

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study examines the effects of explicitly teaching reading strategies and using young adult literature in a class of dependent, struggling readers. The study was completed in a large urban high school in eastern Pennsylvania with seventeen participants from an Academic English 9 Critical Literacy class. This class was made up of students who were scored basic or below basic on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment examination.

Methods of gathering data included teacher research, surveys, interviews, student work including study guides, projects, and journal entries, and field notes that included transcripts of detailed class discussions. The study suggests that teaching reading strategies explicitly improves students' understanding of texts. The study also suggests that using young adult novels, with their relatable and realistic characters and plot, in a class of struggling readers increases student motivation to read. Overall, increases were found in student understanding and comprehension of both fiction and non-fiction pieces because of the utilization of pre-, during-, and after-reading strategies. In addition, the use of young adult literature increased students' motivation to read as was evident by their effort and achievement on projects and assignments completed in class.