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OPENING THE MIND THROUGH JOURNAL WRITING

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Abstract

This qualitative research study examined the observed and reported experiences of eleventh grade students in a foundations leveled World History class. The particular group of students had below average skills in writing, reading, or comprehension. To help improve students' skills, daily journals were implemented into the classroom. Though initially designed to help improve writing skills, the journals became important on their own, and became a tool for students to express their knowledge and gain confidence in an environment that was typically filled with failure and limitations.

Methods of data collection included student surveys, observation, student interviews, and students' written and verbal reflections, and obviously, the student journals themselves. Through analyzing the data, it became apparent that the journals worked as a successful tool in creating a positive learning environment. The journals led to rich discussions, student leadership, and improved comprehension.

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Researcher's Stance

Overview

Education has always been a field of interest for me; in fact, it has been the only field of interest for me. My love for teaching goes back to when I was a little girl “playing school” in my basement. It was then furthered by my younger cousins and brother always turning to me at family functions to come up with ways to make a traditional situation more exciting and entertaining. I loved the challenge and spur of the moment thinking to make things functional and fun. I have always enjoyed helping people and providing a new perspective, understanding, and/or a solution. Teaching is the profession and outlet that allows me to do just that, and to do it daily.

Need for Study

My undergraduate major was elementary and special education. The elementary portion of my major was fueled by my passion to teach younger students; the special education portion of my major came from peers and advisors advice, not necessarily because I felt compelled to reach that specific population of students. It is funny how things evolve, because my first teaching position after college was a position as a high school special education teacher, two things that had not fueled my teaching endeavor, but two things that I would become passionate about.

Through my special education position, I fell in love with struggling learners. I realized how much my special education degree had taught me not only how to reach special education students, but also how those strategies are universal to all learners. I came to the realization that there are no teaching strategies specific to one population, but strategies that can be tweaked to fit all individuals.

My second year of teaching came with a new position; I moved into a regular education history position. In teaching all of my history courses, which included varied levels of learners, I found myself clutching and clinging to the strategies that I was taught to use for special education students with all my students. I came to realize that all students benefited from the strategies and type of instruction.

Due to my background in terms of my special education degree, I was recently placed in charge of the World History Foundations course. The course included very low functioning students who struggle despite being in an inclusive class setting. Even with my special education background, making history tangible and meaningful for them has been a challenge. I want them to understand the content, because the topics are connected to so many of the current events that create our current world environment; however I often find myself questioning whether it is course content that will help them most or if I am better off working with them on developing functional skills, such as writing. This year

in particular, my class roster contained academically lower performing students than I had taught in previous renditions of the course. Going through students' files and conferencing with past teachers forced me to think of ways to adapt the course to meet the needs of this year's students.

I believe that every student can achieve success or at least feel like success is an option. Through my special education training and experience, I have come to see my belief as a real possibility. Success in a classroom is created not from a sole individual. Rather, it evolves from the relationship between the teacher, student, and the class as a whole. Students must feel valued in addition to valuing what they are being taught. The challenge begins when one must figure out how to make the content and the student valued simultaneously.

Even for high performing learners, history is a challenging subject matter, and one that is not generally well liked by all. It is a subject that lends itself to a plethora of facts and interpretation of historical documents and events. Some learners may struggle specifically with the interpretation aspect of history, because it requires higher order thinking skills and a writing component, requiring them to express their interpretations and ideas. I want my class to be functional and have a practical application element for my students. The foundations level class posed challenges for me in terms of determining essential criteria and teaching necessary skills to the students. Many students lacked the basic writing skills to be successful in a high school history class (de Oliveira, 2008). My

thought was that by approaching the writing component more thoroughly, I could help students develop their reading and historical comprehension more fully.

Ultimately, every teacher's goal is that students leave his or her course or classroom better equipped to move forward than they were when they entered. My subject matter lends itself nicely to that goal in theory, but as stated, many students put up an instant barrier to history because they think it is difficult. Still loving a challenge, I wanted to work through those barriers to help improve my students' learning tools so they can become life-long learners.

Research Question

Through research on various writing strategies, I have learned that journals can be a promising tool to use in my foundations classroom. Journals can help provide and create a personal connection to the historical information, which can aid in breaking through the barriers students put up. My research suggested that motivation plays a large part in helping the struggling learner population (Marzano, 2003). I wanted to use journals as a medium to improve both comprehension and writing skills. My hope was to create a personal connection with history through the writing. In my Foundations class, I wished to use journals to increase my students' writing skills and comprehension of historical facts. Through journal prompts, I could engage students by creating personal connections to the content and by increasing the amount they were writing daily. Journals would be used differently in every class, but the root of their

implementation would always be to improve writing skills and comprehension. “Instruction is an ongoing process” (Wood, 2009, p. 155). Through my study, I would learn to adapt and improve on my methods and to be in constant reflection on my acquired data. My hope was, in making journals an integral part of the classroom, students would not see them as an assignment, but rather as a learning tool. Therefore my research question was: What are the observed and reported experiences when foundation level students use journals in an eleventh grade world history class?

Literature Review

Introduction

Writing has proven to be one of the most challenging skills for students to master (de la Paz & Graham, 2002). Due to this struggle amongst students, writing needs to be incorporated across all subject areas (Newell, 1986). In many different subjects, journals have proven to be a successful tool for increasing students' skill sets and motivation toward writing. Motivation can be individualized among students and is a changing characteristic dependent upon the environment and content (Mayer, 2001, as cited in Garcia & de Caso, 2004), which makes it imperative that teachers use effective writing and learning strategies to help improve their students' learning and skill sets. Through different structures and various uses of journals within the classrooms, studies have shown that students respond to journals in a positive way (Crippen & Waldman, 2009).

Writing should become an "active construction of knowledge" (Baxter, Woodward, & Olson, 2005, p. 119). Struggling learners have a problem with putting their knowledge into words. Discrepancies, therefore, exist between scored understanding and actual understanding of these students (Ball, 1993, as cited in Baxter, Woodward, & Olson, 2005). This occurrence puts struggling learners at a disadvantage (Chalk, Hagan-Burke, & Burke, 2005). It becomes imperative that teachers create strategies to reach all students and allow for all to

experience success (Tileston & Darling, 2009). When journals are used as a writing strategy and a learning strategy, the results can be extremely beneficial to the learner and the classroom environment (Baxter, Woodward, & Olson, 2005, p. 124).

Writing Strategies

Writing is a skill that all teachers, regardless of subject, should promote in their classrooms (Garcia & de Caso, 2004). It is common knowledge that when one increases the amount of written work or exercises done, the writing skill set improves. When students write about what they are learning, their comprehension of those topics increases (Weiss & Walters, 1980, as cited in Newell, 1986). When students make personal connections and grapple with the subject matter, significant progress can be seen. Grappling that involves writing about the topic can improve student understanding (Scadamalia & Bereiter, 1985, as cited in Newell, 1986).

The writing process can seem very daunting to students. Many struggling learners lack the ability to break apart questions and truly understand what they must accomplish. Writing assignments and tasks need to be broken down for these learners (Simon, 1991). “By helping students to de-code our assignments, we might persuade them that the writing process begins long before they sit themselves down at the keyboard” (Simon, 1991, p. 155). Teachers play a huge role in how students feel, and play an integral part in showing students that they

are mutually invested in their students' success (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2007). We need to acclimate our students with strategies that help them decipher what teachers are asking them. Anxiety is limited when students feel they have all the necessary pieces to put together (Wood, 2009). When students understand the task at hand, though it still may be daunting, students are more inclined to attempt it with more enthusiasm.

Journals and Notebooks

When teachers have specific opportunities and strategies in the classroom for students to improve their skills, growth in multiple categories can occur (Botel, 2001). Journals provide students with the opportunity to grapple with procedural processes (Baxter, Woodward, & Olson, 2005), self-awareness, and overall content. Students are currently managing to get through school without higher order thinking skills, in part, because the system has allowed it. It is essential that students make meaning of the content versus just memorizing the information (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Through writing in journals, students can gain a deeper understanding of content while simultaneously improving their writing skills.

Since many students lack the procedural know-how or structure, journals work as a way to help provide that structure within the context of the writing process. When teachers implement a consistent structure in the classroom, students eventually incorporate structure into their own daily routine (Wood,

2009). Relevance is another essential entity in the writing process (Tileston & Darling, 2009), and through journals and consistent writing, teachers can attempt to add that relevancy into their classrooms. The topic must pertain or somehow connect to the students themselves or their current environment. When implemented well, students will see journals as a learning tool versus a writing assignment (Crippen & Waldman, 2009).

Interactive notebooks. Interactive notebooks can be an essential tool for students to take ownership of their learning (Crippen & Waldman, 2009). Used in direct conjunction with teacher instruction, they help to personalize the instruction to each learner while at the same time providing student data for the teacher. With any journal, structure is essential for journals to work. One may use the interactive notebook as an introductory or an exit activity. Despite the specific activities, ultimately, an interactive notebook will become individualized by students and be seen as a manifestation of their learning (Crippen & Waldman, 2009). The interactive journals become such an integral part of the classroom that students do not necessarily see the writing as work, but as a tool to use and help improve their educational learning (Crippen & Waldman, 2009).

Math notebooks. Notebooks are used in math classes to help students understand procedural thinking (Baxter, Woodward, & Olson, 2005). Students have become accustomed to quick recall and memorization as means of advancing from one grade to another. Learners need to become more aware of

and articulate their own thought processes. In a procedural subject such as mathematics, journals have helped students improve their articulation (Baxter, Woodward, & Olson, 2005). By writing and working through mathematical problems in journals, additionally oral skills improved, which adds an element to lower level classrooms that normally does not exist (Chalk, Hangan-Burke, & Burke, 2005). Math journals help learners to put the subject matter into their own perspectives, which makes the content more meaningful (Baxter, Woodward, & Olson, 2005), an idea that can be carried over to all subjects.

Science notebooks. Science notebooks are typically used during the experimentation process in science classes. Though used in a different aspect, they still focus on writing about the concepts and events in the classroom. With science notebooks, students are encouraged to read their written responses aloud. This helps students hear what they have written, and realize how accurate and clear their writing is (Butler & Nesbit, 2008). The students are allowed to make corrections in their notebooks based on their realizations or feedback. A key component in science notebooks is feedback. Whether it comes from other students or the teacher, feedback is essential to effective notebooks (Hattie, 1992, as cited in Butler & Nesbit, 2008). Feedback should not be limited to reforming clarity or content errors, but should include encouragement and statements that may provoke further thought.

Vocabulary notebooks. Vocabulary journals will vary among classrooms depending on the goal of the teacher (Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995). Acquisition of vocabulary is a hard concept for struggling learners, but is essential to their progress in school. Vocabulary notebooks should be flexible and a work in progress. Depending on the concept being taught, structures may vary. Students may work in pairs on their notebooks with certain tasks, or individually. Teacher feedback is again essential for notebooks. It is important to set manageable goals in terms of words that students are to grapple with per lesson or unit. Teachers need to convey terms from different perspectives, and the different activities that coincide with vocabulary notebooks help to do that (Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995).

Writing with Struggling Learners

Students' ability to write greatly affects their academic success (Garcia & de Caso, 2004). It is no wonder that those students deemed as struggling learners have a low skill level set in regard to writing. Most struggling learners are failure avoidant, and therefore lack motivation (Marzano, 2003). When working with struggling learners in terms of the writing process, motivation is essential. Studies have shown that regular classroom instruction can provide gains in writing; however students who receive writing interventions are almost guaranteed to show progress (Garcia & de Caso, 2006). With improvement in writing comes improvement in overall academic success. Students become motivated to write when it is within their skill range (Klassen, 2002, as cited in

Garcia & de Caso, 2004). Writing interventions can make writing more tangible to struggling learners, and therefore become essential.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a quality some struggling learners lack. Many students' self-worth at school comes from how they feel in a certain environment (Marzano, 2002). Since struggling learners are at a disadvantage from their peers, their self-worth is typically lower, which creates a vicious learning cycle. Just as interventions exist for writing skills, interventions exist for self-efficacy. There are several components that coincide with self-efficacy: environment, feedback, mastery, and experience (Bandura, 1997, as cited in de Caso, Garcia, Diez, Robledo, & Alvarez, 2010). One can help build students' confidence and motivation by providing opportunities for small successes (Wood, 2009). A study showed that when you improve self-efficacy, not only does the writing improve, but also the process that students engage in to write improves (de Caso, Diez, Robledo, & Alvarez, 2010). Students become more inclined to be persistent when they feel they have the ability to succeed (Wood, 2009).

Metacognition. Struggling learners tend to interpret writing as a single step process, and students with learning disabilities know more information than they are able to show in their writing (Englert & Mariage, 1991, as cited in De La Paz, 1999). It becomes imperative for teachers to educate students how to write, so that they can better demonstrate their knowledge. Goal setting, self-instruction, and self-monitoring are all steps in the writing process that struggling

learners overlook or lack (De La Paz, 1999). When educating on how to write, the writing component itself becomes less daunting.

Writing in the History Classroom

Until history becomes a valued subject, igniting motivation for students to learn the content will remain a struggle (de Oliveira, 2008). History, as a content area, can bring about challenges to those who teach it. The challenges can be put into three categories: students have limited or incorrect background knowledge, high demands for teachers to include writing into the curriculum exist, and most students believe that history does not count (de Oliveira, 2008). A new push for students to “think like a historian” in their history classrooms is prevalent (de Oliveira, 2008, p. 367). This becomes a challenge for teachers when there is little motivation within students to think outside the given or obvious answers.

When students are asked to write in history classrooms, it is normally in response to primary sources. Interpreting historical documents is a road block to writing in history. Teachers are faced with the challenge of not only motivating students to write, but also to read (de Oliveira, 2008). Higher order thinking skills needed in history come from background knowledge, which unfortunately the students may not have. Challenges such as these are what make incorporating writing into the history classroom very difficult.

Ultimately, teachers must fight through the challenges and implement strategies regardless of the students’ ability and motivation. It is in implementing

strategies that teachers find what works and what does not. Teachers must prompt students with structure and purpose to their writing assignments and activities. Think-alouds, verbal scaffolding, and direct instruction have shown in studies to be effective in aiding students in the writing process (De La Paz & Felton, 2010). How and with whom students work is also a factor. Alternating whether students work alone, with partners, or in groups helps to motivate students (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2007). Journals allow teachers and students to touch on and use all aforementioned strategies. Consistency becomes a factor as well. It is important to keep in pattern with processes that students are learning in their English classrooms (De La Paz & Felton, 2010).

Summary

“Given the present status of literacy instruction we must begin to reconsider our assumptions regarding the role of reading and writing in the content-area learning” (Newell, 1986, p. 292). When one combines and implements strategies that coincide with both reading and writing, the results are powerful. Journals provide that combination strategy with reading and writing, and offer a component to increase personal connections to the content. Forcing all teachers, regardless of content, especially at the secondary level, to incorporate writing into their classrooms is essential. For students to constantly improve in reading and writing, teachers need to constantly help them improve. Teachers must help students to make the choice to be successful, as ultimately it is up to

them (Glasser, 1997). Improving writing will improve the way our students think (Newell, 1986); teachers just need to provide the students access to the strategies and techniques they need.

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

In order to carry out my study over the course of 18 weeks, students were administered pre and post surveys along with journals and daily writing prompts. Over the course of my study, I saw whether or not daily journal writing increased students' writing abilities and overall personal connection to the historical content.

Setting

The study took place in an Eastern Pennsylvania suburban school district. The high school has approximately 1,200 students who are in grades 9th -12th. The day is divided into four, one hour and twenty minute blocks, and a forty minute activity period. The building has been retrofitted to keep up with the changing ways of education and technology. Some classrooms have Promethium boards, and teachers have easy access to other technology, such as Skype.

The specific classroom in which the study took place is a classroom that can accommodate up to 30 students. The walls were decorated with historical posters, and world flags hang from the ceiling. Along with the decorations, there were functional bulletin boards, like a "Missed Work" station. A homework board, which was updated daily with student assignments and due dates, was also present. Students had a supply station in front of the classroom, which had staplers, pencils, and hole punchers.

Participants

The study consisted of eight eleventh grade students. Students were placed in the World History Foundations class due to teacher recommendation and a formulated teacher survey. The study consisted of three girls and five boys. All of the students had IEPs. The IEPs were for Learning Disabilities, Autism, and Other Health Impairment. All students came from a diverse set of home lives and socioeconomic status. The building principal approved the study by signing a consent form (Appendix A). Students received parent permission and a signed consent form, approved by the HSIRB (Appendix B), in order to participate in the study.

Procedures

The first steps in completing my study revolved around achieving approval from the Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB). Once the HSIRB approved my study, I was able to begin my study by distributing consent forms to my students and my building principal. In addition to the consent form, I gave a verbal explanation to my students to help them understand the purpose of the study and what their participation in the study would mean. Though outlined in the consent form, I restated that participation was optional and would not affect their grade in any way. Data collection would take the form of many things; however, teacher observation would make up the majority. I structured my study by weeks and units (Table 1). Journal prompts

were given daily when schedule changes and test dates did not conflict (Appendix C). A variety of journal prompts were given throughout the study (Appendix C and Appendix D).

Table 1

Procedure Timeline

Week	Unit	Procedures Taken
Week 1	Unit 1: Renaissance and Reformation	Consent Forms Distributed Administer Pre-Student Study Journal Prompts:
Week 2		Journal Prompts Administered Daily
Week 3	Unit 2 (Part 1): Enlightenment and U.S Revolution	Journal Prompts Administered Daily
Week 4	Unit 2 (Part 2): French Revolution	Journal Prompts Administered Daily
Week 5	Unit 2 (Part 2) Continued Unit 2 (Part 3): Napoleon Unit 2 (Part 3) Continued	Journal Prompts Administered Daily
Week 6		Journal Prompts Administered Daily French Revolution Vocabulary Story
Week 7	Unit 3: Industrial Revolution	Journal Prompts Administered Daily
Week 8		Journal Prompts Administered Daily Student Interviews
Week 9	Unit 4: Africa	Journal Prompts Administered Daily
Week 10		Journal Prompts Administered Daily Complete Student Interviews
Week 11	Unit 5: World War One	Journal Prompts Administered Daily Arch Duke Fictional Story
Week 12	Unit 6: Russia	Journal Prompts Administered Daily
Week 13		Journal Prompts Administered Daily
Week 14		Journal Prompts Administered Daily
Week 15	Unit 7: World War Two	Journal Prompts Administered Daily
Week 16		Journal Prompts Administered Daily
Week 17	Unit 8: Cold War	Journal Prompts Administered Daily Student Post-Study Interviews
Week 18		Journal Prompts Administered Daily Students Reflection and Class Discussion

Data Sources

Field log. Throughout my study, I kept a detailed field log. Each day when a journal prompt was administered, the prompt was written down in my field log and then observations were recorded. Observations, such as writing behavior, student dialogue, and student frustrations were noted. I also noted when I had to differentiate for certain students, and which students were already or became independent throughout the process. The field log served the purpose of data collection and personal recollection for writing up the study. The field log was coded throughout the study for maximum organization. Coding my field log also helped me to separate my opinions from actual occurrences throughout the study.

Student journals. The journals themselves worked as great source of data. I was able to see which students were writing a lot, and which were consistently doing the minimal amount required. Throughout the study, I copied student journal entries and kept them in my field log. Through reading the students' journals, I was able to see where their writing abilities were for myself. Throughout the study, new elements to the journals were added. In the middle of the study, I started to correct the grammar of the students' entries. I was then able to see if grammar improved or remained constant. I also began writing back to the students in their journals, and in reading their entries, I was able to see when

they would write back and how my response affected or did not affect their future work.

Student surveys. Over the course of the study, I conducted two student surveys (Appendix E and Appendix F). Students completed a survey at the beginning of the study and then a very similar survey at the completion of the study. The surveys were used to gather data in regard to student familiarity with journals, their feelings about history, and their perception of their current abilities in regard to the subject of history itself.

Student interviews. Mid-way through my study, I conducted student interviews. I met with students individually and asked them a series of questions (Appendix G). Student interviews allowed me to elaborate on questions the initial student survey posed (Appendix E). The interviews allowed me to alter certain aspects of the journals and maintain some constants from the student feedback and responses during the interviews.

Student reflection. In the last week of the study, the students were asked to reflect on the journals and the class as a whole. Their reflection was guided by several questions written on the board (Appendix H). The student reflection was then taken to a class discussion where students openly shared their responses and additional comments and concerns. Through the students' reflections, I was able to gauge whether or not the journals had been effective within the classroom.

Triangulation. I used research-based strategies, such as peer debriefing, prolonged observations, and triangulation of data (Hendricks, 2009) to increase the validity of my study. I coupled Hendricks' strategies for maintaining validity with numerous forms of data collection. Surveys, interviews, participant and non-participant observations, field log notes, students' journals, and other student artifacts served as means of triangulating my data (Hendricks, 2009). Along with my set interview questions and interview times set in my methodology, member checks served as means to ensure correct data collection throughout the study and ensured that my observations, in fact, remained observations and not interpretations (Hendricks, 2009).

Trustworthiness

As an action researcher, it is imperative that certain ethical guidelines are followed to ensure a study is valid and trustworthy. The first step in achieving my goal of validity and trustworthiness for my study was to have Moravian College's Human Subjects Internal Review Board review and approve my research proposal. Once approved by the HSIRB, I proceeded by obtaining approval from my high school principal (Appendix A). He quickly approved my study, which allowed me to move forward with the distribution of my parent consent forms (Appendix B). I made sure parents and students understood that all students would receive the same treatment and instruction regardless of their participation in the study. I explained that students who participated in the study would be

protected by pseudonyms, and all information and data pertaining to the study would be kept in a secure location. In addition, my literature review served as a foundation for my action research study. It provided me with factual data that I could use to explain and justify the research being done in my classroom, which is essential to any good action research study (McNiff, 2013).

Along with my factual evidence and logistics, I explained to my students that my research was aimed at helping me become a better teacher and use better techniques to help them learn. During action research, knowledge is in constant motion or development (McNiff, 2013); many times our students teach us as much as we hope to teach them. However, just like I tell my students, we have to be careful our preconceived notions about things do not get in our way of understanding and seeing things as they actually are. As a researcher, I was conscious to not let previous biases get in the way of my data collection, and was diligent in separating observations from opinions (Hendricks, 2009).

My methodology provided thick descriptions about the setting, participants, and methods that I used throughout the study. Thick descriptions continued throughout the study in my field log and helped significantly in my final analysis to help others determine whether my data could be used in the future situations and scenarios (Hendricks, 2009). Prolonged observations were possible during the study, due to the fact that I have an associate in the room. During the first couple minutes of journal writing, I was able to simply observe,

versus answering the students' questions. That short time when I acted as a non-participant provided important and uninterrupted data.

I was able to use my Moravian support group to help me create a more stable classroom structure that helped the distribution of journals at the beginning of class become functional for my students and study. Peer-debriefing helped to provide me with outside perspectives and limit biases that seeped through, despite my best efforts to stay neutral (Hendricks, 2009).

Summary

In summary, I conducted my research to determine what the observed and reported effects of implementing daily journals into a foundation leveled world history classroom. The study involved multiple modes of data collection to ensure multiple perspectives and the utmost validity. Through all data collection, I was able to gather successes and possible improvements of daily journals.

My Story

Introduction

With each new group of students come new struggles. The struggles belong to both the teacher and the students. For the students in my fall semester, their struggles revolved around writing, comprehension, and general interest in the subject matter. My struggles as a teacher revolved around how to maintain a rigorous content without causing my students to become defeated. With my incoming students, I chose to implement daily journals into my classroom as a solution to the struggles both parties faced.

A Book of My Thoughts

As with any good research study, I needed permission from my students and their parents to participate in the study. It was exciting to see the students getting as excited as I was about the study when I was passing out the consent forms. I did not tell the students that the journals were the study. Instead, I told them that I would be trying new ways to teach them historical information. I did not want them to think of the journals as something I was trying out, because I did not want them to think that their like or dislike for them could make them go away. Instead, I made the journals appear to be just another part of how I ran my classroom.

The journal responses were to be written in black journal composition books that I had provided to the students. Everyone received his or her own

journal. I presented the journals in a way that made them seem special, and that the students should feel special that they were receiving them. I made a point of saying that the journals were theirs and only theirs. Other students would not be allowed to look at what other students had written unless they were given permission. Because the journals were to be used every day and were valuable pieces of data, the journals were to be kept in the classroom. The journals were given a designated basket where the students would retrieve them at the beginning of class and put back when they were done.

On the first day of the journals, I had the students answer the question “What do you think is the MOST important invention of all time?” When planning out my study, I had known that structure would be an important part to making the journals something more habitual rather than a chore; however the beginning of class was so haphazard due to the beginning of the school year and routines still being put in order; I had completely forgotten to explain the structure before giving the prompt. I was immediately met with a plethora of questions. I had to think on my feet back to my research about what the most important parts of the structure were and what things I would need when reviewing my data in the future. I told everyone to hold onto their thoughts and to listen. I modeled on the black-board how I wanted them to set up each journal entry. The students were told they needed to include the date, the unit number, and at least three- to five lines for their response.

It may seem odd that in a study where I was trying to improve writing, I would set the bar at three to five lines, not three to five sentences. My students struggle so significantly with writing that I did not want to turn them off from the journals. I was afraid they would see it as laborious and an activity they could not accomplish. Success is something that my class of students does not see or feel often in their core classes, and in the beginning stages I wanted them to feel as though their journals could be a possible outlet for success.

Initially, the journals were designed to improve writing skills along with comprehension. The journals would take on a life of their own and morph into something a little different. However, due to my initial goal when the students shared out their journal responses, I instructed them to read their responses exactly as they had written, so they could start to recognize their writing errors. This practice would eventually not become integral to the effectiveness of the journals.

With the first week, there was a lot of modeling of the structure. As I walked around the room, I observed the students writing. In the beginning of the study, the journal portion of class was very quiet and structured. The students wrote very quietly, and they waited very quietly for their peers to finish. I had not instructed them on any specific writing behavior; their quietness was a natural response. Their only limitations or rules were about how they set up the journals. I was very surprised at how none of the students had fought the journal process.

Almost all the students I had in class have their English class prior to mine. I was worried that starting off class with writing might cause some students to shut down. The exact opposite occurred.

Though none of the students put up a barrier to the journals themselves, students were not without frustrations. Differentiation became a key element of the effectiveness of the journals. Open ended questions or opinion questions typically caused students frustrations. I found that many students had not been asked their opinions and/or were never asked, “What if?” Due to the nature of their learning abilities, my students had typically just been told the required information, and did not necessarily have to arrive at a conclusion on their own. When “What if” or “Why” questions occurred, I found providing examples helped to give them direction.

Within the first two weeks of class, I presented several journal prompts that had a “What if” or “Why.” I found that the biggest barrier my students faced initially with the journals was the fear of being wrong. They would respond with “What if I don’t know?” or “I can’t come up with anything.” These questions led to further explanation of what the journals were. I made very clear that these journals were not graded. It was alright to be wrong. I told my students, I just wanted them to start thinking, because “You know more than you think you do.” Obviously, whether or not journals are graded is a teacher preference; however I found that the students were more inclined to write a response when there was no

penalty for incorrect answers. That fear of being wrong never completely went away, but I was able to combat it in my explanations. For example, “*Why can a Revolution be good...bad?*,” when I read this prompt out loud to them, I told them it was an opinion question, so all I wanted to know was what they thought; opinions cannot be wrong. There were some prompts, such as, “*If you were stranded on an island what is one thing you could live without? Why?*” or “*Russia. What do you know, think of, want to know.*” I told them I have a hard time picking or naming just one thing, which is why I wanted to know what they thought. I found these phrases alleviated stresses and the fear of being wrong.

Though the deeper thought provoking type of questions caused my students frustration, it was a good kind of frustration. They were never allowed to leave their journals blank. There were times when I altered the three-to-five line requirement, because it allowed a student to have success. I would not make them write fewer lines, but there were times when I would allow them to bullet their ideas. I found this to be more productive when they had to write more than one idea. Since writing is harder for some than others, the bulleting structure allowed everyone to have success at the same rate. My journals were slowly turning into not only a means to improve writing, but also a means to improve thinking and learning.

A Playground of Ideas: Types of Journal Prompts

The types of journal prompts were crucial to the success of the journals. I knew as I planned my study that I wanted there to be a variety of prompts. I wanted prompts that asked for opinions. I wanted prompts that forced recollection of content. I wanted students to draw on prior knowledge and connect it to their new knowledge. The variety of prompts kept the students from falling into a monotonous routine. I had one student ask me, “Do you use the same prompts every year?” Little did he know that this was the first time that I had used any of these prompts. What I told him, though, was that I created these prompts based on their class and their class only. I realized that for journals to work, structure is necessary, however flexibility and willingness to adapt structure and prompts to each individual class is even more crucial. The conversation with that particular student had value in showing my students that their uniqueness and interests are of value to me. I make note of this, because ultimately the journals were to provide an outlet of success for the students, and I believe that the root of any student success comes from the teacher valuing his or her students.

Over the course of the study, I used a variety of prompts. Each one had a different effect, which is fitting, since each one had an aimed purpose behind its choosing. Initially, I was using prompts that had hidden meaning. I wanted to show students that they could relate to the historical figures and events that we were learning about. It is a concept that is hard for students when the people they

are learning about are from the 1300s. At face value, the prompts appeared to be fluff pieces, prompts like, *“What is the most important thing in your life and why?”*, *“Do you think the government should have control over the information we receive?”*, or *“If you were stranded on an island what is the one thing you couldn’t live without?”* However, these prompts worked to help students relate to the topics at hand. For example, when talking about people during the Renaissance, the most important thing in their life was their religion. The prompt worked as a segway in showing that, just like them, the people of the Renaissance valued things, and, in some cases, it was similar to what the students had written. As for the prompt that referenced a deserted island, I connected that back to Napoleon Bonaparte being exiled to two islands for his antics all around Europe. The students said that they did not always make the connection on their own, but when I connected the prompts to the academic lesson, they were able to see the connection, and it helped them remember the information.

Another way I used the prompts to help the students connect with the history itself was to have them put themselves in the shoes of the individuals we were talking about. For example, *“Is it possible to remain neutral when two of your friends are arguing?”* or *“If you were about to die what would your last words be? or What would you want people to remember about you?”* Students were forced to draw on prior knowledge of their own and of previous lessons to help answer the questions. Asking students if they could remain neutral in an

argument was putting them into the position of the United States during World War I. The journal prompt made them realize that neutrality is a lot harder than it seems, and that the position of the United States at the time of 1917 was similar to a position they had been in themselves with their friends. Asking the students to think about their last words or how they would like to be remembered put them in the position of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the king and queen of France during the French Revolution. It worked as a segway to get the students thinking about what the King's and Queen's last words were and how the world remembers Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI.

Sometimes, I would use the journals as means of review. I would ask "Recall Questions" as journal prompts. *'Explain why Louis XVI and Maria Antoinette were not good leaders.'*, *'Name two things you learned from the Invisible Children video.'*, and *'How did Stalin and Hitler maintain and keep their power?'* are several examples of recall prompts that the students received. These were the least popular among the students. As stated, many struggle with comprehension and recall. These types of prompts required spur-of-the-moment changes in the structure of the written responses. I would offer things to consider when they were responding to help guide them in a direction. When asking questions that required recall or prior knowledge, some students had difficulty answering without a small bit of guidance. Sometimes the journal prompt like, *'How do dictators come to power?'* would call for the students to name several

things learned in a prior lesson. When I saw students completely shutting down, there were times when I said, “How about we simply try for one?” Immediately, the students’ attitudes changed. With the prompt, “*Name the factors of production, and why they caused/started an Industrial Revolution*” the students had to name all three of the factors of production. Lowering the amount actually caused students to remember more. Brandon wrote one down, and, in writing one, he remembered the other two. Sometimes, lowering the number challenged students to try to meet the original goal. With the same prompt, Brian said, “I’m gonna get all three, I’m gonna get four!” I learned very quickly that adapting on the fly is crucial to daily journals.

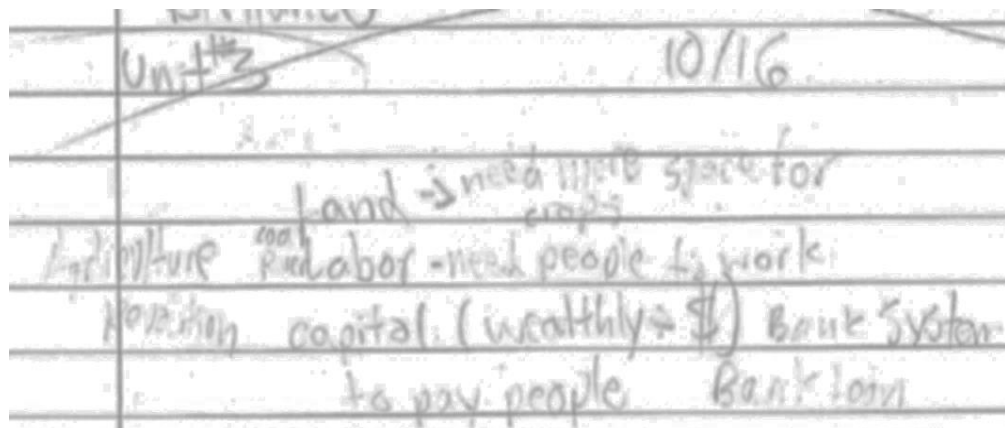


Figure 1. Brandon’s Industrial Revolution List Entry.

Typically, I would write the prompt on the board and read it out loud to the students, differentiating certain terminology and offering examples, but several times I used a picture as a prompt. For example, when introducing the guillotine (Appendix D), I put a picture of a crowd gathered to watch an execution. However, I covered up the scaffold and the guillotine and simply asked the students, *“Why do you think this crowd is gathered?”* They still had to write down their response, but the catalyst for their response was different than normal. Again, it was a type of response that did not require a correct answer and sparked great conversation and ideas. “Picture Prompts” also lent themselves to more questions that I could ask the students. When I revealed the scaffold and guillotine, I used that as my introduction to teaching about the guillotine. With that particular prompt, the journals and the picture remained out for almost thirty minutes. The journal segment took over the lesson. I still accomplished all I wanted to teach them; it just occurred in a slightly different way.

Another great example of a “Picture Prompt” was when I introduced current events in Africa. I showed students several pictures of child soldiers (Appendix D). I told them, “Write whatever you want about this picture.” I offered suggestions, such as: Who are these kids, How does it make you feel, What do you noticed about them. I was so surprised at the details that students had noticed that I had not. Students looked at the clothes of the soldiers. As they were thinking some asked questions, “Why are they carrying weapons?” I told

them, “Answer that question in your journal.” Some were shouting out things that they saw; I replied with excitement, “Write that down.” Again, the picture led right into the lesson and introduction to the movie (Appendix I) I was going to show them to further explain the pictures. There was always a different kind of excitement that came with the picture prompts than any other prompt.

The next type of prompt came out of a frustrating experience with one of my students. The prompt on that particular day was “*Define the following terms: National Assembly, Legislative Assembly, National Convention.*” Nat refused to write in his journal. The prompt included terms that I had taught the class the day prior. I chose that particular prompt, because students normally confused those particular terms with one another, so I was making sure the students were not doing just that before moving on. Nat said he did not know the definitions. Even with the suggestions and encouragement I offered, he was not budging. The situation escalated to the point where we were both frustrated and out of solutions. I was trying my hardest not to offer a punishment for lack of written response, because I felt like that would go against the ultimate goal and cause Nat to consistently shut down during journal time. After personal reflection and a discussion with my professor, the solution of having students use a picture to respond to a prompt instead of words was created. The very next day, the following journal prompt appeared on the board, “*Bastille Day, Great Fear,*

Legislative Assembly, Directory, Bread Riot, Reign of Terror, Louis XVI, Estates General. Pick 2 and draw a picture to represent the word.”

The students were immediately excited. The old pattern of silence during response time had been long gone. Students were talking, saying, “Wait to you see my picture.” I walked around the room to see the pictures the students were drawing. I singled students out who had awesome pictures or who were picking terms that no other student had chosen. As students were finishing up, I immediately realized that because I had never done this type of response, I had not thought about how the students were going to share the work they were so proud of. I quickly thought of a “Picture Walk Through.” The students would leave their journals out to the pages their pictures were on, and students would walk around and look at what their classmates had done.

The success of this journal prompt was more than I had imagined. Not only had we incorporated movement into the journal segment, but students were giving praise to one another saying, “This is really good” or “I really like your picture.” I even got in on the action. I had picked a term that none of the students had chosen, and drew it on the blackboard. I asked if anyone knew the definition. My initial thought was that no one knew the term, which is why no one picked it. However, to my surprise, the students knew the definition. From their explanation, I drew a picture to go along with it. After this experience, the students actually requested several times when I was writing another type of

prompt on the board to do the picture response. I never changed my prompt on the spot to the picture response prompts, but I always would do it the next day after they asked.

Another way I found for the students to share their pictures was to recreate them on the blackboard. This took their artwork to a new level. I asked for volunteers and chose students who had drawn certain terms to draw theirs on the blackboard. I had the students keep the term that their picture represented as a secret from the rest of their classmates. I then had the other students guess what term the students' picture was supposed to represent. This helped the other students who had not chosen that term to now have a visualization of it for future recollection.

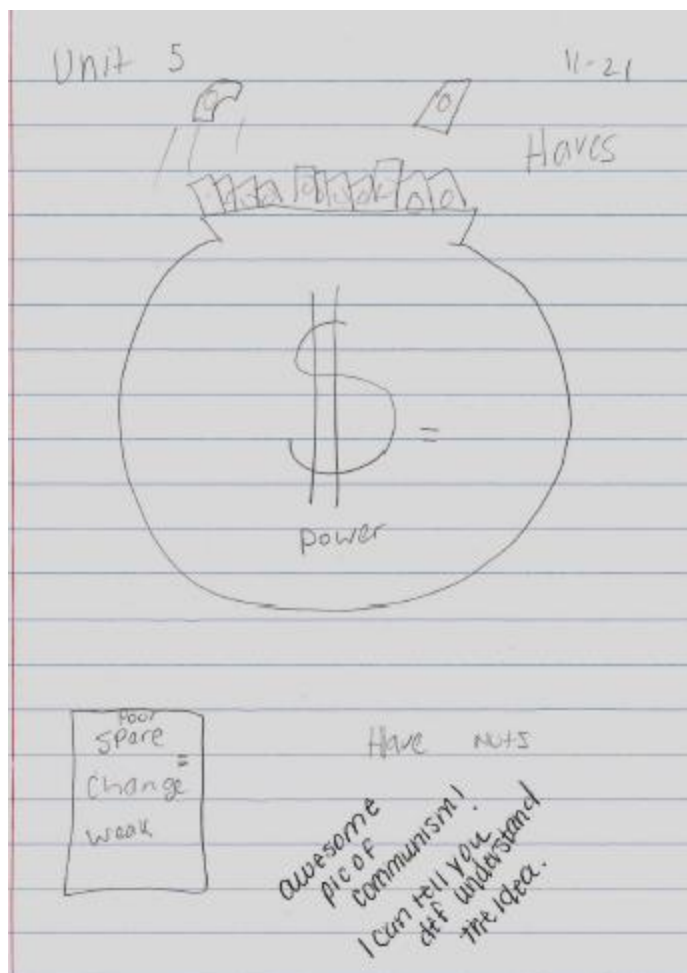


Figure 2. Brian's Russian Unit Picture Entry.

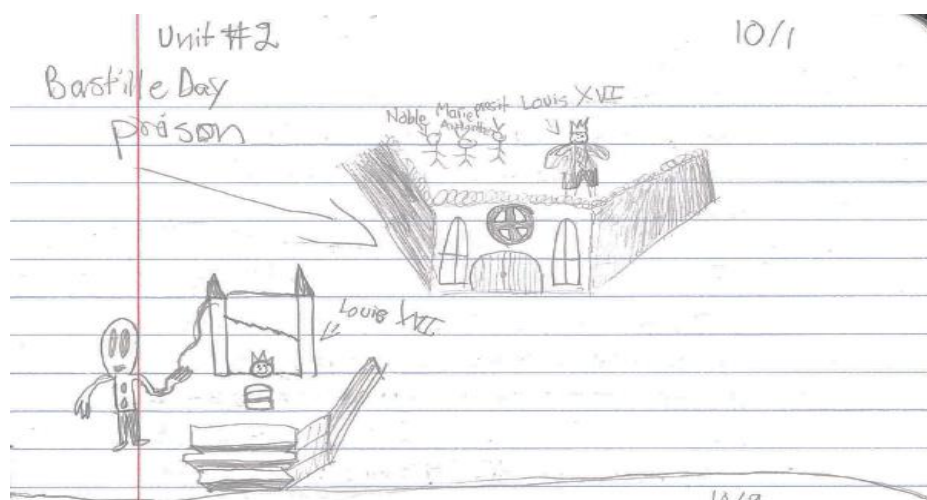


Figure 3. Brandon's French Revolution picture entry.

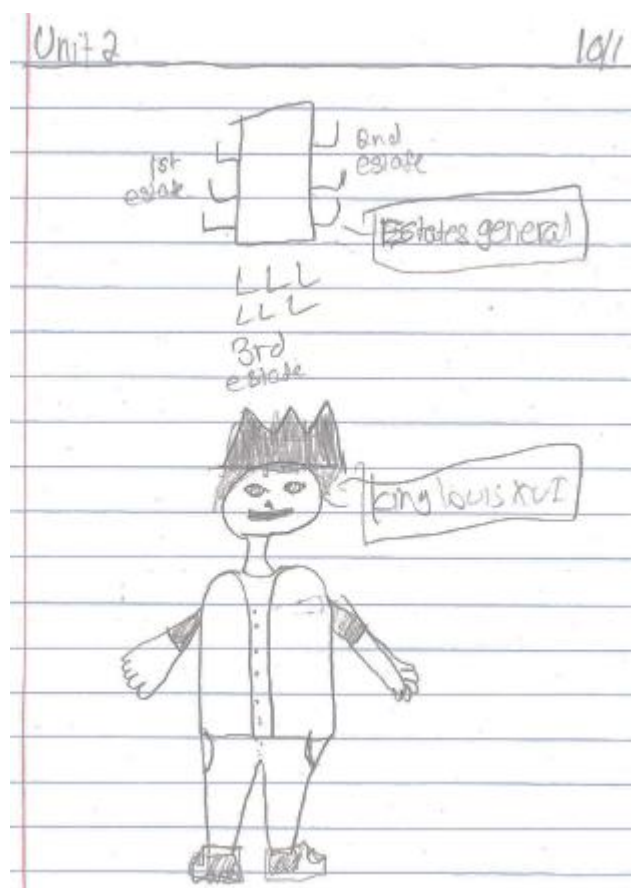


Figure 4. Steve's French Revolution picture entry.

I found pictures really reached my particular class. Visualization was a skill that they had trouble doing on their own that sometimes kept them from seeing the larger concept to be learned. For example with the prompt, *“If an alien species came to Earth and forced you to learn their ways, what would you do?”* the students became so hung up on what the aliens would look like that they could not answer the question. When I saw that the idea of the alien was taking away of what I wanted the prompt to accomplish, I said, “Before we go any further, stop and draw what you think an alien would look like.” All the students drew an alien in their journal. I then asked if anyone wanted to draw their alien picture on the board. Brian volunteered, and I also joined in to help the students visualize an alien. After we tackled what the aliens would look like, we went back to the prompt. After the visualization part was out of the way, the students had really great responses.

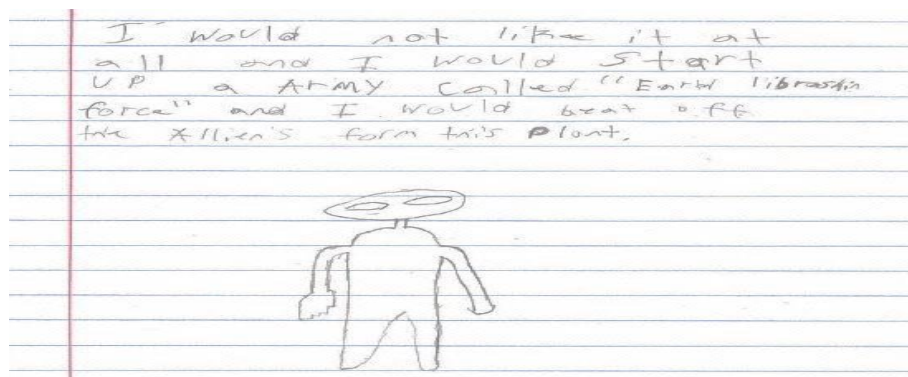


Figure 5. Nat's alien journal entry.

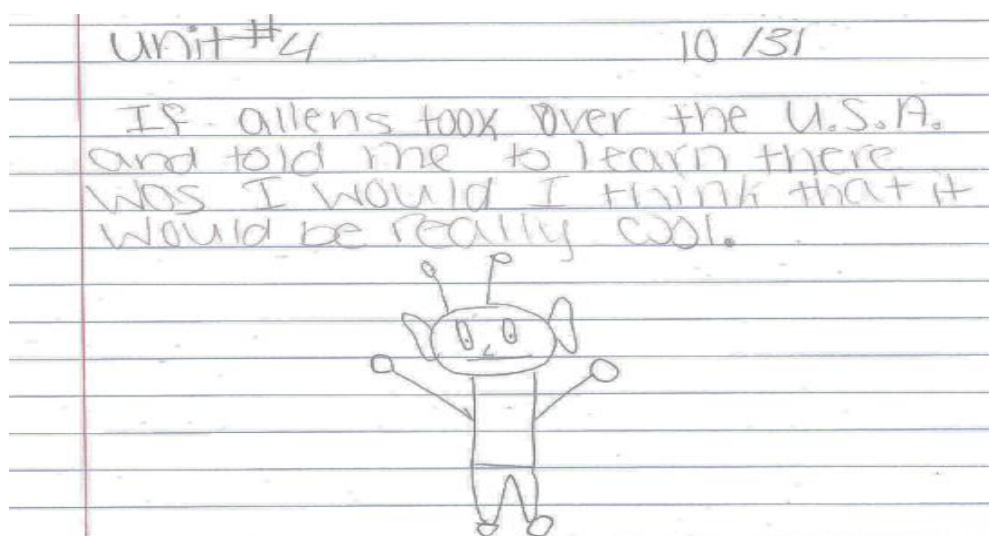


Figure 6. Donna's alien journal entry.

This was an eye opening experience for me in the way that I moved forward with my students. It gave me a window into the way that they think. I realized that this was probably not the first time that I had asked them something, and because they were hung up on one part of the question, they could not correctly answer the question in its entirety. Without this journal prompt and student discussion, this “ah-ha” moment would not have occurred. It was moments like these throughout my study that made me see the value in daily journals. Moments when the whole class was in conversation, where there was not a clear line between student and teacher, but simply a group of people coming to a conclusion through various opinions and perspectives were beyond powerful.

The final type of prompt that I experimented with was called a “Vocabulary Story” (Appendix J). In the past, I had given it to my college preparatory classes as a homework assignment before a test. For my foundations

class, I gave it to them as a journal prompt. I anticipated being met with a lot of resistance. The students were given about 20 vocabulary terms from the French Revolution unit. They were told to put them into a factual story. It was more than I had ever made them write. Yet again, I was pleasantly surprised by their response. They were initially alarmed at the thought of almost 20 vocabulary terms. I told them to simply take it one word at a time. Once the students got started, many were unstoppable. I observed student dialogue including them asking each other, “Do you remember what this term meant?” or “This happened before this term.” It was awesome to see them helping each other. There were more bathroom breaks during the class. Typically, I would not have allowed so many, but I noticed that once they came back, the students went right back to work. I realized that I was pushing them beyond their normal limits, and that their avoidance behaviors were more so pacing breaks for themselves.

During my student interviews, almost all the students mentioned that the vocabulary story was time consuming, but that it really helped them remember the unit information. The students made the suggestion that they would have liked to have had fewer terms. Many were unable to complete the story with all twenty in the allotted time frame, so in the future I will modify my vocabulary story word count at the advice from my students.

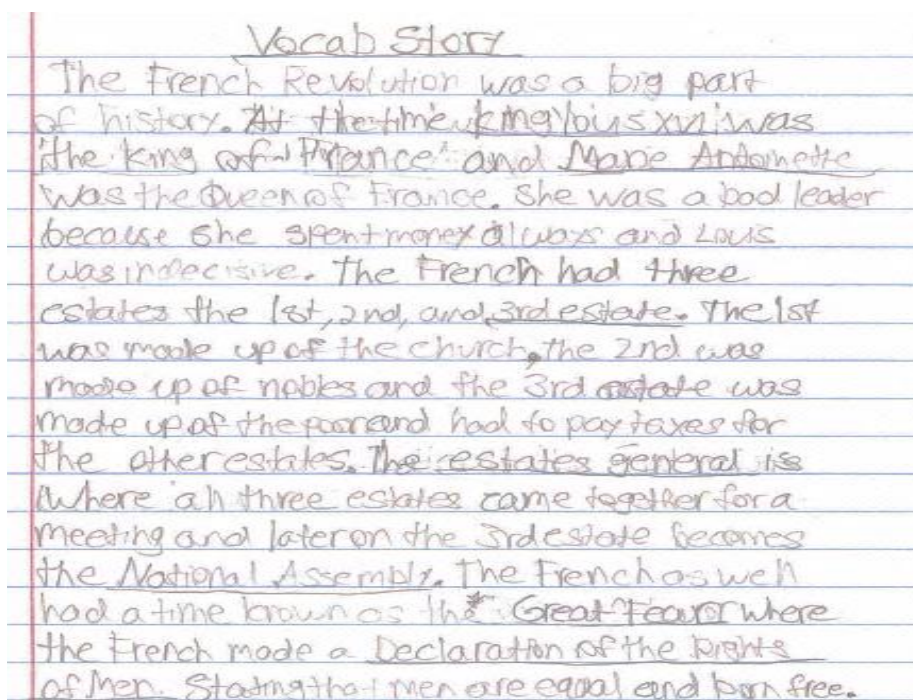


Figure 7. Steve's vocabulary story journal entry.

Student Voices

One aspect that I decided was going to be a part of my class's journals was that there would be a portion where they would share out their written responses. In the beginning of the semester, I simply called on those who had volunteered to share. As the process went on, as I would circle around during the writing time, I would look at and read the responses. If students were showing really good direction in their response, I would offer encouragement. I noticed that this caused students to participate and volunteer in the sharing portion of the journals more.

Eventually, I started calling on students randomly when there seemed to be a pattern of the same students sharing. I waited until the students became

comfortable with the journal process and the students in the class. I was always careful when a student responded to a recall question incorrectly. I made sure to never discount their attempt. Many times when one student saw that another had raised his or her hand and was wrong, but not chastised, he or she would raise a hand with a response. The recall questions, though not the favorite of the students, always lent themselves to clearing up misconceptions or misunderstanding the students had. Many times from the recall prompt verbal responses, I was able to see how I needed to restructure my lesson for that day to meet their needs.

The student response component of the journals was a key element to their success. I have found that many students who perform at the lower end of the grade scale do not participate frequently if at all. Having a written response helped some of the students feel more comfortable when they were called on, because they already had an answer. I was not just calling on them and requiring they come up with an answer immediately.

When the students shared their responses, it was a time when the classroom culture was strengthened. Students were listening to their classmates. It was neat when students would respond with, "I had the same as she did, but I also said this" or "I agree with what he said". The teacher definitely plays a part in creating this type of environment. In the beginning, the students did not always respond like this. It was not until I started asking the students what they had

thought about a classmate's response or if they agreed or disagreed. These initial teacher led behaviors turned into classroom behaviors of the students.

Other times occurred when a student's response would lead us into another direction. Kelly many times would have her interest sparked by something in the conversation and on her own would ask, "Is this similar to what we have in our country?" or "Is that where we get this from?" These questions would not have occurred if it were not for the student response segment of the journals. Other students would sometimes make connections during the journal share out, making the journals that much more powerful than if they were simply just used for writing.

Opening My Mind

The journals created multiple learning opportunities for my students. Through surveys and interviews, I was really able to see how much the journals had helped my students. As stated numerous times, my intentions were to improve writing, comprehension, and personal connection. For some students, the journals reached them in those areas, but some students had other personal successes. In some cases, I found the surprise successes more meaningful, because students gained independence and confidence. Independence and confidence were not initial goal areas of improvement, but by conducting the study, the students' confidence was not shaken by defeat, and they were more likely to try again. These surprise successes turned into tools that students can use

to further their learning in all situations. In some cases, that victory among some of the students is more powerful than historical comprehension. For example, in my student interviews, the students said the recall questions were the hardest, but that they helped them to remember things that they had forgotten. This showed they could now see how working through difficult situations could be rewarding and productive.

Many said that they tried to think back to the journal prompts when they were taking their tests to figure out some of the questions. The students said the recall questions made them feel like they knew things, which I believe to be a success in itself. It was during the interviews that I collected my most powerful data in terms of understanding the effectiveness of the journals. Interviews mid-study definitely helped me to alter necessary structures and meet the needs of my students.

Table 2

Interview Questions and Results

Questions	Student Responses	Teacher Response
What kind of Journal have you used in the past? What class?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A journal at home to write about my childhood” –Brenda • English class, but it never connected to what we were learning”-David • “Yes, but I thought they were stupid, dumb things to write”- Steve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No changes made from data.
What do you like about the journals in our class?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I like how we start with them because before them we are all in our on world”-Brian • “They interest me because I like history”- Brandon • “It opened up my mind and think a little bit about it”-Steve • “Gets my brain flowing with information”-Brenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I kept the journals at the beginning of the class. • I decided to keep the recall questions because the students said they helped them to remember things they had forgot. • I made myself more conscious of the time I gave them to write, because I saw many were using the journals to switch gears.
What would you change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Give me more direction on how the prompt connects to what we are learning”-Brian • “Write less” –Brandon • “Nothing, they don’t bother me at all”-Steve • “I would like more questions that ask my point of view”-Nat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I became more conscious of explaining how the prompt connected to the lesson and tried to bring up the prompt numerous times throughout the lesson. • If the question did not explicitly ask for a student perspective, I would try to add in questions of such during the discussion and sharing portion.
Do you think they help you understand and connect to the curriculum?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It helps me connect it to the curriculum, because it relates to things in real life”.-Brenda • “It doesn’t help me understand but I study”-Brandon • “It helps me with writing and to understand”-Steve • “Writing helps me remember it”- Nat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The responses to this question, gave me motivation to keep continuing with the study as I saw more than not the students were seeing the journals as and effective tool in their learning.

Unexpected Changes

The data that I collected from my surveys also proved to show that the journals had changed my students' abilities and attitudes from their perspectives as well. When I compared the data between the two surveys, I was very intrigued. I gave a survey at the beginning of the study (Appendix E) and then one at the completion of the study (Appendix F). The pre-study was to gather data about my incoming students. I wanted to know what their experiences with journals, writing, and history were. After analyzing the survey data, I found that almost all the students had used a journal before; I was also intrigued that many of the students answered that they do not write in sentence form. I know my high school's English program requires writing development, and I thought it odd that the students were not writing in complete sentences every day. As I had predicted, many of the students responded that they did not like to write. I found this supportive to the structure I implemented that required just three-five lines versus sentences.

When I analyzed my data of the post survey, I was pleasantly surprised to see that many of the responses had changed for the positive. More students responded with higher ratings when they valued how much they liked to write. They all responded with the highest value, that they liked to use the journals as well, which involves daily writing.

I found that my lowest student was the one that answered he did not like to write at all. I would assume that is was because of his ability. I found it promising that the students do like to learn about history. I used this knowledge to know that I was going to be able to push this group of students to use higher level prompts and challenge the students earlier on versus later.

My biggest find with implementing the pre-survey (Appendix E) was the discrepancy with Nat. He is the lowest student, but appeared to have the opinion that he understands everything all the time. What I found was most interesting is that he changed his score with the post-survey to a three versus a five. I think it is very powerful that through the study, and my class, he became more self-aware and was not ashamed of his discovery.

Table 3

Pre-Survey Results

<u>Pre-Survey</u>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>1(Never)</i>	<i>2(Hardly Ever)</i>	<i>3(Often)</i>	<i>4(Almost Always)</i>	<i>5(Always)</i>
<i>Have you ever used a journal in school before?</i>	7	1					
<i>How often do you write in sentence form in school (Not including notes)?</i>			1	2	3		2
<i>Do you like to write?</i>			1	1	3	3	
<i>Do you like to learn about history?</i>				1	1	2	4
<i>Do you understand historical concepts?</i>				1	6		1

Table 4

Post Survey Results

<u>Post-Survey</u>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>1(Never)</i>	<i>2(Hardly Ever)</i>	<i>3(Often)</i>	<i>4(Almost Always)</i>	<i>5(Always)</i>
<i>Do you have a more personal connection with historical concepts?</i>	6						
<i>Do you like using journals in the classroom?</i>							6
<i>Do you like to write?</i>					1	3	2
<i>Do you like to learn about history?</i>					1	3	2
<i>Do you understand historical concepts?</i>					4	1	1

Note: A student withdrew from my class due to wrong placement, and one student was absent the day of the survey.

A Note Back

About three quarters through the study, I started to use the journals as another mode of communication within the classroom. Through my pre-study research, I learned that some educators had written back to the students or made comments about the students' work. I announced on a Monday that I would be writing back to the students in their journals. I told them that they could write back to my comment if they wanted to, but I stressed that this was only an option, not mandatory. For one whole week, I commented back on every student's journal entries daily. My school is structured so that there is a forty minute activity period at the end of the day. I found that this is when I had the time to respond to the students' journals. There were some days when the only time to respond was after the school day had ended.

I kept the comments positive. If I was making a correction or correcting a misunderstanding of the content, I always made a point to compliment the student in my comments first. In addition to making comments, I also corrected their grammar or spelling. When I did this, it caused some of the students to need reassurance that their journals were not graded. I told them that their journals would never be graded, and that I simply just wanted them to see where they were making writing mistakes, so they could also become great writers, not just historians.

It should be noted, that not all comments were directly related to what was written. There would be times that if a student had volunteered to share his or her journals response or who had a great comment during the sharing portion, I would praise them in their journals for their contribution. Brian also took the lead when it came to passing out the journals. Many times he would have them passed out before I asked for them to be. I would thank him for that in his journal. I found that commenting on student participation lead those students to continue to share out. I also found that when students were receiving positive feedback in their journals, they became more confident or more inclined to volunteer to share what they had written. Steve made the comment that when I wrote back, “It made him feel like he knew something”.

I also found that the written dialogue within the journals allowed me to develop relationships with the students who were quieter. The written comments did not give all students the confidence to speak up, but it worked as another way for that student to speak. Brenda, in particular, was a student who had used journals in her personal life to express her feelings. She is not a loud student and does not often participate even though I found she normally knows the answer. Being able to have a written communication with her definitely helped her feel valued with in the classroom. Her rating of history changed between the pre- and post-survey, and during her interviews she offered a lot of praise towards the use

of journals in the classroom. The journals worked as a tool where she could express herself in a more comfortable way, but be a part of the class.

After the first week of responding, I asked the class all at once, if they liked when I had made comments in their journals? They unanimously responding that they did. I told them that since they liked it so much I would continue to write back to them. I told them we were going to make one small change. I said that they could choose whether they wanted me to write back. If they wanted me to read what they wrote for the day, they were to mark their journals. To mark their journals, I cut up pieces of index cards. Each student got one. If I were to comment, then the index card would be sticking out of their journal. If there was nothing sticking out, then I wouldn't comment back.

I found having students chose when I would respond or not alleviated some of the workload for myself. I typically had between five or six journals to respond to daily. Some of the students decorated their journal markers and made them their own. I found that when the students felt very proud of what they had written, they would also want me to read their entries.

I had initially not planned on using the journals as another mode of communication within the classroom, because I thought that I would end up working harder with the journals than the students. I was also wondered, "Would they even read the comments or care about what I thought about their entries?"

Though there were days when it was hard to fit in the journal comments, I

found that it strengthened the excitement the students had for the journals within the classroom. The one instance I realized how much the students did value my comments, was a day when I had forgotten to respond to their journals. Brian was passing out the journals, and Kelly stated in a sad tone, “You didn’t write back!?!” Brendon and Steve also joined in, “Aw yeh! I don’t have a comment either.” It was in this moment that I realized they did value the written dialogue, and that like I got excited to see what they had written, they looked forward to my responses.

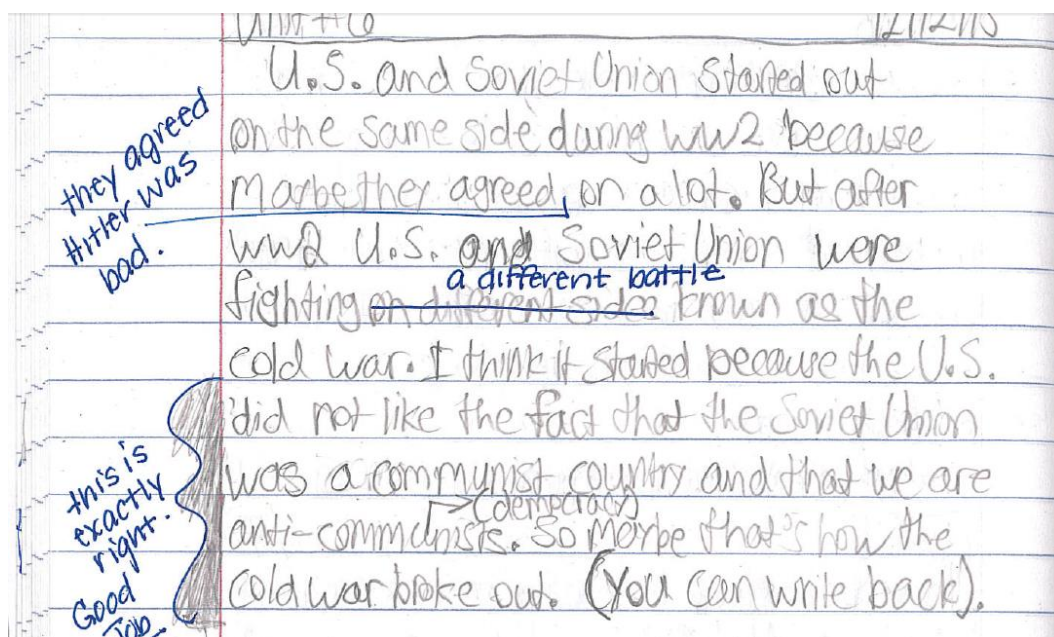


Figure 8. Steve’s teacher-student journal conversation.

Unit #4
 Thing that cause war. One thing could be one country takes over another country. Another thing can be alliances.

Unit #4 11/11
 Yes, it is possible to stay neutral if two of your friends are fighting. It is hard but it is possible. There is nothing you can do but just try and help fix it.

Awesome share out today [REDACTED]
 Do you think when people try to help that sometimes it makes things worse?
 Yes, if people try to help it can make thing worse than what they already are. So it ~~is~~ best if other people stay out of it.
 Thanks for writing back 😊

Figure 9. Donna's teacher-student journal conversation.

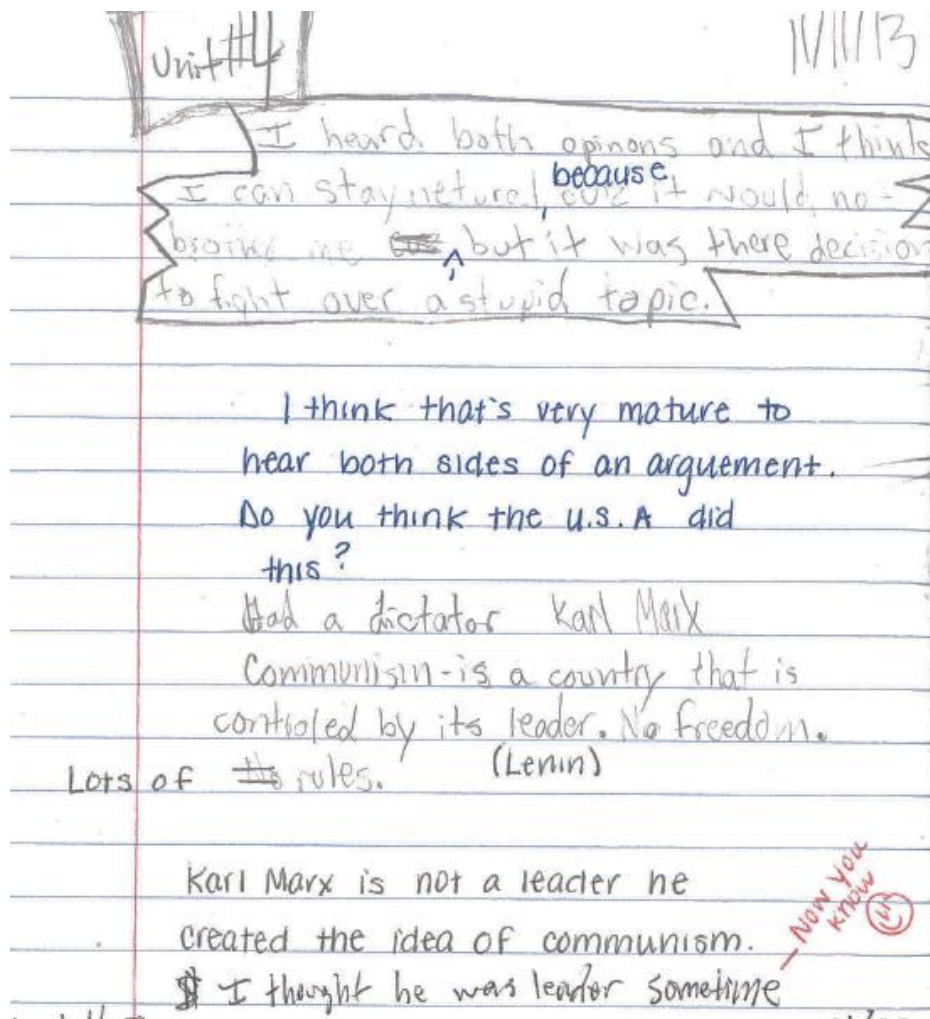


Figure 10. Brandon's teacher-student journal conversation.

Russian Food

With the start of the Russian Unit, the first journal prompt was "Russia." When I read the prompt allowed, I added, "What do you know, think of, want to know?" I was using this journal prompt, specifically, to see what they knew and

what they were interested in knowing about Russia. Since the prompt was more focused on what they knew and not how well they were writing, I told them, “I want you guys to write as much as possible, so let’s do bullets, because that makes it easier.” Emily had started off with saying, “What if I don’t know much?” I told her, “Just write what you do know.”

The students had more knowledge than I had anticipated. Many mentioned the Soviet Union and the World Wars. Though some had historical knowledge, other’s approached the prompt by writing what they wanted to know. The prompt ended up taking on a life of its own. Emily had written, “*When I think of Russia I think of mean people and bad food.*” When she shared her entry, it made them chuckle a little, because they had all heard of that harsh Russian stereotype. After she shared, I asked her, “Why do you think of bad food? Have you ever tried Russian food?” She responded, “Well no, but I would like to know what it tastes like.” This comment sparked a whole discussion on: who had tried Russian dishes, what were Russian dishes, would they taste good or bad. I said maybe we could have a day when we tried different dishes. When saying that I had no idea that we would actually be able to follow through on our discussion.

The students were asking to have a party the day before the holiday break. I agreed, but I said, “It has to be educational in some way.” Emily’s desire to try Russian food would come true. I told the students that instead of bringing in chips and holiday cookies, they had to bring in a dish from another country for

their classmates to try. As an incentive, I made it an extra credit assignment (Appendix K). The student would turn in the actual recipe along with a one page write up about the country and its culture. Our holiday party was a huge success; almost half of the students brought in food. I made each student label their dish, before they put their food in the designated spot. After everyone got into the class, I went through and announced what each student had brought in. The excitement in the room was evident. All the students were chatting; comments like, “This all looks so good” or “I can’t wait to try everything” were constantly repeated.

A student had baked Russian cookies. After everyone had gone through the buffet line of food, I asked Kelly if she had tried the Russian cookies. She said that she had. I asked her “Well, did you like it?” She replied with “No.” We both started laughing remembering her original journal entry where she wrote that she thought Russian was bad. The whole experience of the students trying different foods and the discussion of what things they liked and did not like was amazing. It was awesome to reflect after the holiday party and to think that the origin of the whole experience came from a journal prompt and discussion. It made me realize how powerful the journals truly were as a classroom learning tool.

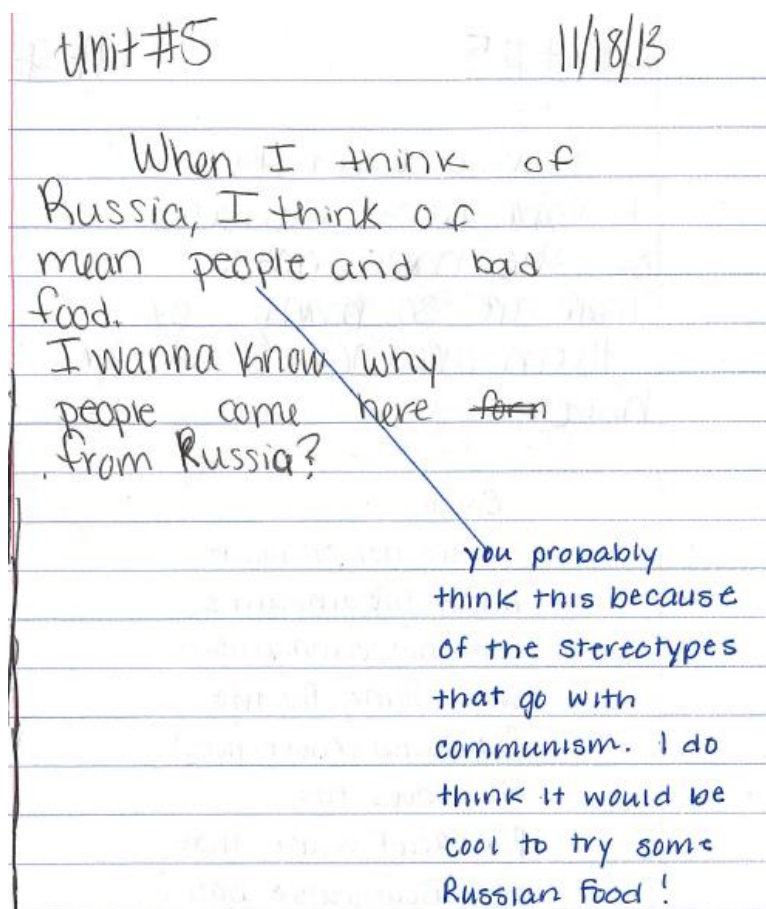


Figure 11. Kelly's journal entry.

Confidence? O Yeah, We Have That Now!

Throughout the study, I observed various student behavior and dialogue. Through these observations, I was able to see students grow into leaders and have more confidence in themselves. After reflecting and analyzing data, about half way through my study I started looking for role changes among the students. I noticed it first in Brian. He was the first student who during a discussion did not

wait for me to call on him to offer his opinion. Normally, a teacher may see that as disrespectful, but since he had never shown any type of disrespectful behavior before, I let it go. When I let Brian direct the conversation, others began to just start talking after their peers had finished their explanation or response to the journal prompt or in some cases questions that came about because of a journal entry.

This type of discussion and conversation did not happen with every journal entry, as some required more teacher direction than others, but when I did see students using other students' responses and leading the discussion on their own, I never tried to halt it to add structure. These types of scenarios did not occur in the beginning of the study. Students were sometimes timid in sharing their journal responses with the class. It was not until many of them had answered a question wrong or struggled through an entry and saw success that I saw the students start to change.

As the study progressed, students started to try to make connections on their own from their journal entries. They would ask things like, "Is this what the United States has?" or "Is this like what's going on in Russia now?" They were no longer afraid to be wrong. I found this a very powerful realization, and I attributed it to the journals. I always stressed that the journals were theirs and that what they put in them was their thoughts. I also stressed that it was ok to be

wrong and that the journals were going to help them and me realize what they did and did not know.

The journals also helped to develop a great sense of community within the classroom. I think that for any student to learn, the environment has to be nonthreatening, but challenging as well. The journals helped me to create that happy medium. Not only were students becoming more confident with themselves and becoming more resilient when things were difficult, but also they started to encourage each other and work together. Since many students finished at different times with their journals some would talk about what they had written. Especially when the prompt had the students sharing their opinions or creating something, the students would engage in conversation with one another. I found that sharing them with a partner and getting feedback helped give the students confidence to share them out-loud with more pride and confidence. I also found that students would encourage one another to share.

They learned to state whether or not they agreed with the person who had gone before them. The students began to model my behavior and questions I had been exhibiting the whole study. I would ask someone to share, and then ask if someone agreed or disagreed with them. Sometimes students would say, “Well I had the same thing as the person before me”, I would always respond by saying, “Well what else did you say beside that or what else do you think in addition to that?” Students began on their own answering responses with “I agree with” or “I

had something different because...” They also learned that, “I said the same thing was not a valid response”. They automatically started responding with, “I had that and...” These observations made me realize how important my actions were to their growth as students and the behavior that they chose to model.

My students grew so much over the semester that I had them and in the time I conducted my study. I have had many come back over the last couple of months to visit and reflect on how much they enjoyed the class. On the last day, we were talking about the funny things that had happened and how we were going to miss each other with the change of classes in the second semester. I typically give a speech at the end of the semester as a sentiment to the time that was shared and the experiences that the students and I had together each day during the hour and half time frame. In my speech, I told them that I do not know if they realize how much they accomplished this semester. I told them that I had really pushed them, because I knew they were capable, and I would not have done it for any other reason. The students were labeled as Foundations students, which means they were seen as below a college prep level. By the end of the semester, I had given the students honors level questions on some of their tests. I feel like the journals opened the door for me to push them as far as I did. Journals were not without frustrations, and the students pushed me as well to be in constant reflection and adapt the journals to be as effective as they were. I could not help but smile at the end of my speech on the last day, after I got done telling them

should be very proud of themselves, when Brandon replied, “I could tell you pushed us, but I still liked it”.

Data Analysis

Introduction

Data Analysis is imperative to any study. Data analysis was consistently ongoing throughout my study. Many forms of data collection existed, therefore providing me with a plethora of information to use to guide, change, and reflect upon throughout and after my study. Field logs, student surveys, student journals, and student reflections were all consistent modes of data collection which added to the accomplishment and validity of the study.

Field Log

My field log was used daily to record a variety of information and behaviors. I created a daily form that I filled out for each journal prompt (Appendix L). The form consisted of recording the journal prompt, writing behavior, student responses, and curriculum connections. Though each day not all categories were necessarily filled out, the form helped to keep me on track and remind me of necessary data to observe and record. I included reflective memos about specific events, specific students, and my own personal insights gained throughout the study. My field log served as means of containing all necessary information in one place. It also served as means for me to review specific days, and recorded information of days past at the end of the study.

Student Interviews

Student interviews were done mid-way through the study (Appendix G). I asked questions that helped me to elaborate on the students' survey answers, and to ask questions to ensure the current implementation of journals was benefiting them. Interviews provided me with rich student dialogue and insight. Information gained from the student interviews gave me direction in areas where I could improve and change the journals for the second half of the study. The changes I made provided me with more valuable information and allowed me to compare differences in writing and verbal behavior of the students from the beginning and end of the study.

Student Surveys

Student surveys were given at the beginning and end of the study (Appendix E and Appendix F). The initial survey was used to gather information on the students' feelings and experiences toward writing, history, and journals. The pre-study survey gave me perspective on what kind of journals prompts my students would like and could handle. The post-study surveys provided data to compare to the pre-study surveys. I was able to analyze changes among the students in terms of their views on the subject matter and perspectives of their abilities from the beginning and end of the study.

Student Journals

The journals themselves provided me with data on student abilities, perspectives, and interests. I would read the students' journals at least twice a week, to see whether their writing was improving, what they were writing about, and how they were responding to the different types of prompts. As changes were made to how I interacted with the students' journals throughout the study, they also provided written dialogue between myself and the students, which worked as another powerful element to the study and to the quality of data that I could analyze and reflect on.

Student Reflections and Discussion

The last journal prompt consisted of three reflective questions that the students answered in their journals (Appendix H). The questions provided me with students' feelings and suggestions on the overall study. These data were powerful to me, because they helped me to see how to structure further implementation of journals in future classes. A class discussion was conducted after the students responded to the questions in their journals. The discussion helped me to understand the students' journal responses, and also allowed students to add comments that they had not written down.

Codes, Bins, and Themes Statements

The data collected throughout the study was so immense that I needed to consolidate it into categories to better make overall conclusions about my study.

To categorize my data, I began with the entries in my field log. I found common themes among the students' behavior, verbal and written responses, and my behaviors as well. I coded, or labeled, those commonalities within my field log. I then proceeded to consolidate the data further by making an index with the codes and pages numbers. I continued this process throughout and used the data at the end of my study to find the most common patterns.

Though not a perfect method, I looked at the codes that were repeated the most, thinking that the more frequent codes would be the most valuable for drawing conclusions. Structure, differentiation, and feedback were examples of stand-out themes that were constantly recorded in my field log. Once I found the most common patterns, I then began to go back into my field log and fit the smaller repeating patterns into the categories or bins that I had determined to be the most important parts of my study.

Once I had created five bins, or categories that represented my study, I wrote a theme statement to summarize the data and a conclusion I had reached about that particular component of my study. The theme statements represented the conclusions that I was able to come to from the data that I had collected over the course of my study. The conclusions represent the triangulation of data that occurred throughout the study and allowed me to find the true nature of the events that occurred and what they meant to the realizations that I was able to come to.



Figure #12. Codes and Bins. The organized codes and bins from my study.

Research Findings

The study was implemented in my classroom in order to answer the question, “What are the observed and reported experiences of foundation level students when daily journals are used in the classroom?” My initial goal was to see if the journals could improve the students’ writing and comprehension abilities. What I found was that the journals did not necessarily improve students’ writing abilities, but rather they improved students’ connection with historical content and improved the students’ self-concept. The following theme statements serve to show the major elements of the study that were found while implementing daily journals into my classroom.

Differentiation

Even though journals are being used to help meet the diverse needs of students, implementation must be within the students’ zone of proximal development to be effective.

I learned that as a teacher I want to push my students, but I must meet them first at their level. I have found that the struggling learners have progressed through school due to the fact that they have reached an unspoken agreement of “...don’t ask much of me and I won’t make any problems for you” (Delpit, 2012). My students were no different; they came to me with the mind-set of always expecting the answers to be given to them. Their presented ability did not match their actual ability. The beginning stages of my journals were used to show the

students that they did and could understand difficult concepts. To do that, I had to use journal prompts that would offer them success. If a student is never met with success, then they will never trust themselves and their potential abilities (Freire, 1970). To help ensure this development of self-trust, I used prompts that had students being more creative than factual. I used that creativity to connect to historical concepts, which showed them that they possessed background knowledge.

As the study progressed, I began to implement more recall questions. When those recall questions seemed to be out of my students' zone of proximal development, I had to adapt and differentiate to match my students' abilities. I constantly reworded the journals prompts. I offered suggestions and examples, in situations, when students struggled or had trouble getting started. For example, I gave the option to choose between two journal prompts. This allowed students to choose which one they felt more comfortable with. It then made the class discussion diverse, because there were different perspectives being put into the mix. By differentiating, the students were able to have success and to become more likely to work through the struggles they encountered.

I have learned through my teaching experiences that differentiation is key to any level learner, but it is essential with struggling learners. My journals would not have evoked such progress among my students if I had not differentiated the

prompts. How I announced and introduced each prompt to the students each day made a big difference versus letting them figure everything out on their own.

Differentiation with the journals did not just end with the variety of prompts. Throughout the discussion portion, I constantly helped to lead students into different perspectives or added elements that they had not thought of initially, and would continue to fuel their thinking and, in turn, the conversation. I had to model constantly how to move the discussion along. If they said a word incorrectly, I would very casually pronounce it correctly for them, so they could self-correct the next time that they used the term or phrase. Differentiating throughout the study helped students to experience success and ultimately drove the effectiveness of the journals in my classroom.

Structure

The structure of the journals must be flexible. Flexibility allows for student growth, success, and class dialogue.

Throughout the course of my study, there was always a basic structure to fall back on, but I found that being able to adapt the structure to students' needs, depending on the prompt and teacher goal, was absolutely necessary. In theme with differentiation, adapting the structure helped with my students' success. The format of journal entries was always consistent. Writing the unit number and date was something I kept constant for my own records, however many times I adapted the three-to-five line structure to help my students get their ideas down more

quickly and in more quantity. There were times when I allowed them to bullet their answers, or respond in the form of a picture. The journals became more than just a writing activity very early on in my study. I quickly saw them as a way to get my students to interact with the content versus just the writing process.

Times existed where the journals were used to introduce, expand, or review a topic. Adapting the structure was necessary to allow all of the different variations of the journals. I found that the structural changes kept the students interested in the journals. Certain structural changes caused them to become more excited about responding to a prompt that may have been mundane had I kept with the three to five line structure.

With the exception of having the students respond with a drawing versus words, the structure changes were typically spur of the moment occurrences. Knowing when to change the structure came from knowing my students and knowing exactly what I wanted each journal prompt to accomplish. If the prompt dealt more with comprehension and expanding on ideas, I typically kept with the structure. If it was recall and expansion, I tended to stray from the initial structure, as I found the extensive writing sometimes caused the students to limit the content of their responses, which contradicted my goal. My goal was to evoke interest and a positive experience. Flexibility with my structure allowed me to create positive educative experiences, because it allowed for frustration that did defeat the students but rather instilled tools for future experiences (Dewey, 58)

Teacher Role

Throughout the journal process, the teacher must take on different roles: the teacher must lead, facilitate, observe, and reflect. In order to evoke role changes within the students, the teacher must understand his/her role thoroughly.

Throughout my study, the students underwent many role changes. Those role changes would not have occurred without me reflecting daily to understand what my role should be in different situations. There were times when I had to be very involved and lead the journal writing and sharing process, however there were times when I realized my involvement was causing the students to have my perspective instead of realizing their own view points. It was during the opinion prompts that I had to monitor myself in how I differentiated and delivered the prompts to ensure that the students were not just reiterating my examples as their own. These were situations where I had to act as a facilitator versus a director.

Fluctuating between facilitator, director, and a combination of the two was one of the harder parts of the study. It took a lot of reflection and review of my data collection to start to realize the importance of my role as the teacher, and how much I had to be aware of my ultimate goal of each journal prompt to know which role to play in each situation. Upon review of the whole study, I came to the conclusion that my roles contributed to different roles my students played as the study progressed. Understanding the goal of each journal prompt, and then my role as a teacher allowed my students to grow and take on different roles.

I saw my students taking on leadership roles and becoming more confident with themselves. Journal sharing allowed students who typically were not verbal to build conversational skills and lead discussion in different directions. Having answers written down before sharing helped students to answer with confidence versus being unsure. Students started to facilitate that time as the study progressed. It was during these moments of the study, that I had the most powerful realizations. Reflections after such powerful moments helped me to confirm how important my role was. Had I not become aware that there were moments where I needed to step back and give up control, I do not think my students would have been able to grow and gain the confidence that they did within themselves.

Journal Writing

The written piece of the journal is but a starting point for student interaction, comprehension, and progress.

Initially, the journals were implemented to help students improve their writing. However, I found that limiting the journals to just writing would limit the success and role changes of the students. The written piece of the journals was very purposeful, but was extended to be powerful when the sharing portion was conducted.

The written part allowed for self-reflection and creativity within the students. The journals helped the students to express themselves with the written

word. For some of the more verbal students, this was the part of the journal that helped them to grow as learners, and it helped to strengthen their weaknesses. For other students, the written part offered them an outlet to express their knowledge and opinions.

Had I just kept the journals as something the students wrote in and then put away, I feel like they would not have become such a powerful learning tool. By coupling written and verbal responses together, it allowed all the students to work on a weakness while maintaining an element of security. No one student was superb in both at the beginning of the study. Even at the end, I do not know that all had become proficient in both the written and verbal responses, but improvement was noted in both. For example, one of my students still did not write lengthy entries and always tried to do the minimum, but I found that his verbal skills were improved by him having to at least write an idea down. It helped him to better articulate his thoughts and create even better verbal responses.

Having the students share what they wrote helped to add the element that what they wrote mattered. If they had simply just written their entry and put the journals away, responses would have become very blasé and not have helped them to make the connections that they did. Both the interpersonal and intrapersonal element would have been lost had the journals just been limited to the written piece.

Student Response and Feedback

Student response, whether verbal, behavioral, or written, is what furthers and/or determines structure, differentiation, and the role of the teacher.

However the students responded furthered my reflection, my role changes, and structure changes made to study. I found it imperative to be receptive to the students' feedback and comments throughout the study. Their suggestions and feedback allowed me to make integral changes, such as writing back to their journal entries, or which types of prompts I chose to continue or limit. I would not have continued my written responses had the students not given me such positive feedback.

Knowing and understanding the students is always a priority of my mine. For journals to work, it needs to become the priority of the teacher who tries to implement them. The journals are a great way to cater instruction to one's students. To do that, one needs to be receptive to the students' comments and observant of their behavior. Frustrations, silence, and discourse are all indicators that can help a teacher to cater the journal prompts to the students.

Reading their journal entries and coupling that with reflecting on their verbal responses helped me to gauge where my students were and where they needed help. In addition to my analysis of their work, I found simply discussing the events of the class with them and asking them their feelings was very helpful in moving forward with my journals and class instruction.

Next Steps

The study had a huge impact on my students and myself. The journals changed the way the students interacted with each other, and the way I interacted with them. Journals helped to create a safe environment where my students could work through frustrations and failures to achieve success. The journals helped the students to see that success was an option and a reality. The experience helped me to see how stepping back and trying something new could have a major impact on how my classroom operated. In moving forward with my future foundations classes, I will definitely continue the journal element of the class. There were several elements I would alter to make the journals even more powerful in my future classroom.

In my study, I did not have the students write the journal prompt that I had on the board. In the future, I would have them write the journal prompt. I found that when I read the journals sometimes, I had forgotten the exact question. I also think that the time it takes the students to rewrite the journal prompt in their journals could work as think time for the students to ponder how they will respond. Sometimes the students were frustrated when they could not come up with a response, I think that getting the journal prompt into the journal could work as a mini-success before an even bigger success with their actual entry.

Another addition I would make would be to write back to my students starting in week two versus half way through the study. I think the students need to get used to the journals for at least a week. They need to feel comfortable with the idea of writing their thoughts down. Since some students may not always be enthusiastic about the journals from the start, I think they need to have individual experiences with the written responses, before it becomes a written conversation between two people.

Due to the feedback from my students, my written comments were a favorite part of the journals; this aspect supports my want to start the element very close to the beginning of the study. I think that making the journals an additional form of communication within the classroom creates an environment conducive to learning. Students feel comfortable and become unafraid to make mistakes.

The last thing that I would be more aware of in future implementations of journals would be to monitor my differentiation of journal prompts that ask for the students' opinions. I noticed in my actions to make my students successful by differentiation, that sometimes I led them to my perspective instead of an original perspective of their own. I would make sure that in trying to offer suggestions or ideas, that I do not share my opinion or idea. I think in doing so, opinion journal prompts may become more time consuming, and I would need to revamp how I differentiate or word the prompts. It could, in turn, also become more powerful in terms of student development and introspection.

Overall, my study showed me how powerful an alteration in one's classroom can be. I found it very rewarding to be learning alongside and with my students. The study has showed me how asking questions and making changes is truly an integral part of being a teacher. I believe that if a teacher becomes comfortable in his or her routine, one should see that as an indicator to change it. Stagnation is an opponent of education. In reflecting and forcing myself out of my conform zone, I can better take on the student perspective more easily.

The study put me into the shoes of my students. We were both trying something new, and trying to figure out how we could have success. In moving forward, I am excited to see what success my changes will cause. McNiff puts it best, "Life is a process of asking questions to reveal new potentialities" (2013), which is exactly what I continually intend to do.

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Appendix A-Principal's Consent Form

Dear [REDACTED]

I am completing a Master of Education degree at Moravian College. My courses have enabled me to learn about the most effective teaching methods. One of the requirements of the program is that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. This semester, I am focusing my research on daily journals. The title of my research is *Incorporating Journals into a High School World History Foundations Course*. My students will benefit from participation in this study by strengthening their writing and critical thinking skills.

As a part of this study, students will be asked to respond to daily writing prompts in a journal that I will provide. Prompts will provide interesting and personal connections for the students to increase their interest and comprehension of historical concepts. Prompts will touch on emotion and personal experiences that will make history relevant to the students. Students will engage in writing daily as means of improving their skills and understanding of the writing process. The study will take place from August 28th -December 24th.

The data will be collected and coded, and held in the strictest confidence. No one except me will have access to the data. My research will be presented using pseudonyms (fake names); no one's identity will be used. I will store the data in a locked cabinet. At the conclusion of the research, the data will be destroyed.

All students in my classroom will receive the same instruction and assignments as part of the Social Studies curriculum. **Participation as a subject in the study, however, 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, sending me an e-mail, or notifying me in person. The parent or guardian may also withdraw the student at any time. If the student withdraws, I agree I will not use any data pertaining to him or her in any written reports of my research.

We welcome questions about this research at any time. Any questions you have about the research can be directed to me, [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

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. Miss Megan O'Brien has my permission to conduct this study.

Principal's Signature

Date

Appendix B -Parent Consent Form

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am completing a Master of Education degree at Moravian College. My courses have enabled me to learn about the most effective teaching methods. One of the requirements of the program is that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. This semester, I am focusing my research on daily journals. The title of my research is *Incorporating Journals into a High School World History Foundations Course*. My students will benefit from participation in this study by strengthening their writing and critical thinking skills.

As a part of this study, students will be asked to respond to daily writing prompts in a journal that I will provide. Prompts will provide interesting and personal connections for the students to increase their interest and comprehension of historical concepts. Prompts will touch on emotion and personal experiences that will make history relevant to the students. Students will engage in writing daily as means of improving their skills and understanding of the writing process. The study will take place from August 28th -December 24th.

The data will be collected and coded, and held in the strictest confidence. No one except me will have access to the data. My research will be presented using pseudonyms (fake names) - no one's identity will be used. I will store the data in a locked cabinet. At the conclusion of the research, the data will be destroyed.

All students in my classroom will receive the same instruction and assignments as part of the Social Studies curriculum. Participation as a subject in the study, however, 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, sending me an e-mail, or notifying me in person. The parent or guardian may also withdraw the student at any time. If the student withdraws, I agree I will not use any date pertaining to him or her in any written reports of my research.

We welcome questions about this research at any time. Any questions you have about the research can be directed to me, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Bethlehem, PA 18018, 610-625-7758.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

I agree to allow my son/daughter to take part in this project. I understand that my son/daughter can choose not to participate at any time.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Student Signature

Date

Appendix C-Journal Prompts

1. What do you think is the MOST important invention of all time?
2. If you could invent anything what would you invent? And why?
3. What is the most important thing in your life? Why?
4. If your country was in trouble, would you want someone to help? Should the U.S. help other countries?
5. What is something you think is corrupt (has errors)? What errors does it have?
6. Henry VIII had many things occur during his rule. Pick one thing and explain why it was positive or negative.
7. What is a situation when you felt your opinion or voice was not heard?
8. Name one enlightenment thinker and his idea.
9. Why can a Revolution be good.....bad?
10. What do you think makes a good leader?
11. Explain why Louis XVI and Maria Antoinette were not good leaders.
12. If the students of Nazareth started a revolution, how would you know? (What would the high school look like?)
13. If you were about to die what would your last words be? or What would you want people to remember about you?
14. Define the following terms: National Assembly, Legislative Assembly, National Convention.
15. Bastille Day, Great Fear, Legislative Assembly, Directory, Bread Riot, Reign of Terror, Louis XVI, Estates General. Pick 2 and draw a picture to represent the word.
15. Name one thing you remember or learned from the Napoleon video yesterday.
17. If you were stranded on an island what is one thing you could not live without? Why?
18. Industrial Revolution. Name three things you think of.
19. Name the factors of production, and why they caused/started an Industrial Revolution.
20. Explain the working conditions during the Industrial Revolution.
21. Which country had a similar industrial revolution to Great Britain? What did this country also have that caused/allowed an industrial revolution to happen?
22. Would you want to go to Africa? Why or why not?
23. If an alien species came to Earth and forced you to learn their ways, what would you do?
24. Name two things you learned from the Invisible Children video.
25. What types of things cause a war to happen?

26. Is it possible to remain neutral when two of your friends are arguing?
27. Russia. What do you know, think of, want to know.
28. Why would the people of Russia turn to communism? or Explain what communism is.
29. What is your favorite thing we've learned or done?
30. Draw one of the causes of the Russian Revolution.
31. Do you think the government should have control over the information we receive?
32. What is indoctrination? How did Stalin accomplish this?
33. When I write in my journal I feel....
When I come to history class it's like...
34. After I graduate from Nazareth...
35. How do dictators come to power?
36. How did Stalin and Hitler maintain and keep their power?
37. Even though the Soviet Union and the U.S.A fought on the same side in WW2, why did they become enemies?
38. What is the Cold War?
39. If you were President during the Cold War, would your decisions have been the same or different than the Presidents then?

Appendix D-Picture Journal Prompts

1. Guillotine Prompt



2. Child Soldier Prompt



Appendix E-Pre-Student SurveyPre-Study Student Survey

1. Have you ever used a journal in school before

YES

NO

2. How often do you write in sentence form in school (NOT including notes)?

1 (*Never*) 2 (*Hardly ever*) 3 (*Often*) 4 (*Almost every day*) 5 (*Everyday*)

3. Do you like to write?

1 (*Not at all*) 2 (*Hardly ever*) 3 (*Sometimes*) 4 (*It's OK*) 5 (*I love it*)

4. Do you like to learn about history?

1 (*Not at all*) 2 (*Hardly ever*) 3 (*Sometimes*) 4 (*It's OK*) 5 (*I love it*)

5. Do you understand historical concepts?

1 (*Never*) 2 (*Hardly ever*) 3 (*Often*) 4 (*Almost all the time*) 5 (*All the time*)

Appendix F-Post-Survey Questions

Post-Study Student Survey

1. Do you have a more personal connection with historical concepts?

YES

NO

2. Do you like using journals in the classroom?

1 (*Not at all*) 2 (*Hardly ever*) 3 (*Sometimes*) 4 (*It's OK*) 5 (*I love it*)

3. Do you like to write?

1 (*Not at all*) 2 (*Hardly ever*) 3 (*Sometimes*) 4 (*It's OK*) 5 (*I love it*)

4. Do you like to learn about history?

1 (*Not at all*) 2 (*Hardly ever*) 3 (*Sometimes*) 4 (*It's OK*) 5 (*I love it*)

5. Do you understand historical concepts?

1 (*Never*) 2 (*Hardly ever*) 3 (*Often*) 4 (*Almost all the time*) 5 (*All the time*)

Appendix G-Student Interview Questions

What kinds of Journal have you used before? In what class?

What do you like about the journals in our class?

What would you change about the journals?

Do you think the journals help you understand and connect to what you are learning?

Appendix H-Student Reflection Questions

- 1. What is your over-all feeling about THIS class?**
- 2. What are the things done in this class that helps you learn?**
- 3. If you like other History classes better, what did you like better about it?**

Appendix I-Movies

Invisible Children

Appendix K–Extra Credit Assignment

Yummy Food from Awesome Places (Optional Assignment)

Assignment

Find a dish that is native to another country. Make sure that your dish is an authentic one aka that is not just an Americanized version of a truly authentic dish. The dish can be an appetizer, meal, or dessert. This assignment will work as possible substitute to the original Optional Assignment that is available. The dishes will be presented on Dec. 20th. Dec. 20th is the only day that is assignment can be turned in due to scheduling. In addition to preparing the dish for the class (there are 26 students), you need to include a description of your dish and attach the formal recipe.

Description should include:

- where the dish originated
- when is this dish served (is it a holiday dish or just typical everyday food)
- background on the country it's from (more so cultural than historical)
- should be about a page in length



Recipe:

On a separate paper attach the full recipe along with the directions (not just the ingredients).



Appendix L- Data Collection Form

Observation Sheet

Date:

Journal Topic/Prompt:

Initial Student Reaction:

a. General:

|

b. Specific:

Writing Behavior:

a. General:

b. Specific:

Sharing (Student/Teacher interaction)

Misc.

a. Was the topic reference again/throughout class?

b.

