CONNECTING THE DOTS: EFFECTS OF CLOSE READING ON STUDENTS'
COMPREHENSION OF PRIMARY SOURCES

by

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ABSTRACT

The Common Core State Standards require teachers to incorporate more primary sources in the history classroom. Primary source documents are often challenging, so teachers must find strategies to help students analyze them. Close reading has been used to help students comprehend primary sources. This strategy causes students to read more slowly and address challenging passages (Fisher, Brozo, Frey, & Ivey, 2015). The present study occurred at a high school in eastern North Carolina. The participants included tenth graders in two Civics and Economics classes. The researcher implemented a single-group interrupted time-series design over four weeks, where she taught participants a close reading strategy using different primary sources. Then, the participants completed a reading comprehension instrument developed by the researcher, which was evaluated using corresponding rubrics. Following this, the researcher analyzed data using descriptive statistics to compare changes in reading comprehension and close reading scores. Throughout the study, researcher also kept a field journal and conducted a qualitative analysis of participant responses. There were no significant changes in reading comprehension throughout the study, but the close reading scores suggested that participants did not transfer the strategy effectively.

Key Words: history teaching, history education, disciplinary literacy, history and reading, reading strategies, content area reading

BACKGROUND

One of a teacher's main goals requires them to reach each individual student at their current level. In addition, the teacher needs to ensure that the entire class comprehends the material. The teacher faces this challenge when some students are unable to read at grade level. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, twenty-five percent of twelfth grade students read below grade level ("Reading Performance," 2015). While this statistic is concerning, it poses a problem for the classroom teacher, who must help these students understand the readings for their class. In the subject of history, primary sources provide an important tool for allowing students to learn the subject and evaluate the concepts presented in class. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) also require students to evaluate primary sources.

With the adoption of Common Core State Standards, several methods encouraging the usage of primary sources in the classroom have been created such as the Promoting Acceleration of Comprehension and Content through Text (PACT) method. Using the PACT method, researchers found that primary and secondary sources have the ability to improve content knowledge in the history classroom (Wanzek, Swanson, Roberts, Vaughn, & Kent, 2015). However, students need prior knowledge to support their understanding of primary sources. Students who have a greater understanding of content tend to have a higher reading comprehension of the primary sources (De La Paz & Wissinger, 2015). Combining these two studies reveals that primary and secondary sources can be an effective way of improving student understanding of historical content, but the students must be presented with enough prior knowledge to comprehend the documents. Seeing the benefit of incorporating primary sources, teachers need strategies to help students access the challenging texts in the classroom.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the present study was to investigate whether the implementation of a close reading strategy effected students' reading comprehension of primary sources.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What effect does close reading have on student comprehension of primary sources?

LITERATURE REVIEW

New Standards for Literacy

For some time, educators have debated methods to improve social studies education in high school. Many of these recent programs engage students through incorporating and evaluating primary and secondary sources. Most of these new programs responded to the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. Specifically, the standards that relate to history and social studies expect that students develop skills that enable them to read, summarize, compile, and evaluate multiple sources (Common Core, 2010). In order to meet these demands, students and teachers need to change their perceptions about the role of literacy in the social studies classroom.

Current Practice of Literacy in Social Studies

Several studies have considered the role that literacy plays in the social studies classroom. Ness (2008) investigated literacy's role in high school and middle school classes through 2,400 hours of class observations, which included four teachers who taught social studies. During these observations, Ness (2008) discovered that these classes spent little time on reading comprehension, which only accounted for three percent of total class time. In fact, the main text source used in these classrooms was the textbook, which the teachers described as

above their students' reading level. Another study on the students' and teachers' perceptions of reading also found that the textbook was the primary means of textual reading in high school (Hooley, Tysseling, & Ray, 2013). Instead of reading, teachers often used a didactic approach where they told students the content utilizing multiple mediums and activities (Ness, 2008). More promising uses of literacy came from Swanson et al. (2016).

In contrast to the Ness (2008) study, Swanson et al. (2016) more recently discovered that more classroom time was directed towards text reading. In fact, Swanson et al. (2016) found that ten percent of classroom time was used for text reading. While an increase in text usage was found in this study, teachers still failed to employ effective vocabulary and reading comprehension strategies (Swanson et al., 2016). From these studies, obvious challenges to incorporating literacy appear, as teachers often use limited strategies when incorporating literacy. Teacher expectations may also contribute to the use of reading. Hooley et al. (2013) discovered that teachers do not expect students to complete reading assignments outside of class. Teachers also disliked utilizing class time so that students read the texts in class (Hooley et al., 2013). Hooley et al. (2013) indicated that the high school seniors may have responded to the teachers' negative perceptions of reading, as many high school seniors reported that they felt reading for class was not imperative. The students believed that teachers assumed that students would not complete assigned reading. These studies indicate some barriers created by current literacy practice in content areas to effectively incorporating literacy strategies. The studies highlight that teachers need to change their perceptions on the importance of literacy education in content areas, as well as the amount of time required to implement literacy strategies.

New Methods for Incorporating Literacy

In response to the Common Core standards, multiple groups developed new strategies which met the national standard's goals. Undoubtedly, these methods reflected a change in social studies education towards a less didactic approach. Literacy instruction was previously limited in high school content areas. To counter this, new programs considered literacy as a foremost component of social studies practice. The National Council for the Social Studies recently introduced the College, Career, and Civic (C3) Life Framework for the Social Studies (2013). The C3 Framework encourages teachers to incorporate its four dimensions: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries, Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools, Evaluating and Using Sources, and Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action. These dimensions each meet requirements of the Common Core standards by asking students to effectively develop questions that analyze sources so that they produce a final, informed product (NCSS, 2013). Other groups have also suggested strategies that incorporate literacy in social studies classrooms.

Researchers and educators have created methods which included primary and secondary sources into social studies lessons. Several studies employing primary and secondary sources in class time resulted in students improving their historical content knowledge (Wanzek et al., 2015; Monte-Sano, 2011; Reisman, 2012b). As previously discussed, the PACT method emphasizes utilizing primary and secondary sources after teaching prior knowledge. In addition, students worked in a collaborative setting on many aspects of the PACT program (Wanzek et al., 2015). To contrast, another educator used primary and secondary sources to teach content by introducing different documents over multiple class periods (Monte-Sano, 2011). During each class period, students investigated additional sources, which students ultimately combined to

answer an overall question about the larger unit topic. Using this method throughout the semester, the teacher improved the students' historical reasoning (Monte-Sano, 2011).

Another method for incorporating literacy is the Stanford History Education Group's "Reading Like a Historian." This method provides teachers with inquiry-based strategies for evaluating specific historical questions. Each lesson begins by introducing the necessary prior knowledge followed by students investigating selected primary and secondary sources surrounding the question. The sources introduced by the program often provide leveled texts, which helps improve student understanding (Reisman, 2012b). Researchers investigated the impact of this program in several eleventh grade United States History classes. During the intervention, Reisman (2012b) discovered that students obtained a higher level of reading comprehension, historical thinking (specifically, close reading and sourcing), and factual knowledge throughout the intervention.

Within these approaches, several key aspects of incorporating literacy strategies emerge. First, most strategies encourage teachers to describe prior knowledge on the sources before allowing students to read (Reisman, 2012a; Wanzek et al., 2015). This prior knowledge provides students with the information necessary to understand the text, and hopefully place the text in the historical context. The strategies also encourage a collaborative environment when evaluating the primary sources (Reisman, 2012a; Wanzek et al., 2015). In addition, many strategies utilized an inquiry-based approach to evaluating the documents (Reisman, 2012a; NCSS, 2013). The inquiry-based approach allows students to complete the primary source investigations, which inform their final response to the questions through a written response or informed action. Despite suggestions by these studies, there is still need to implement a system that more effectively addresses reading comprehension of challenging primary sources.

Addressing Student Reading Level

Student reading level is among the greatest challenges when incorporating social studies literacy methods into the classroom. A national study in 2015 found that twenty-five percent of students read below grade level by the time they reach high school. Between eighth and twelfth grade, there is little change in this statistic. In fact, only thirty-eight percent of students read at or above proficient reading levels during high school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). With so many students maintaining a low reading level throughout high school, teachers face the challenge of providing access to often demanding texts for these students. Both primary sources and the textbook often require reading at or above grade level (Ness, 2008). Due to these findings, teachers need to provide tools that help students adapt to reading difficult texts.

In high school, students face limited growth of reading comprehension because reading level improves slowly during high school (Haynes & Alliance for Excellent, 2012; Lee, 2010). For some researchers, there is a desire to expend more resources on reading comprehension instruction in high school due to reading's importance for the global economy (Haynes et al., 2012). In fact, one study utilized an intensive two-year reading intervention during the students' elective periods to address struggling readers in high school (Vaughn et al., 2015). Vaughn et al. (2015) discovered that this program improved reading for the students through focusing on the texts already being read in their content area classrooms. Despite potential improvements, teachers still spend limited time on reading comprehension in high school (Ness, 2008).

Several methods have been introduced to help high school students improve their reading skills and understand texts. Hawkins, Hale, Sheeley, & Ling (2011) utilized repeated reading and vocabulary previewing interventions in order to help students improve reading fluency and vocabulary. In a combined intervention, Hawkins et al. (2011) discovered that students did

improve their reading skills. Another study that tested using repeated reading and vocabulary

instruction with struggling readers found that, although the interventions did not produce

statistically significant changes in reading comprehension, there seemed to be limited overall

improvement (Seifert & Espin, 2012). Seifert and Espin (2012) also used teacher modeling when

introducing the repeated reading and vocabulary strategies. Throughout repeated reading, the

researchers asked the students to read the document verbally. After students read, the researchers

identified the words that they missed and had the students learn those words. The students then

reread the passage aloud (Hawkins et al., 2011). This process allowed students to learn the words

that they misread and reread the document another time with the corrections. The process

indicates that correcting students' reading helps improve their fluency.

Close Reading

Close reading has been used as a strategy in multiple subject areas for improving reading

comprehension. In addition, the Common Core State Standards encourage utilizing this strategy

(Hinchman & Moore, 2013). Close reading instructs students to read, re-read, annotate,

summarize, and explain a text. In the classroom, this strategy helps students slow their reading

which produces better comprehension of the subjects being discussed (Fisher, Brozo, Frey, &

Ivey, 2015). During primary source analysis, slowing reading assists students in understanding

the topic (Newkirk, 2010). Within the social studies classroom, prior knowledge or historical

context should be incorporated as part of close reading. By providing historical context before

reading, students experience familiarity with the document they are reading (Neumann,

Gilbertson, & Hutton, 2014). Through using close reading with historical context, students gain

the necessary skills to analyze documents presented in class.

Responding to the Common Core State Standards, many studies and organizations have addressed the usage of primary sources in the classroom (NCSS, 2013; Monte-Sano 2011; Reisman 2012b). Primary sources offer students a chance to investigate history themselves; however, one of the challenges with using primary sources is that they are often above the students' reading levels (Ness, 2008). In response to this, several studies have tested the usefulness of introducing historical analysis to primary sources (Monte-Sano, 2011; Reisman 2012b). Although historical analysis strategies help students understand the primary sources, many studies and classes fail to address the implementation of strategies addressing reading comprehension. In fact, very little classroom time has been used to address reading comprehension of texts used in the classroom (Ness, 2008). Close reading is a method suggested by the Common Core State Standards to improve reading comprehension (Hinchman & Moore, 2013; Fisher et al., 2015).

DEFINITIONS

Close reading is a strategy that involves students annotating passages, identifying key terms and main ideas, indicating confusing parts of passages, and repeating reading to gain a greater understanding of the passage (Fisher et al., 2015).

Didactic approach is a "teacher-centered" approach to teaching (Ness, 2008). The teacher tells all the information they want their students to understand.

Inquiry-based approach is a learning strategy that involves students investigating a question using sources provided by the teacher to answer a comprehensive question (Reisman, 2012a).

Teacher modeling features a teacher explaining a new strategy by describing and demonstrating the actions required for the strategy (Fisher et al., 2015).

A *primary source* is a source written by a person who lived during the time period.

Reading comprehension is the student's ability to summarize by identifying the author's claim and supporting details in a text (Dermitzaki, Andreou, & Paraskeva, 2008). In the present study, the student's ability to read and understand a primary source was tested.

A *secondary source* is a source that is written after an event occurred by someone who was not present at the time.

METHOD

The purpose of the present study was to investigate whether the implementation of a close reading strategy would affect the participants' reading comprehension of primary sources. The present study investigated the question: what effect does close reading have on participant comprehension of primary sources? The study was a quantitative experiment using a single-group interrupted time-series design. The study was implemented over a period of seven weeks with a pre-test, four implementations, and a post-test, with six different primary sources. Each time the participants read the primary sources, they were evaluated on reading comprehension and close reading. The evaluation occurred weekly, except between implementations one and two when a hurricane prevented implementation. Throughout the study, the researcher also kept a field journal and completed a qualitative analysis of participant responses to question one. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, and then, qualitative data was compared to the quantitative data.

Procedures

For the present study, the researcher conducted a quantitative experiment using a single-group interrupted time-series design. The researcher first administered a pre-test where participants received a primary source passage, the United States *Declaration of Independence*, and answered the questions on the reading comprehension instrument (see Appendix A). In

addition, participants annotated their primary source passages while reading. After the initial test,

the researcher implemented the close reading treatment over a series of classes. Each time the

participants read a new primary source passage, they also completed the instrument. The data

were collected after each implementation, and at the end of the study, the researcher compiled

the data to analyze.

The instrument created for the study was developed based on components of close

reading and common behaviors of effective readers. The researcher evaluated the participants'

ability to implement the close reading strategy by using a rubric (see Appendix C) that identifies

components of the strategy including annotations, questions, and identifying a passage's main

ideas (Fisher et al., 2015). The instrument and corresponding rubric evaluated behaviors that

indicate effective reading (see Appendix B). The instrument's first question asked participants to

summarize the passage so that the researcher identified whether the participants had an overall

understanding of the passage. Participants were also asked to include main ideas and supporting

details in their summaries, which are considered behaviors of effective readers (Dermitzaki et al.,

2008; Palincsar & Brown, 1989). The instrument's second question asked the participants to

identify any bias. By evaluating the author's bias using the participants' prior knowledge as well

as inference skills, this question identified the readers' ability to connect the reading to prior

knowledge and draw inferences from the text (Dermitzaki et al., 2008; Palincsar & Brown,

1989). The third question focused primarily on historical context as the participants identified the

author's audience. The researcher used this instrument and rubric for each primary source

passage tested.

Population and Sample

The study's population was high school social studies students. For the present study, the researcher used a convenience sample of students in a year-long internship classroom. The study's sixteen participants attended a rural high school in eastern North Carolina. The participants were tenth graders in two Civics and Economics classes. Eight participants came from class A, and eight participants were from class B. Before the study, the researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon receiving approval from the IRB, the researcher sent a consent form to the participants' parents. In addition, the researcher asked the participants to complete an assent form. Throughout the study, the researcher protected the participants' identity by coding the data and using different names when discussing them during the results and discussion.

Treatment

Prior to implementing the treatment, the participants read a primary source passage, the *Declaration of Independence*, and completed the instrument (see Appendix A) using previously acquired skill sets. During the next lesson, the researcher taught the participants the close reading strategy using the Fourteenth Amendment as the primary source. Considering Wanzek et al. (2015) found that providing historical context improves the participants' understanding of a text, the researcher first showed a video to describe the Fourteenth Amendment's time period and discussed the video with the participants. When implementing the close reading strategy the first time, the researcher provided prompts and annotations to complete for each reading of the text (see Table 1). Through these prompts, the participants emphasized different aspects of the text during each reading (Shanahan, 2012). The researcher modeled each prompt with the participants by having the participants complete each prompt individually after the researcher modeled it.

During the first reading, the researcher prompted participants to read for basic understanding. The researcher instructed participants to annotate confusing parts of the text, by bracketing with an explanation in the right margin, as well as interesting points, by providing an explanation in the left margin. The researcher instructed participants to discuss their annotations with a partner and the entire class. The researcher then asked participants to identify the author's claim (by underlining) and supporting details (by circling) during the second reading, prompting participants to clarify the author's purpose. Again, the researcher encouraged participants to discuss this prompt with a partner and the class. After this, the participants completed a final reading to answer the lesson's essential question (by asterisking textual evidence). Following a final discussion of the text, the class reviewed the components of the close reading strategy (Fisher et al., 2015). At the end of the class, the researcher collected their passages to score on the close reading rubric (see Appendix C).

Table 1

Implementing Close Reading

First Reading	Second Reading	Third Reading
The reader will identify:	The reader will identify:	The reader will identify:
• Confusing words/ phrases • Interesting points	• Author's claim • Supporting detail	• Evidence supporting the essential question
The reader will annotate:	The reader will annotate:	The reader will annotate:
• Bracket [confusing words] and include an explanation on the right margin • Identify interesting points and write an explanation in the left margin	• Underline the author's claim • Circle the supporting details	• Evidence using an asterisk*

Throughout the remainder of the study, the researcher continued implementing the close reading strategy. However, the researcher modified the lessons depending on the class' ability to use the close reading strategy. Although the researcher attempted to use texts that were on a similar reading level, the researcher was unable to provide texts with similar structures due to the curriculum. During the second week, the researcher used an excerpt of *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965) as the primary source. The researcher provided less historical background due to time constraints, and she hoped that the participants might rely more on the text in their responses instead of historical context. The researcher then read an excerpt of the dissenting opinion for *Griswold v. Connecticut* with the participants modeling the close reading strategy. Following the modeling, participants completed the close reading strategy independently using instructions on the board as well as support from the researcher and her clinical teacher upon request. Participants again completed the instrument. Following the second implementation of the treatment, a hurricane prevented instruction for two weeks due to school being closed and the researcher's schedule as an intern.

During the third implementation, the researcher used Washington's *First Inaugural Address* as the primary source. Again, the researcher provided some basic historical context and reviewed the close reading strategy with the participants. Then, they completed the strategy and instrument independently. The researcher circulated during their readings to help participants with implementing the strategy as they needed it. In the fourth implementation, the researcher initially discussed basics of the historical background to *Marbury v. Madison* (1803)*, as well as reviewing the concept of judicial review. For this implementation, the researcher provided the participants with instructions and allowed them to only read the document once, provided that they completed the annotations. The researcher again reviewed the annotations that were

expected and left the instructions on the board, and the participants completed the strategy

independently with the researcher assisting them only when questions were asked. For the final

data collection, the researcher used "Federalist No. 10." Before reading, the researcher reviewed

the reasons behind the *Federalist Papers* and the differences between a pure democracy and

republic. Participants were encouraged to use annotations while they read the document and

completed the instrument, but the researcher provided no additional assistance to the participants.

Data Collection

To establish baseline scores, the researcher provided the participants with a primary

source passage, and they completed the instrument using previously acquired skill sets. The

researcher then evaluated the instrument using the accompanying rubric (see Appendix A). After

the researcher established baseline data, she implemented the treatment and continued providing

the participants with a new primary source passage and asking them to complete the instrument.

The participants completed the instrument weekly during a four week period. The researcher

evaluated the participants' answers to the instrument using the rubric each time she implemented

the treatment (see Appendices B & C). By completing and evaluating the instrument weekly, the

researcher identified the improvement (or decline) in participants' reading comprehension and

close reading skills over time. In addition, if the researcher noticed that the participants were not

effectively implementing the close reading strategy, she reviewed the close reading strategy with

the participants. At the end of the treatment, the participants individually completed the

instrument a final time. The data gathered from the instrument on the final assessment served as

the "end" data. The researcher also kept a field journal.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics from the rubric scores were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment. Using the rubric, the researcher assigned a score ranging from one to four, with one being "not proficient" and four being "mastery" on each component of the rubric (see Appendices B & C). Data was analyzed by acquiring an overall reading comprehension score using scores from the instrument's questions and a close reading score based on the participants' annotations. The researcher looked for growth in scores over the course of the treatment. After this, the researcher compared the reading comprehension and close reading scores to see if the close reading strategy improved overall comprehension. If the close reading score improved along with the reading comprehension score, the strategy potentially proved an effective treatment. However, if the close reading score improved but the reading comprehension score did not, the strategy may not be an effective treatment.

The researcher also used qualitative data to draw conclusions about the study. Throughout the study, the researcher kept a field journal where lesson plans were reported and reflected on for each implementation of the study. At the end of the study, the researcher used the field journal to draw conclusions from the quantitative data. The researcher also coded participant responses for question one to determine the participants' reliance on textual content versus historical context in their responses. The responses were coded by highlighting parts of participant responses that referenced the content in blue, quotations in orange, historical context in green, irrelevant information in pink, and parts that might reference textual evidence or historical context in yellow. The researcher then observed the amount of each type of information the participants referenced in their responses. From this information, the researcher created a table for each class with each test and implementation. In the table, she wrote the

observations gathered for each class and implementation along with information from the field

journal. The researcher used this information to compare the amount of historical context the

participants were given to the amount of historical context they used in their responses.

RESULTS

The present study investigated the impact of close reading on the participants' analysis

and interpretation of challenging primary source documents. The researcher categorized the data

using an overall question average for each class and a per question score for both classes

together. To analyze the implementation of the instructional strategy, the researcher also

assigned a close reading score for each implementation of the strategy and a final overall score.

As a final component of data analysis, the researcher used teacher reflections combined with a

qualitative analysis of participant work to determine implications of the study on future practices.

Overall Averages

The overall scores for each class were calculated using an average score of all questions

on the instrument. For the overall baseline average, class A scored 2.2500 and class B scored

approximately a 2.0357. Following the first implementation, class A and class B experienced a

slight decrease in overall averages scoring a 1.8125 and 2.0000 respectively. However,

implementations in weeks two through four saw a slight increase in overall averages for class A.

During the second implementation, class A received an overall average of 2.1563 followed by an

approximate overall average of 2.4286 in the third implementation and 2.5313 in the fourth

implementation. In contrast, class B increased their average in the second implementation to

receive a score of 2.2813, but class B's average decreased slightly over the third and fourth

implementations with averages of 2.1071 and 2.0625 respectively. Both classes' averages

decreased significantly during the final implementation with class A scoring a 2.3750 and class

B a 1.7857 (See Table 2 and Figure 1).

Table 2

Class Average on Reading Comprehension Instrument

Class	Baseline	1	2	3	4	Final
Class 1	2.2500	1.8125	2.1563	2.4286	2.5313	2.3750
Class 2	2.0357	2.0000	2.2813	2.1071	2.0625	1.7857

Figure 1. Class Average on Reading Comprehension Instrument
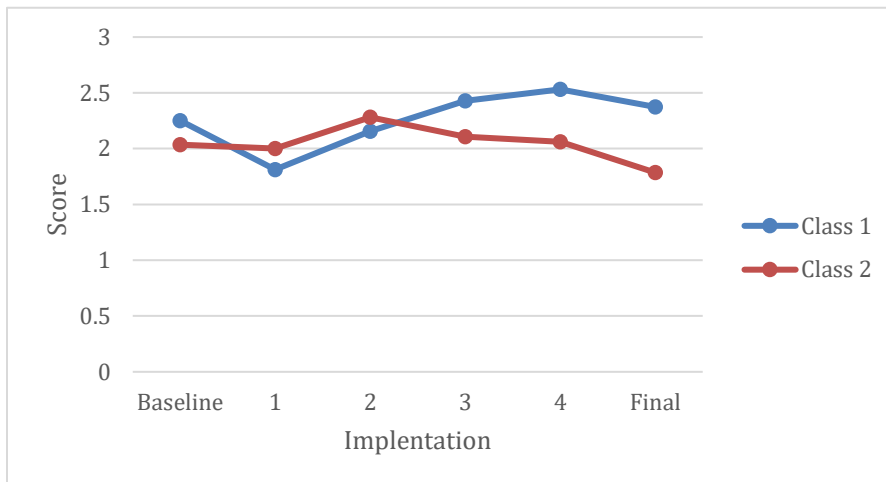
Question Averages

The researcher also scored participants using an average for each question on the rubric.

Throughout most of the study, participants experienced a slight increase in their scores for

question one which assessed the participants' overall understanding of the passage (See Table 3

and Figure 2). The baseline average for question one was 2.8000. After a slight initial drop in the

average during the first implementation with participants averaging 2.5714, the average steadily

increased for the second through fourth implementations. The averages for these

implementations were 3.0000 for the second, 3.0714 for the third, and 2.2123 for the fourth. As

in the overall results, the final averages showed a sharp decrease in the average score for

question one with an average of approximately 2.1333.

The scores for question two addressed references to prior knowledge in part a and

inferences in part b on the rubric. The averages for this question remained consistent throughout

the study. For part a of question two, the baseline average was 1.4000. Throughout the

implementations, question two part a generated scores that oscillated between increasing and

decreasing. During the first implementation, the average decreased to 1.2142. The second

implementation showed a slight increase in the average score to 1.5625 followed by a slight

decrease during the third implementation to a score of 1.3571. The fourth implementation

showed a slight increase in the average to 1.3750. As with the other averages, the participants'

average decreased in the final scores to 1.3333. For part b of question two, participants also

maintained a consistent score with a slight increase overall. The baseline average for part b was

1.4667. The average for part b slightly decreased during the first implementation to 1.4285.

However, the average for part b slightly increased and remained consistent over the second,

third, and fourth implementations with averages of 1.5625, 1.7857, and 1.7500 respectively. As

with the other scores, the average for question two part b fell in the final data collection to

1.7333.

In question three, participants identified the audience of the passage which addressed its

historical context. Throughout the study, the average for question three increased. The baseline

score for week three was 2.9333. Like other scores, the second implementation experienced a

drop in the question average to 2.3571. This decrease was followed by an overall increase in

average scores in the second implementation to 2.8000 and the third implementation to 2.8571.

The fourth implementation experienced a slight decrease in the average to 2.7500. However, in

contrast to trends in the other scores, the final data showed an overall increase in the average for

question three to 3.2000.

Table 3

Per Question Score Averages

Question	Baseline	1	2	3	4	Final
Q 1	2.8000	2.5714	3.0000	3.0714	3.3123	2.1333
Q2a	1.4000	1.2143	1.5625	1.3571	1.3750	1.3333
Q2b	1.4667	1.4286	1.5625	1.7857	1.7500	1.7333
Q3	2.9333	2.3571	2.8000	2.8571	2.7500	3.2000

Figure 2. Per Question Score Averages
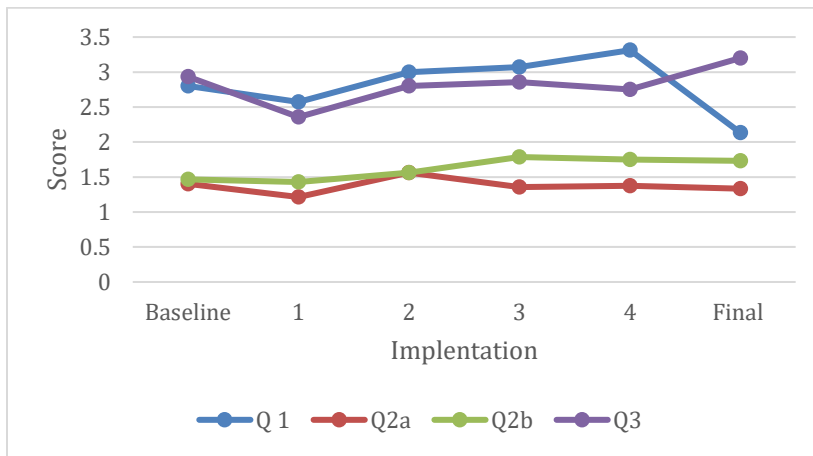

Close Reading Scores

Following the first implementation, the researcher scored each participant on his or her

usage of the close reading strategy. Over the course of the study, participants decreased their

usage of the strategy. During the first implementation, the class A average was 2.8125, and the

class B average was 2.7083. The second and third implementations had relatively consistent

close reading averages. Class A scored a 2.3124 during the second implementation and a 2.3571

during the third implementation. Class B scored a 2.3750 during the second implementation and

a 2.3751 during the third implementation. Both classes continued to have decreases in the close

reading scores during the fourth implementation and the final data collection. Class A's close

reading average score decreased to 2.1230 during the fourth implementation and 1.9375 in the

final data collection scores. Class B showed a similar pattern in close reading averages as their

scores decreased to 2.0625 during the fourth implementation and 1.7857 in the final data

collection (See Table 4).

Table 4

Class Averages for Close Reading Scores

	CR 1	CR 2	CR 3	CR 4	Final
Class 1	2.8125	2.3124	2.3571	2.1230	1.9375
Class 2	2.7083	2.3750	2.3571	2.0625	1.7857

Figure 3. Class Averages for Close Reading Scores
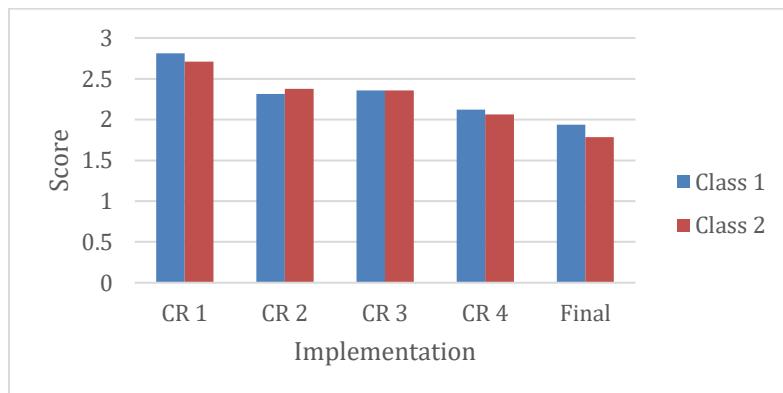
Researcher Reflection and Observation

Throughout the study, the researcher kept a field journal to record observations during the

implementation. In addition, the researcher coded the responses of the participants to the

questions through identifying when the participants referenced historical context, textual content,

direct quotes, and irrelevant information. When collecting baseline data, the researcher relied on

her clinical teacher to deliver content and collect initial responses to the instrument. Following

their responses, the researcher (an intern in the classroom) held a discussion with the participants

on the reading. During the discussion, the researcher noted that participants seemed to effectively

grasp the content of the passage and its historical context. The coded responses to question one

on the instrument revealed that participants mostly relied on the content of the passage, but some

participants incorporated historical context and direct quotes into their responses. With the first

implementation, the researcher reflected that the participants seemed to have a stronger

understanding of the historical context, instead of the passage's content. When the researcher

coded participant responses to question one, the researcher found that the participants' responses

used about half of their space to discuss historical context and the other half to discuss textual

content.

   For the second through fourth implementations, the researcher noticed that participants

relied heavily on the content of the passages, instead of historical context. The researcher also

stated that these lessons did not include as much historical context or relatable information for

the participants as the previous documents had. While the participants continued relying less on

historical context in their responses to question one, they continued to use some quotes as well as

occasional irrelevant information. During the final data collection, the researcher noted that

participants felt the document was more challenging than documents used previously in the

study. The coding for question one revealed that participants still relied more on the passage's

content, but they had some confusion on the meaning due to their discussion of political parties

(Democrats and Republicans) in contrast to the passage referencing different forms of

government (pure democracy and republic).

DISCUSSION

Overall Score Trends

Throughout the treatment's implementation, class A's overall average increased slightly until the final data collection. Class B's scores stayed relatively consistent throughout the treatment with the exception of a slight increase during the second implementation. Scores for both classes decreased during the final data collection. In class A, participants reported to the researcher that the document during the final week, an excerpt from "Federalist No. 10," was harder than any of the previous documents. While scores decreased, the participants showed self-regulation through identifying that they had more difficulty with the document (Dermitzaki et al., 2010). Despite the present study's limited findings about the close reading's effectiveness, other research indicates that close reading remains a viable option for improving participants' overall understanding of a text (Fisher et al., 2015; Newkirk, 2010).

During the present study, the researcher was an intern in the classroom where it occurred. This environment created limitations because the researcher only attended the school once a week and was still learning many teaching skills. The researcher might have improved participant involvement, engagement, and understanding associated with close reading by incorporating more text-dependent questions followed by classroom discussion. Several studies cite the importance of whole class discussion on close reading (Boyles, 2012; Fisher & Frey, 2014). In the future, the researcher would also need to adjust practice to focus at least one of the prompts on historical analysis instead of understanding the text to achieve better results.

"Reading Like a Historian" is a method that found success with using close reading with inquiry-based questions that were specific to each text. The questions (which could be used as prompts) allowed participants to gain comprehension of the passage and use it for historical analysis (Reisman, 2012a, 2012b).

Per Question Score Trends

Throughout the study, only two questions showed any noticeable change in scores. The averages for question one and question three changed throughout the study. Following a slight decrease in scores between the data collection and the first implementation, the class average score for question one grew during the second through fourth implementations from 3.0000 to 3.3123. Question one was used to gauge the participants' overall understanding of the passage focusing on the ability to identify the main idea and supporting details (Dermitzaki, 2008; Palincsar & Brown 1989). The growths over the second through fourth implementations indicate growth in overall understanding of the passage that could be linked to the effectiveness of close reading. During the final data collection, scores for question one fell significantly. Participants reported to the researcher that the document was more challenging than the previous documents. Their scores for question one seemed to describe this as the lowest average score of the study on question one came from the final data collection. This drop in scores combined with the participants' responses seems to indicate that question one may be used in the future to measure overall understanding of the document more than any of the other questions.

Question three also showed a change in scores throughout the study. Question three asked participants to identify the audience, and explain their answer using prior knowledge and the passage. Throughout the study, the class averages for question three increased. This transition was likely caused by requiring participants to answer with a one to two sentence response

following the initial data collection. In the initial implementation, some participants gave one word answers to question three. After they were required to give a one to two sentence response, they began to identify reasons why they chose a specific group of people as the audience. Often, these responses mostly included historical context. For the present study, it is inconclusive what might have prompted the growth in scores for question three.

Content versus Context

Throughout the study, the researcher reported in a field journal that participants seemed to rely on historical context, instead of textual content, in their responses to the instrument and in class discussions. To determine whether this occurred, the researcher coded responses to question one for including historical context and textual content. As the study continued, participants relied more heavily on textual evidence in responses to question one. Two reasons may explain this. First, the participants may have begun relying more on the text due to the close reading strategy. However, this is unlikely because the close reading scores continued to decrease throughout the study. In future studies, researchers might create prompts that specifically connect historical context to the primary sources as recommended in Neumann et al. (2010). Second, the change is partially due to participants having more prior knowledge of the first few documents than the last document because of the Civics and Economics curriculum. The first part of the curriculum focuses on the United States Constitution by presenting information about the time period. Towards the middle of the semester, the curriculum focuses on amendments to the United States Constitution, court cases that deal with constitutional issues, and the structure of the United States government. This transition made it harder to provide similar amounts of historical background for all sources. As discussed in Neumann et al. (2010), it is important to provide historical context based on the participants' prior knowledge.

During the first implementation, scores dropped to their lowest point of the entire study. In coding for historical context versus textual content, the researcher noted that most participants referenced historical context for half of their response. The researcher initially assumed that she had provided too much prior knowledge, so the participants relied on it instead of reading the passage. This was in contradiction to the findings of several articles and studies that found participants could not understand documents without historical context (Wanzek et al., 2015; Monte-Sano, 2011; Reisman, 2012b). After rereading the responses to question one for the first implementation, the researcher found that she did not give enough historical context. In the lesson, the researcher only provided information for the first two sections of the Fourteenth Amendment that concerned citizenship and voting. The researcher did not address enough historical knowledge for participants to understand sections three and four, which mainly discuss the government's relationship with ex-Confederates (Fitzgerald, 2007). Only two participants in the study referenced sections three and four in their summary. These participants used the information from sections three and four incorrectly. This excerpt of the present study indicates that historical context is important for reading comprehension of primary sources as found in Reisman (2012b). In future practice, teachers should carefully consider the amount of context needed, understanding that it varies by document and the participants' prior knowledge (Neumann et al., 2010).

Transfer

Over the course of the study, the most noticeable change in participant scores occurred in their close reading score. The class average for the close reading score decreased throughout the study. This decrease correlated with a transition towards less teacher assistance through gradual release of responsibility. During the first implementation, the researcher modeled and reviewed

the use of the close reading strategy with participants. By the fourth implementation, the

researcher simply gave instructions and reviewed important aspects of the strategy before

participants completed it independently. The decreasing class average for the close reading score

paired with the decreasing teacher-led instruction indicates that a challenge in the present study

was the transfer of skills. Other studies have acknowledged the transfer of skills as a major

problem in instruction. The "Bo Peep" theory introduced by Perkins and Salomon (1988)

describes a phenomenon where students learn skills without the teachers specifically addressing

them. Perkins and Salomon (1988) suggest that this fallacy is prevalent, but not effective, in

improving student skill sets. Within the present study, the researcher fell into the "Bo Peep" trap,

despite attempts to implement gradual release throughout the study. The results suggest that the

participants performed the skill best with teacher help showing that transfer failed to occur.

In the present study, the type of documents may have affected the ability to transfer

skills. Using similar documents is one suggestion for improving the transfer of skills. In order for

skills to be effectively transferred, students must be able to practice the skill set multiple times

with similar types of documents and structures so that students can learn the skills in a familiar

environment (Perkins & Saloman, 1988; Dewitz & Graves, 2014). The present study failed to do

this during some implementations. Due to the curriculum, the researcher needed to choose

documents that were structured differently. Participants read documents including court

decisions, an essay, an amendment, and a speech. The different document types may have made

the skills harder to transfer because the participants also had to understand the components of the

new document. To help participants understand the new document types, the researcher probably

needed to provide participants with more instruction in addressing the different types of

documents (Schwartz, Chase, & Bransford, 2012). Some documents were not engaging to many

of the participants. The lack of engagement may have contributed to the lack of transfer. Dewitz et al.& Graves (2014) indicated that motivation played an important role in which skills transferred for students, because students need to be engaged to transfer harder skills. In addition, Perkins and Salomon (2012) proposed that motivation is an important component of transfer for the step elect (or choosing when to apply the transferable skill) in their detect, elect, and connect system. Students were more likely to transfer skills when the activity was engaging because students were willing to try harder, which is required to use new skills.

One limitation of the present study was time. The researcher was an intern at the school, and therefore, the intern only attended the school once a week over the course of the semester. A hurricane during the study further limited the time available for the study. For these reasons, the researcher implemented the study four times with a week between each implementation, except for the week of the hurricane where two weeks elapsed between implementations of the strategy. Kong (2002) indicated that long-term implementations are necessary for skills to transfer.

One method for encouraging the transfer of skills is gradual release of responsibility. The present study employed gradual release through slowly removing teacher involvement over the course of several weeks. As the researcher allowed participants to be more independent, they did not necessarily transfer the skills. The researcher used the "I," "we," and "they" model with the "I" portion being teacher input, the "we" being participant responses with teacher responses, and the "they" being participants completing work independently. The researcher used most lessons to transition through the "I," "we," and "they" with participants spending most time on the "they" portion by the end of the study. Grant, Lapp, Fisher, Johnson, and Frey (2012) indicated that teachers need to transition between the steps of gradual release in a different order. For instance, a teacher might focus on the "I" and "we" steps in one lesson, then move students to

predominantly using "we" and "they," and then return to the "I" and "we" approach at different points in the semester. The present study indicated that adjusting the gradual release strategy for a skill over a longer period of time may help improve student performance. This system of gradual release also had two types of "they" including one where students worked collaboratively, and the other had students work independently. The expansion of "they" again allowed students to practice the skill with more or less help over time. By failing to do this, the present study indicates that transitioning through different methods of gradual release may help improve student performance, which affirms the findings of Grant et al. (2012).

CONCLUSION

Although the present study did not show that close reading affected the participants' reading comprehension, the strategy should still be tested as a method for improving reading comprehension of primary sources. Reismann (2012b) implemented this strategy effectively with text dependent questions. Future studies should consider modifying the strategy so that text dependent questions with historical references are used for prompts. Further, future studies may also address the importance of historical context in comprehending primary sources. The present study found that historical context (or the lack of historical context) affected the participants' comprehension of certain sources. Teachers should ensure that they incorporate enough historical context for the students to understand the document, which may vary by the document and the class. Transfer of skills was the greatest challenge in the present study. In the future, studies should address the techniques, such as the implementation of gradual release, which will help students transfer skills to new scenarios. The researcher identified several strategies for effective transfer such as engagement, modifications to gradual release of responsibility, and extended implementation from research (Grant et al., 2012; Kong 2002; Dewitz & Graves, 2014).

Teachers should ensure that they use the strategies mentioned previously when teaching new literacy skills. Ultimately, the goal of any literacy strategy in social studies classrooms should be connecting the dots between students and history.

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APPENDIX A

Instrument to Assess Reading Comprehension

While reading the passage, write any questions you may have in the margins. When you read the passage the second time, try to answer these questions. In addition, answer the following questions.

1) Summarize the passage. In your summary, identify the author's claim and any supporting details the author provides.
2) Considering your prior knowledge, does the author provide accurate information? Is there any bias? If so, what is the bias? Cite specific information or quotes from the text to support your claim.
3) Based on your knowledge of the time period and the passage, who is the author's audience? Use examples or quotes from the text to support your answer.

APPENDIX B

Table A1

Rubric for Reading Comprehension

Question	Not Proficient	Developing	Proficient	Mastery
Question 1: Overall Understanding and Identifying Main Ideas	The student fails to write summary that accurately describes the text.	The student writes a summary, but fails to include the author's claim and supporting details, or the student repeats the text's language.	The student writes a basic summary of the text, and identifies the author's claim with limited supporting details.	The student provides an accurate summary of the text by explicitly distinguishing the author's claim and major supporting details.
Question 2a: Connections to Prior Knowledge	The student may reference prior knowledge, but the student fails to connect the prior knowledge to the passage.	The student references limited prior knowledge connections to the passage. The student fails to identify similarities or differences between the passage and prior knowledge.	The student incorporates prior knowledge while making basic connections. The student provides limited examples of similarities and differences between the passage and prior knowledge.	The student accurately and explicitly connects their prior knowledge to the passage. The student clearly identifies similarities and differences between the passage and prior knowledge.
Question 2b: Drawing Inferences	The student attempts describing the passage's usefulness, but does not support their claim with the text.	The student describes the passage's usefulness, and is partially correct. But, the student incorporates little evidence to support their claim.	The student accurately describes the passage's usefulness and provides basic evidence to support their claim.	The student accurately describes the passage's usefulness and provides extensive evidence to support their claim.
Question 3: Historical Context	Student fails to identify audience.	Student identifies audience	Score of 2 AND makes connections to historical context OR textual evidence.	Score of 2 AND makes connections to historical context AND textual evidence.

APPENDIX C

Table A2

Close Reading Rubric

Treatment	Not Proficient	Developing	Proficient	Mastery
Close Reading	- The student's questions are off-topic. - The student underlines and highlights unimportant information in the passage. - The student fails to identify the passage's main idea. - The student's annotations are off-topic.	- The student's questions are relevant, but the student does not address them during the second reading. - The student underlines and highlights some relevant and some irrelevant information. - The student partially identifies the main idea and supporting details. - The student's annotations are mostly relevant, but are sometimes off-topic.	- The student writes relevant questions and provides basic answers during the second reading. - The student highlights and underlines only relevant information. - The student identifies the main idea and supporting details. - The student provides pertinent annotations.	- The student writes relevant questions and clearly provides answers in the second reading. - The student highlights and underlines relevant information. - The student explicitly identifies the main idea and supporting details. - The student provides clear and relevant annotations.

APPENDIX D

Table A3

Documents Used During the Implementation of the Present Study

Document
U.S. *Declaration of Independence* (1776)
Fourteenth Amendment, from *U.S. Constitution* (1868)
Douglas, J. *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965)
Washington, G. *First Inaugural Address* (1789)
Marshall, J. *Marbury v. Madison* (1803)
Madison, J. "Federalist No. 10," from *Federalist Papers* (1788)