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**COOPERATIVE LEARNING: USING STRUCTURED GROUPS TO
FACILITATE DISCUSSION IN A NINTH GRADE CLASSROOM**

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*This document is dedicated to Blake and Molly, my inspiration, my joy.
May you both experience and appreciate the value of lifelong learning.*

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study documents the development of using assigned roles within cooperative learning to foster critical thinking and understanding of texts. The study was completed in a large suburban high school about 60 miles north of Philadelphia, PA. The participants were 25 ninth grade students in an honors English class.

Methods of gathering data included whole group interviews, individual interviews, student work, observations and field notes, and group discussions. Students specific roles within cooperative learning groups and changed groups once during the study.

At the conclusion of this study, cooperative learning groups enhanced students' comprehension and higher order thinking. In addition, increased participation, motivation, and leadership was found while using cooperative learning groups.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I set out on this journey, I didn't know where it would lead me. It has been an awesome one filled with unexpected realizations. I realized I am much stronger woman than I thought I was. Juggling the demands of my career, graduate school, a young family, and outside interests was a difficult task. But, through it all, I realized I am a valuable educator with much to offer my administrators, colleagues, peers, and, most importantly, students.

However, it has also been a journey filled with bumps, fears, and occasional misguided paths. If it were not for these people shining lights at my feet and guiding my way, I would have not arrived at my destination.

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RESEARCHER STORY

Researcher Stance

Doesn't every little girl enjoy playing school? Even as a little girl, I knew I wanted to teach. I wanted to help others. I became an English teacher because I love to read, but, to be honest, I haven't always enjoyed books. I remember my mother reading out of her *Reader's Digest* every night before she went to bed. "Books are boring!" the child Shirley would exclaim. She so wanted me to share her love of literature.

It was not until my sophomore year in high school that I truly began to read for pleasure instead of pain. Specifically, I remember reading *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes in Mrs. Davis's English class. This was the first time I actually experienced a piece of literature: I felt for Charlie, I wept for Charlie, I cheered for Charlie. I remember his last request. "Please, if you get a chance, put some flowers on Algernon's grave." What a moment! The fact that Charlie had regressed into his previous state of mental retardation broke my heart. He had had a taste of life, yet he knew this new life, along with his new found intelligence, was departing him for good. Despite this, he still had love and compassion for others, especially the laboratory rat, Algernon. It is this bravery, even in the face of adversity, that transformed me.

During this year, I not only developed a love of reading, but I also developed my gift of gab. I loved to talk, pass notes, anything to interact with my peers. The last thing I wanted to do was sit in a quiet classroom filled with desks aligned in perfectly straight rows, walls devoid of any color, and a teacher lecturing behind a wooden podium.

I remember longing for Coach Vaught's eighth period history class. Here we would discuss history using our own homemade history videos, humor, and occasionally, Coach Vaught on his guitar strumming in the background. No notes, no straight desks, just a circle discussion about how history affected each of us. We were learning, but this was a different type of learning than I had experienced in most of my own secondary school classes.

Now that I am a teacher, I want to emulate these kinds of meaningful educational experiences for my own students. I want my students to love reading, learning, discussing, and criticizing text. I want it to be fun for them. However, I am a realist, and I know that for many of the 14-year-olds whom I teach, this is not the case. This is evident when I stand in front of my ninth grade English class looking out into a sea of tired, weary eyes staring back at me.

As I attempt to discuss text with my students, I find that many times I do all the talking. Students simply answer my questions with little or no analysis of

the literature. My students do not want to hear me retell a novel they have already read, and I do not want them to merely give yes or no answers.

I have technology, a supportive administration, and an endless supply of texts from which to choose. I teach in an affluent suburban community located about 60 miles north of Philadelphia. I am not at want for much. However, all of this is not enough to capture the attention of typical honors-level teenagers who want to experience literature, and only through such experiential learning will they begin to comprehend, think critically, and develop a love of learning.

The Question

This problem led me to research how I could combine fun and excitement with discussion and critical thinking. To achieve this, I asked myself the question, “What will be the observed and reported experiences when students have assigned roles in cooperative learning groups for discussing and comprehending text?”

Pilot Study

In fact, I had seen good results before. In 2005 I conducted a mini-study on my ninth grade classroom using cooperative learning groups. Here I found that a majority of the students were excited about group work, and the amount of enthusiasm grew as time passed. It was particularly exciting to see the ESL

students enrolled in the course participate and become enthusiastic about their work as well. As a result of this previous study, I longed to delve deeper into the theory of cooperative learning to ensure that my students developed critical thinking skills and a better understanding of texts.

Craving Change

Not only did I want my students to benefit from this important change in my classroom, but as an educator, I also wanted to change and develop. For instance, I wanted to give students the responsibility for their own learning and success. As students worked in cooperative groups, I would need to learn to circulate and join groups as an assistant, observer, and participant. Furthermore, I wanted to improve my questioning skills. During group work, I would need to question and prompt students for answers and gave ample wait time for their own discovery.

These changes, I hoped, made by both my students and me would greatly impact the learning and success in my classroom. Through this inquiry, I hoped to finally become the teacher I always wanted to be. Similar to Mrs. Davis and Coach Vaught's classrooms I experienced long ago, my students and I might have fun while experiencing and discussing literature. And, that is most important. "As educators our primary function is to provide our students with the skills they will need for a productive and happy life" (Kagan, 1994, ch. 2, p. 1). Cooperative

learning groups have the potential to allow me to provide a safe classroom where students are eager to share, laugh, cry, and enjoy learning. Hopefully, I will make a difference in my students' lives as Mrs. Davis and Coach Vaught did in mine.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding Text

Adolescents spend almost six times more leisure time interacting with text on the computer than they do reading print materials (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005). Consequently, comprehending literature in school can be a significant problem for many students. In fact, only six percent of twelfth graders can analyze literature effectively (Ash, 2005). Therefore, it is imperative that teachers learn to help students understand various types of text studied in school, including poetry, novels, speeches, and essays.

Since many students are ill equipped to comprehend what they read, educators must strive to implement strategies to create proficient readers. For example, research suggests that effective readers use key tools to make meaning of texts. Setting a purpose for reading and using background knowledge aid in comprehension (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999).

Unless students develop their own reasons for reading, there is little chance that anything they learn will have lasting impact (Schoenbach, et al., 1999). Clearly, students must have a purpose for reading in order to comprehend and understand text. Schoenbach, et al. (1999) suggested that these purposes drive the way students read. For instance, students should read a television guide differently than they do a novel or poems. When students notice the different purposes, and teachers model, guide, and give practice on finding a purpose,

students will see how to better approach different types of texts (Schoenbach, et al., 1999).

Furthermore, to understand meaning of text, teachers must connect and relate lessons to prior knowledge for their students (Early, 1968). “The teacher’s first move is to kindle what sparks of interest there are and at the same time, push to the forefront whatever pertinent information lies in the recesses of his students’ minds” (Early, 1968, p. 5). Good readers find meaning from what they have read and can apply the meaning to their lives (Ash, 2005). “Students with prior knowledge of the topics they will encounter in a text comprehend more of the text and also recall more information from it than students who lack this knowledge” (Schoenbach, et al., 1999, p. 36). Brainstorming, sharing information, and exploring the topic are all ways to develop this prior knowledge (Schoenbach, et al., 1999). Obviously, activating prior knowledge can facilitate comprehension of text. When using these approaches, students grapple with ideas in the text as they read and dramatically improve their comprehension of the material (Salinger & Fleischman, 2005).

Developing Critical Thinking Skills

With the arrival of the 21st century come new and complicated issues in technology, society, and the environment. It is imperative for students to develop the higher order thinking skills to meet the needs of a changing society. Hence, critical thinking is crucial in today’s world and must be developed early. Critical

thinking involves being able to raise powerful, insightful questions about what is being read. While thinking critically, students also make critical judgments and connections about the text (Adams & Hamm, 1996).

Schoenbach, et al. (1999) described strategies that promote and enhance critical thinking in the classroom while reading text. Teachers can begin the metacognitive conversation about text by asking questions such as, “How did you reach that conclusion?” or “Why do you feel this way?” Among other suggestions are identifying what students know and do not know, writing reflections and logs about the text, and having students talk about their thinking.

Schoenbach, et al. (1999) offered a specific example of a history teacher urging students to think as they read. “She introduced the process of being metacognitive about reading by putting up a text up on an overhead projector and then “thinking on paper” as she read, making her own reading process visible to her students” (p. 118). During this metacognitive conversation participants became consciously aware of their thinking and were able to describe it and discuss it with others. This conversation allows teachers and students to reflectively analyze and assess the impact of their thinking process, the last being the most crucial (Schoenbach, et al., 1999).

Cooperative Learning Groups

With the startling statistic from The Bureau of Labor and Statistics, coupled with the complicated issues a new century brings, educators are being

called to prepare students for a future where they must work collaboratively. According to Jill Casner-Lotto, a writer, researcher, and consultant in human resources and labor-management issues, employers rely on educators to ready students for the workforce. In a workforce readiness study she conducted for The Conference Board, 62% of employers replied that reading comprehension was an important skill in the workplace, while almost 75% stated that teamwork was a very important skill in a career (2007). And, over the next five years, she determined the need for critical thinking skills would increase by 77% (Casner-Lotto, 2007). Cooperative learning groups meet all three needs and help educators meet this call to action.

There is considerable evidence that cooperative learning groups will increase students' use of higher-level thinking skills, and consequently, they will understand and retain more (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). However, to be effective, cooperative learning must be applied correctly. Merely seating students together and calling it cooperative does not make it so (Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

Cooperative learning is a structured system of grouping that allows students to work with others instead of alone or in competition with other students. Cooperative learning is a group of instructional methods where small groups of students work together and help each other accomplish a task (Jacob, 1999). During cooperative learning, the students are required to help each other

by listening, sharing, respecting one another, and resolving problems together. They all must accept responsibility for contributing to the task (Gillies, 2003).

To be truly cooperative, Adams & Hamm (1996) said that group work must contain several characteristics. For example, all members of the group must be held accountable for contributing equally to the group. Therefore, each person in a cooperative group has a specific role or function (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994). With these roles, each student is held accountable for part of the assigned task. The roles also help distribute the tasks and ensure that each student feels like an important part of the group. In addition, these roles assist in differentiating status among students of different ability levels (Kagan, 1994).

Because the roles are key to productivity, students cannot blindly walk into a role. The educator must teach these roles and their functions to the students. "It's important to introduce roles gradually to students as they begin working in cooperative learning groups" (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994, p. 37). Students must learn appropriate skills and functions of each role in order to be a productive member of the group. Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1994) suggested that teachers introduce roles using role cards. These cards help students practice social skills and understand how to perform their roles.

Cooperative learning also promotes positive interaction, another important characteristic. This positive interaction is perhaps the most important characteristic of cooperative learning groups and is key in creating an identity of a

team (Kagan, 1994). Ideally, these teams consist of four members and promote each other's success by helping, supporting, and praising each other's efforts (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Kagan (1994) strongly suggested that teachers create cooperative teams themselves and that the groups mirror the make up of the classroom, "including, to the extent possible, high, middle, and low achievers, boys and girls, and an ethnic and linguistic diversity" (Kagan, 1994, ch. 4, p. 1). This collaboration with others of diverse backgrounds helps "build those bridges of understanding that will allow people to cross the racial divide" (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002, p. 209)

With these roles, all members are seen as important contributors to a team. They are motivated as they begin to learn from other students and value their own importance to the group (Tanner, Bottons, Fegain, & Bearmin, 2003). Students discuss the material, help one another, and encourage each other to work hard to achieve the goal (Holt, 1993).

During this positive interaction, members of the group must depend on one another for success as a whole, ensuring that the entire group learns the material. In fact, through her research, Erb (1996) noticed that students worked well in cooperative learning groups where they were able to able discover things together, listen to one another, and complete the assignment as a team. Vojnovich agreed, adding, "As students became more familiar with the cooperative learning techniques practiced in classroom activities, as trust developed within the groups,

these factors contributed to lively, animated discussion pertaining to topics assigned” (1997, p. 33).

Not only are relationships among students enhanced, but the roles of each are enhanced as well. In their study, Komarchuck, Swenson, and Warlocki (2000) found that cooperative learning builds the student/teacher relationship and motivates students to succeed. Other research suggests that the teacher becomes more of a facilitator than a lecturer. “A teacher who chooses to change from the traditional classroom setting to the cooperative setting, will see their role within that setting shift dramatically from one of being the person in charge of students’ learning, to one of being the person who helps the students become in charge of their own learning” (Petty, 1997, p. 20).

Group processing is yet another important characteristic of cooperative learning. Cooperative groups take time to process their actions, and this can improve both behavior and motivation. Only on task behavior will lead to achieving the desired goal, and the members must determine if they are maintaining behaviors that facilitate achievement and success (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). If the cooperative learning group does this, members are more likely to model appropriate behavior.

But, teachers must understand that talking must be encouraged during cooperative learning activities. Some may believe that this is off-task behavior, but studies suggest that discussion will be mainly about the task at hand (Johnson

& Johnson, 1999). Recognizing that students like to socialize and interact with one another makes cooperative learning successful because this is the essence of structured group learning (Punch & Morarity, 1997). In fact, Kagan (1994) stated that many teachers he encountered reported that their management problems decreased when they begin using cooperative learning techniques. “The cooperative classroom is better aligned with the needs of students. It is based on the assumption that learning occurs through doing and interacting. Students are encouraged to interact, move, create, and do” (Kagan, 1994, ch. 7, p. 1). However, he urged teacher to establish a quiet signal, which can focus attention away from the group activity toward the teacher.

When cooperative learning groups are structured in a way that allows for all students to participate in a safe environment, student engagement, comprehension, and critical thinking are enhanced (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). In discussing literature, there obviously can be more than one correct answer, and cooperative grouping allows a group to share ideas and information, thereby increasing achievement (Gillies, 2003). In fact, DeFoe (1999) found that this group work allowed for students to move from concrete thinking to thinking that is more abstract.

Johnson and Johnson (1999) confirmed this and state that when classroom efforts are structured cooperatively, there is considerable evidence that students will use higher-level thinking skills, and consequently, retain more information.

This is due in part to the peer environment. The students feel at ease to experiment with new, creative, and challenging assignments (Vojnovich, 1997).

In fact, many other research studies confirm that cooperative learning scaffolds critical thinking (Borquist and Schmidgall, 1997; Corder, 1999; Cortright, Collins, and Dicarlo, 2005; Erb, 1996; Goldberg, Foster, Maki, Emde, and O'Kelly, 2001). For instance, Cortright, Collins, and DiCarlo (2005) studied 38 students and found that cooperative learning promotes problem solving and critical thinking. They observed that peer instruction enhances student understanding of difficult concepts. In groups, the researchers found students were able to synthesize and integrate new material into their own learning.

There are many specific examples of success. In her study of ninth grade students in cooperative learning groups, Erb (1996) found that members who work together in structured cooperative learning groups were off task less and were in school more. Furthermore, Borquist and Schmidgall (1997) found that talking out of turn and making derogatory statements decreased in frequency when cooperative learning was used. In addition, Goldberg, et al. (2001) observed that cooperative learning strategies improved the classroom climate. They stated that students perceived working together as less threatening and asking for help became the norm for them. In his study, Coder (1999) also concluded that, "academic motivation improvements were a function of cooperative activity" (p.19).

METHODOLOGY

Rationale

In order to be the effective teacher I wanted to be for my students, I knew I had to actively engage them and ensure that my lessons were student centered. I constantly kept Mrs. Davis and Coach Vaught in the back of my mind – the way they related to their students, the way they captured their students’ attention, the way they made learning come alive.

Unfortunately, I did not see this student engagement in my classroom. Instead, I found that I did a majority of the talking while students simply sat at their desks answering questions with little or no analysis of the literature. I wanted students to be actively engaged in my lessons, especially when discussing and comprehending literature. In order to achieve excitement and engagement, I incorporated cooperative learning groups for discussing and comprehending text.

Setting

My study took place in a high school located in a suburban-rural setting approximately 60 miles north of Philadelphia. Since the district encompasses both farmland and city borders, it has a wide socio-economic range. However, most students come from middle to upper middle class households. The ninth through twelfth grade high school contains approximately 3,000 students.

Because of the large population, many teachers are forced to share classrooms. Since I also advise the school newspaper, I share my ninth grade English classroom with the yearbook adviser who is also a fellow ninth grade honors English teacher. Not only do we advise our newspaper and yearbook classes in this room, but we also teach English here as well. In fact, the tables that have replaced the single student desks make the classroom much more conducive to my study of cooperative learning.

With the computers, newspaper layouts, and yearbook pages, the room seems somewhat crowded; however, there is definitely always work going on in the room. In fact, at times my colleague and I are in the classroom together while one or the other of us is teaching. Instead of feelings of anxiety from someone watching the lesson, there is a sense of comfort and camaraderie we share which enhances our planning and instruction.

Participants

I teach three classes of honors level ninth grade students this academic year. The most difficult part for me was determining which class period to engage in participant observation for the purposes of this study. I chose my fifth period class because even though all enrolled are honors level students, this class seemed the most varied in personality, work ethic, and background. This class consists of 25 Caucasian students, with nine boys and 16 girls. All in all, I have found this to be a well-behaved, motivated group of 13 to 14-year-olds.

Research Methods

I began class in September by acquainting the students with one another and with me through various teambuilding activities. (Appendix A) I wanted to begin the year by building a safe, comfortable environment for the students, one where we all would feel at ease sharing thoughts and ideas. After establishing this trust, I introduced my study on cooperative learning and distributed consent forms to all students (Appendix B) and the principal (Appendix C). I obtained consent from the parents or guardians of all 25 students and quickly began collecting data.

I used various forms of data collection. First, I observed my students in cooperative groups. I maintained a field log and added observational entries on a daily basis, paying close attention to student quotes and reflections, as well as my own. As I observed my students working in cooperative groups, I carefully reflected on what I saw and what I heard, both positive and negative. The honesty was, at times, painful. In their book *Teacher-Researchers at Work*, MacLean and Mohr (1999) stress the importance of honesty in teacher reflection. “This is honest writing by a teacher-researcher struggling to discover what will work as she teaches these students – her dashed hopes as well as her determination. Her research does not allow her to escape the realities of her situation. Instead, she writes about what she sees, even when it is difficult to acknowledge” (p. 113-114).

“Observations are not complete, however, without reflection” (MacLean and Mohr, 1999, p. 28). By keeping my observations and reflections separate in a T-chart format, I was able to distinguish what I saw and heard from how I felt about these events. I would take time, usually after school, to journal about my observations and reflections. MacLean and Mohr suggest this and urge educators to fill in the details as they write (1999). This process gave me further insight and understanding about my study.

Second, I collected data using various student surveys and interviews. I used mainly whole group discussions to gather insights on the students’ thought and feelings about group work; however, those students who excelled or struggled with group work, I interviewed separately. “As equal participants in the teaching-learning process, students can inform teachers in helpful and meaningful ways (Cole and Knowles, 2000, p.95). In these unstructured interviews that Hendricks (2006) explains, I asked the students broad questions and let the interview unfold with few limitations. Consequently, the students were forthright about their likes and dislikes while using cooperative groups. Upon reflection of this important data, I gained much insight into the students’ feelings on cooperative learning.

Finally, I used student work to show the benefits of my study. Through these projects, presentations, and other work, I was able to see the impact that cooperative grouping had on critical thinking and the understanding of texts.

By using observational field logs, interviews, questionnaires, and student work, I collected multiple forms of data to analyze, which I know is key to an effective teacher research study. This triangulation ensured that there were checks and balances within the data collection. Hendricks (2006) states that these different forms of data are extremely important. “Looking at multiple forms of data when answering research questions helps the researcher fill in any gaps that occur if only one data source were used,” and I found this to be the case in my case study (p. 72).

TRUSTWORTHINESS STATEMENT

Trust is so important in life. In fact, to me it is the most important thing in a relationship. I trusted Mrs. Davis and Coach Vaught as both mentors and educators.

In my study, I knew I had to ensure that my students trusted my goals and that they trusted me. To establish this connection, I followed Holly, Arhar, and Kasten's "Ethical Guidelines for Teacher Action Researchers" (2005). They state, "Open communication, trust, and reciprocity are the cornerstones of action research" (p. 177).

Heeding their advice, I was very open and honest with my students about the research study. I obtained student permission, along with their parents and my administration, to use student ideas, quotes, and work samples. In addition, I have not used their real names, but instead assigned students pseudonyms. However, I believe the most important way I gained student trust was by giving them the right to withdraw from the research study at anytime and without penalty. Although know one did, students knew that they could leave the study without fear of negative consequences.

Once I obtained permission from all students, parents, and my administration, I began to observe my students. After observations, I took time for honest reflection of my classroom observations.

Finally, in order to protect my participants and the integrity of the study, I safeguarded all of my research data by keeping it in a secured, locked drawer. No one had access to this information during my study, and upon completion of the project, all data were destroyed.

This mutual trust I established with my students was essential in my study. The data I collected showed that students could work, learn, and socialize in cooperative learning groups. In fact, this study created an excitement for learning in my classroom.

THIS YEAR'S STORY

Meeting the Students

As the students slowly entered the room that first day, I watched as the freshmen timidly ducked into my classroom, peering at their schedules making sure they were in the correct place. I didn't know if it was fear, fatigue, or a little of both that made the room so quiet. However, this calm gave me a chance to greet the students and seat them in alphabetical order (Appendix D). Growing up with a last name beginning with a W, I have always disliked alphabetical seating, and I still hate to seat students this way, but it definitely makes learning names much easier for me. And, I know that it is incredibly important to do this as soon as possible to make an early personal connection with the students. And, later as I learned the students' personalities, I knew I could better group them heterogeneously.

As the first bell rang, Monica entered the classroom - social, energetic, fun, seemingly paying little attention to schoolwork. I immediately noticed her at freshman orientation even before classes began. She entered my class with a bright, inviting smile and seemed eager to begin.

I noticed Tammy for a completely different reason. With her tattered, mismatched clothes and her long unkempt hair, she did not look like the typical student in this relatively affluent school district. Unlike Monica, Tammy was silent, oddly silent, as she took her seat.

Nate entered third. With a large backpack filled with textbooks hanging on his shoulders, he walked directly up to me, extended his hand and introduced himself. “Hello, I am Nate. I have been at Catholic school for eight years. What novel will we be reading first?” he asked in a very astute, academic tone. “I prefer reading fiction to nonfiction.”

Ollie walked in after the bell had already rung and could not have been more different than Nate. With his disheveled backpack devoid of any books, paper, or pencils, and his crumpled schedule in his hand, he seemed disorganized. However, I had expected this. Before the year began I received a notice of his severe ADHD.

As usual, Mrs. Davis and Coach Vaught remained at the forefront of my mind, especially at the onset of this new school year. I wanted to make my class both exciting and challenging for each of these individuals taking their assigned seats and waiting patiently for me to begin. I hoped to reach every single one of these students and impact their lives much like my two favorite teachers did for me years ago.

Interest Inventory

To make this happen, I attempted to find out as much as I could about my students. Therefore, on the first day of school I passed out an Interest Inventory (Appendix E), asking students their likes and dislikes, their strengths and weaknesses. I knew this information would help me get acquainted with them

and perhaps help me to modify my teaching style and curriculum modify to better fit their needs.

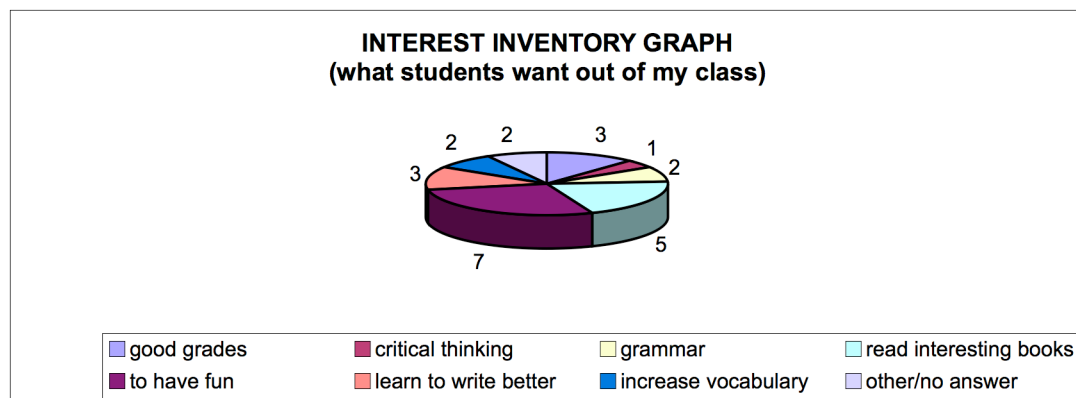


Figure 1. Interest Inventory Graph

As students completed the Interest Inventory, I was pleasantly surprised that 7 of the 25 students stated that they wanted to have fun in this class. Three students warned me that they enjoy talking. Monica wrote, “You need to know that I talk a lot,” as she explained the same thing to me verbally while completing the form. To be honest, since cooperative learning thrives on communication, I was secretly pleased. In cooperative grouping, the students are able to have fun learning and discussing with each other. Monica would enjoy this, I hoped.

In addition, I asked the students what goals they wanted to achieve this year in our class. Like many honors students, several said “good grades.” This did not surprise me since many honors level students are extremely worried about points and grades, some more so than learning the required content. Nate

commented further stating that he wanted to learn how to “be a critical thinker.” Still others said they wanted to create projects. By implementing cooperative learning groups this year, I felt that no one would be disappointed.

However, some answers within the Interest Inventory concerned me. Three students commented on their shyness: Annalise, Carly, and Tammy. Annalise wrote, “I do not speak well in front of a group of people. I get nervous easily.” This worried me because I had placed Annalise and Carly in the same initial cooperative learning group. They had not seemed shy when they first entered the room. Annalise, a tall, pretty girl, seemed very polished, and acted quite mature for her age. Carly looked athletic, and I hadn’t pictured her as an introvert. I contemplated moving them to different groups; however, I kept them together hoping they would be a comfort to one another in these beginning stages of grouping. Plus, I felt they would be a good influence on Ollie, who was also in their group and the exact opposite of the two girls.

So, here I was ready to begin my adventure with these 25 new faces staring back at me. What a diverse group of students! My curriculum would need to reach Monica, Tammy, Nate, Ollie, and every student in between. But would it? I was ready to find out.

Beginning the Study

I felt excited and eager to introduce my students to my study. I was curious to see my students’ first reactions to this adventure. Right away, I

distributed my consent letters and reviewed my research study with enthusiasm hoping it would transfer to my students. My mind raced with all of the interesting things I wanted to accomplish with them. I wanted them to discuss; I wanted them to have fun, but most importantly, I wanted them to be successful.

I talked about how we would become a team, helping and encouraging one another through this entire process. I began to relax as I saw smiles and even some nods.

However, after my pep talk, I braced myself for any questions or negative comments about the study. As I swallowed hard, I prepared to see dozens of hands raised and waiving eager for me to quell their anxieties. But, looking out into the crowd, the only hand that was raised was Ollie's, whom I had already pegged as an outgoing student who says exactly what is on his mind; therefore, I was prepared for the worst.

“Can we choose our own pseudonyms?” he asked. After this funny comment, I felt much better and knew they would be supportive during this process. So, I distributed the consent forms, waited for each of them to be returned, and then began my research study.

Before I began introducing structured groups, I conducted a whole group interview with my class. I wanted to find out their preconceptions about group work, if they liked it, and why or why not. Thirteen of the students said they

enjoyed group work. “It lets us be social,” said Wesley. I was excited when Wesley mentioned this. I was able to tell him how research supports his claim.

Curt raised a good point. “I am sometimes easily distracted doing group work. It is easy to begin talking about something else.” With this comment, I reminded the class about “productive socializing” vs. “unproductive socializing”. “We must all remember and be focused on the task at hand,” I said to them.

“Group work is not as boring!” stated another student.

“It is a lot easier to do projects,” I heard someone say from the back of the room.

However, I was shocked to hear Molly object. “I am a control freak, and it sometimes hard for me to give up control in a group project.” I was surprised by her response since I had already began to view her as an easy-going student.

Then Nate pointed out, “It is difficult for me to depend on others to get things done in groups.” I was not surprised by his response.

In an honors class full of strong, independent personalities, I thought they would not want to work with anyone, instead preferring to work alone. All in all, only one student disliked group work.

Tammy was the only student who admitted to disliking group work. During class she remained extremely quiet and reserved, hardly ever communicating with others at her table, speaking only when spoken to. Even then, she gave quick, one-word responses. Later, at lunch I saw her sitting alone,

interacting with no one. I knew this journey would be a difficult one for her, but I also hoped this study would force her to interact and, as a result, make some new and unexpected friends.

As I introduced my research study on Parents' Night the following week, the parents seemed to have more reservations about group work than the students. "How will you measure the development of higher order thinking skills?" asked one parent.

"I do not want the class to be entirely done in groups," commented another.

I attempted to calm their fears by backing up my answers with documented research about cooperative learning groups and assuring them that students would indeed be meeting the same instructional objective and that I would be observing, documenting, and reflecting more on my teaching practices.

But, as I began my first lesson with cooperative learning groups, echoes of the concerns of the parents rather than the proof of the researchers resonated with me.

The First Assignment

The day I was to begin, Monica walked in to class late with an ice pack on her ear and immediately announced to all that she had been bitten in gym. Next, the 3-hole punch broke, and tiny paper holes flew up in the air and rained down

like confetti. Meanwhile, the students laughed hysterically. I knew this was going to be a long period.

I gathered my composure and attempted to explain the importance of roles within cooperative groups (Appendix F). Each student had a role to fulfill: the facilitator would help students master content; the recorder would write down group decisions and answers; the time keeper would ensure that the group remains on task and completes the work in the time allotted; and the reflector would lead the group in looking back and summarizing its strengths and weaknesses. I heard giggling in the background and immediately wondered if they would take the roles seriously.

I also introduced the quiet signal (my arm raised in the air) and explained that this would signal the need for conversations to cease and the attention of the class turned to me.

As I went on to explain our first group assignment, I couldn't help but notice that Nikki and Sammy were talking to each other, and it wasn't about which role they would choose. Nikki was giggling and touching Sammy on the shoulder whenever she could. It seemed as if she was much more interested in Sammy than in the task at hand.

Finally, my frustration level peaked, and I had to break down and scold the class, something I rarely have to do. "We can have a good time in this class, but you are all expected to act in a civil manner while in here," I said. "If you

cannot handle this, you may need to talk with your counselor and find somewhere else to be.” To be honest, this is my standard speech to misbehaving students at the beginning of the year; however, the students never realize this, and it seems to work every time. This time, I even heard Wesley tell his group to be quiet while I was talking.

A hush fell over the room as I finished explaining that we would be peer editing our essays (Appendix G). The students had just created a timeline of their lives. While discussing how to focus their writing topics on a specific point, each student chose one time in their lives about which to write. After reviewing focus, content, style, organization, and conventions, they were using what they have learned to edit each other’s papers. Not only did this lesson introduce the students to group work slowly and in a non-threatening way, but it also gave them a chance to peek into the lives of their classmates and get to know them better.

Annalise, Carly, and Ollie sat quietly reading their essays. It seemed as if they felt more comfortable writing down suggestions rather than talking about them. This lack of interaction must have given Ollie the idea to move to Wesley’s table to talk about other things. I had to remind him several times to stay on task.

I observed Jenny ask Tate about the focus of her paper. She seemed to understand the concept of focus better from his explanation than from mine.

I was extremely impressed with Kelly, Helen, Ellen, and Cathy. This group of girls seemed to genuinely want to help one another improve. I was glad

to see this, especially since they seemed quite talkative during the chaos at beginning of class.

All in all, I am glad we did this group exercise; however, I knew that we all had a long way to go in making cooperative learning groups work efficiently and effectively in our classroom.

Keeping On

I felt a bit discouraged by the beginning events of my study. Even though the cooperative learning groups did not begin well, I continued on hoping that both the students and I would get better at this process.

During a professional development class, I learned about a LINK activity (Appendix H) that I was eager to share with the students. It incorporated some independent, small group, and whole group activities; therefore, I hoped it would be a good activity to ease back into cooperative grouping and increase my confidence. So, within a few days I took a deep breath and jumped back into the process.

The first task was simple. Students listed all the information they knew about Christopher Columbus. Students worked diligently listing any words or phrases that came to mind. This was independent work because I wanted to know each student's background knowledge on Christopher Columbus. But, with the students sitting at tables with easy access to other students' lists, I had to remind them several times to work alone. I noted that Annalise, Carly, and Tiffany

seemed to thrive on this independent activity. With their heads buried and their pencils racing over their papers, each of the three girls came up with far more than the five facts I had asked them to prepare.

Next, students shared their facts with their groups, asking questions of each other and inquiring about information they did not know. I noticed they were really sharing this day and seemed to be very interested Columbus, perhaps because they were learning about Columbus in their history classes as well.

Kelly and Ellen had a disagreement about whether Columbus sailed on the *Mayflower* or not. This disagreement kept them interested and intrigued, but I did not know whether to simply observe at this point, since we would discuss this with the whole group a bit later.

As I made my way around the room to listen to other groups, I was startled when I heard someone say, “Idiot!” My attention was further piqued because it came from quiet Carly. I raced across the room to see that she was not badmouthing other students, but instead Christopher Columbus. I was relieved, but curious to see what she meant by this; however, I knew I should wait until we discussed it with the rest of the class. The room was buzzing with noise, but it was good noise – a lot of sharing, discussion, proving, and defending – exactly what cooperative grouping was meant to be. I felt good.

Finally, I had each group’s recorder come to the board and write two interesting pieces of information they learned from one another. Again, many

students were extremely talkative as the recorders wrote on the board. Many wanted to rush to the board, only to be disappointed when they remembered they were not the recorder.

As we discussed their answers with the whole class, I noticed a great deal of critical thinking. For instance, Carly defended her “idiot” entry. She said this meant Columbus was an idiot for thinking he was in India and Asia instead of the Bahamas. Kelly and Ellen’s disagreement recurred when Kelly wrote *Mayflower* on the board; however, the class determined that Columbus could not have gone on the *Mayflower*. They realized that he had crossed the ocean far before the Pilgrims. When Don wrote “murderer” on the board, he brought up the fact that he learned that Columbus was not always nice to the Indians. Curtis interjected more information he had learned about this in his history class. I was quite impressed that he had made the connection between the two subjects.

As we ended this activity, my confidence was restored in cooperative grouping. Plus, I was impressed with the critical thinking that students demonstrated. I felt they were both interested and intrigued to learn more about Christopher Columbus because of this activity. Plus, it was fun, got them moving, and got them talking – all things they loved to do!

With the students immersed in the background knowledge of Christopher Columbus, I introduced a journal reading from Columbus’ voyage to America.

The students were to read the journal entry and then answer critical thinking questions I had created (Appendix I).

The students who read alone completed the reading more quickly than the groups who read aloud. I was not surprised to hear Monica read aloud to her group. Meanwhile, the group next to her plugged their ears as they read silently. After observing this, I probably should have had them read this short journal for homework or insist that they all read silently.

As groups completed the reading and began to discuss the questions, many remained on task and discussed facts and details about the journal. I made my way throughout the room, participating in each group's conversation. However, I wanted to make sure they saw me as a participant, not as a leader of the discussion, so I limited my comments and questions.

As I sat in on Curtis' group, I heard Danica say, "What if you were King Ferdinand?" I was incredibly impressed with this questioning. They were putting themselves into the story and looking at it from various points of view.

It did not surprise me that as I entered Annalise, Ollie, and Carly's group they were having a hard time beginning their discussion. I attempted to get them started and tried to let them carry on without me. My first thought of them being a comfort to each other was wrong. I was beginning to get frustrated with them, especially Annalise, who seemed the quieter of the two. She had so much trouble communicating with others.

At the end class, I felt students did well for analyzing their first passage as a group. However, my thoughts were to gradually take them away from answering my questions and to eventually create their own questions, concerns, and comments about the texts.

Problems with Roles

Although my confidence was slowly being restored in their ability to function well in groups, I was worried that they were not utilizing the roles as many researchers had suggested. I had incorporated roles in the first place to keep the students organized and to distribute work evenly.

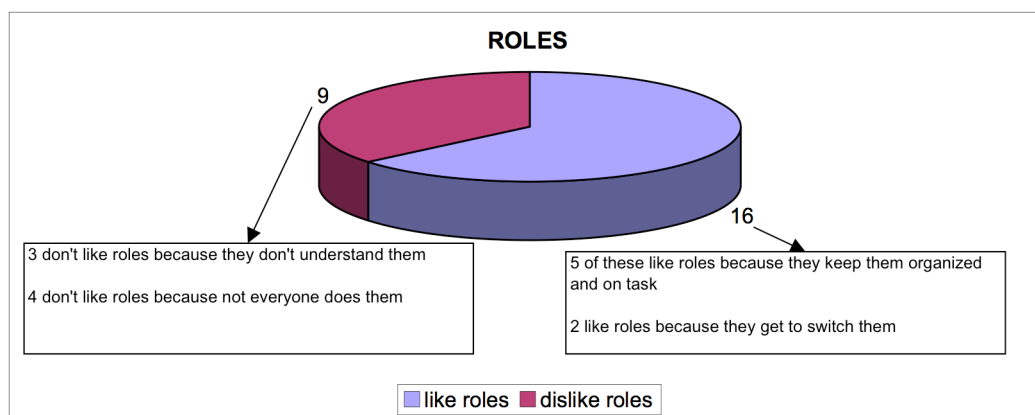


Figure 2. Roles

When we discussed this in class, the students seemed a bit confused about the need for the roles. A majority said the roles were helpful in distributing and organizing the work; however, I rarely saw them in action. “The roles don’t really serve a purpose,” said Amy. “Everyone just puts in what they want towards

the group.” She was in the group with Monica, Tammy, and Eve. For the most part, this group of girls did work well together despite their lack of formal roles.

“It is okay when people actually DO their roles,” said Sahar. She was in a group with three boys was frustrated that not everyone was participating equally.

Ollie did not like the roles. “Some are harder than others,” he said. “Plus, they are forgotten during our group work.”

Still, I continued to ask them to use the roles and rotate them among the group members. However, it was difficult to ensure that they continued to use them throughout the tasks. I especially felt that the roles should be put to use during their next assignment – group presentations of Native American myths.

Project Problems

As we embarked on this group project, I was incredibly nervous and quite anxious to see how they would come together as a group with little structure and guidance from me. This was the first day that students were able to work with their group members to plan their Native American Myth presentation (Appendix J) due in a few days, and the room seemed loud, chaotic, and a bit disorganized. Some students were huddled around computers gathering information. Others had their noses in their texts reading and discussing the literature intently. Still others were drawing, cutting, and creating items for their project.

For the most part, it was all productive noise. The students were all on task. Don, Wesley, and Pete’s group seemed a bit silly at first, but this was

nothing new. It usually took them a while begin, as they were often distracted by Ollie, who seemed often left out of his group.

Curtis' group of Rita and Danica chose a difficult myth to analyze and present. The myth was filled with symbolism and metaphors, so the three members seemed very confused at first. But, after I guided their thinking, they became particularly excited about it. I constantly heard them interpreting and analyzing the myth using drawings to facilitate their discussions. I saw them refer back to the myth several times finding details to confirm their assumptions. They had many questions, but they never became discouraged. They truly worked together as a cooperative group.

Not Nate, Jenny, Tate, and Holly. This group merely divided the work among them, which did not seem like cooperation or working together. This just got the job accomplished faster. The group rarely communicated during the class period because they were all working on their own part of the presentation.

As I saw Tammy drawing, cutting, and pasting with her group, I was very proud of her progress. "Tammy, your drawing needs to be a bit bigger," Monica said as I walked by the group. This made me extremely nervous because I did not know how Tammy would take this suggestion. "But, it is really good," Monica added.

Eve was quick to give her more praise. “Yes, she is the best artist in our group.” I added my praise, and I saw a small, insecure smile cross Tammy’s face. I think that was the first time I had seen her smile all school year.

Unfortunately, the smile had faded by the time I saw her next. Over the weekend, the girls had come together at Eve’s house to work on the project. All but Tammy were there. I felt such pain for Tammy. I could only imagine what she was thinking and feeling. To imagine, I wrote the following brief vignette from Tammy’s point of view.

Tammy’s Vignette

I cannot go to Eve’s house! Not a chance! I am not like those girls. They are pretty, skinny, popular. I am none of these things. I have nothing to offer the group. I’ll just mess everything up. Even when I do say or do something, I just get brushed off. They ignore me. I hate these groups anyway! I would rather be in rows because I don’t like associating with people – period! The class gets so crowded and noisy with everyone talking. By the time I have a chance to say what I think, the topic has changed or I get interrupted. No one hears me! No one notices me! No one cares! So, I hide in my own silent world.

As the students wrapped up their group project presentations, I was a bit disappointed in many of them. The class average was a 76%, far below my expectations. I allowed students to confidentially grade themselves and each other as part of their participation grade. Students were scored on a scale of 1-4

(four being the highest). In addition, I asked students to provide a written rationale for each score. Most did so honestly, and by the students' reactions to their scores, I think this honesty surprised them.

“What?” exclaimed Don as he received his grade. “Our skit was distracting?” However, their presentation was quite silly and as a result, the point of their Native American myth was lost.

“Wow!” said Ollie as he looked at his grade with both astonishment and confusion. I think he was surprised that Annalise and Carly gave him a 5/5 for participation. To be honest, so was I. However, I did observe him looking on the computer for information on their assigned Native American tribe. Perhaps the computer assignment captivated his attention, and therefore, Wesley and Don less distracted him.

“Way to go!” said Monica to her group. They all held up their hands to congratulate each other. They created a puppet show to explain their myth. As Tammy reluctantly raised her hand to meet the others, I couldn't help but feel sorry for her. She received a 1/5 for participation. In fact, she even gave herself a one. The group members stated that all she did was draw a wolf for the presentation. Granted, the drawing was good, and she is a great artist, but she must find the confidence to add more to her group, and her peers must do more than admire her artistry and then admonish her lack of further participation.

As we completed the Native American Unit, I tested my students and was pleased with the outcome (Appendix K). The average score was an 84%.

ITEM ANALYSIS OF NATIVE AMERICAN UNIT TEST

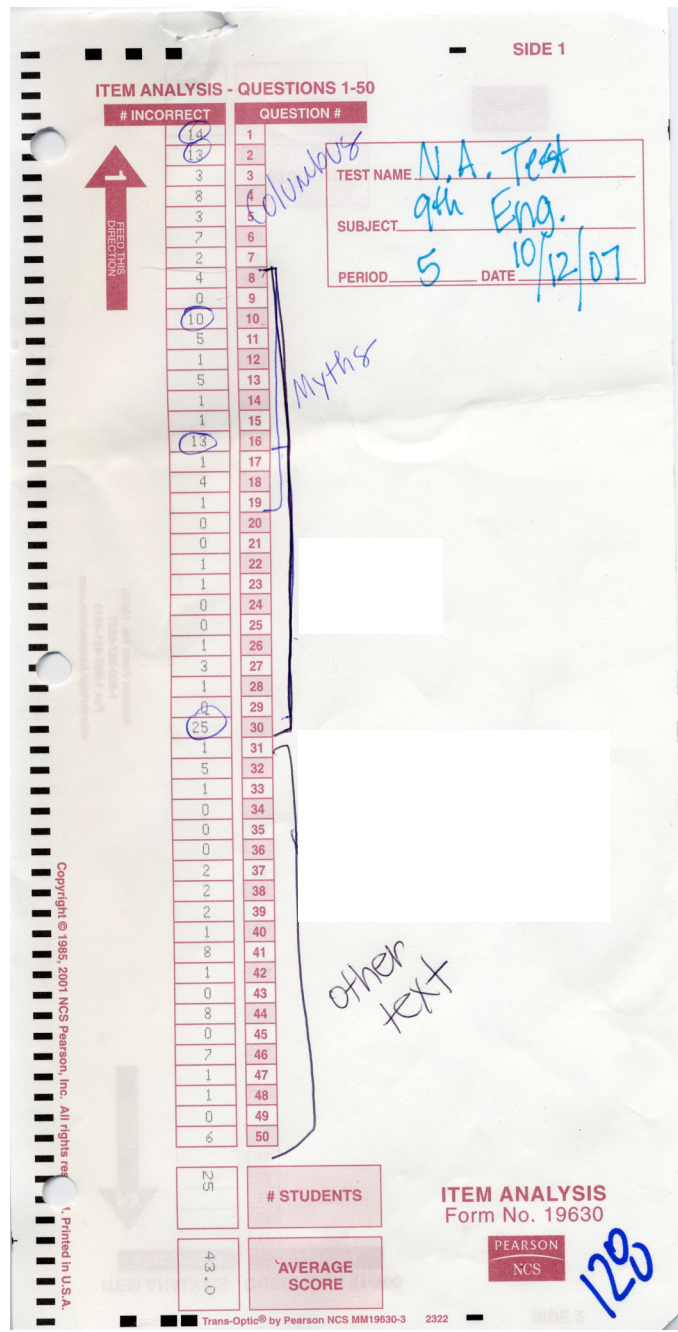


Figure 3. Item Analysis of Native American Unit Test

There seemed to be only five questions (circled on the item analysis) out of the 50 that proved especially troublesome for students. These pertained to facts and details about the journal and myths we had read. However, looking back, the students did extremely well on questions from the texts that we had discussed in cooperative groups. In fact, for 25 of the questions, almost every student answered all of them correctly. Perhaps cooperative grouping was working after all!

Moving Forward

As I completed my first unit using cooperative groups, I felt excited to move forward. Students were responding well to group work; they were sharing eagerly, and they were enjoying the socialization taking place in the classroom. However, the pace of my study did not go as planned for long as many other responsibilities beckoned.

First, many extra duties fell into my lap during the month of October. Trying to keep my study on track while juggling the added responsibilities was difficult. For instance, October brought Homecoming week, where students donned crazy outfits and unique hairstyles all in the name of school spirit making each class more than just a bit restless. In addition, the annual book fair arrived at school during October. Each English teacher was assigned a day to allow students to peruse the books and supplies in the library. Finally, I was required to set aside two days for students to write five-paragraph PSSA style essays. While

these activities were useful to an extent, they did take time away from our important work within our cooperative learning groups.

Annalises' Anxieties

Perhaps because I was involved with these extra activities and still so worried about Tammy and how to help her engage more directly with her classmates, the next issue seemed to arise even more unexpectedly. The frightening news that Annalise was about to share left me concerned and confused. This news would change the way I saw and related to her. She went on to confess her battles with anorexia, depression, and even suicidal thoughts.

“Sixth period would have to wait,” I thought to myself as I went on to share my past issues with anxiety. I asked if she was confiding in anyone other than me, and she confirmed that she was seeing a psychologist and was contemplating taking medication. After we discussed how many people really do care for her, I took her to the counseling office.

Although I was overwhelmed with a myriad of emotions, I was glad she came to me for help, and I felt somewhat honored that she felt she could confide in me.

New Unit, New Groups

With a new unit came new groups (Appendix L). As a result of my discussion with Annalise, I chose the new student groups quite carefully.

However, knowing the students better now than I had at the beginning of the year, I found it easier to place them into groups this time according to their demonstrated strengths and weaknesses.

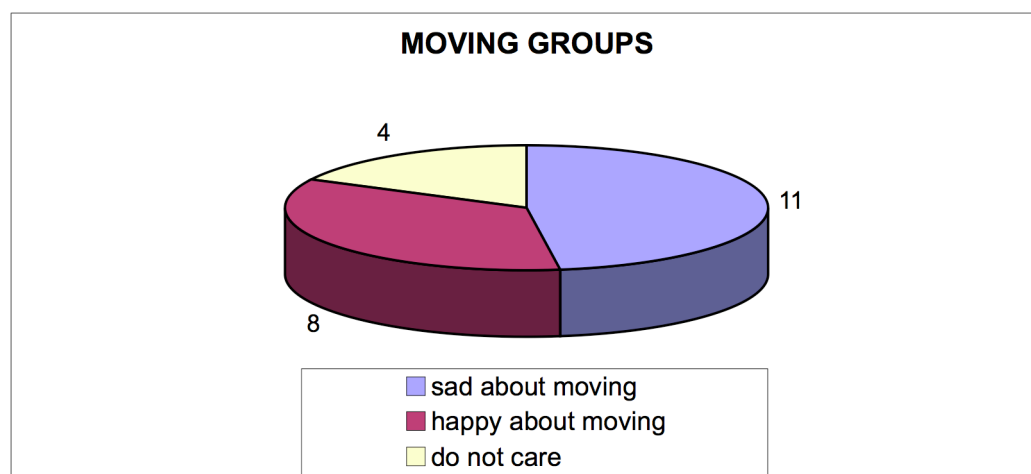


Figure 4. Moving Groups

Many students were excited about moving; however it was an anxious time for others. “I felt like we did not have enough time with our old group,” said Danica.

“I am nervous about being in a group with people I do not know,” added Ellen.

I placed Nate, Danica, and Oliver in the same group. Nate was ready for this change. He said that some of his past team members “were beginning to get on his nerves.” I felt that Nate needed another leader in his group, and Danica served this purpose. Also, I felt that it would be good for Nate to be in the same group with Ollie, and I hoped that Nate would be a good influence on him.

Tammy viewed this process of changing groups as a game and was quite curious to see with whom she would be grouped. I ended up placing her in a group with Tate, Helen, and Ellen. I felt that these students would embrace Tammy and welcome her as a member of their team.

I separated Carly and Annalise, placing Carly with Eve, Sammy, and Curtis. These students seemed cooperative and friendly, and they would value Carly's opinions. Annalise needed a smaller group; therefore, I placed her in a group of three with Pete and Sahar. Pete could lead a group without being overwhelming, and Sahar seemed to interact well with others.

I placed Monica in another group of three. I knew she would work well with Rita and Amy. In fact, she had been in a group with Amy last time, but Amy's calming influence on Monica was apparent and helpful.

As Halloween approached, we all needed a calming influence from the frenzy of the holiday. I had the students summarize short stories by Edgar Allan Poe in their groups (Appendix M). For the most part, the new groups worked well together. However, as I observed their group work, it looked as if the room was split in two: one half of the room cooperating and completing their work, and the other half of the room having difficulty communicating and staying on task.

Danica, Nate, Kelly, and Ollie were on the productive side of the room. I immediately noticed Danica taking charge of the group, and as I walked past the

group, I heard her summarizing the Poe story for Ollie, who was asking questions and needed clarification on what he had read.

As I continued to observe the new groups, I noticed that once again, Don was the leader of his group, which included Cathy and Jenny. However, he was now sharing this role with Cathy, another natural-born leader. Meanwhile, Jenny was busy finding examples in the text to support their answers. I was quite impressed by how well this group was supporting one another.

On the other side of the room, there was a completely different mood. I could not help but be frustrated by Tate, Ellen, and Tammy. Tate and Ellen discussed their selection as if Tammy were not even there. I sat down with them to ask them some questions and involve Tammy in the conversation; however, Tammy didn't look me in the eye when she answered my questions.

"Be sure to utilize your roles to ensure that everyone participates," I said to the class as I left the group.

"We're fine," I overheard Eve whisper to Tate.

Later, I saw Tate attempt to ask Tammy her thoughts about the story. But, her response was simply a terse, "I don't know."

Meanwhile, Annalise was doing her own thing, completing the assignment with little or no regard for the rest of her group. Students had not of their own accord applied the roles they had used in their last groups, so I knew I would need to remind them to do so when we next met.

And, I did. As a result, the next group assignment went much better. The students read two poems by Anne Bradstreet for homework and came into class to discuss the poems with their small groups, then with the whole group (Appendix N). As I had planned, I did not give them pre-made questions about the text, but allowed them to create their own points for discussion. However, I did require all to use roles in their groups. Many expressed their displeasure to me, but I explained that roles ensured participation by all.

This time, the roles seemed to assist Annalise and her group of Pete and Sahar where Sahar was the facilitator and led the group. Annalise interjected comments as the reflector. However, I noticed that while Pete participated quite often in his other group, in this group with Annalise, he was not sharing as much. I wondered if she felt ostracized by this group as well.

Unfortunately, once again, roles did not seem to help Tammy. Her group did little discussing. Tate, the facilitator, led the group, and Helen attempted to draw Tammy into the conversation, but Tammy did not respond, more often shrugging her shoulders instead.

End of First Marking Period

In early November the first marking period ended. The time had passed quickly as the first quarter of the year often does. My room was no longer a quiet room filled with diverse students who silently sat in straight rows staring glassy-eyed at me as I lectured. Instead, it was a room overflowing with effective,

productive noise as the groups of diverse students shared ideas, analyzed texts, and cooperated on projects. All in all, cooperative learning seemed to have helped my students and me create a student-centered classroom that is a fun, exciting, and educational place to be.

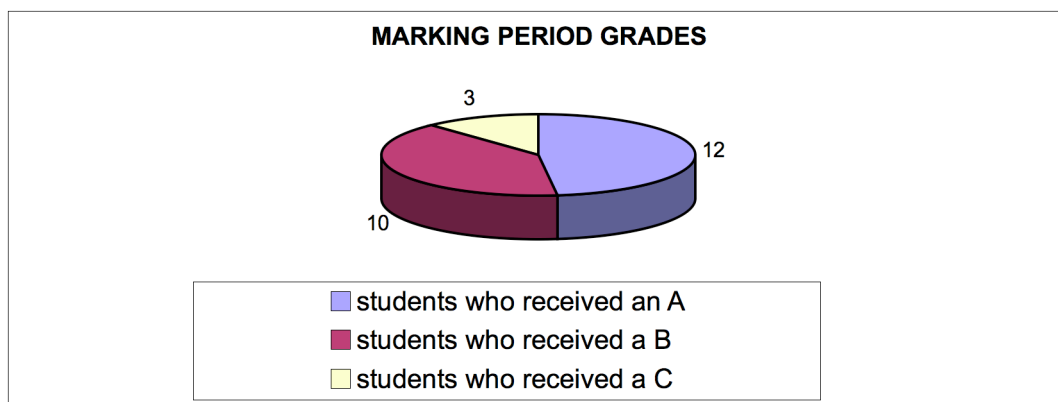


Figure 5. Marking Period Grades

As my students and I wrapped up my research, together we discussed how they felt about group work overall. For the most part, their reactions were extremely positive as shown in the pastiche on p. 49. Everyone, including me, grew from this experience. The collaboration and cooperation that occurred during class added to the understanding of texts and enhanced higher order thinking skills. I noticed that we were truly discussing and debating texts. It was no longer the sole person lecturing and telling them about the stories. With cooperative learning, the students had an active role in their own learning and success.

However, students did not enjoy everything about cooperative groups. For example, the students were extremely resistant to the roles and rarely used them unless I required it. Amy said that the roles were actually a waste of time, and by the previous actions of many of the groups, they agreed.

Furthermore, the shy, introverted students seemed to make the group as a whole uncomfortable, and therefore, the group was not as productive. In fact, some students pointed this out quite clearly. “It got frustrating trying to get Annalise to talk,” said Sahar. “And if I put out an idea, she would just go with it without any discussion or input of her own ideas.”

As I neared the end of the data collection period, I reflected on how far I had come as a teacher. Was I creating a classroom that mirrored Coach Vaught’s and Mrs. Davis’s? This goal finally felt as if it was in my grasp, and I knew I had the remainder of the school year to grab hold and make it happen.

PASTICHE: WHAT I LIKE ABOUT COOPERATIVE GROUPS

I like group work for two reasons:

- 1.) Split up the work so things are less stressful.
- 2.) You get to socialize and share your ideas with others.

I feel more comfortable talking in a small group than talking with the whole class.

The only thing I dislike is the fact that some people may not be reliable, and it's hard for me to put my grade in someone else's hands.

But, I always think they're probably thinking the same thing as I am, so they'll get it done. That makes me feel better.

I enjoyed cooperative groupwork because we could bounce ideas off each other and it was more involved than whole class discussions. However, sometimes my group would get off track.

I like group work because it makes everything more fun & helps us learn better.

I like group work because it's a way for all of our ideas combine and it allows us to understand the topic that we talk about.

I enjoy doing groupwork because I feel less stressed by having the support of other classmates.

I like groupwork because then there's more minds and thoughts put together rather than just one.

Figure 6. Pastiche: What I Like About Cooperative Groups

METHODS OF ANALYSIS

As I gathered data and continually reviewed, reflected, and responded to it, I kept Mrs. Davis and Coach Vaught in the forefront of my mind. By doing this, I knew my observations and analysis would help me make effective changes in my teaching practices and make a major impact on my students' academic engagement and achievement just as they done for me.

After reviewing the data, I took time to honestly reflect on the students' contributions through reflective and analytic memos (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 2001), paying close attention to any figurative language I used in writing these memos. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999) stated in *Philosophy in the Flesh* that figurative language can help in gaining insight into the speakers' true intentions. "Very often people are unaware of the full significance of these metaphors, which usually have come to be taken for granted" (p. 69).

I also learned a great deal by viewing and writing about my students through various lenses. For example, after reading Paulo Freire (1970), I saw for the first time how some of my students, especially those who were introverted and shy in their cooperative learning, as oppressed by school and schooling in ways that I had not previously imagined. Furthermore, I used Lisa Delpit and Joanne Kilgour Dowdy's book, *The Skin That We Speak* (2002), to further help me understand students who seemed different from others. I learned that teachers sometimes make judgments on students' intellect based on the way they look and

sound, and unfortunately, I know that I have done this myself. Through my reading, observation, and reflection, I determined that this opinionated information is baseless and misleading and should not be used to evaluate students. Instead, I learned to celebrate and learn from student differences.

Through Vygotsky (1978), I noted the importance of teaching in the students' zone of proximal development. This ensured that all learning was matched with their development. "By using this method, we can take account of not only the cycles and maturation processes that have already been completed but also those processes that are currently in a state of formation, that are just beginning to mature and develop" (Vygotsky, p.87).

However, I benefited most by observing my class from a Deweyian (1938) perspective. Through progressive and traditional lenses, I could see that my students thrived on the social aspect of school. I observed first-hand just how important it is to provide students with educative experiences to ensure a meaningful experiential education.

In addition to my reflective memoranda, I constantly reviewed student participation and work samples to examine the impact that cooperative learning appeared to have upon my students. This review allowed me to continually monitor and alter my teaching style as needed. I created charts and graphs to analyze these data.

By late October, I had gathered a considerable amount of data and began to itemize the information in a mid-study data assessment. Composing this memo helped me determine the value of what I had collected as well as the future path of the study.

My organized and thorough record keeping made it easier to review and code the data in November. Ely et al. (2001) described coding as “assigning labels to the data, based on our concepts. Essentially, what we are doing is condensing the bulk of our data sets into analyzable units” (p. 165). I provided labels through coding to mark certain observations in order to see a pattern emerging through the data. To keep organized and efficient, I coded my data weekly. Upon graphing my codes, I quickly noticed that the codes *Likes*, *Dislikes*, and *Problems* stood out among the others. The graph below illustrates the number of times each code was found within my field log. For example, I documented Problems 23 times in my field log. The codes then move clockwise around the figure.

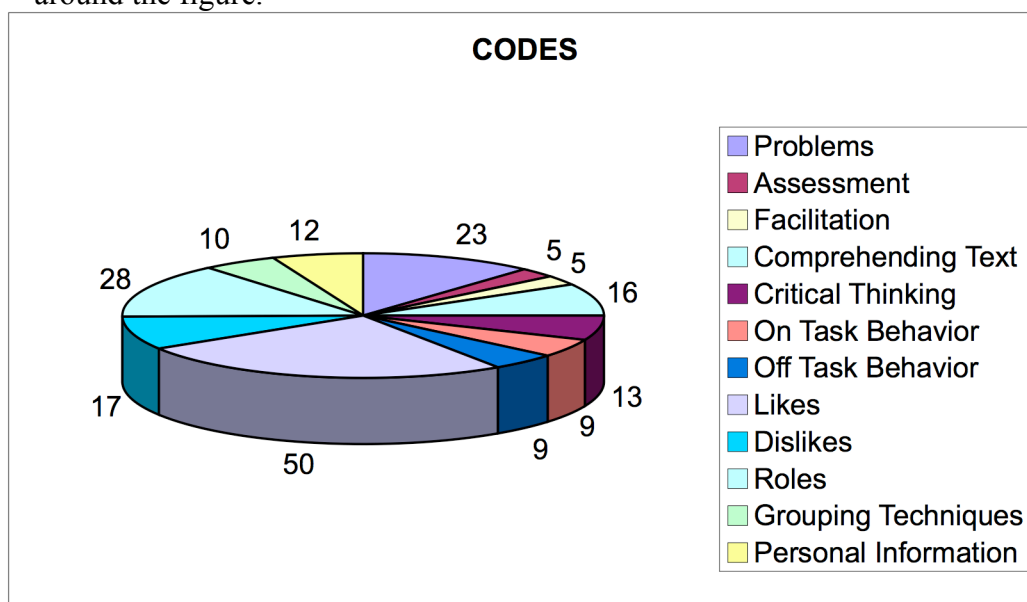


Figure 7. Codes

Consequently, I analyzed these codes further, breaking them down into what students liked or disliked about cooperative grouping and indicating the number of students who stated each like or dislike. I also noted the specific problems that occurred, and again, I indicated how many students stated that they experienced these problems.

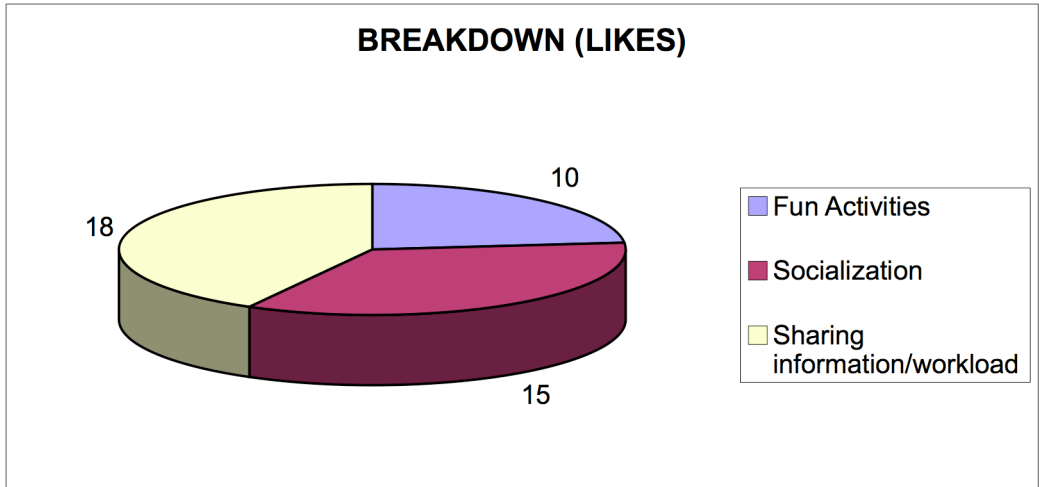


Figure 8. Breakdown (Likes)

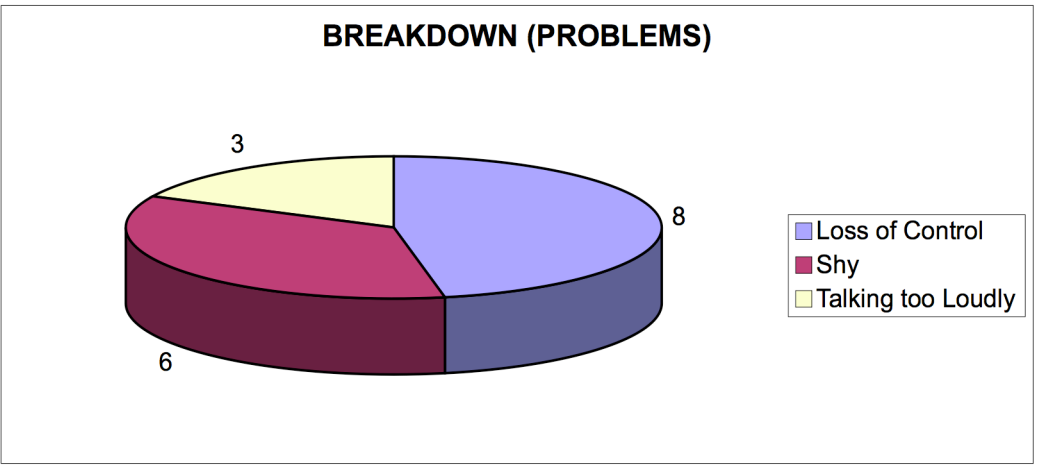


Figure 9. Breakdown (Problems)

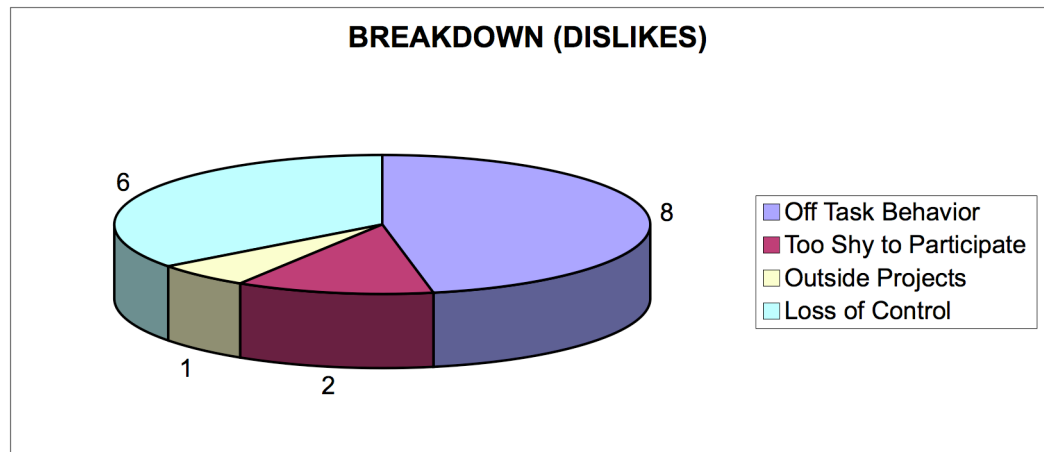


Figure 10. Breakdown (Dislikes)

After coding and noticing patterns, I began to sort the patterns into categories, or bins. From this, I created theme statements. “A theme can be defined as a statement of meaning that carries heavy emotion through all or most of the pertinent data” (Ely et al., 2001). These proved important as they allowed me to see central themes that ran throughout my study. Through an examination of my themes, I was also able to notice both the strengths of my classroom practice as well as the weaknesses I needed to improve.

FINDINGS

Throughout this study, I have experienced first-hand how cooperative learning has changed my teaching and created a more student-centered classroom.

BINS AND THEME STATEMENTS

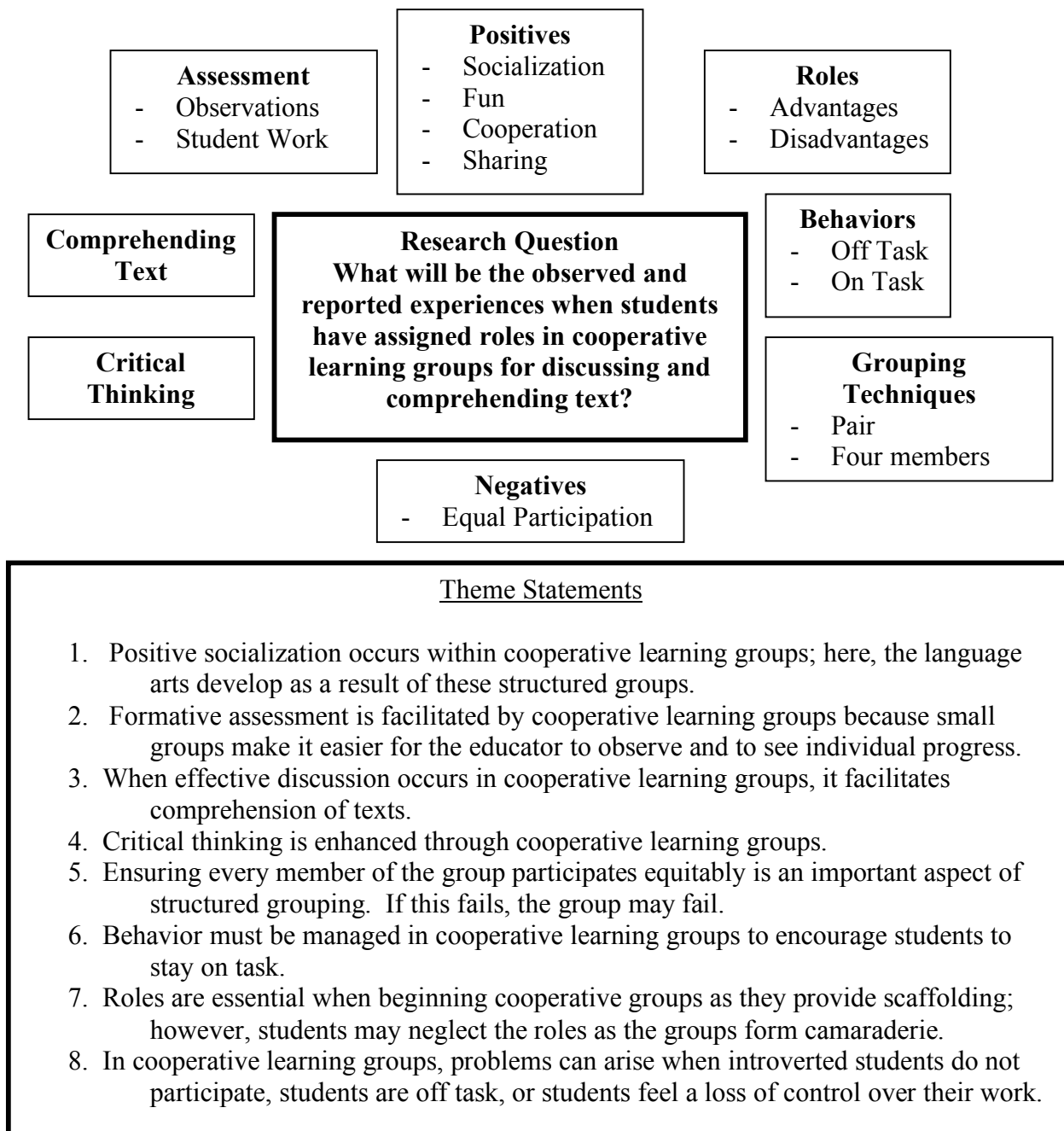


Figure 11. Bins and Theme Statements

First, *cooperative learning groups foster positive socialization*. John Dewey, in his book, *Experience in Education* (1938), stated humans are social beings. “He (the educator) is also unfaithful to the fact that all human experience is ultimately social: that it involves contact and communication” (p. 38). In order to learn, criticize, and analyze, students need to interact with others. This aids in their understanding and critical thinking. Cooperative learning allows for this interaction. In our class discussions, my students understand this and are drawn to group work because of this interaction.

Spencer Kagan, a leader in cooperative grouping, supported this thought too when he said, “It broadens students’ range of experience, including interactive learning opportunities representative of the workplace of the future. It provides a variety of ways to foster communication skills, higher-level thinking skills, and social skills – skills increasingly in demand,” (1994, ch. 2, p. 2). When discussing novels, I am no longer the one who does all the talking, feeding students the facts and details about the story. In cooperative learning groups, students hold a true discussion where more than one person shares information. And, during these discussions, students now interact, analyze, and discuss literature using the very skills that Kagan notes are increasingly in demand.

Furthermore, *cooperative learning groups make it easier for me create and observe individual progress*. Cooperative learning provides the differentiation that students crave. Here, I act as a facilitator while students guide

their own learning. Paulo Freire (1970) noted the importance of students and teacher learning in dialogue with one another. However, he found that much of the curriculum educators present is a “one size fits all approach” providing little, if any, differentiation among students where students are expected to do the same work, in the same way, at the same time. This, said Freire, hinders thinking.

But, in small, cooperative groups, I am able to see individual strengths and weaknesses and provide scaffolding or more challenges when necessary. Because students are seen as unique individuals with different needs, this teaching style definitely effaces the “ready-to-wear approach.”

In addition, *cooperative learning fosters discussion and facilitates the comprehension of texts*. Consequently, critical thinking is enhanced. Freire stated that many educators see their task as simply providing the necessary information mandated by the curriculum with little or no regard for student connection and understanding. This hampers discussion and critical thinking.

The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to “fill” the students with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their

concreteness and become a hollow, alienated, and alienating verbosity (Freire, 1970, p. 71).

Before I introduced cooperative learning, I found that I was doing exactly this as I lectured about literature in my classroom. I knew that the students must know the content, so I simply gave it to them and nothing more. After students read the assigned text, I would summarize it for them during class. I did all the talking, analyzing, and critical thinking for them. Hence, my students were suffering from what Freire (1970) calls “narration sickness.” The students had no role in this so-called exchange of ideas about the reading.

However, now that I am utilizing cooperative learning groups in my literature discussions, I see a complete change. I am now a facilitator, not a lecturer. Hence, I am no longer the sole person filling students’ minds information. Now, the students have the opportunity to truly discuss literature. They are able to ask questions of each other and use higher order thinking skills to solve problems on their own. To me, this is true discussion and interaction with the text that promotes learning and success.

Next, *ensuring every member of the group participates equitably is essential in structured grouping*. If the groups fail to accept others’ diversity and opinions, they may be unsuccessful. Students come to school with various backgrounds. In my classes, I have several students from various cultural backgrounds and religions: Indian, American, Muslim, and Jewish, to name a

few. It is essential to use this diversity as an educational tool to help students appreciate others' cultures. Within the cooperative learning groups, students work collaboratively to discuss and understand one another. This collaboration will, as Joan Wynne stated, "build those bridges of understanding that will allow people to cross the racial divide" (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002, p. 209).

Kagan (1994) agreed that structured groups facilitate this appreciation and create a productive, understanding atmosphere. "A consistent finding in cooperative learning research has been improved ethnic relations among students" (ch. 3, p.1). My students and I experienced this first-hand as everyone in cooperative learning groups shared and gained valuable knowledge from others' prior experiences brought into the classroom.

Moreover, *behavior must be managed in cooperative learning groups to encourage students to stay on task*. For effective classroom management, students must trust and respect each other and the teacher. The teacher must be someone students can come to in times of trouble; however, students must also see the teacher as the authority figure of the classroom. In order to achieve this balance, teachers must have a passion for both authority and knowledge and want the absolute best for all students.

Herbert Kohl discussed this relationship. "You have to know what you are teaching, to learn how to understand your students both as individuals and as a group, and to fight against resistance to learning" (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002, p.

152). Cooperative learning groups facilitate this caring and respectful atmosphere and create an atmosphere where students want to learn. In small groups, I am able to know and understand the students better – their strengths, weakness, and personal interests. I am able to see them as individual people instead of merely students in a classroom. This establishes a relationship that fosters learning and success.

Additionally, *roles are essential when beginning cooperative groups as they provide scaffolding*. These roles also create an atmosphere that allows everyone to contribute to the group on an equal basis, one where all members have an equal say in what happens. All students have a specific role within the group and participate equally within it. This sharing epitomizes democracy. After all, this equality or democracy is the purpose of schools according to Larry Cuban (1998) when he noted, “the core duty of schools, teachers, and administrators – past and present – has been to turn students into citizens who can independently reason through difficult decisions, defend what they have decided, and honor the rule of law” (p. 118).

Finally, *problems can arise in cooperative learning groups when introverted students do not participate, students are off task, or students feel a loss of control over their work*. It is important for both teachers and students to participate and remain open to new ideas and opinions, freeing themselves from biased judgments. I was extremely worried that students in my study would

stereotype Tammy because of the ways she looks and acts. Tammy does not fit the typical mold of the types of students found in this high school, and this leads to her feeling insecure. When she talks, she is barely audible. Because of this, some may make unfounded judgments about her intellect.

Although this behavior hampers her productivity in her cooperative learning group, through observations and assessments, I see Tammy has much to contribute. Perhaps as Tammy continues to gain confidence as we continue to work in cooperative groups, more of her peers will see this, too.

Overall, this experience has changed the way I teach my students. However, little things have stayed the same. Monica is as talkative as ever, but now it is a bit more focused; Tammy remains shy, but is finding an outlet of communication through poetry and art; Nate's love of learning remains, and in fact, it may have grown; Ollie is still disheveled, but is working on improving. Carly is much more involved in her cooperative groups, while Annalise found that home schooling is a better option for her.

Mrs. Davis and Coach Vaught would be proud of the atmosphere I have created in my classroom. Students no longer enter my classroom with anxiety, but instead, are eager to experience literature. They now enter a classroom where all members, including myself, are able to learn from each other and achieve success. This free exchange of ideas and opinions allows for a conducive learning environment for everyone. "Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and

the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach” (Freire, 1970, p. 80).

THE NEXT STEP

“He does not regard cognizable objects as his private property, but as the object of reflection by himself and the students. In this way, the problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of the students. The students – who no longer are docile listeners – are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher” (Freire, 1970, p. 80-81). This idea epitomizes the changes that are happening in my classroom as a result of incorporating cooperative learning groups. I have discovered that good educators ask questions, seek answers, and constantly reflect on their actions and observations of the students. They allow these reflections to guide their teaching and learning. Their students must not be passive observers, but active participants in their own learning.

Having gone through this process, I have completely changed the way I teach; consequently, my students have changed the way they learn. For example, I have become much more than a depositor of information within my students. I am now partner in their learning, in their questioning, in their dialogues. Through my observations, interviews, and analysis, I have become a better facilitator for my students.

In turn, I see that my students are taking the time to do the same in order to become better students. Through cooperative learning, students are now discovering for themselves what works and what does not work in their own

cooperative learning groups. This has enhanced their higher order thinking skills. Students are thinking much more critically about the texts, analyzing, evaluating, and connecting ideas.

However, I must continue this process and maximize my use of cooperative learning groups. For instance, I want to learn how to utilize roles within each group more effectively. This is so important for the groups to operate effectively and efficiently. Using roles, every member has an equal stake in the outcome. “Many cooperative learning techniques are structured so that the contributions from each member must be respected or the group cannot achieve its objectives” (Kagan, 1994, ch.1, p.4).

To achieve this, I plan to heed Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec’s advice. “It’s important to introduce roles gradually to students as they begin working in cooperative groups (1994, p. 37). By teaching them appropriate skills and functions of each role, they can become a more productive member of the group. In fact, they suggest using role cards to facilitate the development of social skills need for each role.

Next, I want every member of my class, especially the most introverted students, to experience more of the clear benefits of cooperative learning. I recognize the difficulty of sharing within a group; however, sharing ideas and opinions is a necessity in life. “It broadens students’ range of experience, including interactive learning opportunities representative of the workplace of the

future. It provides a variety of ways to foster communication skills, higher-level thinking skills, and social skills – skills increasingly in demand,” (Kagan, 1994, ch.2, p.2). To this end, I will support reticent participants and special needs students by conferencing with them personally about their needs and taking the time to place them in cooperative learning groups where they feel safe and successful

I want to develop this camaraderie and motivation by establishing a team atmosphere early on in the school year. Implementing more team building exercises would aid in this and foster a safe, comfortable environment for all students.

I have journeyed far from the girl who loved playing school, to the teenager who loved to socialize and experience literature, to finally an educator who wants to transform the way my students learn and interact. I will continue to look for other ways to enhance my teaching through action research, hence, preparing my students for their own journeys that lie ahead.

Cooperative learning is a crucial component of this journey. “We need to include cooperative learning experiences in our classrooms, because many traditional socialization practices are now absent, and students no longer come to school with an established caring and cooperative social orientation. Thus, students are left ill-prepared for a world which increasingly demands highly developed social skills to deal with increasing economic and social

interdependence” (Kagan, 1994, ch.2, p.10). I will continue on this journey with my students, just as my own mentors, Mrs. Davis and Coach Vaught, continue on this journey with me.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

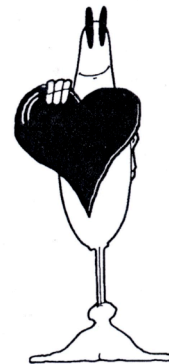
TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Chapter 8. Teambuilding

You Have to Have a Heart



You are one of the members of the City Hospital's Judicial Board and must make a crucial decision. Individually, you must assign priority numbers to 5 patients on a waiting list for an artificial heart. The Judicial Board (the team) must achieve consensus. (1 = first in line; 5 = last in line)



Step 1: Individual Ranking. Working alone you must make a priority ranking of the 5 patients waiting for an artificial heart.

Step 2: Board Meeting. After you and the remainder of the Judicial Board (your teammates) have completed your own priority ranking, you must have a meeting. You must work together to finalize the priority ranking. The rule is before you can express your opinion, you must validate the thoughts or feelings of another member, even if they differ from your own.

George Money

- Age: 61 • Occupation: suspected of underworld involvement
- Description: married, 7 children, extremely wealthy, will donate a very large sum to the hospital following the operation

1 2 3 4 5

Peter Santos

- Age: 23 • Occupation: "B" average student
- Description: single, studies hard, helps support poor family, aspires to be a policeman when he graduates

1 2 3 4 5

Ann Doyle

- Age: 45 • Occupation: housewife
- Description: Widow, supports 3 children, small income, no savings

1 2 3 4 5

Johnny Jaberg

- Age: 35 • Occupation: Famous Actor
- Description: divorced, wife has custody of both children, donates to create shelters for the homeless

1 2 3 4 5

Howard Wilkinson

- Age: 55 • Occupation: California State Senator
- Description: married, 1 child, recently elected, financially well-to-do

1 2 3 4 5

Chapter 8. Teambuilding

Lost on the Moon

You are in a space crew originally scheduled to rendezvous with a mother ship on the lighted surface of the moon. Mechanical difficulties, however, have forced your ship to crash-land at a spot some 200 miles from the rendezvous point. The rough landing damaged much of the equipment aboard. Since survival depends on reaching the mother ship, the most critical items available must be chosen for the 200 mile trip. Below are listed 15 items left intact after landing.

Your task is to rank them in terms of their importance to your crew in its attempt to reach the rendezvous point. Place number 1 by the most important item; number 2 by the second most important, and so on through number 15, the least important.

Step 1: Individual ranking. Each member of the team is to individually rank each item. Do not discuss the situation or problem until each member has finished the individual ranking. Once discussion begins do not change your individual ranking.

Step 2: Team ranking. After everyone has finished the individual ranking, rank in order the 15 items as a team.

Box of matches	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Food concentrate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
50 feet of nylon rope	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Parachute silk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Portable heating unit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Two .45 caliber pistols	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
One case dehydrated milk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Two 100-pound tanks of oxygen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Stellar map (moon's constellation)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Life raft	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Magnetic compass	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
5 gallons of water	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Signal flares	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
First-aid kit containing injection needles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Solar-powered FM receiver-transmitter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15

Chapter 8. Teambuilding

Lost on the Moon Scoring**Rank Order of Items:**

Box of matches	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Food concentrate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
50 feet of nylon rope	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Parachute silk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Portable heating unit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Two .45 caliber pistols	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
One case dehydrated milk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Two 100-pound tanks of oxygen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Stellar map (moon's constellation)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Life raft	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Magnetic compass	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
5 gallons of water	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Signal flares	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
First-aid kit containing injection needles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Solar-powered FM receiver-transmitter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15

Scoring:

For each item, find the difference between your ranking and NASA's ranking number. Add these differences. The smaller your difference, the closer you are to the experts. Also do this for the team rankings. Compare accuracy of the individual predictions and group prediction.

Example:

	Your Ranking	NASA's	Difference
Box of matches	8	15	
Signal Flares	14	10	4

Explanation:

These are the answers supplied by the NASA scientists. The answers are split into groups--physical survival and traveling to the rendezvous.

The first two items are air and water without which you cannot survive at all. After that comes the map for locating position and figuring out how to get to the rendezvous. Food comes next for strength on the trip. It is not as necessary for survival as air and water.

The FM transceiver is for keeping in touch with earth. In a vacuum, without the ionosphere, radio transmission travels only in line of sight and would be limited on the moon to destination of approximately ten miles. On earth powerful receivers could pick up messages which would then be relayed to the mother ship. The next item would be the rope for lunar mountain climbing and traversing crevasses on the trip. The next item would be the rope for lunar mountain climbing and traversing crevasses on the trip. The next item would be first aid for injuries. Parachute silk would offer excellent protection from sunlight and heat buildup.

The life raft is a carry all for supplies, (the moon's gravity permits heavy loads to be carried), as a shelter, and a possible stretcher for the injured. It also offers protection from micro-meteorite showers.

Flares cannot burn in a vacuum, but they, and the pistols, can be shot. Flares and guns would therefore be excellent propulsive devices for flying over obstructions. The milk is heavy and relatively less valuable.

On the moon overheating is a problem and not cold. Thus the heating unit is useless.

The magnetic compass is useless without a map of the moon's magnetic field.

The box of matches is the most useless item.

Spencer Kagan: Cooperative Learning®

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APPENDIX B

September 12, 2007

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Currently, I am taking classes to complete a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. These courses facilitate my teaching by demonstrating effective, up-to-date strategies in order to provide the best learning experience for your child.

During the program, I am required to observe and reflect on my own teaching practices by conducting a research project in my classroom. This year, my research will examine the use of structured cooperative learning groups to facilitate literature discussions. Through examination of research, I have found that cooperative groups will make my class more student-centered, especially when discussing, understanding, and thinking critically about literature. Consequently, I want students to use this knowledge as a catalyst for growth. This cooperation is a lifelong skill that I am sure will benefit them for years to come.

I will be gathering data to support my research study through student observation, interviews, questionnaires, and work samples. This will enhance fairness in the research and ensure that all students will have a chance to give feedback. I will preserve confidentiality by removing student names from any published documents or examples. Furthermore, this data will be kept in a secure, locked location so as not to breach student privacy. Upon completion of the project, all data will be destroyed.

All students will participate in cooperative grouping as part of my English curriculum, and all students are asked to participate in the study. However, participation is completely voluntary, and students have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without fear of consequences. In doing so, I agree I will not use any data pertaining to the child. Please note that this will be exclusion from the study only, not the classroom assignments.

I am looking forward to important and helpful findings from my research study. Should you have any questions about my research study, please contact me by phone (610) 351-3600 or by email thomass@parklandsd.org. My faculty sponsor is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be contacted at Moravian College by phone (610) 861-1482 or by email jshosh@moravian.edu. You may also contact the Parkland High School Principal, Mr. Sniscak, who has approved this study, at (610) 351-5600 or your child's guidance counselor at (610) 351-5900. Thank you for your cooperation in advance.

Please sign and return the consent form below.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Shirley Thomas



I attest that I am the student's legal guardian and understand that Mrs. Thomas will be observing and collecting her research project on cooperative groups. I am willing to have my child participate in this action research study.

YES

NO

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Child's Name: _____

APPENDIX C

September 10, 2007

Dear _____,

Currently, I am taking classes to complete a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. These courses facilitate my teaching by demonstrating effective, up-to-date strategies in order to provide the best learning experience for my students.

During the program, I am required to observe and reflect on my own teaching practices by conducting a research project in my classroom. This project will take place during the 2007-2008 school year. My research will examine the use of structured cooperative learning groups to facilitate literature discussions. Through examination of research, I have found that cooperative groups will make my class more student-centered, especially when discussing, understanding, and thinking critically about literature. Consequently, I want them to use this knowledge as a catalyst for growth. This cooperation is a lifelong skill that I am sure will benefit them for years to come.

I will be gathering data to support my research study through student observation, interviews, questionnaires, and work samples. This will enhance fairness in the research and ensure that all students will have a chance to give feedback. However, these thoughts and feelings will not be used against any student, and I will preserve confidentiality by removing student names from any published documents or examples. Furthermore, this data will be kept in a secure, locked location so as not to breach student privacy. Upon completion of the project, all data will be destroyed.

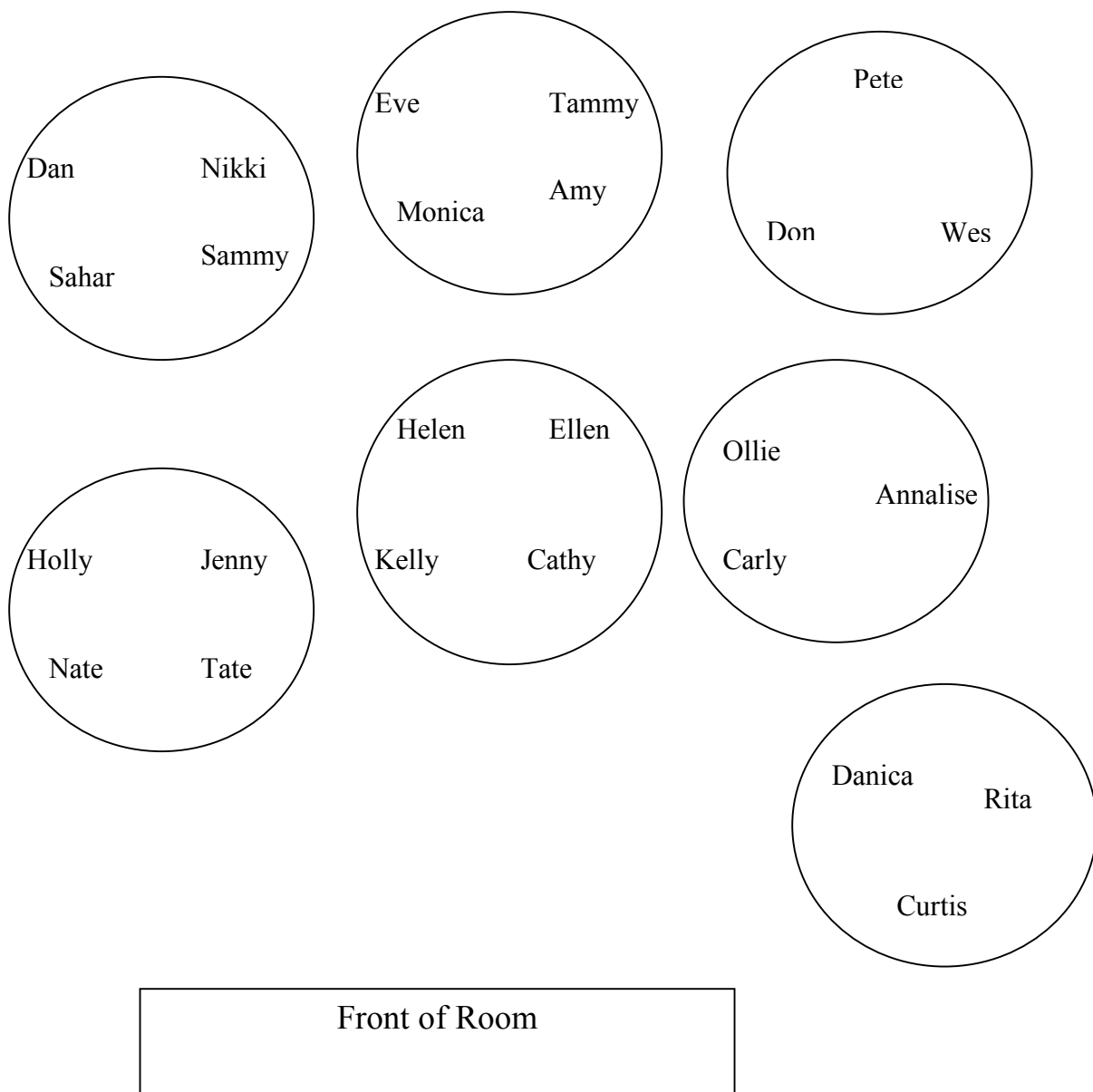
Although all students are asked to participate in the study, participation is completely voluntary, and students have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without fear of consequences. In doing so, I agree I will not use any data pertaining to the child. Please note that this will be exclusion from the study only, not the classroom assignments.

I am looking forward to important and helpful findings from my research study. Should you have any questions about my research study, please contact me. My faculty sponsor is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be contacted at Moravian College by phone (610) 861-1482 or by email jshosh@moravian.edu. Thank you for your cooperation in advance.

Shirley Thomas

APPENDIX D

First Group Assignments



APPENDIX E

Name:
Date:
Class:

Interest Inventory

WHEN IS YOUR BIRTHDAY, AND HOW OLD ARE YOU NOW?

What is your favorite subject? Why?

What is your least favorite subject? Why?

DO YOU LIKE TO READ? WHAT WAS THE LAST INTERESTING BOOK YOU READ?

Do you work best alone or in a group?

What is your favorite type of music?

What is your favorite TV show?

What are your interests or hobbies?

Name two places you have been.

In your opinion, what was the most important event in history thus far?

Which famous person would you like to meet?

WHICH FAMOUS DEAD PERSON WOULD YOU LIKE TO MEET?

What do you want to happen in this class?

You need to know that I.....

APPENDIX F



Roles During Group Work

1. **Facilitator:** The facilitator helps students master content; however, he/she does not do the problems for them.
2. **Recorder:** The recorder writes down group decisions and answers.
3. **Time Keeper:** The time keeper ensures that the group stays on task and completes the work in the time allotted.
4. **Reflector:** The reflector leads the group in looking back and summarizing its strengths and weaknesses.

Quiet Signal

As teams work in groups, there is a need to discuss with members. Be sure your group members stay on task and discuss in a voice that does not disrupt other groups. When the teacher needs to get the attention of the class, I will initiate the quiet signal (my arm raised high in the air). It is then that I expect that all conversation to cease and attention of the class be turned to me.

APPENDIX G



Step 1:

Choose a number from the box on your table.

#1 - You will edit the essays for **FOCUS/CONTENT**.

Does the paper have a clear focus?

Can you identify topic, task and audience?

Does the paper establish and maintain a single point of view?

Are the paragraphs developed fully and contain details and information specific to the topic?

#2 - You will edit the essays for **ORGANIZATION**.

Is there a logical order to the paper?

Is the thesis clear?

Are transitions used to introduce the body paragraphs?

Does the paper include an effective introduction and conclusion?

#3 - You will edit the essays for **STYLE**.

Does the author use different types and lengths of sentences?

Is the language clear and precise?

#4 - You will edit the essays for **SPELLING/GRAMMAR MISTAKES**.

Are all words spelled correctly?

Are capital letters used correctly?

Did the author punctuate correctly? (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens)

Are nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections used properly?

Are all sentences complete? (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).

APPENDIX H

LINK

List:



Inquire:



Note:



Know:



APPENDIX I**COLUMBUS QUESTIONS**

- 1. What is Columbus's reaction to the landscape?**
- 2. According to Columbus, why are the houses empty when he arrives?**
- 3. How long does Columbus plan to spend on the island?**
- 4. How can you tell that Columbus was struck by the beauty of the island?**
- 5. What appears to have been Columbus's primary consideration in choosing specimens to send back to Spain?**
- 6. According to Columbus, how did the first meeting with the Natives go?**
- 7. How would this account be different if it had been written by a crew member?**
- 8. How would this account be different if it had been written by a Native American?**

APPENDIX J



Origin Myths Group Project

We have learned that origin myths are traditional stories that recount the origins of earthly life. Passed down from generation to generation, these myths often explain such phenomena such as the beginning of human life, the customs and religious rites of a people, the creation of natural landmarks, and events beyond. Using your research and information from the myth you read, present the following information to the class.

- Background information on the tribal nation
- An explanation of the myth you read
- Themes, items, geographical settings, etc. distinct to the tribal nation that were used in the myth
- Phenomenon used in the myth to help tell the story

Things to consider during your presentation:

Does your presentation engage the audience?

Did you explain the topic of the myth?

Did you explain other phenomena in nature adequately and logically?

Is your presentation specific sophisticated?

Was your discussion detailed and specific?

Does your presentation flow smoothly from one idea to the next?

Do you summarize your presentation at the end?

You will be graded on:

Relevant information 1-5

Creative presentation 1-5

Knowledge of information 1-5

Equal participation 1-5

Voice 1-5

Poise 1-5

APPENDIX K**Native American Unit Test (Honors)**

From Journal of the First Voyage to America

1. What is the main reason that Columbus kept this journal?
 - A. to pinpoint exact locations for future mapmakers
 - B. to describe the expedition to his patrons
 - C. to convince Ferdinand and Isabella that he had found Asia
 - D. to convince others that he had found the New World

2. Columbus's journal helped his readers share his experiences by
 - A. comparing his findings with familiar sights in Spain
 - B. estimating the value of each object he came across
 - C. embellishing his prose with poetic imagery and figurative language
 - D. identifying by name the places he actually visited

3. Which of these passages most clearly shows that Columbus was writing for an audience he sought to impress?
 - A. "We had no doubt that the people had fled in terror at our approach, as the house was completely empty."
 - B. "A thousand different sorts of trees, with their fruit were to be met with , and of a wonderfully delicious odor."
 - C. "While we were in search of some good water we came upon a village of the natives about half a league from the place where the ships lay."
 - D. "It is my wish to fill all the water casks of the ships at this place, which being executed, I will depart immediately."

4. Why does Columbus take specimens of plants he comes across?
 - A. He may need them on his return voyage.
 - B. He wants to bring unknown plants back to Europe in order to judge their value.
 - C. He is bent on robbing the natives of anything of value.
 - D. He needs them as proof that he visited the lands he is describing.

5. Why does Columbus go to special pains to mention gold in the last part of the excerpt?
- A. He receives definite information on stores of gold on the island.
 - B. He knows that his patrons are interested only in gold and nothing else.
 - C. The acquiring of riches is one of the main aims of his voyage.
 - D. The natives he encounters have great stores of gold.
6. Which of the following reasons tells why this journal may be unreliable?
- A. The writer may be writing to persuade an audience.
 - B. The writer is only one person giving this account.
 - C. It is only a record for his personal use.
 - D. It provides details that no one can actually prove.
7. What conclusion can be drawn from Columbus's determination to take ten quintals of aloe and the snakeskin back with him?
- A. He is determined to find valuables of any kind.
 - B. He longed to find the healing qualities of the aloe tree.
 - C. His ships were too small to hold much cargo.
 - D. The snakeskin is a favorite of the queen.

Native American Myths

8. Which of the following is a true statement about a myth?
- A. Myths are usually about everyday people and their daily lives.
 - B. ALL myths attempt to explain the origin of earthly life.
 - C. Myths often feature immortal beings.
 - D. Myths rarely convey cultural values.
9. "The Earth on Turtle's Back" explains the origin of
- A. the sky
 - B. the sea
 - C. the earth
 - D. the turtle
10. "The Earth on Turtle's Back" shows the importance the Onondaga placed on
- A. rain
 - B. dreams
 - C. strength in battle
 - D. old age

11. Which of these sayings expresses a cultural value clearly suggested by “The Earth on Turtle’s Back”?
- A. Might makes right.
 - B. If you don’t succeed, try, try again.
 - C. There’s no place like home
 - D. The meek shall inherit the earth.
12. In “When Grizzlies Walked Upright,” the daughter places herself in a dangerous position because she is
- A. shy
 - B. self-sacrificing
 - C. self-destructive
 - D. curious
13. “When Grizzlies Walked Upright” explains the origins of
- A. Native Americans
 - B. the earth
 - C. snow
 - D. ice
14. The selection from “The Navajo Origin Legend” shows the origin of
- A. buckskin
 - B. corn
 - C. marriage
 - D. funerals
15. In the ceremony described in “The Navajo Origin Legend”, the ears of corn are carefully laid out with their heads to the west and their tips to the east. The arrangement of the corn reflects the importance the Navajo placed on
- A. the phases of the moon
 - B. desert mirages
 - C. the prevailing west wind
 - D. the rising and setting sun
16. What was Wishpoosh’s downfall in “Coyote and Wishpoosh”?
- A. he treated animals badly
 - B. he was too confident about his abilities
 - C. he was too worried about the wolf
 - D. he was too lazy to fetch the persimmon

17. In “The First Tears” the man was crying because
- A. The woman never thought highly of the man.
 - B. Man was finally able to trust his friends
 - C. Man was sad that the seal escaped.
 - D. He finally found a friend, and good friends were hard to find
18. “How Old Man Remade Earth” most closely resembles what myth?
- A. “The Navajo Origin Legend”
 - B. “Coyote and Wishpoosh”
 - C. “When Grizzlies Walked Upright”
 - D. “The Earth on Turtle’s Back”
19. “The Iroquois Constitution” contains
- A. symbolism
 - B. pseudonyms
 - C. similes
 - D. onomatopoeia

from The Light in the Forest

Match the character to his/her description.

- A. Half Arrow
- B. Parson Elder
- C. Uncle Wilse
- D. Cuyloga
- E. Little Crane
- AB. Harry Butler
- BC. Gordie
- CD. Bejance
- DE. Del Hardy
- AC. Corn Blade

- 20. believes all Indians are savages; treats True Son harshly
- 21. True Son’s friend who married a white prisoner
- 22. negro basket weaver who once lived among Indians
- 23. adopted True Son to replace his own dead son

- 24. soldier who guards Indians on the way back to Pennsylvania
- 25. cries when he sees his son; shakes his son's hand
- 26. True Son's only ally in the white world
- 27. mountain Indian who lives alone and speaks Lenape
- 28. captain of the Paxton boys; a religious man
- 29. True Son's cousin who follows him on the trail to the white world.

Complete the sentence with the sentences below.

- 30. Because True Son feels allegiance to Gordy, _____
- 31. Because Uncle Wilse scalped Little Crane, _____
- 32. Because he is young and naive, _____
- 33. Because Corn Blade speaks Lenape and represents hope to True Son, True Son _____
- 34. Because Parson Elder was a captain of the Paxton boys, _____
- 35. Because a tribe member scalps a young girl, _____
- 36. Because he was such a rebellious captive, _____
 - A. True Son begins to question his tribe's beliefs.
 - B. True Son betrays his tribe and warns the whites about the ambush.
 - C. Gordie befriends True Son and readily accepts him.
 - D. He sets out with Gordie to go to Third Mountain.
 - E. True Son immediately distrusts him.
- AB. Little Crane's family rallies a war party for revenge.
- BC. True Son had to be tied up with strips of buffalo hide

Multiple choice

37. Where is True Son given back to his white father?
- A. Fort Pitt
 - B. Carlisle
 - C. Tuscarawas
 - D. Paxton Township
38. Why is Little Crane ambushed by Uncle Wilse?
- A. because he tries to kidnap True Son
 - B. because Little Crane tells offensive jokes about white people
 - C. because Little Crane killed Uncle Wilse's son
 - D. because Little Crane tried to attack Uncle Wilse
39. Who is Make Daylight?
- A. an Indian who killed himself by eating the root of a May apple
 - B. the last Lenni Lenape speaking Indian in the area around Paxton Township
 - C. Little Crane's brother
 - D. The leader of the Tuscarawas village
40. Which men are identified as leaders of the Paxton boys?
- A. Colonel/Parson Elder and Uncle Wilse
 - B. Colonel/Parson Elder and Colonel Bouquet
 - C. Harry and Uncle Wilse
 - D. Colonel Bouquet and Uncle Wilse
41. Why doesn't True Son carry out his plan to commit suicide?
- A. because he realizes life is too valuable
 - B. because he thinks his father will think him cowardly
 - C. because Half Arrow marches with him and cheers him up
 - D. because Del convinces him not to do it
42. Why does True Son ruin the Indians' ambush attempt?
- A. because he sees a white boy on the boat and it reminds him of Gordie
 - B. because he sees his parents on the boat
 - C. because he hates the Indians
 - D. because he wants to return to Paxton Township

43. Who are the Paxton boys?
- A. a group of Indians that terrorized the white settlers
 - B. the white settlers who returned the Indians' white captives
 - C. a group of white settlers that massacred a number a number of innocent Indians, including women and children
 - D. a group of white settlers that tried to make peace with the Indians
44. What does True Son dream of the night before he is supposed to help ambush a boat of white settlers?
- A. the time he and Half Arrow spent together free in the wilderness
 - B. his white family
 - C. the little girl whose scalp Thitpan carries
 - D. himself as a brave Indian warrior
45. Why don't True Son and Half Arrow cut out Uncle Wilse's heart?
- A. because True Son does not want to since Uncle Wilse is family
 - B. they actually do cut out his heart
 - C. because they do not have the proper knife
 - D. because they see someone has already scapled him
46. What does the doctor think is the main reason for True Son's illness?
- A. the fact that True Son longs to return to his white squaw
 - B. the fact that True Son played outside in the cold with no shoes
 - C. True Son's long stay with the superstitious Indians
 - D. True Son's exposure to white civilization
47. What happens to True Son after he destroys the ambush attempt?
- A. he is rescued by the boat of white settlers
 - B. he is forgiven by Cuyloga after apologizing
 - C. he is brought before council and they vote on his fate
 - D. he flees in the forest for fear that he will be harmed

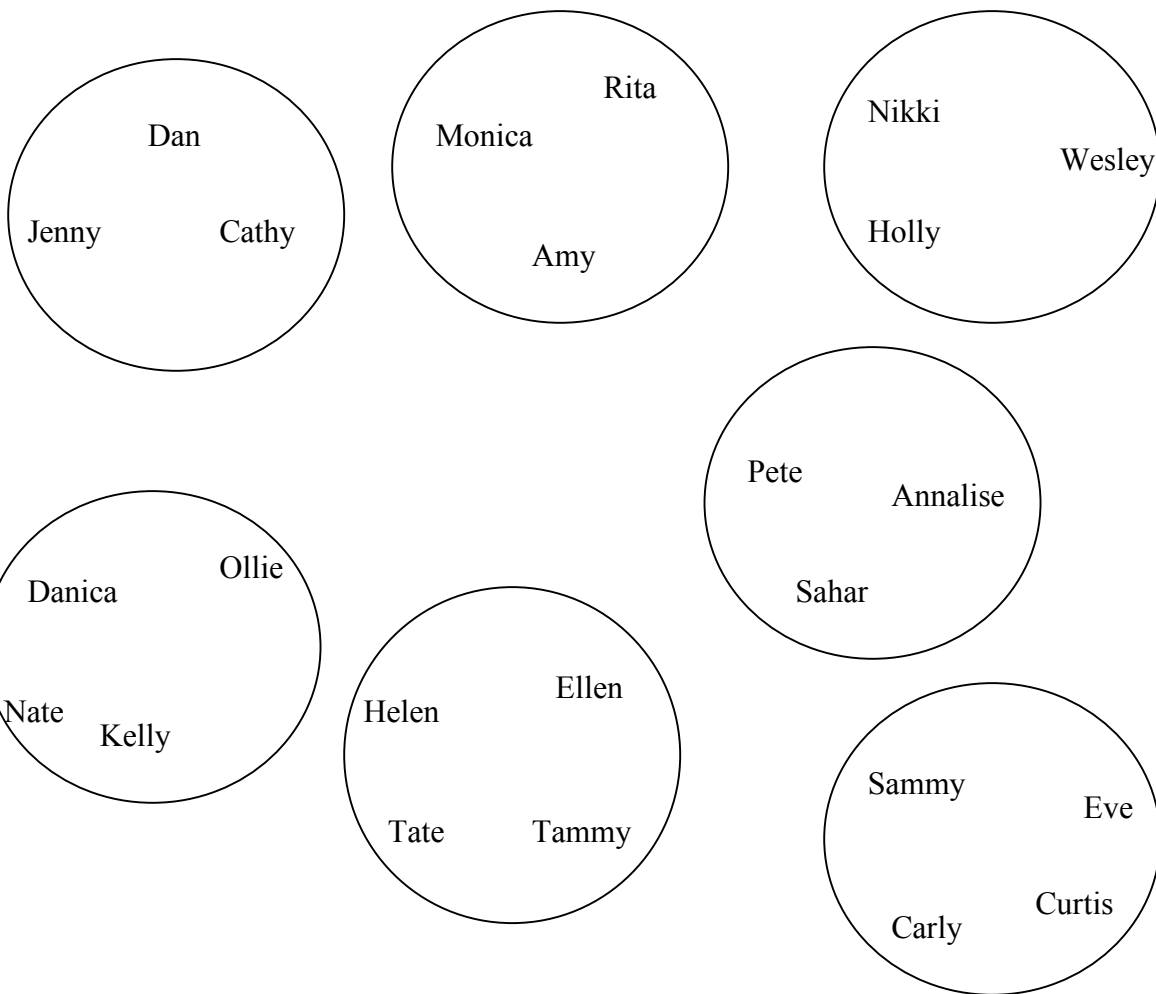
48. What does Cuyloga do at the tribal council?
- A. he finally shows emotion, breaking down in tears
 - B. he states that he wants to reattempt the ambush
 - C. he forgives True Son and accepts him with open arms
 - D. he apologizes and accepts responsibility for his son's actions
49. What is True Son's fate at the end of the novel?
- A. he is finally accepted as a true Lenni Lenape
 - B. he finds a true love just as his white family had hoped
 - C. he finds the root of the May Apple and eats it
 - D. he feels like he no longer belongs with the Native Americans or in the white settlement
50. Parson Elder excuses the Conestoga massacre by the Paxton Boys by saying
- A. he was about to be murdered
 - B. innocent women and children were not killed
 - C. the Conestogas were going to kill his favorite horse
 - D. the massacre violated no Christian law

Essays – choose ONE of the essays and write a well thought out essay giving specific details from the selection.

1. How different do you think Columbus's journal would have been if he had written it only for personal use and not for an audience of royal patrons? In a brief essay, consider the way in which the journal would have been different had it been strictly a private record. Discuss general as well as specific differences in the selection you read, and explain the reasons for the differences.
2. Cuyloga expresses his final estimation of True Son with the words, "Your heart is Indian. Your head is Indian. But your blood is still thin like the whites." What do you think Cuyloga meant by saying that True Son had thin blood? Give specific examples that showed that his blood was "still thin like the whites."
3. Discuss the characteristics of an origin method. Choose one of the myths we read in class and give specific examples of these characteristics.

APPENDIX L

Second Group Assignments



Front of Room

APPENDIX M

THE GOTHIC MOVEMENT
In
Edgar Allan Poe

CHARACTERISTICS

1. Focus

2. Extreme Situations

3. Deeper Meaning

4. Class Structure

5. Elements of the Supernatural

6. Death and Darkness

7. Innocent Heroine

APPENDIX N**To My Dear and Loving Husband****BY ANNE BRADSTREET**

If ever two were one, then surely we. If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee; If ever wife was happy in a man, Compare with me ye women if you can. I prize thy love more than whole Mines of gold, Or all the riches that the East doth hold. My love is such that Rivers cannot quench, Nor ought but love from thee, give recompence. Thy love is such I can no way repay, The heavens reward thee manifold I pray. Then while we live, in love let's so persever, That when we live no more, we may live ever.

Before the Birth of One of Her Children

BY ANNE BRADSTREET

All things within this fading world hath end,
 Adversity doth still our joys attend;
 No ties so strong, no friends so dear and sweet,
 But with death's parting blow are sure to meet.
 The sentence past is most irrevocable,
 A common thing, yet oh, inevitable.
 How soon, my Dear, death may my steps attend,
 How soon't may be thy lot to lose thy friend,
 We both are ignorant, yet love bids me
 These farewell lines to recommend to thee,
 That when the knot's untied that made us one,
 I may seem thine, who in effect am none.
 And if I see not half my days that's due,
 What nature would, God grant to yours and you;
 The many faults that well you know I have
 Let be interred in my oblivious grave;
 If any worth or virtue were in me,
 Let that live freshly in thy memory
 And when thou feel'st no grief, as I no harmes,
 Yet love thy dead, who long lay in thine arms,
 And when thy loss shall be repaid with gains
 Look to my little babes, my dear remains.
 And if thou love thyself, or loved'st me,
 These O protect from stepdame's injury.
 And if chance to thine eyes shall bring this verse,
 With some sad sighs honor my absent hearse;
 And kiss this paper for thy dear love's sake,
 Who with salt tears this last farewell did take.