(204) 474-9024

Good day everyone,

My name is [redacted]. Ms. Bartok is a student at the University of Manitoba and working on a Master of Education degree. She is interested in learning more about the ways students engage in literacy outside of school, and how students think about and explain their own literacy practices. Ms. Bartok is also interested in how different literacies can be more thoughtfully integrated into the classroom. This will not require anything extra from you. She will study regular ELA work in which the entire ELA class will be involved in keeping track of the different literacy experiences they engage in, participate in an oral storytelling experience, and in expressing the main idea, theme or emotion of your oral story in another form (art, dance, photography, video, music, etc.). You will also be keeping a learning journal during this experience, and will do a short video reflection on your final project. This will be part of your regular ELA class, and although Ms. Bartok will co-teach with your ELA teacher, your ELA teacher will be responsible for grading your work. Ms. Bartok is asking for permission to analyze that work, what it means in the context of teaching literacy and to share that information as part of her thesis.

Everyday, we encounter information that is communicated through combinations of print, photos, art, film, music, spoken word, or movement. These are called multimodal texts, and they make up many of our daily literacy experiences. As technology evolves, and students try to make sense of things like websites, info-graphics, social media, video games, augmented reality and other media, they must interpret meaning in complex ways. I am interested in understanding how adolescents are making sense of these types of texts, how/if they are creating them, if they are thinking critically about them, and if they are aware that the information they interpret or communicate is influenced by the modes of communication that are being used. The purpose of this research is to find ways of thoughtfully including instruction on these types of texts in the classroom.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary, there is no penalty for not participating, and your report card will in no way be negatively impacted if you choose not to participate. Ms. Bartok will not know who agrees to participate in the study until after the learning experience is over, and everyone will be treated the same and participate in ELA classes as usual.

Ms. Bartok would also like to share photographs, audio recordings, and videos of your work as part of her thesis, at educational conferences, and with other teachers to share what she has learned. Your faces will be pixelated or obscured in the photographs or videos, and the focus will be mostly on your work. Ms. Bartok will always ask if it is okay to take a photograph, video, or audio recording. She will also take notes, and ask questions in small group interviews about your work and experiences. These interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed.

Confidentiality will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms (made up names) for all participants, and the removal of other identifying information such as place names that might be shared as part of your oral stories or in your other work as part of the learning experience.

I am giving you two permission forms. Please take these forms home to give to your parents/guardians. Ask your parents/guardians to read them carefully. You should talk to your parents/guardians and decide if you would like to participate in the study. Please bring the forms back to [redacted] as soon as possible. Both you and your parent/guardian have to agree to participate and sign the form. The first form is about allowing Ms. Bartok to study and write about your literacy journals, interviews, learning journals, final reflective video, and creative work in her Master's thesis. The second form is about allowing Ms. Bartok to share photographs, audio clips, or video clips of your creative work at conferences and in her Master's thesis. You do not have to agree to both or either. If your parents/guardians have any difficulty with English and do not understand some parts of the study, we can schedule a meeting for your parents to talk to someone who can explain it to them in their own language.

If you or your parents/guardians have any other questions or concerns about the study, they can contact Ms. Bartok or her research supervisor, Dr. Serebrin. Their phone numbers and email addresses are on the forms.

227 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550



UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

*Parent Information Letter Regarding Third Party Recruitment Meeting for Parents & Students*

Research Project Title: I HAVE NO STORY TO TELL: EXPLORING THE MULTIMODAL LITERACY IDENTITIES OF ADOLESCENTS

Principal Investigator: [redacted]

Research Supervisor: Dr. Wayne Serebrin, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. Email: Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca. Phone:(204) 474-9024

Dear Parent or Guardian,

My name is Brandi Bartok, and [redacted] I am working on my Master of Education degree at the University of Manitoba, and in order to fulfill the requirements for my thesis I would like to conduct a research study in your child's ELA class to study adolescent literacy practices.

Everyday, we encounter information that is communicated through combinations of print, photos, art, film, music, spoken word, or movement. These are called multimodal texts, and they make up many of our daily literacy experiences. As technology evolves, and students try to make sense of things like websites, infographics, social media, video games, augmented reality, and other media, they must interpret meaning in complex ways. I am interested in understanding how adolescents are making sense of these types of texts, how/if they are creating them, if they are thinking critically about them, and if they are aware that the information they interpret or communicate is influenced by the modes of communication that are being used. The purpose of this research is to find ways of thoughtfully including instruction on these types of texts in the classroom.

Participation will not require anything extra from students, and the entire ELA class will be involved in a learning process where students keep track of the different literacy experiences they engage in outside of school, participate in an oral storytelling experience based on a family or personal story and in expressing the main idea, theme or emotion of the oral story in another form (art, dance, photography, video, music, etc.). They will also do a short video reflection on their final project. This will be part of their regular ELA class, and although I will co-teach with your child's ELA teacher, the ELA teacher will be responsible for grading student work.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating. Your child's report card will in no way be negatively impacted if you choose not to participate. I will not know who agrees to participate in the study until after the learning experience is over, and everyone will be treated the same and participate in ELA classes as usual. Participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to request that certain information or work not be included as data.

On November 16, 2017 at 5 p.m., [redacted] will host an information meeting about the study in Room 214. All parents/guardians and their Grades 8 students are welcome to attend. If you are unable to attend this meeting, your child's classroom teacher will send an information letter and consent form home for your review. If you still have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at school.

Sincerely,

Brandi Bartok
[redacted]

227 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550



UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

**Appendix C: Letters of Consent (Parent/Guardian/Student)**

*Letter of Informed Consent for Parent & Child*

Research Project Title: I HAVE NO STORY TO TELL: EXPLORING THE MULTIMODAL LITERACY IDENTITIES OF ADOLESCENTS

Principal Investigator: Brandi Bartok, [redacted]

Research Supervisor: Dr. Wayne Serebrin, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. Email: Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca. Phone:(204) 474-9024

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

**This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your child's participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.**

**You are being asked to participate in a research study in which video, audio recordings, and or photographs of your child taken during ELA classes for assessment purposes will also be used as research data. The information contained in video and photographs is considered personal information as they present recorded information in which your child may be identified. Please take your time to review and read this consent form carefully and any accompanying information. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, you should feel free to contact me or the research supervisor. Although the information captured in video and pictures is non-anonymous, confidentiality can be protected by restricting access to the video and to personal information such as the names of the participants or the institutions in which data will be captured.**

I am working on my Master of Education degree at the University of Manitoba, and in order to fulfill the requirements for my thesis I would like to conduct a research study in your child's ELA class to study adolescent literacy practices. Everyday, we encounter information

that is communicated through combinations of print, photos, art, film, music, spoken word, or movement. These are called multimodal texts, and they make up many of our daily literacy experiences. As technology evolves, and students try to make sense of things like websites, info-graphics, social media, video games, augmented reality and other media, they must interpret meaning in complex ways. I am interested in understanding how adolescents are making sense of these types of texts, how/if they are creating them, if they are thinking critically about them, and if they are aware that the information they interpret or communicate is influenced by the modes of communication that are being used. The purpose of this research is to find ways of thoughtfully including instruction on these types of texts in the classroom.

Participation will not require anything extra from students, and the entire ELA class will be involved in a learning process where students keep track of the different literacy experiences they engage in outside of school through a photo journal assignment, participation in an oral storytelling experience based on a family or personal story, and creative project where they express the main idea, theme or emotion of the oral story in another form (art, dance, photography, video, music, etc.). Students will also complete a short video reflection on their final projects. Students will receive instruction in oral storytelling and in interpreting and creating texts that incorporate more than one mode of communication. These learning experiences align with the provincial ELA curriculum.

I am requesting consent to analyze student creative work, conversations, and reflections for research purposes and to publish the results. Consenting means that you are giving me permission to analyze your child's creative work, responses to interview questions, conversations about their ELA work held in small groups, and responses to whole class instruction. I am also requesting consent to share this information with a peer who will help me analyze and provide another perspective. This peer will only have access to student work, responses, and conversations once any information that might identify the student is removed. I will publish the findings in my written thesis which will be accessible online through the University of Manitoba's Online Library MSpace (https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/). I may elect to share them in journal articles and to present them at conferences, but there is a separate consent form for this level of sharing.

During the learning process, interviews and small group discussions about student work will take place as part of instruction, and these will be audio or video recorded and transcribed for analysis. Video, audio recordings, and pictures of student work will be taken for assessment and student reflection purposes and will later be analyzed by me for research purposes. At the end of the learning process, students will record a short reflective video about the experience that will be used for assessment purposes by the teacher, and later analysis by me for research purposes.

Videos, audio recording and pictures will be taken with a digital camera during the ELA lessons. In addition to being used for assessment purposes in the context of regular classroom practices, videos are being taken for two reasons:

1. Video and/or audio recordings of the oral storytelling process, student interviews, the final reflective video and of student work will be analyzed and transcribed for research purposes and the transcriptions may be included in the thesis publication. Pictures of student work will be analyzed and may be shared in the thesis publication. Any student faces or identifying visual information present in

the pictures will be pixelated or obscured. Video, audio and picture data from non-consenting students will not be analyzed for research purposes and will be deleted prior to analysis of the data. All other written and recorded media will be destroyed five years following the conclusion of this study.

2. Video, audio recordings, and pictures of student work will be selected to share in the electronic publication of my thesis, in journal articles, at educational conferences, or with other educators/scholars. Video, audio recordings, and pictures selected for these purposes will focus primarily on student work, and the faces of participants will be pixilated or obscured. Precautions will be taken to protect the identity of your child.

You can consent to use of pictures, video and audio recordings of your child for one of these reasons, for both, or for neither of these reasons.

Several precautions are being taken to protect the confidentiality of student identities. Videos and pictures will mostly focus on student work. For example, I may video student work while having students describe features of their work, or have them do a voice over the video later. If students' faces or any other identifying information appear in the video or pictures, these will be pixelated or obscured if selected for sharing in publications or during academic conferences. Voices of students during oral storytelling, interviews, small group discussions, and reflections may be recorded and shared or alternatively transcribed and shared. All electronic data (video, audio recordings and pictures) will be stored on my password-protected computer at home, as well as on an external hard drive that will be locked in a filing cabinet at home. Physical copies of data collected (student journals, transcriptions, other student work) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home. All data in electronic or written forms containing students' responses will be deleted or shredded five years after the data analysis (March 30, 2023). Pseudonyms will be used in place of student names and place names.

There is minimal risk to participation in this study. The research used to design the ELA learning experience will support your child's creativity and the development of critical thinking skills necessary for literacy growth. I will benefit from the understanding of how to better support the literacy growth of my students. There will be no compensation to students and/or families that do choose to participate.

I recognize that I am in a position of authority because I am a teacher at your child's school, but please be assured that there is no penalty for choosing to not participate in this study. There will be no relationship between participation or non-participation in the study and student grades. Although I will co-teach with your child's ELA teacher, I am not responsible for grading your student's ELA work. Additionally, I will not be aware of which students participate in the study until March 23rd, 2018 after report cards have been submitted. Participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to request that certain information or work not be included as data.

If you wish to consent to participation in the study, please see the attached forms. There are two different consent forms. One form requests consent for participation in the study, and the other asks for consent for the sharing of video data in publications or at academic conferences. There is a consent form for parents and an assent form for the participating

student, and copies to keep for your own records. There is no penalty for withdrawing from the study if you change your mind at any time. If parents or students wish to withdraw their participation after initially consenting for any reason, they can do so by contacting [redacted]

If English is not your primary language and you would like the details of this study to be read aloud and explained in-person by an interpreter, arrangements can be made to schedule such a meeting. Please feel free to contact me if you have any other questions regarding any aspect of the study.

Sincerely,

Brandi Bartok
[redacted]

227 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550



UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

Research Project Title: I HAVE NO STORY TO TELL: EXPLORING THE MULTIMODAL LITERACY IDENTITIES OF ADOLESCENTS

Principal Investigator: Brandi Bartok, [redacted]

Research Supervisor: Dr. Wayne Serebrin, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. Email: Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca. Phone:(204) 474-9024

**PARENT/GUARDIAN and STUDENT CONSENT/ASSENT FORM**
***Please return this form*** [redacted] ***by November 20, 2017***

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at my research records to see that my research is being done in a safe and proper way.

I have read this consent form. I have had the opportunity to discuss the research study with the researcher and/or her research supervisor. I have had all questions answered by them in language I understand. There are no known risks associated with this study. I understand that the data collected during this study (including students' responses, pictures, audio and video recordings) will be destroyed five years after the completion of data analysis.

I believe that I have not been unduly influenced by the teacher-researcher to participate in the research study by any statements or implied statements. Any relationship (such as employer, supervisor or family member) I may have with the researcher has not affected my decision to participate and that I may choose to withdraw my consent and decline to the use of my child's video-recordings and to participate in any activity related to this study at any time, without penalty, prejudice or consequence. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after signing it. I authorize the inspection of any of my records that relate to this study by the University of Manitoba.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you

have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator by phone at 204-474-7122 or by email humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

□ **_Yes**, I give permission for the use of ELA data about my child for research purposes. These data include: audio recordings and transcribed notes of interviews and small group discussions; whole class de-brief session notes, video recordings; teacher field note observations; student work; pictures of student work; and student video reflections. Audio and video data that is selected for inclusion in the thesis publication will be transcribed. I give permission for pictures of student work to be included in the thesis publication with the understanding that student faces will be pixelated or obscured. I give permission for data to be shared with a peer of the researcher's choice after identifying information has been removed.

☐ **_No**, I do not give permission for the use of ELA data about my child for research purposes. These data include: audio recordings and transcribed notes of interviews and small group discussions; whole class de-brief session notes, video recordings; teacher field note observations; student work; pictures of student work; and student video reflections.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian's Printed Name: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

227 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550



UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

Research Project Title: I HAVE NO STORY TO TELL: EXPLORING THE MULTIMODAL LITERACY IDENTITIES OF ADOLESCENTS

Principal Investigator: Brandi Bartok, [redacted]

Research Supervisor: Dr. Wayne Serebrin, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. Email: Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca. Phone:(204) 474-9024

**PARENT/GUARDIAN VIDEO CONSENT FORM**
***Please return this form*** [redacted] ***by November 20, 2017***

In signing this document I freely agree to participate in a research study in which video recordings capturing my child's image may be used in the following contexts: presentations at educational conferences (involving teachers, professors, and other scholars), my online thesis report posted on UM Libraries MSpace, and articles in online educational journals. I authorize the use of such data and recordings only for the scientific and educational purposes specified above. I have been told that my child's name will not appear in any report or publication resulting from this study. I have been advised that while all feasible precautions are being taken to restrict the use of video-data, it is not possible to fully guarantee that distributed materials, especially those distributed via the Internet, will always be used for intended purposes.

I have read this consent form. I have had the opportunity to discuss the research study with the researcher and/or her research supervisor. I have had all questions answered by them in language I understand. There are no known risks associated with this study. I understand that the data collected during this study (including students' responses, assessments, and video recordings) will be destroyed five years after the completion of data analysis.

I believe that I have not been unduly influenced by the teacher-researcher to participate in the research study by any statements or implied statements. Any relationship (such as employer, supervisor or family member) I may have with the researcher has not affected my decision to participate and that I may choose to withdraw my consent and decline to the use of my child's video-recordings and to participate in any activity related to this study at any time, without penalty, prejudice or consequence. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after signing it. I authorize the inspection of any of my records that relate to this study by the University of Manitoba.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this research project and agree to your child's

participation as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw your child from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at my research records to see that my research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator by phone at 204-474-7122 or by email humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

□ **_Yes**, I give permission for the use of ELA video data provided by me, my child or about my child to be shared publicly for secondary uses. These videos of students' ELA work may be shared at academic conferences, in online journal articles, and/or the University of Manitoba's Online Library MSpace (https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/).

□ **_No**, I do not give permission for the use of ELA video data provided by me, my child or about my child to be shared publicly for secondary uses. These videos of students' ELA work may be shared at academic conferences, in online journal articles, and/or the University of Manitoba's Online Library MSpace (https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/).

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian's Printed Name: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

227 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

**Appendix D: Letters of Consent (Administrator)**

*Letter of Informed Consent for Administrator*

Research Project Title: I HAVE NO STORY TO TELL: EXPLORING THE MULTIMODAL LITERACY IDENTITIES OF ADOLESCENTS

Principal Investigator: Brandi Bartok, [redacted]

Research Supervisor: Dr. Wayne Serebrin, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. Email: Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca. Phone:(204) 474-9024

Dear [redacted]

**This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what student participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.**

**You are being asked to participate in a research study in which video, audio recordings, and or photographs of your students taken during ELA classes for assessment purposes will also be used as research data. The information contained in video and photographs is considered personal information as they present recorded information in which your students may be identified. Please take your time to review and read this consent form carefully and any accompanying information. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, you should feel free to contact me or the research supervisor. Although the information captured in video and pictures is non-anonymous, confidentiality can be protected by restricting access to the video and to personal information such as the names of the participants or the institutions in which data will be captured.**

I am working on my Master of Education degree at the University of Manitoba, and in order to fulfill the requirements for my thesis I would like to conduct a research study in a Grade 8 ELA class in your school to study adolescent literacy practices. Everyday, we encounter information that is communicated through combinations of print, photos, art, film, music, spoken word, or movement. These are called multimodal texts, and they make up many of our daily literacy experiences. As technology evolves, and students try to make sense of

things like websites, info-graphics, social media, video games, augmented reality and other media, they must interpret meaning in complex ways. I am interested in understanding how adolescents are making sense of these types of texts, how/if they are creating them, if they are thinking critically about them, and if they are aware that the information they interpret or communicate is influenced by the modes of communication that are being used. The purpose of this research is to find ways of thoughtfully including instruction on these types of texts in the classroom.

Participation will not require anything extra from students, and the entire ELA class will be involved in a learning process where students keep track of the different literacy experiences they engage in outside of school through a photo journal assignment, participation in an oral storytelling experience based on a family or personal story, and creative project where they express the main idea, theme or emotion of the oral story in another form (art, dance, photography, video, music, etc.). Students will also complete a short video reflection on their final projects. Students will receive instruction in oral storytelling and in interpreting and creating texts that incorporate more than one mode of communication. These learning experiences align with the provincial ELA curriculum.

I am requesting consent to analyze student creative work, conversations, and reflections for research purposes and to publish the results. Consenting means that you are giving me permission to analyze your students' creative work, responses to interview questions, conversations about their ELA work held in small groups, and responses to whole class instruction. I am also requesting consent to share this information with a peer who will help me analyze and provide another perspective. This peer will only have access to student work, responses, and conversations once any information that might identify the student is removed. I will publish the findings in my written thesis which will be accessible online through the University of Manitoba's Online Library MSpace (https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/). I may elect to share them in journal articles and to present them at conferences, but there is a separate consent form for this level of sharing.

During the learning process, interviews and small group discussions about student work will take place as part of instruction, and these will be audio or video recorded and transcribed for analysis. Video, audio recordings, and pictures of student work will be taken for assessment and student reflection purposes and will later be analyzed by me for research purposes. At the end of the learning process, students will record a short reflective video about the experience that will be used for assessment purposes by the teacher, and later analysis by me for research purposes.

Videos, audio recording and pictures will be taken with a digital camera during the ELA lessons. In addition to being used for assessment purposes in the context of regular classroom practices, videos are being taken for two reasons:

1. Video and/or audio recordings of the oral storytelling process, student interviews, the final reflective video and of student work will be analyzed and transcribed for research purposes and the transcriptions may be included in the thesis publication. Pictures of student work will be analyzed and may be shared in the thesis publication. Any student faces or identifying visual information present in the pictures will be pixelated or obscured. Video, audio and picture data from non-consenting students will not be analyzed for research purposes and will be deleted prior to analysis of the data. All other written and recorded media will be

destroyed five years following the conclusion of this study.

2. Video, audio recordings, and pictures of student work will be selected to share in the electronic publication of my thesis, in journal articles, at educational conferences, or with other educators/scholars. Video, audio recordings, and pictures selected for these purposes will focus primarily on student work, and the faces of participants will be pixilated or obscured. Precautions will be taken to protect the identity of your child.

You can consent to use of pictures, video and audio recordings of your student for one of these reasons, for both, or for neither of these reasons.

Several precautions are being taken to protect the confidentiality of student identities. Videos and pictures will mostly focus on student work. For example, I may video student work while having students describe features of their work, or have them do a voice over the video later. If students' faces or any other identifying information appear in the video or pictures, these will be pixelated or obscured if selected for sharing in publications or during academic conferences. Voices of students during oral storytelling, interviews, small group discussions, and reflections may be recorded and shared or alternatively transcribed and shared. All electronic data (video, audio recordings and pictures) will be stored on my password-protected computer at home, as well as on an external hard drive that will be locked in a filing cabinet at home. Physical copies of data collected (student journals, transcriptions, other student work) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home. All data in electronic or written forms containing students' responses will be deleted or shredded five years after the data analysis (March 30, 2023). Pseudonyms will be used in place of student names and place names.

There is minimal risk to participation in this study. The research used to design the ELA learning experience will support your students' creativity and the development of critical thinking skills necessary for literacy growth. I will benefit from the understanding of how to better support the literacy growth of my students. There will be no compensation to students and/or families that do choose to participate.

I recognize that I am in a position of authority because I am a teacher at the school, but please be assured that there is no penalty for choosing to not participate in this study. There will be no relationship between participation or non-participation in the study and student grades. Although I will co-teach with the students' ELA teacher, I am not responsible for grading student ELA work. Additionally, I will not be aware of which students participate in the study until March 23rd, 2018 after report cards have been submitted. Participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to request that certain information or work not be included as data.

If you wish to consent to participation in the study, please see the attached forms. There are two different consent forms. One form requests consent for participation in the study, and the other asks for consent for the sharing of video data in publications or at academic conferences. There are copies to keep for your own records. There is no penalty for withdrawing from the study if you change your mind at any time. If parents or students wish to withdraw their participation after initially consenting for any reason, they can do so by contacting [redacted]

[redacted]

If English is not your primary language and you would like the details of this study to be read aloud and explained in-person by an interpreter, arrangements can be made to schedule such a meeting. Please feel free to contact me if you have any other questions regarding any aspect of the study.

Sincerely,

Brandi Bartok
[redacted]

227 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550



UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

Research Project Title: I HAVE NO STORY TO TELL: EXPLORING THE MULTIMODAL LITERACY IDENTITIES OF ADOLESCENTS

Principal Investigator: Brandi Bartok, [redacted]

Research Supervisor: Dr. Wayne Serebrin, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. Email: Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca. Phone:(204) 474-9024

**SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT FORM**

***Please return this form to Brandi Bartok***

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at my research records to see that my research is being done in a safe and proper way.

I have read this consent form. I have had the opportunity to discuss the research study with the researcher and/or her research supervisor. I have had all questions answered by them in language I understand. There are no known risks associated with this study. I understand that the data collected during this study (including students' responses, pictures, audio and video recordings) will be destroyed five years after the completion of data analysis.

I believe that I have not been unduly influenced by the teacher-researcher to participate in the research study by any statements or implied statements. Any relationship (such as employer, supervisor or family member) I may have with the researcher has not affected my decision to participate and that I may choose to withdraw my consent and decline to the use of my students' video-recordings and to participate in any activity related to this study at any time, without penalty, prejudice or consequence. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after signing it. I authorize the inspection of any of my records that relate to this study by the University of Manitoba.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you

have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator by phone at 204-474-7122 or by email humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

□ **_Yes**, I give permission for the use of ELA data about students for research purposes. These data include: audio recordings and transcribed notes of interviews and small group discussions; whole class de-brief session notes, video recordings; teacher field note observations; student work; pictures of student work; and student video reflections. Audio and video data that is selected for inclusion in the thesis publication will be transcribed. I give permission for pictures of student work to be included in the thesis publication with the understanding that student faces will be pixelated or obscured. I give permission for data to be shared with a peer of the researcher's choice after identifying information has been removed.

☐ **_No**, I do not give permission for the use of ELA data students for research purposes. These data include: audio recordings and transcribed notes of interviews and small group discussions; whole class de-brief session notes, video recordings; teacher field note observations; student work; pictures of student work; and student video reflections.

Principal's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Principal's Printed Name: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

227 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

**Appendix D: Letters of Consent (Superintendent)**

*Letter of Informed Consent for SUPERINTENDENT*

Research Project Title: I HAVE NO STORY TO TELL: EXPLORING THE MULTIMODAL LITERACY IDENTITIES OF ADOLESCENTS

Principal Investigator: Brandi Bartok, [redacted]

Research Supervisor: Dr. Wayne Serebrin, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. Email: Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca. Phone:(204) 474-9024

Dear [redacted]

**This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what student participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.**

**You are being asked to participate in a research study in which video, audio recordings, and or photographs of students taken during ELA classes for assessment purposes will also be used as research data. The information contained in video and photographs is considered personal information as they present recorded information in which your students may be identified. Please take your time to review and read this consent form carefully and any accompanying information. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, you should feel free to contact me or the research supervisor. Although the information captured in video and pictures is non-anonymous, confidentiality can be protected by restricting access to the video and to personal information such as the names of the participants or the institutions in which data will be captured.**

I am working on my Master of Education degree at the University of Manitoba, and in order to fulfill the requirements for my thesis I would like to conduct a research study in a grade 8 ELA class at [redacted] to study adolescent literacy practices. Everyday,

we encounter information that is communicated through combinations of print, photos, art, film, music, spoken word, or movement. These are called multimodal texts, and they make up many of our daily literacy experiences. As technology evolves, and students try to make sense of things like websites, info-graphics, social media, video games, augmented reality and other media, they must interpret meaning in complex ways. I am interested in understanding how adolescents are making sense of these types of texts, how/if they are creating them, if they are thinking critically about them, and if they are aware that the information they interpret or communicate is influenced by the modes of communication that are being used. The purpose of this research is to find ways of thoughtfully including instruction on these types of texts in the classroom.

Participation will not require anything extra from students, and the entire ELA class will be involved in a learning process where students keep track of the different literacy experiences they engage in outside of school through a photo journal assignment, participation in an oral storytelling experience based on a family or personal story, and creative project where they express the main idea, theme or emotion of the oral story in another form (art, dance, photography, video, music, etc.). Students will also complete a short video reflection on their final projects. Students will receive instruction in oral storytelling and in interpreting and creating texts that incorporate more than one mode of communication. These learning experiences align with the provincial ELA curriculum.

I am requesting consent to analyze student creative work, conversations, and reflections for research purposes and to publish the results. Consenting means that you are giving me permission to analyze your students' creative work, responses to interview questions, conversations about their ELA work held in small groups, and responses to whole class instruction. I am also requesting consent to share this information with a peer who will help me analyze and provide another perspective. This peer will only have access to student work, responses, and conversations once any information that might identify the student is removed. I will publish the findings in my written thesis which will be accessible online through the University of Manitoba's Online Library MSpace (https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/). I may elect to share them in journal articles and to present them at conferences, but there is a separate consent form for this level of sharing.

During the learning process, interviews and small group discussions about student work will take place as part of instruction, and these will be audio or video recorded and transcribed for analysis. Video, audio recordings, and pictures of student work will be taken for assessment and student reflection purposes and will later be analyzed by me for research purposes. At the end of the learning process, students will record a short reflective video about the experience that will be used for assessment purposes by the teacher, and later analysis by me for research purposes.

Videos, audio recording and pictures will be taken with a digital camera during the ELA lessons. In addition to being used for assessment purposes in the context of regular classroom practices, videos are being taken for two reasons:

1. Video and/or audio recordings of the oral storytelling process, student interviews, the final reflective video and of student work will be analyzed and transcribed for research purposes and the transcriptions may be included in the thesis publication. Pictures of student work will be analyzed and may be shared in the thesis publication. Any student faces or identifying visual information present in

the pictures will be pixelated or obscured. Video, audio and picture data from non-consenting students will not be analyzed for research purposes and will be deleted prior to analysis of the data. All other written and recorded media will be destroyed five years following the conclusion of this study.

2. Video, audio recordings, and pictures of student work will be selected to share in the electronic publication of my thesis, in journal articles, at educational conferences, or with other educators/scholars. Video, audio recordings, and pictures selected for these purposes will focus primarily on student work, and the faces of participants will be pixilated or obscured. Precautions will be taken to protect the identity of your child.

You can consent to use of pictures, video and audio recordings of your student for one of these reasons, for both, or for neither of these reasons.

Several precautions are being taken to protect the confidentiality of student identities. Videos and pictures will mostly focus on student work. For example, I may video student work while having students describe features of their work, or have them do a voice over the video later. If students' faces or any other identifying information appear in the video or pictures, these will be pixelated or obscured if selected for sharing in publications or during academic conferences. Voices of students during oral storytelling, interviews, small group discussions, and reflections may be recorded and shared or alternatively transcribed and shared. All electronic data (video, audio recordings and pictures) will be stored on my password-protected computer at home, as well as on an external hard drive that will be locked in a filing cabinet at home. Physical copies of data collected (student journals, transcriptions, other student work) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home. All data in electronic or written forms containing students' responses will be deleted or shredded five years after the data analysis (March 30, 2023). Pseudonyms will be used in place of student names and place names.

There is minimal risk to participation in this study. The research used to design the ELA learning experience will support your students' creativity and the development of critical thinking skills necessary for literacy growth. I will benefit from the understanding of how to better support the literacy growth of my students. There will be no compensation to students and/or families that do choose to participate.

I recognize that I am in a position of authority because I am a teacher at [redacted], but please be assured that there is no penalty for choosing to not participate in this study. There will be no relationship between participation or non-participation in the study and student grades. Although I will co-teach with the students' ELA teacher, I am not responsible for grading student ELA work. Additionally, I will not be aware of which students participate in the study until March 23rd, 2018 after report cards have been submitted. Participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to request that certain information or work not be included as data.

If you wish to consent to participation in the study, please see the attached forms. There are two different consent forms. One form requests consent for participation in the study, and the other asks for consent for the sharing of video data in publications or at academic conferences. There are copies to keep for your own records. There is no penalty for

withdrawing from the study if you change your mind at any time. If parents or students wish to withdraw their participation after initially consenting for any reason, they can do so by contacting [redacted]

If English is not your primary language and you would like the details of this study to be read aloud and explained in-person by an interpreter, arrangements can be made to schedule such a meeting. Please feel free to contact me if you have any other questions regarding any aspect of the study.

Sincerely,

Brandi Bartok
[redacted]

227 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

Research Project Title: I HAVE NO STORY TO TELL: EXPLORING THE MULTIMODAL LITERACY IDENTITIES OF ADOLESCENTS

Principal Investigator: Brandi Bartok, [redacted]

Research Supervisor: Dr. Wayne Serebrin, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. Email: Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca. Phone:(204) 474-9024

***SUPERINTENDENT* CONSENT FORM**
***Please return this form to Brandi Bartok***

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at my research records to see that my research is being done in a safe and proper way.

I have read this consent form. I have had the opportunity to discuss the research study with the researcher and/or her research supervisor. I have had all questions answered by them in language I understand. There are no known risks associated with this study. I understand that the data collected during this study (including students' responses, pictures, audio and video recordings) will be destroyed five years after the completion of data analysis.

I believe that I have not been unduly influenced by the teacher-researcher to participate in the research study by any statements or implied statements. Any relationship (such as employer, supervisor or family member) I may have with the researcher has not affected my decision to participate and that I may choose to withdraw my consent and decline to the use of my students' video-recordings and to participate in any activity related to this study at any time, without penalty, prejudice or consequence. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after signing it. I authorize the inspection of any of my records that relate to this study by the University of Manitoba.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you

have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator by phone at 204-474-7122 or by email humanethics@umanitoba.ca.. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

□ **_Yes**, I give permission for the use of ELA data about students for research purposes. These data include: audio recordings and transcribed notes of interviews and small group discussions; whole class de-brief session notes, video recordings; teacher field note observations; student work; pictures of student work; and student video reflections. Audio and video data that is selected for inclusion in the thesis publication will be transcribed. I give permission for pictures of student work to be included in the thesis publication with the understanding that student faces will be pixelated or obscured. I give permission for data to be shared with a peer of the researcher's choice after identifying information has been removed.

☐ **_No**, I do not give permission for the use of ELA data students for research purposes. These data include: audio recordings and transcribed notes of interviews and small group discussions; whole class de-brief session notes, video recordings; teacher field note observations; student work; pictures of student work; and student video reflections.

Superintendent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Superintendent's Printed Name: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

227 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550



UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

**Appendix E: Confidentiality Agreement**

Research Project Title: I HAVE NO STORY TO TELL: EXPLORING THE MULTIMODAL LITERACY IDENTITIES OF ADOLESCENTS

Principal Investigator: Brandi Bartok, [redacted]

Research Supervisor: Dr. Wayne Serebrin, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. Email: Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca. Phone:(204) 474-9024

***Please return by [insert date]***

As a peer consulted to help analyze data and provide another perspective on student data in this research study, I understand that I may have knowledge of confidential information about the study site and participants. By signing this statement, I am indicating my understanding of my responsibilities to maintain confidentiality and agree to the following:

- I understand that names and any other identifying information about study sites and participants are completely confidential.

- I agree not to reveal or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons or to the public any information that could identify the persons who participated in the study.

- I agree to notify the principal investigator immediately should I become aware of an actual breach of confidentiality or a situation which could potentially result in a breach, whether this be on my part or on the part of another person.

| _____ | _____ | _____ |
|---|---|---|
| Signature of peer | Date | Printed name |

| _____ | _____ | _____ |
|---|---|---|
| Signature of local principal investigator | Date | Printed name |