QUT Digital Repository:
http://eprints.qut.edu.au/

QUT

This is the accepted version of this article. To be published as:

Meyer, Kylie (2010) *A collaborative approach to reading workshop in the middle years.* The Reading Teacher. (In Press)

A Collaborative Approach to *Reading Workshop* in the Middle Years
Kylie Elizabeth Meyer

Reflection Questions

• How does the *collaborative reading workshop* approach engage students in higher order thinking and deep engagement with text?

• How does the *collaborative reading workshop* approach support students to be active citizens and critically literate?

• How does the interaction and collaborative thinking in this approach contribute to the students' intellectual engagement and the teacher's pedagogical rigor?

• How could this approach be implemented or adapted at your school?

The "*Reading Workshop*" approach has been found to successfully improve students' reading comprehension and attitudes toward reading (Oberlin & Shugarman, 1989; Swift, 1993). *Reading workshop* is a term that initially referred to reading sessions that encouraged and supported the independent reading of literature (Atwell, 1987, 1998; Lause, 2004). *Reading workshops* traditionally included reading minilessons, independent silent reading, and reader response tasks (Hewitt, 1996; Oberlin & Shugarman, 1989; Swift, 1993).

Building on the work of U.S. reading specialists (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000, 2007; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997, 2007; Tovani, 2000, 2004, 2005) and Vygotsky's (1978) notion that learning is embedded in social interaction, the *collaborative reading workshop* process we have developed at our school, rather than being an individual literature-based reading approach, is a whole-class, collaborative, apprenticeship (Rogoff, 1990) approach that promotes reciprocal dialogue, critical thinking, and the explicit teaching and sharing of active comprehension (or high-yield) strategies.

The Collaborative Reading Workshop Process at our School

1. Selection of Texts

Texts selected for our *collaborative reading workshop* sessions are generally short, provocative, and of high interest to the students. Examples include newspaper and magazine articles, poems, and

song lyrics that are usually related to the curriculum area being studied or to recent events in the media. The purpose of our collaborative approach to *reading workshop* is to model effective comprehension strategies and to generate higher order thinking through deep comprehension of texts.

2. Marking the Text and Holding Thinking

The teachers think aloud while reading the text, making their thinking visible for the students as they predict, ask questions, clarify, make connections, and comment about the text. Teachers demonstrate how to mark the text while making explicit comments about the reading strategies that good readers use (Tovani, 2000, 2004). Students concurrently mark their own texts, annotating their own questions, wonderings and connections on their individual copies.

The *collaborative reading workshop* process described here involves reciprocal interaction between teachers and students and deep engagement with texts through student-generated questions, and connections, generating inquiry around issues that the students genuinely wonder about in relation to the texts they are reading.

Nystrand and Gamoran (1989) found that *substantive engagement* had a strong, positive effect on achievement and featured authentic, open-ended questions with reciprocal interaction between students and teachers. Similar to Nystrand and Gamoran's (1989) notion of authentic questions, Scardamalia and Bereiter (1992) refer to "knowledge-based" or "wonderment" questions, which are more spontaneous about things the students genuinely wondered about and could lead to significant conceptual advance. Therefore, the *collaborative reading workshop* process at our school involves students generating and investigating their own questions, wonderings, and connections.

2.1 Burning Questions

After the students have read the text and annotated it, the teacher invites each student to select their most "*burning question*" and this is written on the first sticky note. The students scan through all their annotations to choose the most important question that they'd like to investigate further.

Students take it in turn to share their questions and place them on the Burning Questions chart (see Figure 1).
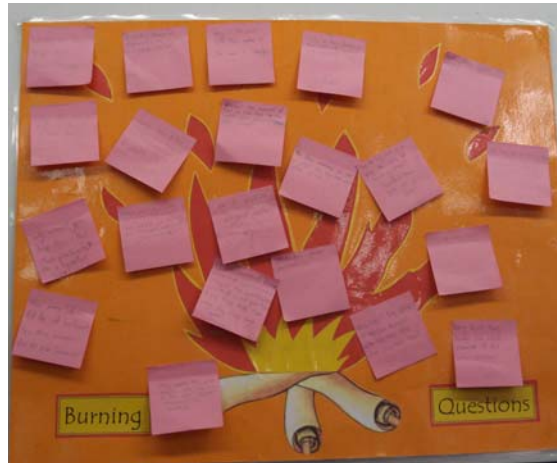

Figure One: Burning Questions Chart

Often the *burning questions* are more literal, seeking clarification of facts, vocabulary, or events, whereas the students' *wonderings* tend to be more inferential and the wondering prompts serve to move students into more inferential thinking.

2.2 Wonderings

The students then reflect on their wonderings about the text and they use the prompts to help them write a wondering as a result of their reading. These are written on the second sticky note, shared aloud and added to the Wondering Wall chart (see Figure 2).

Wonderings
▪ Perhaps…
▪ Could…
▪ I wonder why…
▪ I wonder what…
▪ What could…
▪ What would…
▪ What if…
▪ What might…
▪ If…

Figure Two: Wondering Wall Chart

2.3 Clever Connections

After students have identified their burning questions and wonderings, they choose their favorite connection between the text and something else they may have read, experienced, viewed, or heard about that is similar or relevant to the text. The teacher encourages the students to make text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). The students share their connections aloud and add them to the Clever Connections chart (see Figure 3).

Connections
Make links to other texts, experiences, ideas or things relevant to the topic
- This reminds me of…
- I remember when…
- Another text like this is…
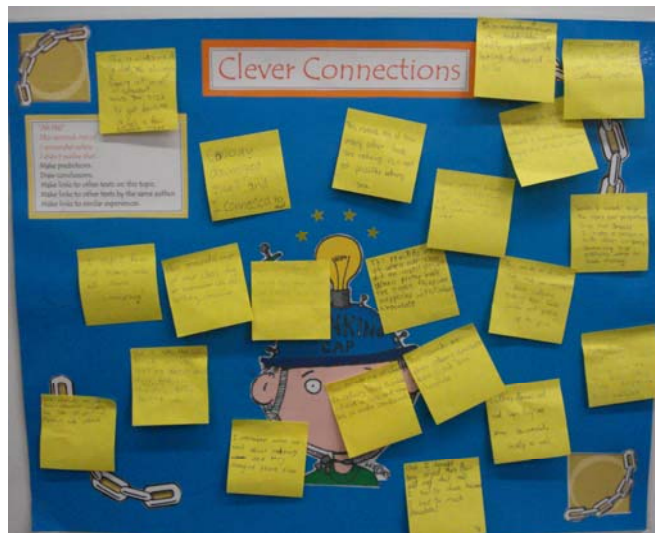- I didn't realise that…
- I think…
- Ah ha!

Figure Three: Clever Connections Chart

3. Finding the Answers to Our Own Questions

The students then sort the questions and wonderings into whether they could find the answer in the text, in their heads, or somewhere else. This draws on the question–answer relationship (QAR) (Raphael, 1982; Raphael & Au, 2005) approach. Research has shown that QAR is an evidence-based approach that improves reading comprehension (Raphael & Au, 2005; Raphael & McKinney, 1983; Raphael & Pearson, 1982, 1985; Raphael & Wonnacott, 1985).

The students write the answers that they already know to each other's questions under each question on the chart, then they work in teams to investigate the answers to the unknown questions.

4. Collaborative Reading Workshop in Action

Students in Year 7 investigated the lyrics of Michael Franti's song, "*Bomb the World*" (Franti & Spearhead., 2003). The students worked through the *collaborative reading workshop* process,

listening to the song several times while reading the lyrics and marking their thinking around the text. The students then shared their burning questions, wonderings, and connections.

The *collaborative reading workshop* process gives teachers insight into the students' *coding* (for example word meanings and definitions), *semantic* (meaning making strategies), *pragmatic* (knowledge of author's purpose and use of texts in their cultural and social context) and *critical* competence (Freebody & Luke, 1990, 1999). What is evident from the student responses (See Table One) is the depth of critical thinking generated in relation to the text which framed future investigations around worldwide political and economic systems. Teachers have commented that the student-generated questions and wonderings have lead to far more relevant and intense investigations than if the teachers themselves had thought up comprehension questions in isolation prior to the lesson.

Table One: Year 7 student responses to song lyrics "*Bomb the World*" (Franti & Spearhead., 2003)

Four Resources Focus	Burning Questions	Wondering Wall	Clever Connections
Coding competence	▪ I don't know what, "*rally around the flag*" means. ▪ What does "*propaganda*" mean? ▪ What does "*unpatriotic*" mean? ▪ Does "*unify*" mean to come together? ▪ What does "*idiotic*" mean? ▪ What are "*international sanctions*"? ▪ Does "*corporations*" mean big companies? ▪ Is a "*world trade organisation*" a world wide company? ▪ Does "*tri-lateral action*" mean countries around the world fighting together?	▪ I wonder if "*unify*" means we should all get together on this issue?	▪ I think "*CNN*" means the news that I've seen on our TV.
Pragmatic competence		▪ I wonder why he tried to put his message across in song? ▪ I wonder why he wanted to write a song about war? ▪ I wonder if he wrote this song to share his feelings?	▪ I think Michael Franti wrote this song because he cares about everyone and he wants peace. ▪ I think he wrote this because he likes peace, he doesn't like war and he's against hunger and disease. ▪ I think he tried to get his message across by song so younger people would hear it too.
Semantic competence	▪ Who is Tim McVeigh? Is he famous?	▪ I wonder why he says, "*We can bomb the world to pieces but we can't bomb it into peace*"? ▪ I wonder why he repeated, "*blood is blood is blood*…"? Did he do that for a reason? ▪ I wonder if he is saying that war has no point and must stop?	▪ I think he wants to have more peace than war and to see people work together to make a better world. ▪ I think he is trying to tell us that war won't solve anything. ▪ I think he wrote, "*The death toll is so horrendous*" because lots of people have died from bombs. ▪ I think he repeats, "*blood is blood is blood*" because he is describing how bloody war is. ▪ I think "*rally around the flag*" means defending your country. ▪ This is about how pointless war is and that war causes and costs many lives. ▪ I think "*blood is blood is blood*" means that everyone has blood and we are all the same in that way. ▪ I think "*power to the peaceful*" means to give all the power to the peacemakers. ▪ I think this song means that war is not cool.

Four Resources Focus	Burning Questions	Wondering Wall	Clever Connections
Critical competence	▪ Why do people have wars? ▪ Why are there so many wars? ▪ Why don't people share our goods like fuel and oil and food – why don't we just work together? ▪ Is war mainly caused by terrorists? ▪ Why do countries fight together and against each other and kill innocent people when it is usually governments fighting? ▪ Why is he trying to make us help stop wars? ▪ What is the point of war? ▪ He says, "*They tellin' lies of division and fear*" – Who are "*they*"? Who's telling lies? ▪ Why do countries have to abide by international laws of war and what happens in they don't abide by war treaties? ▪ Who made up the war treaties and why?	▪ I wonder why people aren't happy with what they've got? ▪ I wonder why there can't be peace and no wars in the world? ▪ I wonder if this song will change the world? ▪ I wonder who war benefits? ▪ I wonder why they would take revenge on a country that hasn't done anything to them? ▪ I wonder why some countries are poor and others aren't? ▪ He asks, "*Who's responsible?*" I wonder who is responsible for wars? ▪ I wonder why they tell lies about things that happened in the war? ▪ I wonder if the winning team mostly benefit from wars?	▪ I think "*power to the peaceful*" means that people who want peace will have more power than people who want to start wars. ▪ I think "*We can bomb the world to pieces but we can't bomb it into peace*" might mean that we can destroy the world, but if we keep on having wars, there won't be any peace. ▪ I think Michael Franti is trying to tell everyone that war goes nowhere, it only causes hatred, but peace is powerful ▪ I think "*power to the peaceful*" means you can make a difference. ▪ I think "*power to the peaceful*" means that people who don't fight do have power.

5. In Summary

The *collaborative reading workshop* approach at our school, through its interactive processes, has led to greater intellectual demand in the teaching of reading, through

- ▪ explicit modeling and sharing of high yield comprehension strategies

- ▪ authentic student investigations of their own inquiry questions generated from texts

- ▪ explicit talk about thinking and metacognition (Flavell, 1979)

- ▪ the establishment of a classroom context that is a supportive and collaborative community of learners with reciprocal dialogue and interchange between all members

It is evident that the *collaborative reading workshop* process itself, through its student-generated questions, wonderings and connections, scaffolds students to deeper levels of thinking and engagement with texts and provides students with greater input into and ownership of their learning.

References

Atwell, N. (1987). *In the middle: Writing, reading, and learning with adolescents*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.</bok>

Atwell, N. (1998). *In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading and learning* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.</bok>

Flavell, J.H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive–developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist*, *34*(10), 906–911. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.34.10.906</jrn>

Freebody, P., & Luke, A. (1990). "Literacies" programs: Debates and demands in cultural context. *Prospect: Australian Journal of TESOL*, *5*(7), 7–16.</jrn>

Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.</bok>

Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2007). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension for understanding and engagement* (2nd ed.). Portland, ME: Stenhouse.</bok>

Hewitt, C. (1996). *Improving low reading skills through the use of reader's workshop*. Chicago: Saint Xavier University.</unknown>

Keene, E.O., & Zimmermann, S. (1997). *Mosaic of thought: Teaching comprehension in a reader's workshop*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.</bok>

Keene, E.O., & Zimmermann, S. (2007). *Mosaic of thought: The power of comprehension strategy instruction* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.</bok>

Lause, J. (2004). Using reading workshop to inspire lifelong readers. *English Journal*, *93*(5), 24. doi:10.2307/4128931</jrn>

Luke, A, &. Freebody, P. (1999). Further notes on the four resources model. *Reading Online*. Retrieved May 1, 2007, from www.readingonline.org/research/lukefreebody.html</jrn>

Nystrand, M., & Gamoran, A. (1989). *Instructional discourse and student engagement*. Madison, WI: National Center on Effective Secondary Schools.</bok>

Oberlin, K.J., & Shugarman, S.L. (1989). Implementing the reading workshop with middle school LD readers. *Journal of Reading*, *32*(8), 682–687.</jrn>

Raphael, T.E. (1982). *Improving question-answering performance through instruction*. Urbana, IL: Center for the Study of Reading; Cambridge, MA: Bolt, Beranek and Newman.</bok>

Raphael, T.E., & Au, K.H. (2005). QAR: Enhancing comprehension and test taking across grades and content areas. *The Reading Teacher*, *59*(3), 206–221. doi:10.1598/RT.59.3.1</jrn>

Raphael, T.E., & McKinney, J. (1983). An examination of fifth- and eighth-grade children's question-answering behavior: An instructional study in metacognition. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, *15*(3), 67–86.</jrn>

Raphael, T.E., & Pearson, P.D. (1982). *The effect of metacognitive training on children's question-answering behavior*. Urbana, IL: Center for the Study of Reading; Cambridge, MA: Bolt, Beranek and Newman.</bok>

Raphael, T.E., & Pearson, P.D. (1985). Increasing students' awareness of sources of information for answering questions. *American Educational Research Journal*, *22*(2), 217–235.</jrn>

Raphael, T.E., & Wonnacott, C.A. (1985). Heightening fourth-grade students' sensitivity to sources of information for answering comprehension questions. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *20*(3), 282–296. doi:10.2307/748019</jrn>

Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context*. New York: Oxford University Press.</bok>

Scardamalia, M., & Bereiter, C. (1992). Text-based and knowledge based questioning by children. *Cognition and Instruction*, *9*(3), 177–199.</jrn>

Swift, K. (1993). Try reading workshop in your classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, *46*(5), 366–371.</jrn>

Tovani, C. (2000). *I read it, but I don't get it: Comprehension strategies for adolescent readers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.</bok>

Tovani, C. (2004). *Do I really have to teach reading? Content comprehension, grades 6–12*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.</bok>

Tovani, C. (2005). The power of purposeful reading. *Educational Leadership*, *63*(2), 48–51.</jrn>

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, Eds. & Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.</edb>

Meyer is Head of Curriculum at Forest Lake State School and PhD student at the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia; e-mail ke.meyer@student.qut.edu.au.

Franti, M., & Spearhead. (Writer) (2003). Bomb the World, *Everyone Deserves Music*.