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**ACCOUNTABLE TALK IN THE 10TH GRADE CLASSROOM:
LEARNING THROUGH DISCUSSION**

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study examined the observed behaviors and recorded experiences of tenth grade students as they were introduced to the concepts of Accountable Talk and participated in discussions in the classroom. There were 25 students who participated in this study. In the process of covering several units, including short stories and research, students had large and small group discussions. The purposes of this study were to observe the effects of Accountable Talk on the Academic English classroom.

The methods used to collect data were teacher observations, student surveys, student self-evaluations in the form of rubrics and surveys, and student work. These data were analyzed through reflective and analytic memos, evaluation of student performance, narratives, codes, bins, and the creation of theme statements. After data analysis, the findings suggest that after being introduced to what Accountable Talk is, through set expectations, teacher modeling, and self-reflections, and after being given a variety of opportunities to talk in the classroom, students showed respect and cooperation to each other, they strived to present accurate information, and they dug deeper into topics by challenging and defending their ideas and evaluating the information at hand. Students showed that they are more willing to participate when discussions were in a small-group format with peers with whom they felt comfortable and when they were interested in and had prior knowledge about the topic.

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RESEARCHER'S STANCE

Sometimes, when the school day is over, when I've fought to keep the attention of three classes of high school students, I'll look back on my college days with fond remembrance of the focused, academic discussions I participated in with my self-motivated classmates. We would sit in circles, perhaps around tables, classes would be no more than 15 students, and we would all have read the material beforehand, written notes in the margins, and be impatient to say what was on our minds. Well, maybe not all my classes were like that, but plenty were, and I thrived in that atmosphere. It was a chance for me to talk out my thoughts, but more importantly, to "show off" what I had discovered and interpreted. Discussion was both the process of learning and also part of the way professors assessed us.

The above memory is in stark contrast to the classes I teach today. I remember that during my first year of teaching, I had to constantly remind myself that I was teaching high school, not college. My then recent student experiences could not be relied on; I had to throw away the idea that students would automatically come into the room ready to talk about the literature. They might complain about it, give excuses as to why they didn't read it, but rarely was there a comment about the symbolism, characterization, or the author's stylistic choices.

In vain, I attempted forcing discussion. I gave students participation slips; they had to get rid of a certain number by the end of the week to get full credit. I tried participation rubrics. I tried group-led discussion. Nothing worked effectively. There was always some glitch; somehow students found a way to do as little as possible and still get the full grade. I wasn't planning well; I focused on quantity rather than quality. The result was that I would stick to teacher-led discussion, asking questions and calling on volunteers, and it was always the same volunteers. I focused on writing instead, temporarily giving up on the dream of a classroom of motivated contributors.

In the fall of 2009, I had a student teacher for several weeks. She would leave a week or so before Winter Break, and I used my free time to plan how to cover *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in an effective way in the little time I would have left in the semester. One of my coworkers had shared with me her attempt at Socratic Circles earlier in the semester. I honestly don't remember the details of her lessons, but I decided to try out the basics. After some planning, I attempted the following:

My class was split into two groups. I chose each group myself, arbitrarily deciding to split those few students who participate the most. All students would read a chapter from the novella first. The inner circle for that day would write four questions, following the question types I explained to them, in preparation for discussion. The outer circle would be in charge of taking notes on what the inner

circle said. As students answered their circles' questions, they would have to provide evidence from the novella as support. Circles would switch after each chapter. Notes taken while in the outer circle were posted on a Wiki in categories such as characterization, setting, plot. Students were then to use these notes for a final assessment. Students were also given a participation rubric at the beginning and told they would be graded on how they participated, listened, and took notes in the process.

I did not explicitly take down notes during the activity, but I did observe who participated and how. I noticed that students who usually talked in class still did so in the circle, but I also noticed shyer, quieter students pushing themselves to contribute. I also noticed that students expressed interest in understanding what was going on and why it was happening in the story. They did this more so than when I provided questions and they simply answered. When given the opportunity to express confusion, students who usually kept quiet now spoke up. In some ways, it was a less judgmental scene; students felt freer to express themselves.

There were some glitches in the activity; some students just did not participate. Some students were absent every time they were supposed to discuss. Sometimes the higher-level questions were asked first before basic knowledge and understanding of the chapter could be established. Sometimes some students just took over and led the discussion. They often did a good job, but it took away from shyer students' opportunities to discuss. In one class, there were behavior

problems when one or two students didn't take the task seriously, or did the minimum required and expected an "A."

Despite these issues, I felt as if I stepped into something worthwhile. I was no longer feeling badly for imposing my own interpretations of literature onto students without giving them a chance to think. All in all, that's the point, really, to let students do the interpreting. That's where thinking skills are developed.

Because of this experience, I was tempted to try again, but this time with more planning and more research to properly structure the activity. I realized that there would still be problems, but I had a feeling that I would see a more student-centered process to comprehending and interpreting literature. I wanted to see students who were once not motivated to speak actually speak up and want to do so. I would hopefully see improvements in the content of their writing about the class-discussed literature as well.

My goal was to get students to participate more often and more effectively. In my research, I found the concept of Accountable Talk applicable to my goals and expectations for my students. In contrast to Socratic Circles, Accountable Talk can happen in any discussion format; the class could be in small groups, pairs, whole group, teacher-led or student-led. Because of this flexibility, I was free to plan questions, topics, and corresponding assignments that may not have worked with half the class talking and the other half taking notes. The concept thoroughly covers not only how to get students to speak, but

also delineates what constitutes effective discussion in the classroom. Therefore, I used the ideas of Accountable Talk to create my research question: ***What are the observed and reported experiences of tenth-grade students and their teacher when Accountable Talk strategies and structures are introduced and implemented to support student communication about literature and writing?***

This question allowed me to plan my lessons but also to observe the effects of those lessons on my students and on my own teaching style. With what researchers have outlined as Accountable Talk, I was able to open the discussion opportunities in my classroom to curriculum beyond literature and to structures beyond circles. I could incorporate conversation into my lessons about writing and research. I could search for meaningful classroom conversations in partner work, teacher-led as well as student-led discussions, small groups, and student presentations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The traditional form of communication in a classroom involves much teacher control. Usually, in whole-class instruction, it is the teacher who asks the questions, and students either volunteer answers or the teacher calls on particular students to answer. There is little room for students to ask questions of their own or to choose the direction of the discussion. Even in small student groups, there is the tendency for this setting to still be teacher-centered if the main task is for students to answer teacher-created questions. While there is some merit to this type of instruction, the teacher ensuring that the prescribed goals of the classroom are covered, this traditional form of communication leaves much to be desired in terms of giving students the opportunity to grow as self-directed learners.

Researchers like Reid (1987) and Knoeller (1994) emphasize that discussion is a tool for higher levels of learning, such as analysis and evaluation. Knoeller (1994) says that, “In student-led discussions, there is also the potential for students with different perspectives to interact, negotiating interpretations of text with relatively little mediation by a teacher” (p. 2) It is not just important that students can come to an agreement on the basic elements of a story, but also gain wider and deeper perspectives on what that story might mean. The ideas above go hand in hand with what Freire (1970) proposes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: “...only through communication can human life hold meaning. The teacher’s

thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students' thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication" (p. 77).

An ideal student-centered classroom may be one that is based on what Michaels, O'Connor, and Resnick (2007) refer to as Accountable Talk. They say that, "In the ideal discussion-based classroom community, students have the right to speak and the obligation to explicate their reasoning, providing warranted evidence for their claims so that others can understand and critique their arguments" (p. 2-3). The researchers maintain that classrooms that use Accountable Talk give students the opportunity to learn through speaking.

Reid (1987) agrees with this perspective, and takes things a step further: "This view [Accountable Talk] reinforces my assumptions that learning is a process of making connections between new knowledge and old, that knowledge is constructed through language use, and that language is social in origin" (p. 7). Reid stresses the importance of prior knowledge in communication, but also educational growth that comes from a dialogue, not a one-way lecture. In essence, a discussion-based classroom is one where students can bring their outside world into the curriculum and work to both establish knowledge and change and develop it through speaking and listening. While the concepts behind Accountable Talk can be placed in a variety of formats in the classroom, all focus on not only

allowing students to speak, but also creating environments where students can communicate, and therefore think, effectively.

The Accountable Talk Classroom

Michaels, O'Connor, Hall, and Resnick (2010) define Accountable Talk classrooms as those that “are filled with talk that seriously responds to and further develops what others in the group have said. It puts forth and demands knowledge that is accurate and relevant to the issue under discussion” (p. 1) In other words, students and teacher communicate in ways that move thinking forward.

According to these researchers, there are three facets of Accountable Talk that must be present in order for classroom discussion to be successful. They name these the three Accountabilities: Accountability to the Learning Community, Accountability to Accurate Knowledge, and Accountability to Rigorous Thinking.

One important element of effective discussion is creating a safe environment for students to feel comfortable enough to share and listen to ideas. Michaels, et al. (2010) call this Accountability to the Learning Community. When this quality is present, they say that, “students listen to one another, not just obediently keeping quiet until it is their turn to take the floor, but attending carefully so that they can use and build on one another’s ideas” (p. 2). Students must hear what their classmates are saying, compare it to their own ideas and conclusions, and respond accordingly. With Accountability to the Learning

Community, contributions to the discussion are not disconnected but interconnected.

Another essential requirement for effective academic discussion is for participators to bring forth ideas and facts that are reasonable and accurate. Accountability to Accurate Knowledge means that “when speakers make an observation or claim, they try to be as specific and accurate as possible, not just saying anything that comes to mind. Speakers should be concerned that what they are saying is true or supportable, that is, that they have their facts straight” (Michaels et al., 2010, p. 4) . A discussion can happen regardless of whether the statements made are accurate; however, a factually and logically flawed conversation is hardly academically productive. Accountability to Knowledge makes sure that participants in a discussion bring forth information that doesn’t misinform or mislead the rest of the participants.

Accordingly, a discussion that is academically useful should have an accountability to rigorous thinking. Accountability to Rigorous Thinking means that “students and teachers consistently push for clear statements of claims (positions, explanations, or predictions) and sound reasoning in backing up those claims with evidence” (Michaels et Al., 2010, p. 5). A conversation in the classroom cannot just be the spouting of facts or claim, even if they may be accurate or logical. Speakers need to back their claims with support, usually from a text.

All three accountabilities must be present for successful discussion.

Michaels, O'Connor, and Resnick (2007) explain that disconnected facts are a weak basis for reasoned argument, and that building off other ideas is important in creating connections and understanding, while clarity is important to communicate ideas. Finally, peer review and critique help determine which ideas in a discussion are important and which are less useful. In other words, being aware of one's community of fellow discussion members, making the effort to stick to accurate and logical information, and pushing oneself and others to dig deeper into a topic all are qualities that are mutually necessary and dependent on each other.

Implementing Accountable Talk

Resnick and Hall (2000) describe Accountable Talk as a strategy that “sharpens students’ thinking by reinforcing their ability to use and create knowledge. Teachers create the norms and skills of Accountable Talk in their classrooms by modeling appropriate forms of discussion and by questioning, probing, and leading conversations. For example, teachers may press for clarification and explanation, require justifications of proposals and challenges, recognize and challenge misconceptions, demand evidence for claims and arguments, or interpret and ‘revoice’ students’ statements. Over time, students can be expected to carry out each of these conversational ‘moves’ themselves in peer discussions” (p. 11). In this way, the classroom dialogue goes from teacher-

centered or teacher-controlled to an atmosphere that not only gives students more of a voice, but also the tools to make that voice academically productive. By providing modeling, guidelines, and scaffolding, teachers can gain confidence that students are not just talking, but are talking with the goal of learning and connecting to the classroom topics.

Another important step teachers should take in preparing students to participate in Accountable Talk is overall planning. As with any lesson planning, Michaels et al. (2010) advise to start with clear academic goals, determining the key concepts and big ideas students should learn and relating those ideas to what they've already done. Those researchers also list the different types of talk formats in which accountable talk can take place: teacher-guided whole group discussion, teacher-guided small group discussion, teacher-student conferences, student-led small group work, peer conferencing, and hybrid formats like stop-and-talk, when students go from working in pairs to discussing with larger groups, the fishbowl, when an inner circle discusses while an outer circle observes, or student presentations with accompanying questions/critique by classmates and the teacher (Michaels et al. 2010). It is significant that Accountable Talk can happen in a variety of formats. These formats can be teacher or student-led. Michaels, O'Connor, and Resnick (2007), in discussion transcripts, show how students come to conclusions about various topics with class discussions driven predominantly by student questions. Because Accountable Talk can be present in

many forms, in not only large group discussions but also in small groups or pairs, in discussions where the teacher is essentially invisible but also where he/she plays a guiding role (Michaels, et al., 2010), students can gradually transition from what they are accustomed to, to a situation that is more student-centered.

Along with overall planning, teachers should also plan the details before expecting students to participate effectively with the three accountabilities. Perhaps the most essential piece of planning is determining the questions or topics for students to discuss. Michaels et al. (2010) suggest planning questions that can sustain a certain amount of discussion and thinking about possible student responses. Teachers should also create an atmosphere and set expectations for students before discussion so students can talk in a focused way with distractions of where to sit, what to bring, and what is and is not acceptable (Michaels, et al., 2010). Overall, thoughtful preparation is necessary for Accountable Talk to actually work, for students to feel comfortable enough to communicate in positive and constructive ways.

Examples

The Accountable Talk Strategy is relatively new, first introduced in professional literature by Resnick in 1999. As a result, examples of its application in secondary classrooms are few. One exception is Richardson (2010), who used Accountable Talk in a fifth grade classroom, first by brainstorming with the class what “good discussion” is, then by modeling discussion through a fishbowl, and

finally by giving students multiple opportunities to talk. Richardson (2010) defines Accountable Talk by saying, “There are no set roles for the participants, no assigned positions or leadership, just a manageable list of expectations to follow and the assumption that all discussion participants will come to table prepared” (p. 85).

Throughout the application of Accountable Talk in the classroom, Richardson (2010) noticed a number of results. One was the usefulness of the strategy as a formative assessment: “...it soon became one of my most frequently implemented and convenient formative assessment tools as the year progressed. I often would precede a writing assignment with a session of Accountable Talk, allowing the children to think through an important open response question with their peers before putting pen to paper on their own” (p. 86). Furthermore, Richardson (2010) notes the success of Accountable Talk in how it “offers them [students] a way to feel successful about expressing their ideas and, in some ways, levels the playing field within our heterogeneous public schools” (p. 87) In other words, because the strategy focuses on speaking, and Richardson (2010) claims that “verbal expression comes before written expression” (p. 87) in the developmental process, students are not hindered by any challenges of writing and can therefore communicate freely their ideas and questions.

Accountable Talk can have positive effects in different areas. It may help in establishing student knowledge on a topic, and it may expose students to

different perspectives, according to researchers like Richardson (2010). Beyond the academic benefits, Accountable Talk experiences can also enhance students' abilities and comfort levels with communication. Richardson (2010) says that peer interaction and a positive form of peer pressure encourage students to communicate effectively, either by listening more, or by gaining the confidence to speak up, and to be prepared for class because they will be held accountable by their fellow classmates. Overall, this researcher found the strategies involved with Accountable Talk effective in more than one way.

Final Thoughts

A teacher's main goal is to give students the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information, but without the element of social constructivism that kind of thinking cannot be developed. Communication, speaking, listening, bouncing ideas off one another, demanding that those ideas be supported by evidence are all crucial in an education that prepares students for a world outside school. Accountable Talk presents a thorough method to establishing those skills.

DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

Research Goals

Through past experience, I've noticed that my students come into the course with not only different levels of ability, but also different levels of motivation to speak to each other about the course content. My main goal in this study was to see how tenth-grade students may benefit from Accountable Talk strategies and structures.

Setting & Participants

I teach at a high school in Northeastern Pennsylvania, with a diverse population of approximately 2000 students. My tenth grade Academic classroom began with 29 students and increased to 33 by the end of the semester, 15 who were male and 18 who were female. Five students have Individualized Learning Plans. Twenty-five of the students were study participants. The class met fourth block (the last in the day) every day, for 80 minutes.

My classroom was set up in four rows of four pairs. When doing large group discussions, desks were pushed aside and students brought chairs to the middle of the classroom. In small group discussions, desks were arranged in groups to prevent distractions from other groups. In hybrid discussions, with students working both in pairs and then in larger groups, the original classroom floor plan was convenient and easy to transition.

Data Sources

When I planned my data collection process, I submitted my proposal to Moravian College's Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) (Appendix A). I also submitted a Principal Consent Form (Appendix B), which was approved, and Parent Consent Forms (Appendix C) went home with students to be signed by parents, granting their approval for students to be participants in the study.

My sources for data focused on gaining information from a variety of sources that could be cross-checked. These included rubrics, surveys, checklists, polls, student reflections, my own field log and reflective memos, and student work.

Accountable Talk Rubric

After both small and large-group discussions, students self-evaluated, using the Accountable Talk Rubric. In the beginning, students used a partial rubric, focusing only on one of the three accountabilities at a time: accountability to the learning community, to knowledge, or to rigorous thinking. They received a copy of this rubric right before discussion and on it was not only the points of evaluation but also question/comment starters that aimed to assist students in what to say during discussion. (Because discussions need all three accountabilities in order to be successful, the comment/question starters for all three accountabilities were posted visibly in the classroom at all times.) There was also a section for

students to write comments after they self-evaluated (where they were comfortable, why/why not, why they did/did not participate, etc.). After the class became familiar with all three accountabilities separately, students self-evaluated with the whole rubric (Appendix D). Self-evaluations were printed on a specific color to visually separate them from teacher and peer evaluations.

Students also used the partial and whole Accountable Talk rubrics to evaluate their peers and assist them in creating constructive feedback for peer verbal evaluations post-discussion. I also used the same rubric to evaluate group discussions. Keeping the rubric consistent throughout enabled me to consistently compare my judgment to my students'.

Surveys

One element of my study that really provided me with a great deal of useful information was the survey. The survey was valuable because I could collect data in a quick, easy, and conveniently accessible way. I've noticed that in print, many students can be very honest with their critiques and their opinions of the education process. Before class brainstorming about what makes a good discussion, students completed a survey (Appendix E) about their previous experiences with class discussions. Later in the study, students completed surveys about whether the discussions for each topic or reading helped them understand and interpret the content successfully. Also, after fishbowl discussions, students

not in the fishbowl completed short surveys, evaluating their classmates. At the end of the semester, students completed a post-study survey (Appendix F).

Participant Checks & Polls

As with the surveys, I gauged student perspectives on our discussions through post-discussion critiques. I sometimes chose to have students write their comments about past discussions instead of verbalizing them to avoid feelings being hurt through thoughtless comments. I also wanted to give students the right to privacy in their opinions, which hopefully would inspire more honesty.

Sometimes I polled the class with specific questions, such as whether they preferred small group or large group. Other times I wrote specific questions on the board and asked for volunteers to answer. In the polls, all students answered. In the questions asking for volunteers, I gauged which students were more comfortable expressing their opinions with the class.

Field Log and Reflective Memo

One important source of data was my own observation of the discussions. I transcribed dialogues and conversations, focusing on both my comments and questions as a teacher and also my students' contributions. I recorded the processes of setting up discussion and sometimes the follow-up activities. I also took student comments and questions and identified them by accountability.

My reflections on my notes were also significant in evaluating what was successful and what was not. Analyzing positives and negatives and causes and effects, I was able to plan effectively for the future.

Student Work

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I looked at student writing and tests during and after the process. Did students use points made in their own circle or in the circle they observed? Did they provide examples for their short-answers? Are those examples things they talked about in their circles? Do they clearly explain their examples and connect them back to the essay/test question? Do they show understanding of the text? While these issues were part of a grading rubric, they were also evaluated for my own purposes, to observe the results of my study.

Trustworthiness Statement

One significant memory I have from a pilot study I conducted in 2008 came to mind as I did my action research this semester. That year, as I passed out and explained a permission letter one of my students made the comment: "This is ridiculous!" I was about to be offended, but then he went on to explain. He said that all I was doing was trying to help them learn, but instead of being allowed to do that freely, I was forced to worry about legal issues. That comment has stayed with me as a positive memory; a student actually realized that the teacher's goal is

to help him learn. However, while intentions can be good, planning and care is necessary to make sure those intentions are fulfilled.

First, I encouraged researcher-participant corroboration. I teach high school students, who are in the final stages to becoming adults. They'll soon be setting off for careers and college, and they should know what works for them in the learning process. For this study, I was able to get their evaluations of the success of Accountable Talk through the surveys I gave and the conferences I held.

Second, I used checklists, surveys, and student work, and student observations to get a variety of data. Also, when the class was in fishbowl mode, the inner circle discussed and the outer observed. Part of the outer circle's observations were to evaluate the inner circle's quality of discussion; I think students' perspectives were important in catching what I didn't see or in interpreting participation with a different perspective.

Also, I used student surveys several times throughout the study. Before we started learning and using Accountable Talk, I surveyed students' prior experiences with discussion in other classes. I gave a very similar survey at the end of the unit, comparing before and after answers. Student feedback was important not only for finding results but also for pinpointing areas in the plan that needed changing or were successful and did not need to be changed.

I've described these different types of data above, and they've given me data triangulation because I was not looking just at students' opinions, but I also observed how they acted in the process and their academic work in the end.

Along with data triangulation, I also have methodological triangulation. My observations, students' feedback, and student artifacts will be analyzed, sometimes in terms of frequency, sometimes in terms of types of responses, and sometimes in terms of quality.

Researcher's Biases

I realize though that walking into this study, I had some biases that I needed to work through as I not only observed my students but also planned and re-planned my methods of teaching. As teachers, we naturally tend to categorize students, and in terms of participation, I've developed some group characteristics from my previous years of teaching. There are the students who earnestly attempt to discuss, perhaps because they are intrinsically motivated, and who often are the ones who say what they think the teacher wants to hear. My initial bias was that I believed these students would rarely step out of the box, and I went in thinking to rely on them to talk about things using Accountable Talk, constantly referring to literary terms as they go. In contrast, there is the group of students that perhaps has ideas, has interpretations, has insights, but doesn't feel comfortable or motivated enough to speak. Finally, there are those students who enjoy speaking, but not in a way that progresses the discussion in an academic way. It is those last

two groups towards which my study was aimed; I wanted to hear what those quiet students have to say, and I wanted to give off-task students the tools and incentive to get on task and give positive contributions.

However, I had to ignore my previously conceived explanation as to why these students do not talk (shyness, the fear of not looking cool, etc.) and discover the real reasons they are silent. Also, with the students who speak, but rarely on topic or to any useful purpose, I had to work past my fear that every time someone in this group speaks up, he/she will cause a disturbance or say something insignificant. I had to find a way to bring everyone to the same ability and motivation level when it comes to discussion, and I had to work past my biases in order to make that happen.

Finally, I had to understand that discussion and participation, while important and necessary, aren't the only indication of learning in my classroom. In my memories, I may have viewed my college discussions as the ultimate learning experiences, but that can't be true in an atmosphere of varied learning styles and preferences. I needed to take into consideration the other learning activities involved in my units and not downplay those as I embrace my lessons on discussion.

Overall, I know I conducted a study that took effort to convey to my students and perseverance to withstand the possible backlash that may have come. However, I think my goals were worthwhile and important; they coordinated with

standards I've been given and with future experiences my students most likely will have. Therefore, I entered into my research with hesitant hope that I would find substantial ways of making my teaching and my students' learning more successful.

MY STORY

The First Days of School

While the first day of school is infamous for being a day of dread for students, it can hold an equal amount of trepidation for even experienced teachers. Entering into this school year added an extra nerve-inducing element for me because I was teaching tenth grade for the first time. How would students two years younger than I was accustomed to react to my lesson plans, my teaching style? Most importantly, how ready would they be to talk accountably?

In those late summer days before the school year began, I looked at my list of students, but I took it with a grain of salt. The first week is infamous for being the time that the student list changes, multiple times, so that any seating chart or class list I created with be worthless after each day. I started with 28 students, but as the semester progressed, because mine was the only fourth block 10th grade Academic class, my class size grew to 33. There were traditional 10th graders but also juniors who had not passed sophomore English the year before, and even one senior who was in the same situation. I had one student who had taken Honors English the year before but decided to drop to the Academic level. Over halfway through the semester, I had a student come in from another school. A little later than that, a guidance counselor begged me to add a student who was currently struggling in 10th grade Honors. The diverse nature of this class challenged me to

create lessons that were supportive of all ability and motivation levels. It also influenced my choices in discussion topics and formats.

Before I began my study, during those first tone-setting days of the semester, I held a series of “Restorative Circles.” Our district had recently gone through Restorative Practices training, and one element that teachers were encouraged to incorporate in the classroom was the circle. Teachers (or sometimes students) would ask a question or propose a topic, and in a structured way, usually by going around a circle, students would answer the question or make a comment about the topic. The circle structure was encouraged by the Restorative Practice trainers; the theory is that the circle creates a sense of equality and safety among speakers (Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel, 2009, p.23). As I planned my study, I often tried to find tying threads between the Restorative Circle and Accountable Talk, but the main significant thread is that students are talking in both. The Restorative Circle emphasized giving every student a voice and creating a feeling of community (Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel, 2009, p.23), which is reflected in my study’s emphasis on accountability to the learning community. One student talking at a time, everyone else listening: these were ways to create a positive speaking environment. Accountable Talk certainly encouraged these two characteristics, but accountability to the learning community means more; it emphasizes student interaction and idea building and allows for more organic, less restricted structures (Michaels et al. 2010).

Because Restorative Practices was a district initiative, I incorporated it into my semester along with Accountable Talk, but not necessarily intertwined with it. Therefore, at the beginning of the semester, I had students stand in a large circle around the room, and asked ice-breaker questions. On the first day, students had to say their name and tell the class one thing they were good at. I used this as an opportunity to see who was more or less vocal. Even with this seemingly simple question, I saw students reluctant to give loud, clear answers. On the second go-around, students had to pick an idea from the class goals on my syllabus and explain why that idea was important to them. This inspired even more reluctance. Right away, I noticed that when the topic is unfamiliar or not interesting enough, students are less likely to talk. I even had several students pass during this activity. Cassandra and Josephine both immediately gave a quiet “Pass” when their turns came. Some students, as we went around the circle, repeated the same answers as previous classmates. I told them they could repeat; it’s not as if I could get 28 different answers on the same question. However, were they repeating because they had originally planned the same answers or were they repeating as almost a defense mechanism? It may be that regardless of whether they had their own ideas or not, repeating what someone else already said was safer. If the previous person wasn’t labeled “wrong” by the teacher or laughed at by the students, it was safe to follow in those footsteps.

Restorative circles, for the rest of the semester, were used as part of our warm-ups or as closings. Yes, they were useful in getting kids to speak, but they weren't effective, because of their strict structure, in inspiring conversation.

Introducing my Study: “I’m a student, just like you!”

When I first introduced my study to my students, I started with the parent permission letter. Instead of reading the letter word-for-word, I explained my study in my own words. I said, “Just like you will be writing a research paper later in the semester, I’m writing one right now for my masters thesis. But instead of just finding research in books and articles, I’m observing what goes on in my classroom and interpreting and analyzing my observations. I am looking for strategies to make my teaching more effective.” After that, I explained that I would be focusing on how students talk and discuss in the classroom. I pointed out my bulletin board with Accountable Talk prompts (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Classroom Bulletin Board



At that point in my introduction, I didn't get many responses. Gary asked me what college I was going to; Benny asked me how many pages my thesis had to be. Nobody asked me anything about Accountable Talk. Did they wonder what it was? Did they even care?

My next step was to talk about the technical details of conducting my study. I told my students that I would not be using their real names. I thought that this would come as a relief to them; they wouldn't run into the possibility of being embarrassed in a possibly published work. I was in for a surprise: the vocal reactions to this piece of information varied, but all were the opposite of what I expected. "Can you use our real names? I don't mind; I want to be written about!" "Can we choose our own code names? I want a cool name!" "Will you tell use which names are which? Can we read it when you're done?" They were so excited to be part of a study (regardless of what the purpose of it was), and they wanted to put their stamp on it. These comments left me feeling positive about starting our activities, knowing students would be willing to work with me, at least initially. Would they be this enthusiastic as the days went by, as I asked them to self-reflect and evaluate?

The Pre-Participation Survey

The parent signatures came pouring in over the next few days. That positive feeling I had when I introduced the study grew as I gained a wide range of participants in the class. I knew it was time to get things started officially.

The first thing I did was give a pre-participation survey (Appendix E). I wanted to know what students thought of participation, what their previous experiences were. The answers I received were varied, but there were definite trends that helped me plan future conversations.

When asked, *“In what classes do you remember having significant discussion on the topics you were learning?”* students answered Spanish, English, History/Social Studies, Biology/Science, Health, and Math/Accounting. Half these answers I expected, but I was surprised when I saw Biology and Math. My memory of these classes in high school involved a lot of work that did not include academically related student-centered discussions. It was encouraging to know that discussions could occur in any subject area, and more importantly, students *remembered* these discussions. They must have had some impact.

“Did you enjoy/get anything out of these discussions? Why or why not?” A majority – 19 students – said “Yes!” They said that discussions allowed them to learn what other people think, gain knowledge, and gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Better phrasing helped make things clearer. Students who said they enjoyed discussions said they liked talking about certain topics and that being part of the discussions increased their motivation. As I reflect on these reasons, one that sticks out is the idea that “better phrasing” makes what students are learning in class clearer. What is “better phrasing?” Is it the colloquial, common, relatable language of a peer, rather than a teacher? I think I can safely

assume so, and it's one clear benefit that strictly comes from student discussion that couldn't really come from another type of learning activity. Another idea I found interesting was that not only does the topic of discussion motivate speakers to talk, but vice versa. The opportunity to talk increases motivation in the subject area. For these students who said "yes," talking in the classroom was viewed as a positive tool.

On the other hand, there were some students, five to be exact, who clearly said that discussion did *not* help them or that they did not enjoy it. While significantly fewer in number, their reasons were not unimportant. One reason was that they only talked about unclear or boring topics. This answer corresponds directly with one of the positive responses' reasons; topic is crucial. Not only must it be interesting, but it also must be understandable. Going along with interest-level, one student said he couldn't remember any discussions. Why not? It could be that he just wasn't in any classes with any teachers who made discussions part of the learning activities. On the other hand, it could be that there were discussions, but they just didn't inspire any interest in that student.

One answer that especially impacted me came from Jamie, that discussions become arguments, and that's why she didn't appreciate them in class. Accountability to the Learning Community immediately comes to mind with this comment. Obviously, previous discussion experiences left this student feeling negative about her community of classmates. It could have been that

arguments started because of polarizing topics, but there can be some civility instilled in even the most controversial discussions. On the other hand, there may be those students, unlike Jamie, who enjoy “arguments,” not necessarily because of the negativity involved, but because the topic is interesting enough, personal enough, important enough to speak passionately about it.

One final negative comment came from Brandon. Brandon was a junior in my sophomore English class. While the reasons why he failed his first attempt in the class are unavailable to me, I could surmise that it was not because of any lack of ability. His work was strong throughout the semester, and he actively sought for more challenges. Despite his enthusiasm for work, though, he clearly opposed the idea of class discussion. His response to the question was that he “already knew about the subjects,” and “didn’t gain anything” from the discussions. Again, as I became aware of his writing, reading, and overall abilities in the course, I could see that this might in fact be true, that he was “above” his classmates, as crude as that may sound. Brandon took a stance that he was better off on his own, that communicating with his peers was more likely to drag him down rather than give him a boost. While his answer may have put a damper on my enthusiasm, it also inspired me to consider the structure of my discussions and how to approach the facets of accurate knowledge and rigorous thinking for talking accountably.

Finally, some students did not feel so clear-cut about discussions they had

in the past. Three students said that they only “sometimes” enjoyed or benefited from discussions. It depended on topic, some were more interesting than others. It also depended on prior knowledge; some said they had no clue what to say sometimes. I think these answers really pinpoint two major issues that impact my planning. I had to make those discussion topics worthwhile for students. I also had to prepare students to confidently talk accountably.

“Did you participate actively in these discussions, did you just listen, or did you do both? Describe in detail your level of participation.” Five students said they participated actively, in other words, they spoke a lot during the discussion. Three students said they mostly listened. An overwhelming 17 students said they did both. I was glad that the majority claimed they both spoke and listened. Again, I see accountability to the learning community seeping into these answers; students know, either explicitly or implicitly, that discussion needs both students who vocalize their ideas and questions and who also listen to what their classmates have to say.

Then we have the more important questions: *“What motivates you to participate if you do so? What prevents you from participating if you don’t? Explain in detail.”* Students said that they participated because they had to ask questions, state how I felt, knew the answer, or had a strong opinion. Again, some said the topic was interesting or fun or relatable, while others said that they participated because others were talking too or they liked talking in general. In

contrast, some were prevented from participating because they didn't know a lot about a topic, they didn't care or couldn't relate, didn't agree with others, or found the discussion repetitive, either in itself or when put together with other learning activities. Some merely said they enjoyed listening.

The next question was a level more important: "*Does participation help you learn?*" Most students responded positively. They said discussions helped them remember the topic, that the information is clarified because it's said aloud and clarified by other students, they were able to share and hear other viewpoints, and discussions helped them stay focused and pay attention in class.

However, there were some students who said "no;" their reasoning varied. One student claimed he was an independent thinker/learner. Others said they preferred the traditional structure of taking notes and studying. Brandon claimed he already knew most or all of the information discussion and didn't need to discuss it, while others didn't have his same confidence and cited nervousness as what prevented them from participation and learning in a class discussion.

These are some of the more illuminating comments from the student surveys:

"...it helps you remember when you're more involved."

"What motivates me is the interesting topics such as a certain debate or issue. The prevention is the boring stories that wouldn't get me anywhere in life."

“I don’t really participate verbally because I don’t like to speak in front of people when they stare at me. It makes me paranoid that I’ll mess up.”

“I feel like my answer isn’t good enough so I don’t really say what I feel.”

“I like to participate when it gets deep into the discussions and I say my opinion. [I don’t like to participate] when I don’t know what they are discussing or I never learned it.”

“You’ll understand more, rather than just sitting there.”

Defining Accountable Talk

My next job was to make sure students knew what I meant every time I said “accountable talk,” or even just the word “accountable.” At the end of the survey, I showed five questions on the board for the class to answer with a partner. They completed these at the end of one block; we went over these at the beginning of the next day.

In order to get a variety of answers, after students joined their partners, I pointed to pairs randomly throughout their room and asked them for their answers as I recorded them on the board. Here are the results:

1. What makes a good discussion?

- participating by talking and active listening
- when everyone is able to relate to topic and enjoy
- everyone is involved
- when there's something interesting and it doesn't get off track

- interesting topic, people understand what they're talking about
- everyone enjoys topic
- good topic
- clear communication, interesting topic
- listening to details, most people participating actively and listening -
- their own thoughts
- people are discussing well, participating and listening
- people participating, topics are interesting, enjoy

2. What makes a good classroom discussion?

- topic that everyone enjoys, is interested in
- when people can relate to topics
- people are respectful of others' opinions
- everyone participates
- everyone understands, gives examples

3. What does "talk" mean?

- to interact with other people
- to speak and listen
- to speak to someone about a subject
- to converse with someone
- to do something enjoyable
- to speak

-words coming out of your mouth

4. What does "accountable" mean?

-responsible

-if you're not, you can face consequences

-dependable

-has to do with actions you take

5. What does "accountable talk" mean?

-you're responsible for what say

-not being offensive to whom you're talking to, whom you're talking about

-communicate clearly (use correct grammar)

-quote from the text

-make sure that what you is relevant, meaningful, accurate

I thought these were fairly thorough answers. Their responses were consistent repetitions of the survey results. The unfortunate part of this compilation of answers was its timing. As mentioned before, it was fourth block, right before a pep rally. It was also a Friday. Many students were missing, and the rest were not focused; students were not thinking about English class. They were itching to get out of that room. Unfortunately, it took some reprimanding in order to get students, such as Jacqueline and Daniella, to stop talking amongst

themselves and focus. I must note that it hurt to do that, to tell students to stop talking so we could talk about discussion. I wanted my students to be excited about this, but admittedly, this kind of discussion is probably not interesting to them.

By the time the next week came, the depleted number of students that created these answers with me most likely had forgotten them. Therefore, I projected the answers on the board, summarized them in my own words, and transitioned into defining the three accountabilities with the whole class, in preparation for our first discussions.

I didn't just want to give students a piece of paper with the definitions on them. That paper would inevitable find itself in the trashcan. I wanted students to think on their own about the phrases that went along with each accountability before I gave them my technical definitions. Therefore, their handout (Appendix G) had a space for brainstorming and a fill-in-the-blank definition.

I gave students a couple of minutes to jot down words or phrases that come to mind when they hear the words "learning community." I walked around the room to see how they were doing. Well, there was no frantic pencil scratching noises. There was some tapping, some looking around the room, a giggle or two, Peter even put his head down. This wasn't working. I had time working against me; I wanted to get both first time discussions in that day. So I focused students' attention in on just the definitions, and I filled in the blanks, occasionally asking

students to predict what goes in them and also by using my Keynote presentation (Appendix H). In hindsight, a probable passage activity might have worked better; I could have given students words to put together in a reasonable definition.

We had our definitions. The class had described what makes a good classroom discussion. There was nothing left to do but actually start discussing.

“Contents of a Dead Man’s Pocket”

The first short story we discussed was Jack Finney’s “Contents of a Dead Man’s Pocket.” I knew that before discussion, I had to give students as much support as possible. In some ways, it was an almost overwhelming process; even after making detailed plans and lists, I feared that there would be something that would hinder the conversation.

Step 1: Give time for students to read the story. The day before discussion, students had time in class to read silently. If they didn’t finish in class, they could finish for homework. I thought this would accommodate for different reading paces in the class.

Step 2: Provide questions and topics to think about while students are reading. Because I wanted to have two half-circle discussions, with an inner circle discussing and an outer circle observing, I divided the questions in half. I had slips of paper prepared with the main topics: Group 1’s slip said “Plot, Setting, and Suspense” while Group 2’s slip said “Characterization, Symbols, and Theme.” I made enough slips for each half, set them on the front table, and let

students pick which group they wanted to be in. They may have picked based on the topics or they may have picked based on what their friends chose. Either way, I gave them that choice so they would not feel forced into a discussion.

Once they picked their group, they had three questions to think about and answer. These were their directions: “Read your group's discussion questions (all three questions) below. On your own, come up with a thorough response to the question. Write these responses in your notebook. We will share responses with each other in a large-group discussion in order to review the literary elements appearing in this story.” My intention was for students to think about the story in a specific way to prepare them for discussion and to have them make written notes that they could take with them as support for the discussion. If they followed my directions, they wouldn't be unprepared.

Step 3: Set up the classroom for discussion. Traditionally, my classroom is set up in rows of pairs. For this discussion, I arranged the desks in a U shape, with plenty of room in the middle of that U to bring in chairs and form a circle for half the students in the class.

Step 4: Get myself ready for discussion. I had all my handouts prepared, and a list of the process: what to do when, which questions to ask each group, but when the time comes for the discussion, I felt nervous and would remember little details at the last minute (when to give the rubrics, when to give the sentence prompts, explaining each). In order to get myself ready, I gave students five

minutes to review with a partner their notes/answers to the questions they were supposed to answer.

Step 5: Give students even more support in order to participate effectively in the discussion. Again, part of the reason I was overwhelmed entering this discussion was because of the many handouts I planned to give. Students already had copies of the short story, copies of the questions, and their own notes. On top of all that, I added a yellow, laminated sheet (so it would stand out!) with the Accountable Talk question/comment prompts (Appendix I). Then, I gave each student in the inner circle an orange rubric (Appendix J) for self-evaluation. Since this was the first discussion, I only had them focus on Accountability to the Learning Community. The outer circle received a green rubric (Appendix K) that was very similar, only it asked those students to evaluate their peers.

On top of distributing everything, I had to explain everything. I also repeated what we had discussed earlier, about what Accountability to the Learning Community means, and what we said makes an effective discussion.

Pre-Discussion Reflections:

During Step 4, I observed that many students had not read the story. For example, I saw Jodi, Daniella, Trixie, and Jacqueline sitting all together, and then looking around the room for people who would also be in Group 1. Then they called Brandon over to sit with them, knowing that he read the story (he always read everything quickly and ahead of everyone else; he was also a junior in this

sophomore class). I surmised that they wanted him to summarize the story for them, so I told him to go back to his original partner and that time was almost up anyway. Already I was running into complications beyond my control. I know I had given adequate time for reading. Some of the students did not use this time. I could ask myself whether it was the story that was the problem, whether it was too difficult or just not interesting, but I don't believe this was the case. I think it was simply one of those instances when students just did not do their homework. In other situations, it may have affected their own grade; in this case, however, it affected the whole group.

As I reflected on all the steps above, I realized that even before discussion had started, if I as the teacher was feeling overwhelmed, then I could expect just as much from my students. I mean, physically, without a desk in front of them, they had five different papers to deal with at the same time. I should have known that they would prioritize what to look at and what to use, and that the prompts and rubric would take a back seat. I was okay with this, as long as discussion was going well without those supports. They would have time to self-evaluate after the discussion. Still, there was too much going on, too much set-up, and too much stalling, though unintentional, that interrupted any possible momentum students might have had in entering a discussion.

However, I persevered, and plowed through two half-circle discussions. I should note that in both, I sat in the circle with the students and chose to lead the discussions since it was our first time using this structure.

Excerpt from Group 1: Plot, Setting, Suspense

I used the questions students had been given as the structure of the discussion, but also added questions of my own. I made an outline for myself before the discussion. In the dialogue below, the questions that were from the original outline are in bold. Anything else I added in the course of discussion are italicized.

Me: *Okay, my first question for you guys in the inner circle: **Who is our main character?***

Several Students: Tom

Me: Okay, Tom. **What does he do?**

Several Students: [incoherent mumbling all at once]

Me: *Can someone give me a line from the story that tells us what he does? Did anyone pick up on what his actual profession is?*

Student: He works in an office.

Me: *What kind of office, what does he deal with?*

Student: Grocery store stuff, I think

Me: *Grocery store stuff? Okay, can anybody find where it says that? You're right...*

Gandalf: It says right here ... (Gandalf quotes from the text).

Me: *Okay good, okay, now*, “**The main character of the story, Tom, makes a number of important choices that directly affect the story's plot. What choice has he already made when the story opens that starts the events that unfold?**”

Alicia: He doesn't go

Me: “*He doesn't go?*” *Is that what you said...Is that what you wanted to say?*

Alicia: He doesn't go to the play with his wife.

Perry: Isn't it the movies?

Alicia: Yeah, the movies.

Me: *Okay, does anyone else have something to add?*

Gandalf: He opened the window.

Me: *How does that affect the plot then?*

Gandalf: Because if he didn't open the window, the paper wouldn't have flown out.

Me: *Good, did everybody hear that? Jacqueline, can you repeat what he said?*

Jacqueline: If he didn't open the window, the paper wouldn't have flown out.

Me: *Okay, good, and if we could repeat what Alicia said, about him not going to the movies, how does that affect the plot?*

Perry: Because his wife asked him to go to the movies and she opened the door and that made the draft that blew the paper out the window.

Me: *Is that it? Is that the only thing affected by his choice not to go to the movies?*

[Silence] Okay, we can come back to that question. **“Why does Tom risk his life to retrieve the paper?”**

Gandolf: Because it’s extremely important.

Me: *Can somebody find, in the story, where it says that? Why does he risk his life? [Flipping through pages] Let’s take a second to find that.*

Brandon: Um, it says here that the paper’s going to get him a promotion.

Me: *Okay, so the paper’s going to get him a promotion; can we add to that?*

Trixie: Because it had important information?

Gandolf: I already said that.

Me: *What was specifically on that paper? Can anybody find that passage?*

Jacqueline: She got it!

Nicole: Back of the first page, second paragraph (Nicole quotes from the text).

Reflections on the First Discussion:

In this discussion, it is more useful to reflect on my contributions than my students’. That’s not to say that the students’ contributions were not significant. Instead, I’ve come to the conclusion that I took a majority of the control in the discussion and I probably spoke more than the students. Essentially, I took a traditional pattern of teaching, where the teacher asks the question and the students respond, and merely placed it in a different physical format. We were sitting in a circle, but that was the only major difference. However, because this was our first discussion, it was perhaps natural for me to model the types of

questions and follow ups I would expect from my students in a less teacher-controlled atmosphere. Therefore, even though I spoke too much, it probably had a positive effect on my students.

My first observation is that my questions greatly multiplied from my original outline. The outline itself had more than the three questions students had received originally. However, as students responded, and as I demanded more from them, new questions developed, and conveniently, these fit nicely into the three accountabilities. (I must note that while I had studied the Accountable Talk prompts, I did not consciously use them as I went through the discussion.)

Table 1. Teacher Question/Comment Breakdown

Accountability	Questions or Comments
Learning Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grocery store stuff? -You're right... - Is that what you said...Is that what you wanted to say? - Does anyone else have something to add? - Did everybody hear that? Jacqueline, can you repeat what he said? - If we could repeat what Alicia said, about him not going to the movies...
Accurate Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can someone give me a line from the story that tells us what he does? -Did anyone pick up on what his actual profession is? -Okay, can anybody find where it says that? - Can somebody find, in the story, where it says that? - What was specifically on that paper? Can anybody find that passage?
Rigorous Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What kind of office, what does he deal with? - How does that affect the plot then? - Is that it? Is that the only thing affected by his choice not to go to the movies? - Can we add to that?

In these unplanned/unscripted questions and comments, I attempted to support the three facets of accountability. It's interesting to note that this came naturally for me as a teacher; it reinforces what the creators of Accountable Talk have proposed, that all three areas are essential to an effective discussion. For the questions that dealt with the learning community, my main goal was to ensure that everyone was listening to each other. I also tried to provide positive feedback to correct answers. There were some cases where I repeated what a student had said to show that I had been listening. When I wanted to ensure accurate knowledge, I asked for textual support of their answers. In literature, proof is simple: find the passage in the story that supports your claim. Finally, I encouraged rigorous thinking by asking students to analyze at least a step more deeply. Sometimes it was as simple as asking for more detail, and other times I asked to students to think about cause and effect relationships. The rigorous thinking questions asked to students to go beyond retaining basic information from the story.

Student Reactions & My Reflections

The students in the inner circle filled out the orange rubric. They evaluated themselves, giving scores from zero to four on listening, summarizing, building, and marking (which means pointing out and noting that someone else has made a contribution) (Appendix J). They also had two self-reflective questions to answer: *During this discussion, I participated/didn't participate because...* and *What might help me become better even if future discussions?* Students had time after

their discussions to self-evaluate and reflect.

The results I got on the rubric portion were varied but still had a pattern. Most students gave themselves four or three for listening and for marking, which meant they directed attention to the importance of another's statement. However, the scores for summarizing and building were consistently lower, ranging from one to three. Some students gave themselves all fours.

As for the answers to the self-reflection, most students who said they participated did so because they had something to say, or because they knew the answer. I can infer that the students who didn't participate then, even if they may not have wanted to say so, possibly didn't do so because they didn't know the answers. Then I had Shelley, who said, "I read the story and I completely understood it and I know all the answers but I'm just shy talking in front of people."

The outer circle had the same rubric, except it was green (Appendix K). The only pattern I saw with those is scores that were the same across all four categories. On the green rubric, there were also two categories for comments: *Comments/Suggestions for how things could have gone better* and *Comments/Praise for people who did well in the discussion*. The comments I received for these questions were for the most part vague or non-existent. Many students just said "good job" or "great" as their answer for the second question. However, there were a few outer-circle observers who were more specific. A

majority said that more people needed to talk and talk louder. Nicholas observed that “There were some side conversations and people not partisapating [sic],” but that “Gandalf, Brandon, Jodi, and some others did very well with paying attention and participating.” Janet’s comments mirrored what Nicholas said. Other than that, though, most of the comments, again were two-word answers and very vague. Going back through Gandalf, Brandon, and Jodi’s self-evaluations, I noticed that Gandalf had given himself all fours, while Jodi gave herself threes in every category except “Summarize,” where she gave herself a one. Brandon as well gave himself threes in all categories except “Summarize,” where he gave himself a two. Gandalf’s grades match his personality. Confident, he participated constantly throughout the whole semester, no matter what the structure or topic of discussion. Brandon was the self-proclaimed non-participator, the one who in his survey didn’t participate because he didn’t need to. Jodi was one of the girls who tried to get Brandon in her group so he could summarize the story for her because she hadn’t read. Was it their pre-conceived notions about discussion in general or discussing without reading that affected their scores? When asked what could improve their participation in the future, Brandon wrote, “A more interesting story,” while Jodi wrote, “paying more attention.”

While the written student observations and reflections were not as detailed as my own, I did not see any discrepancies between what I saw and what my students said they saw. There may have been some who just gave themselves high

scores because they wanted a high score (not that any of this would go in my grade-book!). However, the pattern of lower marks for summarizing and building is telling. I take it as a result of my excessive control of the conversation. Students themselves had no opportunity to build off each other's ideas. If anything, I did that with my added questions. They didn't though. The same thing goes for building, which meant that students added to the statement of the previous speaker. Again, I did this. My students didn't get a chance.

All in all, while the discussion was not a perfect circle of intense dialogue with students interacting and coming up with brilliant conclusions, it did give me experience to adjust my plans for the next discussion. First, I needed to step back, set up, give supports, and then observe the discussion but let the students take the lead. I also had to take away the factor of students not having read the text. While a discussion can be a nice way for me to assess what my students have done, that was not my intention. I wanted to see how students could talk about material in a meaningful way. I wanted to see how the three accountabilities created a basis for the establishment of novel, for analysis, for evaluation. I also needed to give my students a better way to prepare for discussion. This had to go beyond answer questions. Those teacher-created questions may have stifled any questions the students may have. Finally, I needed to give students some incentive to participate, some product that would reflect their discussion. They needed a reason to talk; it would be nice if it was interest in the topic, but because that is so

difficult to gage, so I'd like to add something more concrete.

“The Lottery”

Now was the time for my favorite short story, “The Lottery,” by Shirley Jackson. I remember reading this in school and experiencing the shock of the ending. In contrast to “Contents of a Dead Man’s Pocket,” this second short story builds suspense in a simpler, more impacting way, and I hoped it would inspire the interest of my students. I decided not to take any chances this time; instead of trusting students to read it on their own, I read the short story aloud. We did this at the end of the block. We then went to our short story packet, and individually, students identified elements of the short story: characters, setting, conflict, symbols, and irony. I told them to leave the theme section blank until after our discussions.

The preparations did not stop there. The next day, I gave students an article about Shirley Jackson and her short story. There was information about how she was inspired to write it, the setting of the story, including the time period, and the overall message. Students were told to read it as their warm-up for the day, and then underline two interesting facts. It still wasn't time to discuss formally. The last element I gave my students to support their thinking was a movie version of the short story. Now there were two choices available to me. One was short and stuck to the original plot. It would have given students a nice, if disturbing, visual, but nothing else significant beyond the story. The other was a longer, made-for-

TV movie that took place in modern times. The plot added significant details, characters, conversations, and situations that just did not happen in the short story. Therefore, students completed a worksheet as they watched , comparing and contrasting the protagonist, setting, plot, and determine the theme of the film.

Finally, we were this close to talking about “The Lottery.” These preparatory activities extended over several days, because my curriculum includes vocabulary and grammar that is an on-going process. Therefore, in order for students to refresh their memories and have a clear place to put their notes and thoughts together, I gave them a “Discussion Cheat Sheet” for “The Lottery,” (Appendix L). It had four squares on it: one asked for the plot in one sentence, main characters, and irony of the original story, the second asked for changes in the movie, the third asked for three pieces of information from the article, and the last was a place for students to put their own questions and comments. I didn’t even leave this to chance, but instead gave more structure:

Figure 2: Cheat Sheet Excerpt

Questions/Comments <i>You MUST fill in this section!</i>
Choose 3 of the 4 options:
1. I wonder why:
2. I don’t understand how/why:
3. I think _____ means that _____
4. This reminds me of _____ because

We were almost ready. One tiny thing needs to be mentioned. When students came in that day, their desks were arranged in groups of four or five. Each desk was already numbered from the beginning of the year, and students are assigned that number for organizational purposes. When the desks were moved, students sat where their number was. My only goal when arranging the desks was to mix the numbers so student wouldn't work with those who usually sit next to or near them. I gave them a chance to talk to someone new and to move around the room.

Finally, I went around to each group and placed three slips on their desks. I had already put together eight different questions about the story; I copied these onto individual slips and gave each group a selection of three of these eight questions. All eight questions were somewhere around the room, but no two groups had the same questions. These questions about the short story went beyond the concrete or simple. The options were:

1. Even though this story deals with a very violent event, there is very little description of the violence. Do you think the story would have been more or less effective if the author had described the violence more?
2. Mr. Adams states that in a neighboring village they don't even have a lottery. Old Man Warner responds that those villagers are a "pack of crazy fools." Why does he say this? Why might this be ironic?

3. What do you think the purpose of the lottery is in the village? Why do you think people continue to participate in it? Is it a good thing or bad thing?
4. How do you think the village people feel about the lottery? Explain.
5. Do you think this story has a message for readers? Explain your view.
6. This story was published in 1948. Are there any cultural or historical events that Jackson might be commenting on here? Is this a story about this particular time and place? What important thing is she trying to say about human nature?
7. Do you agree with Mrs. Hutchinson – is the lottery unfair? What part of the lottery does she think is unfair? What part of the lottery does she not criticize? Which part do you think is unfair?
8. Is the lottery a collective act of murder? Is it morally justified? Is tradition sufficient justification for such actions? How would you respond to cultures that are different from ours that perform "strange" rituals?

I tried to pick questions that let students talk about the big ideas: theme, message, real-world connections. I gave groups three different slips and it was their job to talk about all three topics. No writing was required, initially. Along with the questions, students brought their cheat sheets and a copy of the story. I gave each group an orange rubric and a yellow sheet of Accountable Talk prompts. They were ready.

I placed myself as inconspicuously as possible near two groups. Leaning against a radiator, I had my clipboard and notes. I picked Jimmy, Ricardo, Landon, and Daisy to focus on first. All four students were relatively quiet when it comes to answering questions in large group instruction, so I wanted to see how things would go in a small group.

Jimmy picked up the slips and shuffled them one-by-one. He put them down and Ricardo picked up the one top.

Ricardo: Do you agree with Mrs. Hutchinson – is the lottery unfair? What part of the lottery does she think is unfair? What part of the lottery does she not criticize? Which part do you think is unfair?

Landon: It isn't fair, one minute there goes your whole life

Jimmy: They killed that lady...she didn't deserve it.

Ricardo: Yeah but it could have been anyone. It just happened to her that time.

Landon: Wait, how did they figure out who in the family gets picked?

Daisy: They re-pick the slips again from the box.

Jimmy: Yeah, just the family does it.

Ricardo: Yeah.

Landon: Oh okay. That makes sense.

At that point, two visitors entered the room: the principal and the superintendent. They were observing classrooms. Happily, my students were

conversing in their groups, all seemingly on task. The students continued their work, disregarding these two visitors.

Landon and Jimmy continued to summarize the plot. Landon asked about character's actions, and Jimmy confirmed his guesses. The other two just sat there.

Ricardo: What was the second part of that question again?

The discussion moves forward, but my attention is drawn to a neighboring group.

Kevin: Are you going to write? [to Adele]

Adele: [silence]

Kevin: Well, here's the first question. [takes out a sheet of paper and makes moves to start writing]

Me: Wait guys, I don't want you writing anything yet. Your job is to talk about all three questions...for now. You don't have to write anything down.

As this group reorganized themselves, I went back to my original group. They had moved on to the next question.

Landon: So what's the purpose of the lottery?

Ricardo: I don't know, do they ever say?

Daisy looks through her packet.

Perry: I don't think they ever say, they just stone the person at the end.

Ricardo: Is it just to get rid of people?

Landon: Don't they say it's a tradition or something?

Daisy: Yeah, here it says they've always done it. (Points to passage in story.)

Perry: Yeah, and the other villages have stopped doing it.

Daisy: So is it just tradition?

Ricardo: Ooh is it like a superstition thing? That's what it was like in the movie...

Daisy: The movie was really different from the short story though.

Ricardo: I still think it's superstition.

Perry: Yeah, let's just write that down.

Table 2. Student Question/Comment Breakdown

Accountability	Questions or Comments
Learning Community	-Are you going to write? -Yeah, let's just write that down.
Accurate Knowledge	- Yeah but it could have been anyone. It just happened to her that time. -Yeah, here it says they've always done it. -Yeah, and the other villages have stopped doing it.
Rigorous Thinking	-Wait, how did they figure out who in the family gets picked? -They killed that lady...she didn't deserve it. -So is it just tradition? -Ooh is it like a superstition thing? That's what it was like in the movie... -The movie was really different from the short story though.

While not all the comments from the discussion are in the table above, the selections are a representative example. I noticed that it was difficult to separate some of the comments into the three categories. In other words, some comments

showed elements that fell into two accountabilities, not just one. My main observation was that there were more comments in the second two categories than in the first. Students spoke to establish knowledge and think further to answer the question with rigorous thinking. Many times their comments had little transition from the previous speaker's comments. However, there were no apparent arguments, and in the discussion I closely observed, no participants were put down by their group members or labeled as invalid. Questions were respected, confusion was cleared up; this lack of hostility is a less concrete but still valuable form of accountability to the learning community.

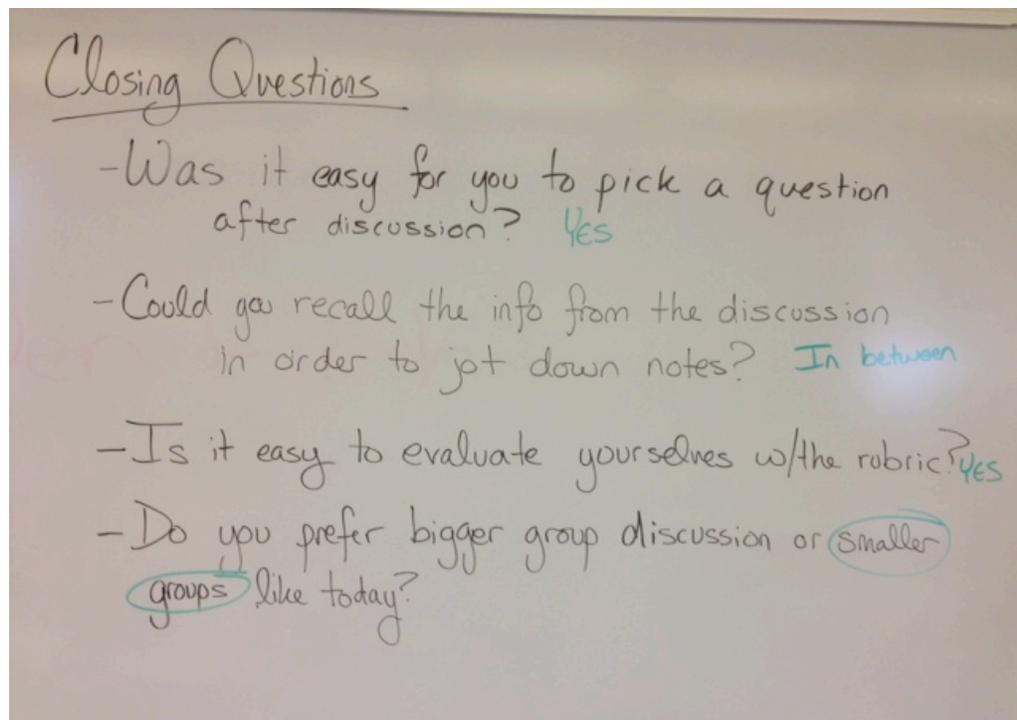
Reflections on the Discussion

One positive thing I noticed in this discussion is a general air of comfort that was missing from the "Contents of a Dead Man's Pocket" circle discussions. While I focused on one group, I noticed that in general, students were talking more often and they were talking on task. Which factor influenced this improvement? It could be by virtue of the structure itself. Smaller groups mean more opportunities for students to take the lead. Smaller groups may also mean less pressure. Removal of the teacher from the discussion could also mean less intimidation and interference.

It could be based on reasons beyond the structure, however. The story could have been more interesting. The questions involved less of the typical English class identifications ("Who is the main character?" "What is the tone")

and instead allowed students to put their own prior knowledge and opinions into the answer. Overall, from my observations, these discussions were more successful than my first activity. However, I didn't just rely on my own observations. At the end of the block, I polled the class to confirm my interpretations. On the board, I wrote some closing questions. The relevant question here was the last one: "Do you prefer bigger group discussion or smaller groups like today?" An overwhelming amount of students said smaller groups.

Figure 3. Closing questions



Because of the success of the format, I used the small groups for two more short stories. Their results were very similar to "The Lottery" discussions. I continued to give students the rubrics and the prompts, moving on from the

Learning Community rubric to Accurate Knowledge (Appendices M & N), then on to Rigorous Thinking (Appendices O & P), and finally the whole rubric (Appendix D). The rubrics, according to the students (see Figure 3), were easy to fill out. I continued to use them mostly as reminders to the students as to what the expectations for the discussions were.

“Born of Man and Woman”

I decided to do something different for a discussion of this story. I wasn't hearing everyone's discussions with the small groups, but splitting the class into inner and outer circles didn't seem natural enough a way of responding to the latest short story, “Born of Man and Woman,” by Richard Matheson. The story especially didn't need any background activities and was short enough to have students quickly recall details without too much page turning. Therefore, I proceeded as follows:

I read the story aloud to the class. The only thing I said prior was to forgive me for any stumbling, since the language in the story was odd.

The class was silent as I read. They usually are, but they were especially so this time. I felt as though I was stumbling and that my listeners become impatient because of the lack of flow in the story, but this was not the case.

After I finished reading, some reactions, before I asked anything, were “Wow,” (David) and “I don't know what to say about that” (Marcus).

To officially start the class talking, I said one statement: “Tell me about this story.” Then I privately gave myself the role of recorder. I wanted to see how students asked the questions and analyzed the story, without structure from me. I essentially wanted to give a larger amount of control to the students.

Frank: It was really confusing.

Betty: The first section was, then I got it.

David: What are the mother and father?

Janie: Yeah, why do they keep on saying “mother” and “father?”

Benny & Marcus: That’s the mom and dad, the little mother and father are kids.

Betty: How do you know?

Benny: You can tell from the story.

Marcus: She was born a different way and the parents didn’t want to show her.

Janie: How do you know it’s a she, it could be a he.

Marcus: I just think it’s a ‘slow’ child.

Nitsa: Don’t say ‘slow.’

Joanna: ‘Disabled’

David & Nicole: ‘Handicapped’

Betty: Are we playing charades or something? Why aren’t you talking?

Me: *I just want to hear what you guys have to say.*

Trixie: Why do they beat her?

Marcus: They’re angry.

Brandon: They're ashamed, not angry.

Brandon: This thing sounds like a spider because it says it has lots of legs and it's hanging off the ceiling and running up walls.

Betty: Wait, did it really have multiple legs? I don't remember that?

Perry: If it's hanging off the ceiling, is it a bat?

Marcus: Well it can't be human because it's green.

Trixie: It's green? How do you know it's green?

Benny: It just says it's dripping green; that could be the color of its blood.

Marcus: Maybe it's colorblind!

Deanna: Is it an alien?

Gandalf: No, it's not an alien.

Betty: I think it's a vampire.

Nicholas: How could it be a vampire?

Betty: Well someone said it was a bat.

Gandalf: I want to go back to why they beat her; I think they're afraid people will see her.

Janie: Yeah, they might think it's going to attack.

Jacqueline: Wait, what's the "little thing?"

Benny: It's probably a dog or a cat.

Daniella: What's the upstairs?

Betty: It's the sky!

Alvin: So is this like a diary?

Gandalf: I think it's like the first time you experience something, you talk about it based on other things you already know about.

Me: *Okay, one more question: What's the point or purpose of this story?*

Betty: It makes you think about what's going on.

Trixie: Yeah, it makes you wonder.

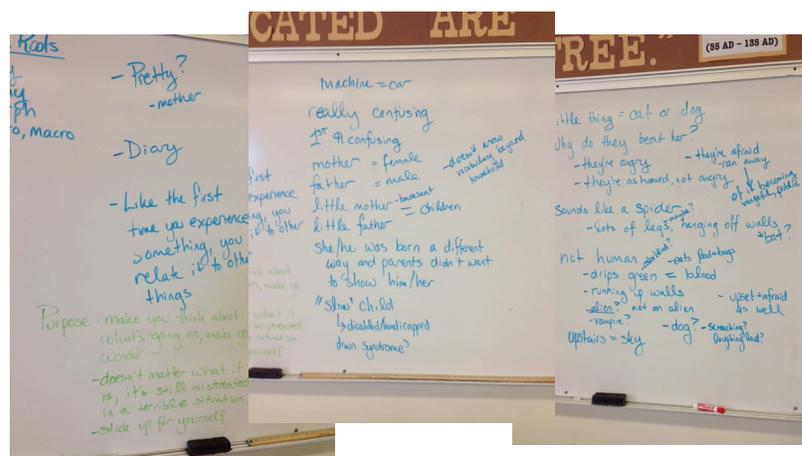
Me: *What does that mean?*

Benny: It doesn't matter what it is, it's still mistreated in a terrible situation.

Jacqueline: Stick up for yourself!

I only added the purpose question when the class stopped commenting on the story. At the end of the discussion, my board looked like this:

Figure 4. Board Notes



My notes on the board were not necessarily in the same order of the discussion. I jumped from place to place when students repeated or expanded on previously mentioned ideas. The discussion went on in this way for approximately

20 minutes. While students made comments, they sometimes raised their hands, they sometimes shouted out questions or comments. In some instances, side conversations began, but quickly died down with a reminder from me. Otherwise, because of my silence, Betty asked “Are we playing charades? Why isn’t she talking?”

Table 3. Student Question/Comment Breakdown

Accountability	Questions or Comments
Learning Community	Yeah, why do they keep on saying “mother” and “father?” Don’t say ‘slow.’ Disabled’ ‘Handicapped’ Wait, did it really have multiple legs? If it’s hanging of the ceiling, is it a bat?
Accurate Knowledge	What are the mother and father? That’s the mom and dad and then the little mother and father are the kids. You can tell from the story. I just think it’s a ‘slow’ child. This thing sounds like a spider because it says it has lots of legs and it’s hanging off the ceiling and running up walls. It just says it’s dripping green; that could be the color of its blood. Is it an alien? No, it’s not an alien. She was born a different way and the parents didn’t want to show her.
Rigorous Thinking	<i>What does that mean?(Teacher Question)</i> How do you know it’s a she, it could be a he. How do you know? Maybe it’s colorblind! So is this like a diary? I think it’s like the first time you experience something, you talk about it based on other things you already know about. <i>What’s the point or purpose of this story?(Teacher Question)</i> It doesn’t matter what it is, it’s still mistreated in a terrible situation. Stick up for yourself!

Reflections on the Discussion:

In general, I was surprisingly pleased with the outcome of this discussion. Without any preparation, without an assignment to complete, students were able to discuss a story, as an entire group, stay on task, come up with different interpretations, and think of themes, all without excessive prompting from me.

I have to give most of the credit to the actual story. It's a weird story. It catches readers' attentions. It's not written in a traditional style and it naturally inspires many questions. Also, even though the speaker of the story is not human, its plight has qualities that are universal.

Again, as in previous discussions, all three accountabilities were present. However, where accountability to the learning community was found lacking in the small group discussions, it made a comeback here. Students referred back to comments others had made. They answered each other's questions. There are two factors that perhaps may have influenced this. First, I removed myself from the picture, but I was still there listening. That meant that students took on the responsibility of continuing conversation and of making sure questions were answered. Through my general silence, I had made it clear that I was not taking care of this for them. They were in charge. Second, I think the board helped. By giving them a visual record of the comments they were making, it was easier to remember what their classmates had already said. This may not be an issue in a small group, but with an entire class, with many participants, comments can get

lost. On top of this, while I didn't participate verbally, writing on the board was a way to be accountable to the learning community, because once a student's idea went on the board, that idea was validated.

Reflections for the Future:

Having a whole class discussion was something that seemed unattainable to me before this discussion. Of course, I couldn't consider this a perfect whole-class discussion because not everyone in the class spoke. However, would that even be reasonably possible? With a class of 33 students, with different personalities, ability levels, levels of motivation, having all 33 students speak during one block of time, in a free and unstructured yet academically focused way, seems impossible. Yet in this discussion, students weren't sitting in a circle, they didn't prepare ahead of time. However, as I observed the class while simultaneously writing their comments on the board, I didn't hear any side conversations, the clearest sign of lack of focus. If students weren't talking about the story, they were quiet. Were they paying attention? I had no way of getting inside their heads at that moment, but there were no heads down, there were no students asking to go to the bathroom, no one had other assignments out. Afterwards, when the students grouped together to create their drawings of the character and setting, their conversations indicated comprehension and retention of the story and our discussion.

Further Assessment

The next day, students, in self-chosen groups of three, were told to draw the speaker of the short story, using the details provided. While there was obviously discussion during this process, what interested me more was the class evaluation of these drawings afterwards. Students were each given three small sticky notes with the numbers 1, 2, and 3. They placed these numbers on the top three drawings (1 being the best). The winner was a fairly artistic depiction of an octopus-like creature with multiple legs and cuts that oozed green. A collar and chain attached the creature to the wall. I had to admit, the quality of the drawing was superior to the others. However, as I went through each drawing with the class in order to decide between two pairs that had tied, students contributed evaluative comments, accountable to accurate knowledge, to influence my choice of second and third place.

“You should pick that one because it has the window and the furnace! No one else drew that and that’s in the story!”

“You can’t really pick that one. It’s drawn good but it looks too human. There’s nothing from the story in it.”

“Miss, don’t pick my group’s because we got it all wrong.”

“It’s not all wrong, you guys have the chain and the stairs and the poster!”

It was refreshing to see students give me reasons that actually had substance instead of groundless self-promotion. Students were more concerned

with giving the prize in a fair way than getting it themselves. While I definitely label this as accountability to accurate knowledge, because students were making sure the details were correctly represented, I can also say that accountability to the learning community was present, because students gave each other credit or critiqued the drawings in a fair, logical way. Instead of just saying, “That one’s pretty bad,” they pointed out details the drawings lacked. This was not part of my scheduled, formal discussions. It was rewarding, however, to see the qualities of positive discussing spilling over to other things we did in the classroom.

Talking about Research Topics

One characteristic of English class is the fact that we teach multiple units, sometimes simultaneously. While I knew my Accountable Talk discussions would fit into my literature units, I also wanted to see how discussion could play a role when dealing with non-fiction, in this case, the research paper writing process. The assignment was to choose a human rights issue somewhere in the world, outside of the United States, and write about the causes, effects, and solutions of the issue. The first step in the process was for students to gain knowledge and awareness of worldwide issues. This was supposed to be a fairly simple activity, done individually, using the student laptops and garnering information from recommended websites. Students were supposed to record information on three different issues. It should have taken less than a block of time (less than 80 minutes). Unexpectedly, however, we had problems with the Internet connection.

While students refreshed their screens repeatedly in hopes of loading a page, they began to chat. I did not want this to happen. I didn't want them to give up the task and use it as an excuse to goof off. It was too late for me to take them to the library. I wasn't willing to switch to something else and create a disjointed atmosphere. What would become of this block? As I went from laptop to laptop, switching networks and inserting passwords, inwardly panicking, I realized that I had slightly underestimated my students. When they began to chat, it wasn't off-topic (well, some of it was, but not enough to spread through the whole class). They began to share their findings, what little they had. Those with working Internet were sources for the other students.

“Did you read about that thing in Iran?”

“Brandon, you were talking about that guy that got killed in...”

“Yeah, he made a comment about...”

“Wait, who got killed?”

“Hey, I think my page is loading, let me look that up.”

“Did anyone see that article about censorship in China?”

One characteristic of this talk going around the room is the exposure of different levels of the students' prior knowledge. Some showed themselves as aware of current events, while others appeared completely clueless. Some stayed quiet, looking around the room at who was talking, still frustrated at the lack of Internet. The students who spoke fell under three categories: those who had some

background knowledge on current events and asked others questions, those who had some background knowledge on current events and were sought out by others for answers, and those who didn't have much background knowledge, but by listening to others, their interest was peaked, and they too asked questions.

Small Group Greek Roots Review

At the end of the semester, we spent several days reviewing for the various sections of the final exam. One section was on Greek roots, essentially vocabulary words that have the Greek roots we learned throughout the semester. As a review activity, students formed groups of three or four of their own choice. They received a "test" and had to complete it with their group. They were not allowed to use notes; the only thing they could do was pool together all the group members' knowledge of the words. There was an added competitive aspect: the first group to complete the test packet with the most accurate answers won.

I'm going to assume, with some confidence, that the fact that this assignment was a competition influenced the amount of focus and the lack of off-task chatter during the time it took to complete the test. The groups were small as well, and gave all members the opportunity to put in their ideas. Overall, I heard a plethora of comments that fell under the Accountability to Accurate Knowledge category. This made sense; we're talking about words and definitions, so there's not much room to repeat, summarize, and build to show accountability to the

learning community or to defend, challenge, and predict to show rigorous thinking. Below are key examples of the three types of comments.

Table 4. Student Question/Comment Breakdown

Accountability	Questions or Comments
Learning Community	-“I think you’re right”
Accurate Knowledge	-“Eu” means good, so “euphemism” must mean a nice way of saying something harsh. -Since “mono” means one, monogamous must mean married to one person.
Rigorous Thinking	-Are you sure that acrophobia means that? -Yeah, I know that “phobia” means fear, and “acro” is like “acrobat” so it’s like heights.

As the students worked, I compared the behavior of two groups. Both were made up of three girls each.

Group 1 was Jacqueline, Jessica, and Katherine. Throughout the semester, Jacqueline was talkative, but not always on task. However, whenever I redirected her and asked her to focus, she often made comments that showed accountability to accurate knowledge and rigorous thinking. I think that at times she even surprised herself. She had set friends she usually chose to work with in small groups, but this time, she went outside of her circle. Katherine was quiet, but always asked questions when she was confused or unsure about something. In her surveys and rubric reflections, she often labeled herself as shy. Jessica was consistently on task, often participated in teacher-led instruction, and had a tendency to spend too much time focusing on details rather than the bigger

picture. These three had never worked together in my class, but the absence of friends and limit to group size brought them together. I can say they worked together well; I did not hear any off-task comments, yet I heard exchanges back and forth that showed striving for accuracy. They shared their own knowledge of the roots with each other and questioned each other to ensure they had the right answers.

Group 2 was Janie, Betty, and Trixie. These three had worked together before, and it had not gone well that time. In that previous experience, the group had split in two, with one side claiming that the other had not carried their weight in a project. However, despite the poor experience, they still decided to work together again. I said nothing, allowing them to make their choice and observing whether there would be any change. I saw that this group approached the assignment differently; instead of work on each question and section together, they split up the test amongst themselves and only shared their answers in the end. They trusted that their group members would have the answers.

When it came time to hand in the tests, Group 1 handed theirs in third amongst all the groups in the class. Group 2 handed theirs in last. Group 1 had more accurate answers than Group 2. The latter group actually had entire sections completed incorrectly, having not read the directions. Needless to say, Group 1, though equal in ability level to Group 2, has more successful. There are other factors that could have influenced this outcome. Group 1 could have studied more

outside of class. However, I know for a fact that Janie in Group 2 had made flashcards of the words and had been diligently studying days before. Ideally, though, I'd like to attribute some of the success of Group 1 to how they worked together, focused, on-task, and using the accountable talk expectations and models they experienced throughout the semester, whether they consciously did this or not.

The Post-Participation Survey

On the last day of classes, I gave my participation post-survey. We were about to do one final review for the exam, this time an intense game of jeopardy, but before we could play, students had to fill in the survey. Interestingly, students were seated in groups, five in all, of 6-7 students. Of course, the survey was an individual assignment, but students were in the position to discuss their answers. I did expect to see similar answers throughout the room, but was proven wrong. Each student had his/her own answers. Here are the results of a selection of the questions:

Do you remember discussions? Which ones?

Table 5: Student Responses – Memory of Discussions

<p>Yes! 19 participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorts stories (10) • Class introductions (2) • Warm-ups (2) • Grammar (1) • Research (2) 	<p>No. 7 participants</p> <p>No Answer 2 participants</p>
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I'm glad a majority of students at least remember discussions, or at least say they do. It does not surprise me that the short story discussions were named the most. It does surprise me that students named warm-ups and grammar as discussion topics. I haven't counted warm-ups in my study because they followed the format of the restorative circle, where students would answer a question by taking turns going around the room. There was no interaction in these warm-ups, but perhaps students considered these discussions because all students were expected to speak (but not actually discuss).

Of the seven participants who claimed that they didn't remember discussions, two were students who were often absent. Three were present, and in later questions on the survey, actually showed that they did remember specific discussions. One of these three I had labeled as a frequent participator. Why did he not remember, or why did he say he didn't remember? Was it a sincere response or was it an attempt to quickly finish the survey? Was he just trying to be difficult?

Did you enjoy/get anything out of discussing in large groups in this class? Why or why not?

Table 6: Student Responses – Reaction to Large Group Discussions

Yes! 18 participants	No. 7 participants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “gave me more ideas” • “because some students can answer something that’s more understandable than teachers” • learned more • helped comprehension • getting to know classmates • it was fun • it was easy • heard lots of people’s opinions • “made us participate more” • “it helps also when people add things to make discussion more memorable” • “because we talked about how talking and participating in class help us learn” • got work done faster • some discussions were interesting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • boring • didn’t enjoy interacting with peers they didn’t know • didn’t do well in large groups • getting off-topic • not everyone participated • prefer to “keep to myself”

Again, I was pleased to see more positive responses than negative.

However, the fact that some students still didn’t feel comfortable in large group discussion indicated that the three Accountabilities and my preparations were not enough to get everyone talking.

Did you enjoy/get anything out of discussing in small groups in this class? Why or why not?

Table 7: Student Responses – Reactions to Small Group Discussions

Yes! 21 participants	No. 4 participants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I prefer small group so more people can get more into the discussion” • hear more clearly • could discuss with friends • “I liked discussing in small groups because it wasn’t like talking to the whole class so I felt more comfortable” • stays on topic • clarified things that students aren’t sure about • “it’s more of a 1 on 1 scenario so I pay more attention” • liked small groups better than large, but preferred large group • “we usually chose our group members which allowed me to feel more comfortable” • “you get to speak your thoughts more” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • didn’t like it • “we would get off task” • don’t remember • “not really because I would be shy or not in the mood half the time”

Once more, the results are positive, but more importantly, students show that they prefer small groups over large groups. This evaluation confirms my decisions throughout the study to veer towards small groups. Students stated logical reasons for this preference: they had more of a chance to talk, felt less

pressure or discomfort, and choosing their own group members allowed them to speak more freely.

What motivated you to participate? What prevented you from participating if you didn't?

Table 8. Student Responses – Participation Motivation & Prevention

Motivations:	Preventions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Nothing I felt I just have to participate.” • “What motivated me would be subjects I enjoy.” • “I wanted a good grade.” • “It was a good discussion.” • “Just to give my opinion. Maybe someone agrees.” • “If the topic was interesting I participated.” • “That everyone was being confident and speaking their mind so I wanted to do the same.” • “I worked with people I know so I felt more comfortable.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “If I don't agree with them.” • “I didn't understand the material, so I wanted to just listen to get the story.” • “What prevented me was annoying subjects/topics” • “I am very shy when it comes to answering some things. My mind just blanks out.” • “I didn't participated because I didn't feel like my opinions were needed.” • “I didn't read the short story.”

It saddened me to see that one of my students felt her opinions weren't needed. I had noticed her reticent nature throughout the semester and often tried to draw her out of her shell and support her when she gave answers. I wonder if this is something I could solve within one semester and if Accountability to the Learning Community is enough to create a safe and welcoming environment for even the shyest and least confident students.

In the End

This semester provided me with a variety of experiences and student behaviors. We suffered some set backs, like unplanned breaks in the semester due to weather and delayed lessons because of failed technology. Despite these setbacks, I was able to plan and implement different discussion formats that attempted to suit the texts, topics, student abilities, and student preferences. Because I introduced the concepts of Accountable Talk, I noticed my students improve the way they communicated about academic topics. They showed respect and attentiveness to each other, they supported and defended their ideas, and they dug deeper into topics. Overall, through classroom conversations, I saw many moments of enthusiasm for the literature we were reading or the research topics students were choosing.

DATA ANALYSIS

When I planned my study, in order to determine how the ideas of Accountable Talk affected my students, I chose to gather data from various sources. These sources included the Accountable Talk rubrics, checklists, student surveys and written reflections, participant checks, student work, and my field log and reflective memos. In the end, some of these sources proved more valuable than others.

Accountable Talk Rubrics

From the first discussion, students were given some form of the Accountable Talk Rubric in order to guide their goals in effective discussion and to self and peer evaluate. They began with only a third of the rubric at a time, and then graduated on to the whole rubric, which covered all three Accountabilities. I too filled out a rubric for each discussion I heard. When I collected these rubrics, their numerical results didn't really give me a clear-cut picture of student progress as much as checklists, surveys, polls, and teacher observations did. The rubrics served the purpose of setting expectations for the students rather than becoming an effective source of data.

Checklists

One source that proved more useful than the rubrics were my own checklists I created after each discussion. Originally, my plan was to check off each time a question or comment fell under a certain category. This plan morphed

slightly; instead of merely putting checks in a column, I took my transcribed notes of the discussions and arranged the comments and questions by category. In this way, I was able to see the types of comments in each Accountability rather than just the number of comments in each section. By doing this, I was able to see that even though students did not use the prompts I gave them, their comments still were Accountable. They just used their own words. These questions also helped me find new ways to model comments and questions in future discussions.

Student Surveys & Written Reflections

At the beginning and end of the study, students complete surveys assessing their memories, comfort, and opinions on the effectiveness of discussions in the classroom. While the first survey assessed discussions before the semester and the second discussions within our class, the questions were very similar.

Table 9. Pre & Post Survey Result Comparison

Survey Question	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Did you enjoy/get anything out of discussions?	76% - Yes 16% - No 8% - Sometimes	Large Group: 72% - Yes 18% - No Small Group: 84% - Yes 16% - No

It's positive that both the pre- and post- surveys showed that students thought they got something out of classroom discussions. It's illuminating but

also expected that students showed more positive comments for small groups than for large groups.

Participant Checks & Polls

It was important for me to be on the same page as my students throughout the study. There may have been times when my perspective was not the same as the class's experience. This was especially significant after small group discussions, because often my main observations focused on one or two groups.

Many times, these checks took the form of written responses to questions. On the Accountable Talk rubrics, for example, I would ask students to reflect on their opinion of the discussion as a whole or to point out why or why not they participated. After small group work on a short story project, students were asked to evaluate their group members but also to evaluate how well choosing their own group members worked.

On some occasions, I polled the class, asking them whether a format worked, whether they used the prompts I gave them, or whether they felt prepared for discussion (by having read the short story beforehand). I used the results of these polls and checks to choose what kinds of discussions we'd have in the future.

Student Work

It was important for me to also see how the discussions we'd have affected students' work. I observed written assignments after short story discussions to see how what groups said was retained by each individual member. After the whole

group discussion on the short story “Born of Man and Woman,” I observed how students used the details we discussed from the story in their drawings. When students completed a project on short stories, I compared their behavior in groups to their final results. In the Greek roots review, I compared the discussions of two groups and their results on the test packet. While my goal was improving the actual conversations, how these improvements trickled down to student work gave me further insight as to the productive nature of Accountable Talk on the big picture of the classroom.

Field Log and Reflective Memo

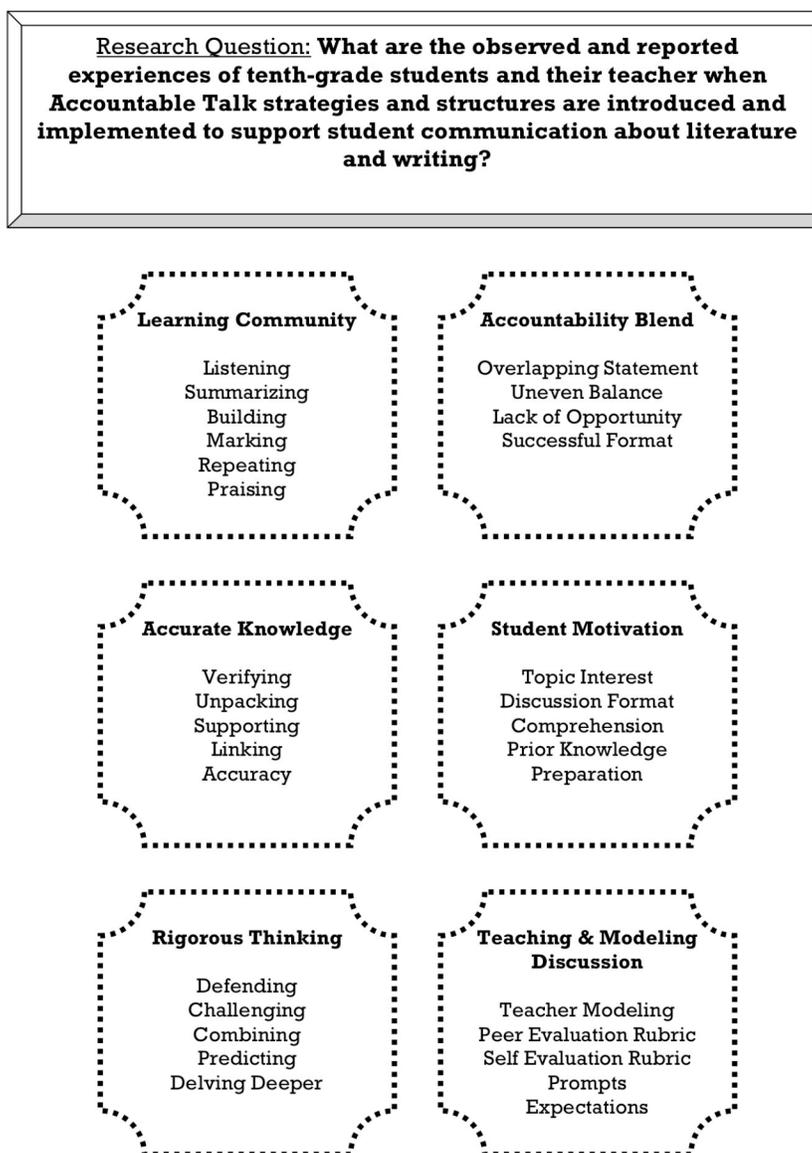
Because the primary focus of my study was student discussion, it was important for me to transcribe as much dialogue as possible. Depending on the type of discussion, I strived to note as many student comments and interactions as possible. In some cases, I observed and noted non-verbal actions of the students during moments of discussion, like whether they were silent, had their heads down, or diligently writing notes on what their classmates were saying. Therefore, dialogue was a main feature of my field log. After each discussion, I would first look over my notes and make sure I had noted as much of each observed conversation as possible. It was also important for me to note activities, plans, and student behavior before and after each discussion. Therefore, I had a complete picture of the discussion and information that would help me analyze what worked and what didn't. My reflective memos accompanied these snapshots of

discussion, again with the intention of noting which situations and plans were more or less effective. These memos played a major role in planning and adjusting future discussions.

Codes and Bins

From the very beginning, my purpose was to see how my students' conversations improved after introducing them to Accountable Talk. As I made progress throughout the semester, I began to notice various patterns and motifs. I organized these codes into logical bins and then used my ideas to create theme statements.

Figure 5. Codes and Bins



Theme Statements

1. *Teaching & Modeling Discussion:* Teacher modeling, set expectations, and student reflections on discussions were effective in establishing accountable talk.
2. *Learning Community:* Students show they're accountable to the learning community by listening respectfully and repeating ideas and building off them.
3. *Accurate Knowledge:* Students are mostly focused on establishing accurate knowledge about a topic or a text, by verifying information, supporting their claims, and asking for accuracy from their peers.
4. *Rigorous Thinking:* Students, when given the time and when motivated by the topic, show rigorous thinking by defending their claims, challenging others, predicting outcomes, and combining ideas with their own prior knowledge.
5. *Student Motivation:* Students were motivated to talk accountably when they were interested in the text/topic, when they understood the material, when they had prior knowledge, when they had the appropriate amount of preparation, and when they were comfortable with their groups.
6. *Benefits to Student Work:* Preparation, interest, and comfort resulted in motivated students who talked accountably and produced accurate, thoughtful work after their discussions.

FINDINGS

Teaching & Modeling Discussion

Teacher modeling, set expectations, and student reflections on discussions were effective in establishing accountable talk.

Naturally, students needed a starting point, some directions, an establishment of expectations before they themselves could be accountable in discussions. As a teacher, having gone through many years of education and eight years of teaching, being an accountable participant in a discussion, following the definitions of those three accountabilities, seems natural to me. However, I could not assume the same for my students. Most had noted that they remembered discussions from previous semesters in other classes, and perhaps in those discussions their teachers set expectations for how to talk effectively. However, I had to assume that my students were coming from varied discussion backgrounds, so I had to put them on an even playing field.

Resnick and Hall (2000) suggest that “teachers may press for clarification and explanation, require justifications of proposals and challenges, recognize and challenge misconceptions, demand evidence for claims and arguments, or interpret and ‘revoice’ students’ statements,” and that “Over time, students can be expected to carry out each of these conversational ‘moves’ themselves in peer discussion” (p.11). This was my goal, especially in the beginning of the study. During our first discussion, based on “Contents of a Dead Man’s Pocket,” while

students and I sat in a circle that should have equalized our roles physically, I still led the discussion, modeling comments and questions that reflected the three accountabilities (Table 1). In later discussions, when I essentially removed myself from the conversation, students took on the leadership role. Yes, they asked the questions I had already provided. All they had to do was read them aloud. However, they also took the discussion further by not only attempting to answer the questions, but providing textual evidence, repeating each others' statements, and agreeing or disagreeing with each other. For example in the small-group "Lottery" discussion, Landon, Ricardo, Daisy, and Perry take the original question, "What do you think the purpose of the lottery is in the village?" and proceed to answer it by asking more specific questions, providing information from the story, and eventually coming to a conclusion.

Landon: So what's the purpose of the lottery?

Ricardo: I don't know, do they ever say?

Daisy looks through her packet.

Perry: I don't think they ever say, they just stone the person at the end.

Ricardo: Is it just to get rid of people?

Landon: Don't they say it's a tradition or something?

Daisy: Yeah, here it says they've always done it. (Points to passage in story.)

Perry: Yeah, and the other villages have stopped doing it.

Daisy: So is it just tradition?

Ricardo: Ooh is it like a superstition thing? That's what it was like in the movie...

Daisy: The movie was really different from the short story though.

Ricardo: I still think it's superstition.

Perry: Yeah, let's just write that down.

If I were to imagine what this discussion might sound like without the back-and-forth accountable questions and comments from the students, it would probably be one student asking the original question and then another one answering, and everyone writing down that response, with no questions asked. Of course, the interest level of the question and topic and story played a role in getting students to talk, but teacher modeling may have also influenced students to establish their answer in a thorough, all-inclusive, responsible way.

Of course, teacher modeling is not enough by itself. I could have led the discussion all I wanted, but students also may have benefited from getting explicit expectations for their own behavior. Providing definitions of the three accountabilities established the basics, and asking students to brainstorm what they thought "good discussion" was may have been a step in the right direction. In her Post-Participation survey, Janie recalled this brainstorming and claimed it was useful, "because we talked about how talking and participating in class help us learn." Going further, providing students with rubrics allowed them to see what exactly they should be doing as they were talking. Example question and comment starters were also accessible, though in polls after the first three

discussions, when I asked students “How many of you used the yellow Accountable Talk prompt sheet during your discussion?” only two students raised their hands. Students, like Mark and Benny, said that they used their own words rather than rely on those prompts.

Learning Community

Students show they’re accountable to the learning community by listening respectfully and repeating ideas and building off them.

Essential to an effective discussion, Accountability to the Learning Community creates a comfortable space for students to talk. Michaels, O’Connor, Hall, and Resnick (2010) say that, “students listen to one another, not just obediently keeping quiet until it is their turn to take the floor, but attending carefully so that they can use and build on one another’s ideas” (p. 2). In order to create this safe environment, I set expectations at the beginning of the study for how I wanted students to behave. Beyond that, I asked students to give their viewpoints on this topic as well, getting them involved in setting guidelines and giving them ownership over what went on in our classroom. I asked students to evaluate themselves on how they dealt with each other’s ideas during discussion. I noticed, especially in my dissection of student dialogue, that students often repeated others’ comments, most of the time to build off them. In the “Born of Man and Woman” discussion, when Betty asked, “Wait, did it really have multiple legs?” she was repeating the end of Brandon’s previous comment. The

same thing goes for Perry, when he asks, “If it’s hanging off the ceiling, is it a bat?” Both Betty and Perry’s questions are examples of students listening to their classmates and using their comments to further the conversation. In this case, they listened and repeated so that they could clarify and learn more about the subject at hand. In this way, being accountable to the learning community improved the quality of our classroom conversations because students were able to create comprehension, ideas, and/or opinions because of what their classmates said, instead of reading a short story and processing information individually.

Accountability to the Learning Community was necessary for the success of our discussions. Without cooperation, without respect for other classmates, without the willingness to volunteer and the willingness to be quiet and listen, opportunities for discussion could be lost or wasted. I saw obvious differences between small groups who talked accountably and those groups who split up an assignment and essentially worked individually. For example, in the Greek Roots group work, Group 1’s members offered answers, but also listened to each other and responded to their classmates. Group 1 *talked* to each other. Through my observations, I saw and heard them go through the packet question-by-question, asking each other questions, answering, defending, explaining, even second-guessing themselves. They went through all three accountabilities, yes, but their willingness to collaborate allowed them to be accurate and think rigorously.

In my question/comment breakdown tables, even though Learning Community comments were never the majority, they were always present. Also, non-verbal indications of Learning Community accountability played a factor in discussion success. In the preparation for the “Content of a Dean Man’s Pocket” discussion, I saw signs of students not having read. In the reflective questions on the self-evaluation rubric, when asked “What might help me become even better in future discussions?” nine students responded that they should have read the short story. Coming unprepared to the discussion prevents students from contributing to a positive learning environment. Students must hear what their classmates are saying, compare it to their own ideas and conclusions, and respond accordingly. Accountability to the Learning Community means that student contributions are interconnected; how can they be interconnected if some participants don’t have anything to work with? When students *did* pay attention to the story, and granted, I had to make sure of this, sometimes by reading aloud to them, they were able to not only listen to the ideas of others but build off those ideas as well.

Accurate Knowledge

Students are mostly focused on establishing accurate knowledge about a topic or a text, by verifying information, supporting their claims, and asking for accuracy from their peers.

The Accountability I saw consistently and clearly throughout our discussions was Accurate Knowledge. In an educational environment where frequent standardized tests force students to focus on finding one correct answer to a multiple choice question, it makes sense that students were concerned about being accurate in establishing knowledge during their classroom discussions. Of course they want the right answer; that's what affects their grade. "Speakers should be concerned that what they are saying is true or supportable, that is, that they have their facts straight" (Michaels et al, 2010, p. 4). In order to ensure that they were getting their facts straight, there was a constant effort to refer back to the text in all our literature discussions. When students evaluated their pictures depicting the main character and scene of "Born of Man and Woman," without prompting from me, they formed their judgments based on evidence from the story.

"You should pick that one because it has the window and the furnace! No one else drew that and that's in the story!"

"You can't really pick that one. It's drawn good but it looks too human. There's nothing from the story in it."

In my checklists during discussions, it was true that the column I checked off the most was Accountability to Knowledge. For example, in the "Born of Man and Woman" discussion, of approximately 50 comments, at least 25, or 50%, showed students being accountable to establishing comprehension and facts about

the story. (About 15 showed rigorous thinking and only about 10 were focused on supporting the learning community). The same percentage was true in the Greek Roots group work. In the latter conversation, this made complete sense, because students had to answer very straightforward questions. In the former discussion, however, I simply, and vaguely, asked students to “Tell me about this story.” When I held them accountable to knowledge, it was perhaps the most concrete and traditional direction they could take. Recalling what they knew and making sure they were correct were their first priorities.

Rigorous Thinking

Students, when given the time and when motivated by the topic, show rigorous thinking by defending their claims, challenging others, predicting outcomes, and combining ideas with their own prior knowledge.

Just as students were accountable to the learning community in order to create an environment where they could establish accurate knowledge, verifying their statements and ideas led them straight into thinking rigorously. Often, by citing passages from the story, they worked to defend their own ideas.

Part of rigorous thinking means challenging and defending ideas, but the opportunity to do this depended on the topic at hand. Our first two discussions showed examples of this. In “Contents of a Dead Man’s Pocket,” when I guided the discussion and provided questions that had to do with tone, characterization, symbolism, and theme, students simply answered my questions (either the

original or the broken down questions I included on the spot) and didn't go very far to start arguing about the story themselves. The control I had over that conversation probably influenced this reaction. However, when I stepped out of the discussion, but also when my questions focused less on literary terms and more on personal opinion, there were more opportunities for students to argue for their side.

Thinking rigorously also means combining knowledge to form ideas and drawing conclusions and predicting what might happen next. There were times when I had to encourage rigorous thinking through added questions. I was pleased with the amount of motivated participation my class gave during "Born of Man and Woman." While much of the conversation was spent establishing who/what the narrator was and what he/she was saying, students began to make comments that showed defending and challenging, towards the end of the discussion, and especially after I asked "What is the point or purpose of the story?"

Table 10. Breakdown of Rigorous Thinking Comments & Questions

<i>Defend</i>	<i>Challenge</i>	<i>Combine</i>	<i>Predict</i>
-It doesn't matter what it is, it's still mistreated in a terrible situation.	- <i>What does that mean?</i> (Teacher Question) -How do you know it's a she, it could be a he. How do you know?	-So is this like a diary? -I think it's like the first time you experience something, you talk about it based on other things you already know about	- <i>What is the point or purpose of this story?</i> (Teacher Question) -Stick up for yourself!

The table above shows examples of how students conveyed their rigorous thinking in different ways. With an open-ended question and a story open to interpretation, students had the opportunity to go beyond a recollection of details. They asked for proof from their classmates, they compared what they read to their own personal experiences, and they predicted meanings and conclusions.

Student Motivation

Students were motivated to talk accountably when they were interested in the text/topic, when they understood the material, when they had prior knowledge, when they had the appropriate amount of preparation, and when they were comfortable with their groups.

From the very beginning, students told me that they participated when what they were supposed to talk about was interesting to them.

“What motivates me is the interesting topics such as a certain debate or issue. The prevention is the boring stories that wouldn’t get me anywhere in life.” Listening to my participants’ preferences seemed like good common sense. The trick was to find how to take the curriculum and make it interesting. In my choice of short stories, I was lucky enough to have a selection that other teachers before me had found successful. With the research paper, students got to choose from various human rights injustices from around the world. Even if this might not have been interesting to everyone, at least students got to choose what interested them the most.

However, it's important to note that student choice is not always effective without some teacher support. When students don't already have prior knowledge about a topic, their expectations of how interesting it will be can be inaccurate. For example, when students worked on a short story project in groups, they got to choose their own story from a list I had provided for them. I gave students a preview of what each story was about, students were also able to peruse the stories in their textbooks, but even after they made their choices, at least three of the nine groups in my class decided that they didn't like their story after reading it. Two of those three asked my suggestions for another story, and I was able to successfully choose one that better suited them. In this situation, knowing something of my students' preferences, their reading ability, and the stories themselves, I was able to make up for the lack of success based on choosing just because of initial interest.

Another instance showed a similar situation. For the research paper, students had to be put in groups where all group members share the same overall topic. Taking into consideration the problems mentioned earlier with the short story project, I still had students choose their top three topics, but I made the final decisions for them, arranging students by interest but also by ability level and group dynamics and size. In the end, students still had ownership over their topics, but my expertise ensured their success.

By analyzing student work, I was able to see how interest level influenced students long-term. A group that chose “The Masque of the Red Death” created a presentation later that fulfilled all the requirements of the rubric. A group that chose “Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?” a short story about the Vietnam War, came to me too late in the game to switch its story. Their presentation, although the other grades they’ve received in my class were comparable to the “Red Death” group, scored low, with many requirements, like analyzing the characters and presenting the theme, half done or poorly and inaccurately analyzed.

Topic interest is important, but part of that is question type. When students were given “boring” questions, I observed that they were less likely to talk beyond giving one-word/phrase answers. For example, in the Greek Roots groups, yes, there was collaboration and an appearance of all three accountabilities, and yes, students spoke throughout, but the discussion took on a quick pace. Students began by looking at each question, proposing their answer, sometimes taking the time to explain themselves, but after one or two exchanges, they quickly moved on to the next question. Students were motivated in completing the assignment, but not necessarily to talk in detail about it. On the other hand, when presented with more open-ended questions, and a smaller number of questions, students showed more of an inclination to spend more time on each idea. For example, in the “Born of Man and Woman” conversation, students spent several comments

and questions discussing amongst themselves who the characters were and what the narrator actually looked like. Because my question was not specific, students had more of an opportunity to talk in the direction they preferred instead of being confined by numerous questions they had to answer.

I draw these conclusions from my observations, but also from survey results. In the post-participation survey, no students named the Greek roots assignment as a memorable group-work experience, while at least five named the research paper and four named “The Lottery.”

The structure of our discussions and the arrangement of participants also played a crucial role. In surveys and in reflection questions throughout the semester, students showed a preference for small groups over large. (see Tables 6 & 7). When reflecting on the success of the large group discussion for “Contents of a Dead Man’s Pocket,” at least 10 students, from both the participating and observing circles, commented that one negative about the discussion was that not everyone participated. Ricardo wrote that in the small groups, he felt more comfortable talking because he felt less in the spotlight. Jennie echoed these thoughts in her post-discussion survey. My observations showed me that in small groups, all group members spoke at least two to three times, whereas in large groups, anywhere from five to ten students would take a back seat and stay silent. When narrowing down the participants in a discussion, students were more likely to talk.

Benefits to Student Work

Preparation, interest, and comfort resulted in motivated students who talked accountably and produced accurate, thoughtful work after their discussions.

A key observation I made is that motivation and discussion both affect each other. Students need to be motivated in order to talk, but by talking, they can become more motivated to be successful in classroom assignments. Richardson (2010), who tried Accountable Talk in the classroom, said that discussions became a key formative assessment; before writing, students would discuss their ideas and therefore produce stronger writing. In the same way, I saw that discussions affected the quality of my participants' assessments. To clarify, students who participated *accountably* in discussions produced accurate, thoughtful work.

For example, after "The Lottery" discussion, students wrote a short essay responding to one of the questions they discussed. As I looked at those essays, I first noticed that in the group I observed, all four students wrote about the same question. Second, the ideas they used to answer the question were similar, but not completely identical. Finally, all four students used passages mentioned during discussion to support their answers. To me, this shows evidence that the knowledge they've constructed through discussion influenced their viewpoints on the subject.

After students read “Born of Man and Woman,” they drew pictures of the narrator. While the level of artistry may have varied, the details in the drawings reflected details students offered during our whole-class discussion. When this wasn’t the case, in the evaluations of the drawings, classmates commented on details that didn’t belong or were missing.

Again, the group that chose “The Masque of the Red Death” for their short story project was excited about the story, talked about it in their groups, and presented a final product that was thorough and thoughtful. On the other hand, a group that didn’t pay much attention to their choice of story, decided to split up the requirements of the project. Janie, Betty, and Trixie were among the members of this group. Without group reading, without any discussion of the story, they set about their tasks without consulting one another when they were confused or unclear about either a plot point or a project requirement. When it came time to put the pieces together, Janie and Betty found fault with Trixie’s lack of work, coming to me to complain. While I worked to get them to work together and salvage the project, their lack of accountability, especially to their own little learning community, resulted in a poorly finished product. In written reflections afterwards, Betty wrote, “I thought picking my own group members would make things easier and more fun but it didn’t go good.” Trixie said, “I wished someone would have helped me cause I didn’t get some stuff.” Janie claimed, “I feel like

me and Betty did all the work and the other two didn't and that's why it didn't turn out the best.”

At the end of the study, when students completed their final survey, most commented on how they felt working with large or small groups. A couple, though, made positive comments about not only how they liked working with others, but how discussions affected their thinking. One said the discussions “gave me more ideas” and another student claimed he enjoyed the discussions because “because some students can answer something that's more understandable than teachers.” Overall, I was glad to see that not only did implementing Accountable Talk improve how students participated, but it also helped in improving their work.

NEXT STEPS

When my students were exposed to the ideas of Accountable Talk, overall, I saw them participate in productive, rewarding ways. I may not have seen extreme results, but I saw potential for even more improvement.

One thing I would like to continue with my classes is the establishment of expectations. I think because I presented a combination of both student brainstorming and my definitions of Accountable Talk, students got the idea that discussion was going to be a serious part of the semester. Of course, the number of discussions is something I'd also like to continue, because the more opportunities students get to talk, the more ownership they take over their learning.

As for format, while small groups proved to be more successful in my study, I would like to find ways to make large group discussions more successful. One step I observed in my study as productive was when I took myself out of the conversation after some initial guidance. The more I talked, the more I led, the less I heard my students, naturally. Beyond that though, students received less of an opportunity to show higher level thinking when I controlled the questions and the discussion.

I provided my students with Accountable Talk prompts. While students did talk accountably, they didn't really use my prompts. They just weren't natural

enough. Instead of providing prompts, I'd like to explore other ways to train students to carry on conversation, like questioning strategies.

A positive aspect of my study that I can use not only with discussions but with any other strategy I try is the use of surveys and reflective questions. Especially in high school, students are aware of what works for them and what doesn't. Getting my students' reactions in a formal way like a survey will help me decide which lessons work and which do not. Additionally, the surveys may serve to have students self-reflect for their own benefit. Explicitly naming effective and ineffective strategies can help students become more reflective learners.

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APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD (HSIRB) PROPOSAL FORM
Moravian College

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v. 01-25-04

This form must be completed for any research activity involving human participants. All researchers must read the Moravian College Human Subjects Research Policy found at <p:\hsirb\MoravianCollegeHSIRBPolicy.doc>

Part I: RESEARCHER

1. Proposer: Anna Marmaros	2. Department: MEDU
3. Mailing address: 1107 Edward Avenue Allentown PA 18103	4. Phone: 610-762-0316
5. E-mail address: annoula21@hotmail.com	
6. This is a (circle one) a. New Proposal b. Resubmission of a rejected Proposal c. Renewal d. Request for modification	7. Research Start/End Dates: September 5 th , 2012 – January 9 th , 2013
7. Title of Proposal: Accountable Talk in the High School English Classroom	

Part II: SUBMITTING PROPOSALS

Incomplete documentation will delay the Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) review of your research proposal. Submit **all** of the following:

1. This Human Subjects Internal Review Board Proposal Form
2. A copy of your Informed Consent form and/or other evidence of Informed Consent to voluntary participation [See HSIRB proposed Policy #MC.116 & MC.117. Can be viewed at <Public/hsirb/>]
3. A copy of your instruments (surveys, tests, etc.)

Submit electronic copies of complete proposals to:

hsirb@moravian.edu

Questions: contact

Virginia Adams O'Connell, Co-Chair HSIRB
Department of Sociology
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Part III: SIGNATURES

PROPOSER'S Signature:	Date:
For Student Proposals I am the Principal Instructor for this student. I have examined the procedures in this study and approve them as described.	
INSTRUCTOR'S Signature:	Date:
INSTRUCTOR'S Name (Type or Print): Jack Dilendik	

Part IV: PROPOSAL

1. This research involves ONLY the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude or achievement). (Circle one.) Yes | **No**
2. This research collects interviews or surveys ONLY of elected or appointed public officials or candidates for such. (Circle one.) Yes | **No**
3. This research involves ONLY observations of public behavior. (Circle one.) Yes | **No**
4. This research involves ONLY existing data, documents, records or specimens. (Circle one.) Yes | **No**
5. List the research funding sources, if any.
6. The results of this research will be published. (Circle one.) **Yes** | No | Uncertain
The results of this research will be published in my Masters of Education Thesis.
7. Summarize the Purpose of Research, including a. objectives, b. procedures, c. design, d. what is required of subjects, and e. procedures to reduce risks to subjects. Attach additional pages as needed.

Purpose: To determine the observed and reported experiences of tenth-grade students and their teacher when Accountable Talk strategies and structures are introduced and implemented to support student communication about literature and writing.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to actively participate in discussions on literature we read in class and on the writing process.
2. Students will be able to use Accountable Talk question and comment prompts when participating in both small and large group discussions.
3. Students will be able to actively listen, understand, and take notes on student discussion they observe.
4. Students will be able to evaluate their own and their peer's quality of contributions to discussions using a rubric focused on Accountable Talk.

Proposed Timeline of Study:

Summer 2012: Preparation

- Literature Review
- Discussion Planning
- Human Subjects Internal Review Board Proposal

Week 2 (of the semester): Introduction of Study, Establishing Prior Knowledge

- Send home parent consent letter
- Read aloud student information letter with class
- Pre-participation survey: personal experiences with class participation

Introduction to Accountable Talk

- Class Brainstorming: What makes a discussion effective?
- Introduction to three Accountabilities
- Discussion Model & Training

Week 3: First Short Story Discussion (Half-Class)

-Students complete Self-Evaluation with Accountable Talk Rubric:
Accountability to Learning Community

Week 4: Second Short Story Discussion (Small Group)

-Students complete Self-Evaluation using Accountable Talk Rubric:
Accountability to Rigorous Thinking

Week 5: Third Short Story Discussion (Small Group)

-Students complete Self-Evaluation using Accountable Talk Rubric that includes
all three accountabilities.

Week 6: Fourth Short Story Discussion (Whole Class)

-Students complete Self-Evaluation using Accountable Talk Rubric that includes
all three accountabilities.

Week 7: Short Story Projects

-Students complete Peer Evaluation using Accountable Talk Rubric
-Students reflect on group work and discussion process

Week 10-11: Research Topic Discussions

-Small Group Discussions, students complete Self-Evaluation using Accountable
Talk Rubric

Week 12: Othello Characterization Discussions

-Fishbowl Discussions, students complete Peer-Evaluations using Accountable
Talk Rubric

Week 13: Othello Plot Development Discussions

-Fishbowl Discussions, students complete Peer-Evaluations using Accountable
Talk Rubric

Week 14: Othello Themes and Symbolism Discussions

-Fishbowl Discussions, students complete Peer-Evaluations using Accountable
Talk Rubric

Literature Analysis Essay Sample Evaluation Small Group Discussions

-Students complete Self-Evaluation using Accountable Talk Rubric

Teacher-Student Whole Group Conference

- Discuss effectiveness and comfort level of Accountable Talk

Week 17-18: End of Semester Review & Reflection

-Group work – Review concepts on Final Exam
-Post-Survey

Data Collection:

1. Participant Observation w/ checklist	2-4x/week
2. Field Log	2-4x/week
3. Student survey regarding motivation	2 times
4. Student work	5-6 times
5. Accountable Talk Rubric – Teacher Evaluation	15-16 times
6. Accountable Talk Rubric – Student Evaluation	15-16 times

Participant Risk Prevention:

Students will be provided with thorough training and guidelines, covering the expectations of Accountable Talk. We will discuss and analyze the three accountabilities of Accountable Talk. During discussions, sentence and question prompts will be displayed in the classroom and also given on handouts to each student. Through surveys and possible informal

interviews, we will strive to create a safe environment for students to feel comfortable with participating in class. Finally, behavioral issues that may impede discussion and cause student anxiety will be dealt with promptly, following the school's code of conduct.

If any students experience any unexpected negative effects from participating in this research, they will be referred to the school's guidance counselors or health center.

8. This research involves the following GROUP(S) vulnerable to risk. (Circle all that apply.)

- a. Subjects under the age of 18
b. Prisoners
c. Pregnant women
d. Handicapped or mentally disabled persons

If you circled any or all of 8a through 8d, explain why you need to use the group and the methods you will use to minimize risk.

I need to use subjects under the age of 18 because the study focuses on my high school grade-level students. This is necessary because I am focusing on improving how they participate and communicate when discussing literature in the classroom. The skills they may develop will help them both in writing and in participating and communicating in college or a future career.

To minimize the risks to my students, I will be using randomly selected and assigned pseudonyms instead of names when I report my findings. My nickname key will be under a secure password on my personal computer. I will not keep a copy of the key on my computer at school. In addition, any documentation of the study, including surveys, observation checklists, rubrics, and field notes will be kept in a locked area located at my home.

The nature of my study does not pose any special risks to any handicapped or mentally disabled participants.

9. This research might affect people with special vulnerabilities (for example, pregnant women, people with allergies, people taking some medications, etc.) (Circle one.) Yes | No
If Yes, explain the methods you will use to minimize risk to these people.

10. Describe your subject pool including a. the intended number of subjects and b. characteristics.

Subject Pool: My subjects will include my 10th grade students whose ages range from 14 to 16. The students will be both male and female. The subject pool will include students who have been classified as needing additional support in the classroom in the area of language arts as well as students who have been classified as special education students. Students will be from a variety of socioeconomic, religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. The study will focus on one general education, mainstreamed classroom containing approximately 30 students.

11. Describe the methods you will use to recruit your subjects.

Recruitment Method: My subjects will be selected by the class they are placed in by the Principal/CSA of my school. There will be no need to recruit. Only students from whom I have received a signed Informed Consent form will be considered subjects for the study.

12. This research involves deception of subjects. (Circle one.) Yes | No
If Yes, describe the nature of the deception and your debriefing procedure.

13. Explain by whom and how the subjects will be informed of the purposes of this research project. [Make references to HSIRB Policy #MC.116 & #MC.117.]

My students and their parents will be informed of the purposes of this research through a letter sent home at the beginning of the study. The letter will describe the study, its process and its purposes and will include a consent form to be signed. Students who do not consent will not be included in my research.

14. This research collects information, which (Circle all that apply.)
- deals with sensitive aspects from the participant's point of view.
 - identifies the subject by name or number codes.
 - might place the subject at risk of liability if made public.
 - might place the subject's financial standing or employability at risk if made public.

- If you circled any or all of 14a through 14d, explain the methods you will use to
- safeguard the data you collect
 - inform subjects of available support services, and
 - minimize the risk to the subjects.

The data that I collect in this study will be kept in a secure location at all times. The data will not be shared with anyone excluding my building principal and case manager (if applicable). Students names will be kept anonymous. They will be given pseudonyms for my study and I will refer to them as such in my reports and data collection. I will only collect data from students who have signed the consent form at the beginning of my study.

APPENDIX B

Dear Mr. _____,

I am currently working toward the completion of a Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. The courses involved help me stay in touch with the most effective ways of teaching in order to provide the best learning experiences for my students. As a requisite for my thesis, Moravian's program requires that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. I will be looking at student participation and leadership in the classroom, collecting data from my students, their contributions, and my own observations, and analyzing that data. Combining my data analysis and my research, I hope to improve student engagement and achievement in communication in my Language Arts classes.

In preparation for my study, I have studied much research that supports Accountable Talk, with guidance from the teacher. My research and experience also suggest that students need to learn *how* to discuss effectively, through exploring various types of questions, finding supports for answers, being exposed to structured student-led discussion circles, and viewing models of effective discussion. The purpose of my specific study is to observe and analyze the experiences of tenth-grade students when Accountable Talk strategies and structures are introduced and implemented to support student communication about literature and writing. My goal is to encourage improved communication through active participation, peer observation and interaction, and self-reflection, three skills that will be beneficial for students entering college and/or the work force. This study will take place throughout the months of September, October, November, December 2012, and January 2013.

The information I will gather to answer my research questions will be in the form of student surveys, self and peer evaluation rubrics, conferences, teacher checklists, and work samples. Along with these sources, I will also use my own observations to help me determine how I can better improve student performance in writing. In order to support the accuracy of my observations, there may be instances when class discussions will be recorded in audio format. Students will always be informed beforehand when these recordings take place. It is important for me to note that all of the students' names will be kept confidential as well as the names of teachers, other staff, and the school. In some cases, student work may be modified with the specific purpose of maintaining confidentiality. All research materials will be kept in a secure location in my home and all data gathered will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. All of the students in my classroom will receive the same instruction and assignments as part of the Language Arts curriculum. There are no anticipated risks for participation in the study and IEP and instructional modifications will be adhered to throughout the period of the study. While participation in the instruction and assignments is mandatory, participation in the study is entirely voluntary and will not affect the student's grade in any way. Any student may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty by writing me a letter or sending me an email stating that he or she would like to do so. The parent or guardian may also withdraw the student through a letter or email. Again, if a student withdraws from the study, his/her grade will not be affected.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 610-867-5843, ext. 53183 or 53213 or amarmaros@bethsd.org. My faculty advisor through Moravian College is Dr. Joseph Shosh; he can be contacted at 610-861-1482 or jshosh@moravian.edu. If you approve of your child being a participant in my teacher action research thesis and have no questions, please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter. Thank you very much for all of your help.

Sincerely,

Anna Marmaros

 _____

I attest that I am the principal of the teacher conducting this research study, that I have read and understand this consent form, and that I have received a copy. Anna Marmaros has my permission to conduct this study.

Principal's Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

Dear Parents or Guardians,

I am currently working toward the completion of a Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. The courses involved help me stay in touch with the most effective ways of teaching in order to provide the best learning experiences for my students. To write my thesis, Moravian's program requires that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. This semester, I will be looking at student participation and leadership in the classroom, collecting data from my students' contributions and my own observations, and analyzing that data. Combining my data analysis and my research, my goal is to improve student engagement and achievement in communication in my Language Arts classes.

In preparation for my study, I have studied much research that supports Accountable Talk, with guidance from the teacher. My research and experience also suggest that students need to learn *how* to discuss effectively, through exploring various types of questions, finding supports for answers, being exposed to discussion circles, and viewing models of discussion. The purpose of my study is to observe and analyze the experiences of tenth-grade students when Accountable Talk strategies and structures are introduced and implemented to support student communication about literature and writing. My goal is to encourage improved communication through active participation, peer observation and interaction, and self-reflection, three skills that will be beneficial for students entering college and/or the work force. This study will take place throughout the months of September, October, November, December 2012, and January 2013.

The information I will gather to answer my research questions will be in the form of student surveys, self and peer evaluation rubrics, conferences, teacher checklists, and work samples. Along with these sources, I will also use my own observations to help me determine how I can better improve student performance. In order to make sure my observations are accurate, there may be times when class discussions will be audio-recorded. I will always tell students beforehand when these recordings take place. All of the students' names will be kept confidential as well as the names of teachers, other staff, and the school. In some cases, student work may be modified with the specific purpose of maintaining confidentiality. All research materials will be kept in a secure location in my home and all data gathered will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

All of the students in my classroom will receive the same instruction and assignments as part of the Language Arts curriculum. There are no anticipated risks for participation in the study and IEP and instructional modifications will be adhered to throughout the period of the study. While participation in the instruction and assignments is mandatory, participation in the study is entirely voluntary and will not affect the student's grade in any way. Any student may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty by writing me a letter or sending me an email stating that he or she would like to do so. The parent or guardian may also withdraw the student through a letter or email. Again, if a student withdraws from the study, his/her grade will not be affected.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 610-867-5843, ext. 53183 or 53213 or amarmaros@bethsd.org. My faculty advisor through Moravian College is Dr. Jack Dilendik; he can be contacted at 610-861-1557 or jdilendik@moravian.edu. If you approve of your child being a participant in my teacher action research thesis and have no questions, please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter. Thank you very much for all of your help.

Sincerely,

Anna Marmaros



I understand that Miss Marmaros will be observing and collecting data as part of her teacher research on improving student communication and literature comprehension.

_____ My child has permission to be a participant in the study.

_____ My child does not have permission to be a participant in the study.

Student Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

*Please return this slip by _____ and keep the top portion for your own reference.

APPENDIX D

Accountable Talk Rubric		Self-Evaluation		
<p>Accountable to the Learning Community</p> <p>Choose one descriptor from this category.</p>	<p>Listen</p> 	<p>Summarize</p> 	<p>Build</p> 	<p>Mark</p> 
	<p>Pay attention to the statements of others, maintains eye contact, uses appropriate tone & volume.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Restates the ideas of a previous speaker in new language.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Adds to the statement of a previous speaker.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Directs attention to the importance of another's statement.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>
	<p>Choose one descriptor from this category.</p>	<p>Check your understanding of previous statements & knowledge.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Explain how you arrived at your answer.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Give examples & evidence to support your answer.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>
<p>Accountable to the Knowledge</p> <p>Must demonstrate starred descriptors.</p>	<p>Verify</p> 	<p>Unpack*</p> 	<p>Support*</p> 	<p>Link</p> 
	<p>Defend your reasoning against a different point of view.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Ask a previous speaker to explain & provide evidence for a statement.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Incorporate knowledge from multiple resources to form your ideas.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Draw conclusions about what might happen next, or as a result of ideas.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>
	<p>Choose one descriptor from this category.</p>	<p>Defend your reasoning against a different point of view.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Ask a previous speaker to explain & provide evidence for a statement.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Incorporate knowledge from multiple resources to form your ideas.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>
<p>Accountable to Rigorous Thinking</p> <p>Choose one descriptor from this category.</p>	<p>Defend</p> 	<p>Challenge</p> 	<p>Combine</p> 	<p>Predict</p> 
	<p>Defend your reasoning against a different point of view.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Ask a previous speaker to explain & provide evidence for a statement.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Incorporate knowledge from multiple resources to form your ideas.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Draw conclusions about what might happen next, or as a result of ideas.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>
	<p>Choose one descriptor from this category.</p>	<p>Ask a previous speaker to explain & provide evidence for a statement.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Incorporate knowledge from multiple resources to form your ideas.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Draw conclusions about what might happen next, or as a result of ideas.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>

APPENDIX F

Name: _____ Date: _____

Participation Post-Survey

1. Do you remember any of the discussions we had in class? If yes, which were they (what were we discussing)?

2. Did you enjoy/get anything out of discussing in large groups in this class? Why or why not?

3. Did you enjoy/get anything out of discussing in small groups in this class? Why or why not?

4. Did you participate actively in these discussions, did you just listen, or did you do both? Describe your level of participation.

5. What motivated you to participate if you did so? What prevented you from participating if you didn't? Explain in detail.

6. Overall, do you think participating in this class helped you learn? Why or why not?

7. Describe any problems you encountered during any type of discussion in this class.

APPENDIX G

Name: _____

Accountable Talk Definitions

1. What do you think “**Accountability to the Learning Community**” means? Jot down some key words and phrases.

Actual Definition:

Students _____, not just _____ until it is their turn to take the floor, but _____ so that they can use and build _____.

- _____ on one another’s contributions
- make an effort to _____
- _____

2. What do you think “**Accountability to Knowledge**” means? Jot down some key words and phrases.

Actual Definition:

When speakers make an _____, they try to be as _____ as possible, not just saying what _____.

- make sure what they say is _____
- _____ the text appropriately
- _____ each other to _____

3. What do you think “**Accountability to Rigorous Thinking**” means? Jot down some key words and phrases.

Actual Definition:

Students and teachers consistently push for _____ and sound reasoning in backing up those claims _____.

- having _____ for what is said
- facts need to be _____
- reasons need to be _____

APPENDIX H

What is Accountable Talk?

Definitions

Accountability to the Learning Community

- Students listen to one another, not just obediently keeping quiet until it is their turn to take the floor, but attending carefully so that they can use and build on one another's ideas.
- paraphrase and expand on one another's contributions
- make an effort to understand and clarify
- disagree respectfully

Accountability to Accurate Knowledge

- When speakers make an observation or claim, they try to be as specific and accurate as possible, not just saying what comes to mind.
- make sure what they say is true and supportable
- reference the text appropriately
- challenge each other to "get it right"

Accountability to Rigorous Thinking

- Students and teachers consistently push for clear explanations, predictions, and positions and sound reasoning in backing up those claims with evidence.
- having sufficient proof for what is said
- facts need to be relevant
- reasons need to be logical

APPENDIX I

Accountable Talk Sentence Starters**Making a Comment:**

That is a good idea because...
 That is confusing because...
 I disagree with _____ because...

Making a Prediction:

I think that _____ will happen because...
 I don't think that _____ will happen because...
 I wonder if...
 Since this happened, then what if...

Clarifying Something:

Now I understand _____ because...
 No, I think it means...
 I agree with _____ because...
 At first I thought _____, but now I think _____ because...
 What I hear you saying is...
 I don't understand _____, but I do understand _____
 because...

Asking a Question:

What did you mean when you said _____?
 Do you think that...?
 Why is that happening?
 What is happening?
 Why do you think that way?
 What led you to that conclusion?

Making a Connection:

This reminds me of...
 This is like _____ when...
 This is like _____, but different because...

APPENDIX J

Accountable Talk Rubric **Self-Evaluation**

Step 1: Learning Community

<p>Accountable to the Learning Community</p> <p>Choose one descriptor from this category.</p>	<p>Listen</p>  <p>Pay attention to the statements of others, maintains eye contact, uses appropriate tone & volume.</p> <p>4 (consistently) 3 (most of the time) 2 (some of the time) 1 (rarely) 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Summarize</p>  <p>Restates the ideas of a previous speaker in new language.</p> <p>4 (consistently) 3 (most of the time) 2 (some of the time) 1 (rarely) 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Build</p>  <p>Adds to the statement of a previous speaker.</p> <p>4 (consistently) 3 (most of the time) 2 (some of the time) 1 (rarely) 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Mark</p>  <p>Directs attention to the importance of another's statement.</p> <p>4 (consistently) 3 (most of the time) 2 (some of the time) 1 (rarely) 0 (not at all)</p>
--	---	---	---	---

Question/Comment Starters:

Use these during the discussion to ensure that your contributions are accountable to our learning community!

I agree with _____ because...

What I hear you saying is...

I don't understand _____, but I do understand _____ because...

That is a good idea because...

What _____ said reminds me of...

Self-Reflection:

During this discussion, I participated/didn't participate because...

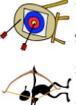
What might help me become even better in future discussions?

APPENDIX K

Accountable Talk Rubric Peer-Evaluation

Step 1: Learning Community

Evaluate the entire group, not just one person!

<p>Accountable to the Learning Community</p> <p>Choose one descriptor from this category.</p>	<p>Listen</p>  <p>Pay attention to the statements of others, maintains eye contact, uses appropriate tone & volume.</p> <p>4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Summarize</p>  <p>Restates the ideas of a previous speaker in new language.</p> <p>4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Build</p>  <p>Adds to the statement of a previous speaker.</p> <p>4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Mark</p>  <p>Directs attention to the importance of another's statement.</p> <p>4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>

Your Name: _____ Date: _____

Discussion you observed: _____

Comments/Suggestions for how things could have gone better:

Comments/Praise for people who did well in the discussion:

APPENDIX L

Name: _____ Date: _____

Discussion Cheat Sheet – “The Lottery”

It's your turn to participate, but you don't know what to say. Use this cheat sheet to get your ideas organized before it's time for discussion. Carry it with you in your circle or group so you can access your ideas, all in one place. Remember, these are your own, personal ideas and interpretation, so you must write your own answers.

Overview of the Short Story	Movie Comparison
Plot in One Sentence: Main Character(s): Where is the irony?	Three Plot Additions: 1. 2. 3. Goal of the Protagonists: Story: Movie:
Article	Questions/Comments
Three pieces of information that might help us understand the story: 1. 2. 3.	<i>You MUST fill in this section!</i> Choose 3 of the 4 options: 1. I wonder why: 2. I don't understand how/why: 3. I think _____ means that _____ 4. This reminds me of _____ because _____

APPENDIX M

Accountable Talk Rubric Self-Evaluation

Step 2: Knowledge

	 <p>Verify Check your understanding of previous statements & knowledge.</p>	 <p>Unpack * Explain how you arrived at your answer.</p>	 <p>Support * Give examples & evidence to support your answer.</p>	 <p>Link Point out the relationships among previous statements & knowledge.</p>
<p>Accountable to Knowledge Must demonstrate starred descriptors.</p>	<p>4 (consistently) _____ 3 (most of the time) _____ 2 (some of the time) _____ 1 (rarely) _____ 0 (not at all) _____</p>	<p>4 (consistently) _____ 3 (most of the time) _____ 2 (some of the time) _____ 1 (rarely) _____ 0 (not at all) _____</p>	<p>4 (consistently) _____ 3 (most of the time) _____ 2 (some of the time) _____ 1 (rarely) _____ 0 (not at all) _____</p>	<p>4 (consistently) _____ 3 (most of the time) _____ 2 (some of the time) _____ 1 (rarely) _____ 0 (not at all) _____</p>

Question/Comment Starters:

Use these during the discussion to ensure that your contributions are accountable to knowledge!

*That is confusing because...
I think that _____ will happen because...
I don't think that _____ will happen because...
At first I thought _____, but now I think...*

*Why is that happening?
What is happening?
This is like _____ when...
This is like _____, but different, because...*

Self-Reflection:

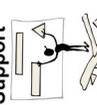
During this discussion, I participated/didn't participate because...

What might help me become even better in future discussions?

APPENDIX N

Accountable Talk Rubric Peer-Evaluation

Step 2: Knowledge

<p>Accountable to Knowledge Must demonstrate starred descriptors.</p>	<p>Verify²  Check your understanding of previous statements & knowledge. 4 (consistently) 3 (most of the time) 2 (some of the time) 1 (rarely) 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Unpack*  Explain how you arrived at your answer. 4 (consistently) 3 (most of the time) 2 (some of the time) 1 (rarely) 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Support*  Give examples & evidence to support your answer. 4 (consistently) 3 (most of the time) 2 (some of the time) 1 (rarely) 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Link  Point out the relationships among previous statements & knowledge. 4 (consistently) 3 (most of the time) 2 (some of the time) 1 (rarely) 0 (not at all)</p>
--	--	--	--	--

Your Name: _____ Date: _____
Discussion you observed: _____

Comments/Suggestions for how things could have gone better:

Comments/Praise for people who did well in the discussion:

APPENDIX O

Accountable Talk Rubric		Self-Evaluation	
Step 3: Rigorous Thinking			
<p>Accountable to Rigorous Thinking</p> <p>Choose one descriptor from this category.</p>	<p>Defend</p>  <p>Defend your reasoning against a different point of view.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Challenge</p>  <p>Ask a previous speaker to explain & provide evidence for a statement.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	<p>Combine</p>  <p>Incorporate knowledge from multiple resources to form your ideas.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>
		<p>Predict</p>  <p>Draw conclusions about what might happen next, or as a result of ideas.</p> <p>___ 4 (consistently) ___ 3 (most of the time) ___ 2 (some of the time) ___ 1 (rarely) ___ 0 (not at all)</p>	

Question/Comment Starters:
Use these during the discussion to ensure that your contributions are accountable to rigorous thinking!

- That is confusing because...*
- I disagree with _____ because ...*
- Since this happened, then what if ...*
- What did you mean when you said...?*
- No, I think it means...*
- Why do you think that way?*
- What led you to that conclusion?*

Self-Reflection:
During this discussion, I participated/didn't participate because...

What might help me become even better in future discussions?

APPENDIX P

Accountable Talk Rubric		Peer-Evaluation	
Step 3: Rigorous Thinking			
<p>Accountable to Rigorous Thinking</p> <p>Choose one descriptor from this category.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Defend</p>  <p>Defend your reasoning against a different point of view.</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> 4 (consistently) <input type="checkbox"/> 3 (most of the time) <input type="checkbox"/> 2 (some of the time) <input type="checkbox"/> 1 (rarely) <input type="checkbox"/> 0 (not at all) </p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Challenge</p>  <p>Ask a previous speaker to explain & provide evidence for a statement.</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> 4 (consistently) <input type="checkbox"/> 3 (most of the time) <input type="checkbox"/> 2 (some of the time) <input type="checkbox"/> 1 (rarely) <input type="checkbox"/> 0 (not at all) </p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Combine</p>  <p>Incorporate knowledge from multiple resources to form your ideas.</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> 4 (consistently) <input type="checkbox"/> 3 (most of the time) <input type="checkbox"/> 2 (some of the time) <input type="checkbox"/> 1 (rarely) <input type="checkbox"/> 0 (not at all) </p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Predict</p>  <p>Draw conclusions about what might happen next, or as a result of ideas.</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> 4 (consistently) <input type="checkbox"/> 3 (most of the time) <input type="checkbox"/> 2 (some of the time) <input type="checkbox"/> 1 (rarely) <input type="checkbox"/> 0 (not at all) </p>		

Your Name: _____ Date: _____

Discussion you observed: _____

Comments/Suggestions for how things could have gone better: _____

Comments/Praise for people who did well in the discussion: _____